

## THE JOY OF GROWING IN GRACE

2 Peter 3:18 KJV **SLIDE**

*But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever. Amen.*

**SLIDE** *If you were to ask an apple tree – ‘Umm ... excuse me ... How do you grow?’*

*It would probably say –*

*‘Errrr ... I’m not sure ... Growing just happens ...*

*It comes naturally –*

*‘Hmmm ... The warm sun rises above me and draws me up, up up...*

*It Feeds me with warmth and inspiration and life ...*

*And inside I feel energy surging ... my sap rises ...*

*And little buds appear ...*

*That over time turn into branches and leaves ... flowers and fruit.’*

### TO **GROW**

IS THE NATURAL, ORGANIC WAY OF EVERY LIVING THING

Every tree, plant, animal or baby has inherent life in them.

It’s natural for all these things to grow ...

**SLIDE** So it is with us Spiritually –

**WE HAVE INHERENT LIFE WITHIN US**

**THAT WANTS TO GROW**

**BORN-AGAIN BELIEVERS CAN NATURALLY & SIMPLY**

***GROW in GRACE ...***

*Just like the tree that simply grows by standing in the sun.*

### THE SEED

*The Life of the tree comes from The Life that is in The Seed.*

*The seed falls into good ground ...*

*The warm sun shines ...*

*The gentle rains water the soil ...*

*And the Life within the seed stirs,*

*And the shoot naturally and easily pushes its way to the light,*

**SLIDE** *And grows and grows and grows ...*

In the same way, we have been born-again of Spiritual Seed that contains the Life of God. He brought us to New Life through His Seed that He planted deep within us –

1 John 3:9 NKJV **SLIDE**

*Whoever has been born of God does not sin, **for HIS SEED remains in him ...***

**GOD'S SEED REMAINS IN US ...**

And just like a garden seed has all the genetic codes already buried deep inside it, **GOD'S SEED IMPLANTED IN YOU ALREADY**

**CONTAINS EVERYTHING GOD HAS MADE YOU TO BE –**

All your Potential ... all the Goodness ... all you can be is already inside you.

**IT JUST HAS TO GROW AND YOU'LL SEE ALL THE BEAUTIFUL THINGS YOU ARE COME FORTH.**

**ALL HE HAS MADE YOU TO BE IS ALREADY THERE ... READY TO GROW ... THERE IN THAT SEED THAT REMAINS IN YOU.**

Every tree, plant, animal or baby has the seed of life in them. It's natural for all living things to grow ...

**AND THE SEED WANTS TO GROW.**

**THE SEED MUST GROW.**

**IT IS IN ITS GENES TO GROW ... IT PULSATES WITH LIFE ...**

**IT'S READY TO GROW!**

In fact -

**TO NOT GROW IS TO STIFLE GOD'S LIFE IN US**

Sadly, that's what happens to a lot of Believers who aren't taught this truth.

**THEY DON'T KNOW WHO THEY REALLY ARE.**

**THEY DON'T KNOW THE GLORIOUS TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL.**

**THEY DON'T KNOW WHAT'S BURIED DEEP INSIDE THEM.**

**THEY DON'T KNOW 'WHO THEY ARE CALLED TO BECOME' –**

**AS MATURE – GROWN-UP – ADULT BELIEVERS**

**❖ GROWING UP IN GOD ... IS BECOMING OUTWARDLY WHO GOD HAS ALREADY MADE US INWARDLY**

Some block the voice of the Spirit inside them and go back to their old pursuits ... no matter how their heart cries ...

They stifle the seed inside them and it never becomes –  
THE BLOOMING AND GLORIOUS TREE IT WAS MADE BE ...

Some are reluctant to Grow.

They seem quite happy to sit around and do church ... existing with what they have.

They may have been saved for many years, but an adult choosing to remain a child is stilted and retarded from all they could be.

So Peter exhorts us to

**GROW**

2 Peter 3:18 KJV **SLIDE**

*... **GROW** in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ ...*

THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY TO TRULY GROW IN GOD.

THAT IS **BY** GRACE ... AND **IN** GRACE ...

ONLY BY GRACE DO WE GROW INTO WHO WE ARE INSIDE.

There are lots of different ways Christians can GROW WRONG.

❖ MANY CHRISTIANS GROW RELIGIOUSLY

**SLIDE** Many new Believers have been taught that they have to measure up.

They are told you have to 'do' this and you have to 'do' that, to a certain standard. And they try and force their own growth.

