

SLIDE 2**Growing In Grace****SLIDE 3****2 Peter 3:17-18**

You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. ¹⁸ But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

Introduction:

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A. What exactly did Peter mean when he said, "Grow in grace?"

1. This could mean grow in God's favor –
 - a. Paul seems to indicate this in 2 Tim.2:1. You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus,

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2. Or, it could mean in His worded grace –
 - a. Paul, in Titus 2:11,12 tells us ¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, ¹² training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age,

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B. The righteous are compared to a tree:

1. Ps.1:1-3. Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; ² but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. ³ He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.

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C. In this lesson we take a look at the Christian as he grows in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

SLIDE 8**I. The Christian must Grow DOWNWARD.**

A. As you can see here, this tree has roots as deep in the ground as it is tall above the ground. This is a well rooted tree.

1. As this tree is well rooted, so we are admonished to be rooted and grounded.

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2. We are to be Rooted and grounded in **Love** –

a. Paul tells us this in **Eph.3:17**. so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love,

3. Not only are we to be grounded in love, we are to be Rooted and settled in **Faith** –

a. Again, the apostle Paul in **Col.2:6-7**. Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, ⁷ rooted and built up in him and established in the faith,

SLIDE 10**B. Why are we to be so rooted and grounded in our faith?**

1. There are several reasons

a. So as not to be tossed to and fro – **Eph.4:14,15**. ¹⁴ so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. ¹⁵ Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,

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b. This is to make us unmovable – **1 Cor.15:58**. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

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c. Those not rooted will ultimately be lost –

1) Jesus spoke of these in His parable of the sower in **Matt.13:20,21**. ²⁰ As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, ²¹ yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away.

SLIDE 13**C. The next question is How can we grow downward? How can we become rooted in our faith?**

1. Peter tells us how in **1 Pet.3:15-16**. but in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; ¹⁶ yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience

2. We are to have depth and it can only come through study of God's word – **2 Tim.2:15**. Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.

SLIDE 14**II. The Christian must Grow UPWARD.**

A. Here, we see a tree that has grown upward, towering above all the other trees around.

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1. The Christian must grow **So as to have as much height as he does depth.**
2. The christian must never be ashamed to stand up for Christ.
 - a. Jesus tells us in **Lk.9:26**. **For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.**
3. We must build great confidence in our faith and our hope must be as high as our faith is deep.
 - a. **Heb.11:1**– **“Now faith is assurance of [things] hoped for, a conviction of things not seen.”**
 - b. Our faith and hope must be active and seen.

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B. To grow upward we must Focus our mind on the things above –

1. Paul says in **Col.3:2-3**. **Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ³ For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.**

SLIDE 17**III. The Christian must Grow INWARD.**

A. This is the backbone of the Christian, his conviction.

1. Here we have a picture of a hollow tree.
 - a. An Interesting thing about hollow trees
 - 1) They're either dead, like this one

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- 2) Or they're dying like this one

SLIDE 19**B. To grow in our Christianity, we must development the inward man.**

1. In other words, it must be occupied –
2. I want you to listen to something Jesus told the scribes and Pharisees in **Matt.12:43-45**. ⁴³ "When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, but finds none. ⁴⁴ Then it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when it comes, it finds the house empty, swept, and put in order. ⁴⁵ Then it goes and brings with it seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there, and the last state of that person is worse than the first.
 - a. As we rid ourselves of the evil spirit, or sin in our lives, we must replace it with the righteous spirit the Lord wants us to have.
 - b. Our spiritual lives must be strengthened – It must be renewed every day.
 - c. Because if it is not and if it becomes empty, just as Jesus said here, the last state is worse than the first.

SLIDE 20**C. To grow inwardly requires a good and honest heart**

- 1. As Jesus explained in the parable of the sower -** As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience. **Lk.8:15**.

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- a. Growing inwardly takes obedience from the heart – **Rom.6:17**. But God be thanked that *though* you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.
- b. Growing inwardly requires Sanctification in the heart – We've already read that from **1 Pet.3:15**.
- c. Growing inwardly demands Action from the heart –
 - 1) Peter describes it as *the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.* **1 Peter 3:4**.
 - 2) The Hebrew writer tells us we need a true heart in **Heb.10:22**. *let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.*

SLIDE 22**D. Inward growth creates within us the fruits of the spirit:**

1. Paul's list: **Gal.5:22,23** – love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control.
2. Peter's list: **2 Pet.1:5-9**– “virtue; knowledge self-control; patience; brotherly kindness; love.
3. All of these things help the Christian to grow inward.

SLIDE 23**IV. The Christian must Grow OUTWARD.**

A. Some of you may recognize this tree.

When you leave the building today, just look straight ahead and you will see it.

I tell everyone back in Alabama that I have the biggest tree in Georgia in my back yard.

I love to sit under it and listen to the wind whistle through the leaves in the summertime.

You can sit out under it for 10 minutes after the rain starts and not get wet.

B. A tree cannot grow unless it branches out.

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1. As Christians, We must branch out like the tree.

- a. **Always abounding in the work**, as we have already read in – **1 Cor.15:58**.
- b. Preach the Gospel to all – **2 Tim.2:2**. and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.
- c. Do good unto all – **Gal.6:10**. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.
- d. Be an example to all – **Matt.5:16**. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

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Conclusion:

- A. Can you say you are growing in all these directions?
- B. Can you say you are like the tree planted by the rivers of waters?
 - 1. Who brings forth his fruit in due season?
 - 2. Whose leaf does not wither?
 - 3. And who prospers in what you do?
- C. For this to be true, you must grow downward, upward, inward and outward.
 - 1. This must be done steadily all at the same time.

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- D. Are you doing these things as a christian?
- E. If not, repent of your shortcomings and start today?
- F. If you are not a Christian, plant yourself firmly in the Lord by obeying the gospel today