They don't know the GLORIOUS GOSPEL OF GRACE –  
THAT THEY ARE ALREADY 100% ACCEPTABLE AND BEAUTIFUL TO GOD.

*Some of us have been in this place, struggling and toiling – trying to live the Christian Life, getting ourselves in a frazzle with little or no real growth ...*

WE NEVER KNEW ... ALL WE NEED IS IN US ALREADY.

To have erroneous teaching causes distorted growth.

Not only legalism ... but ...

- Cultish teaching ...
- Doctrines of demons ...
- People idolizing a preacher teaching his own skewed slant on things ...
- People who shun fellowship and have their own brand of home-made religion.

These things cause stunted growth and distortions ...

These people remind me of a tree I saw –

*Among the beautiful trees and gardens of the village where I live, I spied a poor, ugly, half-dead tree that has obviously been overlooked. It had mostly bare branches with a few straggling leaves dangling from them.*

**IT IS LIKE THIS WITH CHRISTIANS WHO TRY TO GROW RELIGIOUSLY ... SLIDE  
THEY STIFLE GOD'S DIVINE LIFE WITHIN THEM**

❖ **SOME CHRISTIANS GROW AMBITIOUSLY – COMPETITIVELY**

Some New Believers chase after growth by trying to Compete with others –

*Like a little orange tree who sees a tall and mighty oak and says –*  
**SLIDE** *'I want to be like that big tree' ...*

*And he loses sight of the sunshine, in constantly comparing himself with the oak, instead of naturally reaching for the sun ...*

The growth of people like this is weak and spindly and doesn't stand the winds of time and reality ...

This is why Peter says –

***'BUT GROW IN GRACE'***

2 Peter 3:18 KJV **SLIDE**

***But grow in GRACE and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ ...***

**SLIDE JUST AS IT WAS BY GRACE THAT WE WERE SAVED,  
IT IS ALSO BY GRACE THAT WE WILL GROW**

All Christians know that we were PLANTED IN GRACE.

We see GRACE expressed so well in our Salvation –

It's not by one tiny little thing we could do that we were saved.  
No man can save himself ...  
We were dead in sin with no escape.

But ...

**GOD HAS DEMONSTRATED HIS INCREDIBLE GRACE & KINDNESS  
TOWARD US BY SENDING HIS BELOVED SON THAT WE MIGHT BE  
SAVED.  
FROM THIS ... WE KNOW GRACE.**

But **GRACE FOR SALVATION IS JUST THE STARTING LINE.**

God doesn't want us to just paddle our toes in His Grace ...  
He doesn't want us to just receive His Grace for Salvation and then  
try and live in our own strength.

Our own Efforts couldn't save us.  
Why would we think it will be any more successful in living the  
Christian Life that way?

**WE HAVE BEEN PLANTED IN THE GOOD SOIL OF GRACE.  
Or as Romans says it –**

Romans 5:2 BSB **SLIDE**

*Through [our Lord Jesus Christ] we have gained access by faith  
into this grace **in which we stand** ...*

To understand Grace better, let's look quickly at the word 'STAND' –

**WE STAND IN GRACE – Grace is our standing ...**

The commentator McClaren points to the fact that we come to  
salvation **BY GRACE**. But **Everything After That IS ALSO GRACE.**

It's Where we Stand ... and How we Stand ...

And how we **CONTINUE** to Stand ... all **BY GRACE**.

The Greek word for STAND - *hitemi* has the sense of –

You've stood ... now keep standing ...

Not just – you stood up ... now you can sit down.

But it's the sense of a prolonged Standing in Grace ...

This standing is brought out well in –

1 Corinthians 15:1 Berean Literal Bible

*Now I make known to you, brothers, the gospel ... which you also received, **in which you also stand.***

And also - Ephesians 6:14 – ‘**Stand firm**’

Not just, ‘You’ve stood ... now you can go ...’

No. ‘**Stand firm**’ in Grace.

‘Standing’ in Grace is a continued thing.

We’ve been planted in the good soil of Grace.

We are deeply rooted in His Grace.

As we **stand** in His Grace ... we will **GROW** in **His Grace** ...  
in the atmosphere of **Grace**.

Did you know ...

### **GRACE ABOUND TO US**

At Salvation, God Gave Us **ABUNDANCE OF GRACE TO GROW INTO.**

Romans 5:17 Berean Literal Bible

*... Those who receive **ABUNDANCE OF GRACE** and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.*

The International Standard Version says

*... Those who receive such **overflowing grace** ... **SLIDE***

**THIS ABUNDANCE OF GRACE IS ALREADY OURS TO OPEN OUR HEARTS AND RECEIVE.**

**THIS ABUNDANCE OF GRACE IS ALREADY IN US ...**

**IT’S ALREADY AROUND US ...**

Not just enough for paddling in

But ‘*Waters to Swim in*’. (Ezekiel 47:5)

We have the Grace for Life Bursting in us – **SLIDE**

To Grow into Who He’s Already Made Us ...

Effortlessly ... And without struggle ... Or mental toil.

**ALL BY GOD’S GRACE ...**

**SLIDE IT’S THE WORK OF GOD’S SOVEREIGN GARDENER TO GROW US SIMPLY AND NATURALLY IN GRACE**

**REMEMBER –**

*Mary thought Jesus was ‘The Gardener’ after His resurrection.*

In our metaphor today, HE IS NOW OUR SOVEREIGN GARDENER.  
We are planted in His Garden of Grace and **OUR GROWTH ... IS HIS SOVEREIGN WORK.**

Jesus didn't just leave us after we were saved ... and say –  
*'Oh you're right now ... Off you go ...'*

No. He is with us every step of the way.  
We are His Garden ... His Delight and Joy ...

He sees to our needs with infinite care and tenderness.  
He organises the rain to provide water and the sun to give nutrients.

He feeds us on the fertilizer of His Word.

Jesus is our Faithful Gardener ...  
**AND OUR GROWTH IS HIS WORK.**

*I so love the Gospel of Grace that proclaims this.*

*Some people, when they come to Jesus and find Him as their Saviour, have their whole lives radically changed and their hearts are deeply touched with the love of God.*

*But my path has been very different.*

*It wasn't until coming to New Creation Church, and starting to understand GOD'S GRACE that enables us TO LIVE FOR HIM, that I really understood the Great Love of God for me.*

*Knowing my Christian Life isn't reliant on what I do ... has filled my Life with such Joy and Praise.*

*Learning this – I HAVE TRULY BEGUN TO **GROW IN GRACE.***

## **OUR GROWTH IS GOD'S WORK**

Ephesians 2:10 Berean Literal Bible **SLIDE**

*For **we are [God's] workmanship**, having been created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*

We are God's handiwork.

**AND WHAT IS HE WORKING IN US?**

**GROWTH** through Good Works that He prepared from the beginning of Time for us to walk in.

**THESE GOOD WORKS ARE THE FRUITS OF OUR GROWTH**

*We bear Good Works Like Fruits on the Trees of our Lives ...*

And these Fruits of Good Works are not something we have to strive and struggle to do.

It is all God's effort ...

But for Us - His yoke is easy and His burden light (Matthew 11:30)

We can just rest back in what He has prepared for us to grow in and rejoice as we see Him work it in us ... and see His Fruits grow.

Because 'We are His workmanship'.

**Philippians 2:13 NLT**

*... God is working in you, giving you the desire and power to do what pleases Him.*

Even the 'wanting to do Good Works' comes from Him.

**HIS ORGANIC LIFE IS ALIVE & WORKING IN US FOR GROWTH**

We can Rest ... KNOWING God is doing the work in us.

And even more ... He tells us ... HE WILL NEVER STOP –

**Philippians 1:6 BSB**

*Being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*

Let's have a look at –

**GOD'S TIME TO GROW & PRODUCE FRUIT**

***WHEN DO WE PRODUCE OUR FRUIT? ... IN GOD'S SEASON***

**SOVEREIGN GRACE INVOLVES GOD'S TIMING FOR GROWTH.**

You might feel condemned or discouraged because you cannot do what someone else can do ...

We want to see the fruit in our life ... like they have in theirs ...

But it's all a matter of Time ...

Your particular fruit will come to you, too ... in God's Time ...

Just grow at your pace.

Keep growing ... don't falter ...

**Ecclesiastes 3:11 KJV**

*[God] has made everything beautiful IN HIS TIME ...*



In Time you will see ... the fruit of your good works will be beautiful too.

People New in the Faith are particularly susceptible to this.

**BUT IT'S GOOD FOR A CHILD TO BE A CHILD, BECAUSE THEY WILL GROW IN WHO THEY ARE.**

But if a child is always trying to be an adult,  
They really don't do it well ...

**YOU CAN'T BE SOMEONE ELSE**

**SLIDE** *Remember the little orange tree seeing the tall oak tree.*

*He couldn't ever be an oak.*

*But where would the world be without orange trees?*

Every tree and plant come in different sizes and shapes and colours and patterns of leaves ...

Different trees and plants thrive in different environments.  
And they are useful in different ways.

God has made them all beautiful for Him.

**Accept Who You Are**

**You don't Grow unless you accept You as You Are.**

**And then ... Grow in Who You Are ... Who He has made you.**

Let Who-You-Are come from **Your Own Convictions before God**,  
from the Faith He has put inside you.

God has made YOU beautiful and unique and for a purpose He has just for you.

You may say, **'BUT WHO AM I?'**

Well, look at your fruit ... your qualities ... That will give you a clue.

You don't grow oranges on a gum tree ...

You don't get lavender leaves on an oak tree ...

In time it will become plain to you ... as you Grow in Grace ...

You'll **Grow** into Who You Are ... who He has made you to be.

And you and your fruit will be glorious and beautiful to Him ...

Our verse also speaks of

## KNOWING WHAT WE HAVE IN HIM

### GROWING BY KNOWING

2 Peter 3:18 GNB **SLIDE**

*But grow in grace and in the **KNOWLEDGE** of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ ...*

We have been given so much in Christ, and God wants us to KNOW ABOUT IT.

As Paul prayed –

Ephesians 1:18 BSB

*I ask that the eyes of your heart maybe enlightened, **so THAT YOU MAY KNOW ... the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints.***

*For some years, I pondered this passage.*

*What did it mean ‘The Riches of His Glorious Inheritance in the saints’? I had no clue ...*

*But here at New Creation Church I am finding out. Hallelujah!*

GROWING IN THE ‘**KNOWLEDGE OF HIM**’ IS **SLIDE** –

TO KNOW ALL HE’S DONE FOR US

TO KNOW ALL HE’S GIVEN US

TO KNOW WHO HE HAS MADE US

TO KNOW WHERE HE’S POSITIONED US

TO RECOGNISE WHAT WE HAVE IN HIM

TO REST IN WHO WE ARE IN HIM

TO GIVE THANKS FOR ALL WE HAVE

### WHY DO WE NEED TO GROW IN KNOWLEDGE?

BECAUSE OUR THINKING NEEDS CHANGING

Before we were saved, our thinking took us in lots of wrong directions.

At salvation, we come into a great inheritance.

If we learn about who we have become and all we’ve been given ... our thinking will change and we will live in the ‘*glorious riches of our inheritance.*’

Like my pondering ‘*the riches of His Glorious Inheritance.*’

I NEEDED TO LEARN WHAT IT MEANT ...

I NEEDED TO **KNOW**

THE WAY TO 'GROW IN GRACE IS BY **KNOWING HIS GRACE**' – ALL GOD HAS DONE FOR US AND MADE US BY GRACE.

Otherwise we go off on some tangent ... and try and Grow by our own works.

Peter stresses knowledge because our thinking needs to be brought into line with the Truth planted deed inside us.

**Romans 12:2 Berean Study Bible**

*Do not be conformed to this world, but **BE TRANSFORMED BY THE RENEWING OF YOUR MIND. Then you will be able to test and approve what is the good, pleasing and perfect will of God.***

Unless our thinking is renewed – or converted – to **KNOW** what is ours by Grace – we Will Try to do the works In Our Own Strength as many people have been taught to do.

And that doesn't get us anywhere ...

But we can bring our Mind into conformity to the Truth our Heart **KNOWS**.

And we will see ourselves '**TRANSFORMED**' and **Growing in Grace**.

## **WHY KNOWLEDGE?**

### **WE NEED KNOWLEDGE SO WE CAN GROW**

To not have Knowledge is to Live In Ignorance – like some wild plant ... something stunted – that doesn't draw from the nutrients provided for it **in His Grace**.

**'ITS ALL THERE', PETER SAYS, 'PROVIDED FOR US – BUT YOU NEED TO KNOW IT!'**

### **THE KNOWLEDGE OF WHAT IS OURS**

At salvation, we come into an amazing inheritance ...

*As Rosa Maria said at the last Grace Ladies meeting – 'It's just incredible that when we are saved, we are given so much - everything we'll need - the moment we are saved ...'*

**IT'S ALL THERE ... IN GOD'S SEED THAT REMAINS IN US.**

To list some of these things –

- Redemption (Ephesians 1:6)
- Forgiveness (Ephesians 1:8)
- We are made completely Righteous (2 Corinthians 5:21)
- We are made as Holy as God (1 Corinthians 1:30)
- We're given a brand New Heart that longs to live for Him (Ezekiel 36:26)
- And a New Pure Perfect Spirit (Ezekiel 36:26)

DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'VE GOT ... AND WHO YOU BECAME  
WHEN YOU WERE SAVED?  
DO YOU RECOGNISE IT?

IT'S SOMETHING WE CAN GROW AND GROW MORE IN ...

**GOD WANTS US TO KNOW SO WE CAN GROW**

**TO GROW IN WHO WE ARE BY GRACE**

THESE ARE ALL THINGS THAT **GOD WANTS US TO KNOW** HE  
HAS **ALREADY** GIVEN US SO WE CAN GROW INTO WHO WE ARE,  
INTO WHO HE HAS ALREADY MADE US.

**'GOD WANTS US TO KNOW SO WE CAN GROW'**

ALL THESE THINGS ARE WHO YOU ARE ALREADY

*But not many Christians KNOW these Glorious Truths Of Living  
in Grace. And when they find their flesh doing what their heart  
hates - when the fleshly habits come back and they find themselves  
doing the same old things again, they feel they're a failure and  
either struggle harder or just give up ...*

BUT YOU DON'T HAVE TO STRUGGLE AND STRIVE AGAINST  
YOUR FLESHLY FAILINGS ANY MORE.

YOU ONLY NEED TO KNOW **WHO GOD HAS MADE YOU.**

YOU ARE NOT THAT OLD PERSON ANY MORE.

Don't let the enemy trick you into believing that you are – even if  
your flesh fails.

**KNOW WHO GOD HAS MADE YOU AND YOU WILL BECOME WHO  
YOU ARE OVER TIME ... BY HIS GRACE & SOVEREIGN CARE.**

**KNOW** That you are already Righteous

- Already Holy
- Loving Him with a pure heart

- And delighting to serve Him.

Keep Training your Brain ...

Reckon yourself dead to that Old Man (Romans 6:11)

And you'll see Growth by Grace.

**WE CAN  
GROW IN EXPERIENCING MORE OF GOD'S GRACE  
IN OUR LIVES**

As we rest in what we have and who we are in Him, we will see God working in us to bring blessing to others.

There's such joy in being used by God in His Grace ... in seeing our lives bear fruit ...

***THE GUAVA TREE***

*This past summer I have had the opportunity to look after the fruit trees down the bottom of Chris's place.*

*There are 3 trees there - a persimmon, a guava and a lemon tree.*

*And I have thoroughly enjoyed tending these trees and seeing the fruit form and ripen. It's been very satisfying ...*

*And, of course, the best part is picking them and eating them.*

**THIS IS JUST LIKE JESUS TENDING US ...**

**HE DELIGHTS IN EVERY STAGE OF OUR GROWTH**

**SLIDE** He loves seeing the flowers and fruit develop in our lives and He eagerly anticipates our Fruit.

**James 5:7 ESV**

*... See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains.*

Our Fruit is precious to Him ...

It will come in His Time.

Do you see ... Jesus is patient and waits?

Let us also be patient ... and rest in simply Growing in Grace.

Ephesians 2:10 **SLIDE**

*For **we are His workmanship**, having been created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*

**ALL BY HIS GRACE**

2 Peter 3:18 KJV **SLIDE**

*But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever. Amen.*

## **PETER'S PASSION FOR US**

*In closing, let me share with you this thought on our verse, from the Commentator, McCLAREN –*

**SLIDE** These are the last words of an old man, written down as his legacy to us – and this is the last verse of this last epistle.

He is writing to his beloved children.

His heart is full.

He knows his end is near.

And he yearns for their wellbeing after he has departed.

He has grown from being the young brash and self-confident disciple we see in the Gospels, to being now a seasoned servant of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

And what he has proved for himself, he now commands and commends to us.

### **AND WHAT DOES HE SAY?**

Like the blast of a trumpet on the battlefield when the battle is done, he spends his last energy in sounding an advance –

Eternal Hope animates his dying injunction: **SLIDE**

*'Grow! grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.'*