

May 14

Speaking the truth in love,...grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ. Ephesians 4:15

WHAT is it to grow in grace? It is to grow in favor with the Lord through an intimate personal acquaintance and fellow-

ship of spirit with Him...To grow thus in grace and not grow in knowledge is impossible; for the very object of such communion is to build us up in a more perfect knowledge and acquaintance with the Lord--to bring us into closer fellowship with the divine plan, and to give us the privilege of

being "workers together with Him" in executing that plan. If, therefore, we love and obey the Lord and desire to grow in His favor, His written Word is our daily meditation and study; and thus we grow in knowledge. Z. '03-200R3215:3

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HOW TO PROCLAIM THE TRUTH

"Speaking the Truth in love,...grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ."--Ephesians 4:15

THE Truth is always to be spoken humbly, but fearlessly. The Christian is not at liberty to speak anything but the Truth. If he is a professed minister of the Gospel when the Truth reaches him, he is not to continue to preach error just because the congregation employing him do not want the Truth. A worldling in the pulpit would have no qualms of conscience. He would reason, "I am giving these people the very things they want. They are paying my salary, and this is purely a business proposition." The worldling calling himself a minister of Christ would take this position because he had never received the Spirit, the disposition, of the Truth--the Holy Spirit of begetting.

But one who receives the Truth in the love of it, who imbibes its spirit, would say, "I now see that many of the things I have been preaching for years are injurious, dishonoring to God, misrepresenting His character, and to some extent, at least, turning people away from the Truth. This is the very opposite of what I wish to do. I cannot longer dispense error. I am not an ambassador of a denomination or a congregation, I am an ambassador for God. I am not the servant of this congregation, but the servant of the Lord. If I should still preach error when I have come to see the Truth, I would be guilty before God."

THE HONOR OF OUR AMBASSADORSHIP

Such a faithful servant of God would by his uncompromising attitude lose his standing and his honor amongst men. But all this is not to be considered; for he would gain instead the favor and blessing of the Lord. The great Apostle declared that he counted all things but loss and dross, that he might win Christ and "be found *in Him*"--that he might gain a place in the everlasting Kingdom of Messiah. Those who succeed in so doing will win the "pearl of great price." So, then, the speaking of the Truth is absolutely essential to the life of the Christian. The Truth of God's Word is to be enshrined above all else in the heart of the child of God, and he should esteem it a blessed privilege to speak it.

Our power of speech, of communicating our thoughts to others, is the greatest power we possess--the most far-reaching. It is a potent factor for either good or evil, for either Truth or error. The opportunity to speak the Truth, to confess Christ before men, either publicly or privately, is a great privilege. In order to be a servant pleasing to the Lord, one who can be effectively used of Him, one must speak the Truth *in love*. When one has just entered the family of God, less might be reasonably expected of him than after he had been for some time in the family. We, as God's dear children are to grow in the likeness of our dear Elder Brother, our Pattern, our Head. We are to "grow up into Him in all things." We are to recognize that He is the Head of the Church; and that if we are to be members of His Body in glory, we must be developed. We are to bear the fruitage of the Holy Spirit, that we may be qualified to share in the future that glorious Kingdom which is to bless the world.

"EXPRESSION DEEPENS IMPRESSION"

We are to exercise our function of ambassadorship-- we are to show forth the praises of Him who hath called us out of the darkness into His marvelous light. And in telling the Message of His Grace we shall grow spiritually. "He that watereth shall himself also be watered." As we proclaim the Truth from an honest, earnest, loving heart we shall become more and more filled with it ourselves. "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth and it tendeth to poverty"--to leanness of soul. As we give out to others, our own store of blessing is increased. We are to

develop day by day this quality of *love*. Why is this? Because it will make us like God, and that is the one thing to be desired--the one thing necessary.

Our God has other glorious attributes besides Love, but this attribute is the especially predominating, overruling quality of His character. God's Justice co-operates with His Love. And His Wisdom would not attempt to carry out any plans that His Love would not approve. So as we grow, this quality of Love should be more and more manifest. We are to see that our words are loving, kind, gentle. We are to curb any tendency to self-glorification or show in telling of God's great Plan to others. Let us keep self out of sight, that the beauty of the Truth may be seen. Our manner of presenting the Message to others has much to do with its effectiveness. Speaking the Truth in love, we shall not only be accomplishing much more for others, but the Message will also be more impressed upon our own mind.

Whoever appreciates these things of God and then speaks forth in love and sincerity will receive a blessing in his own heart and mind, and the Truth will become clearer and sweeter. In helping others he will be helping himself. Thus the various features of the Plan of God become more firmly engraved upon his mind.

NATURAL QUALITIES THAT NEED RESTRAINT

In the cases of the stronger characters which come into Christ, we see a special need for watchfulness in the proclamation of the Truth. Those naturally lacking in combativeness would not be inclined to bring strong pressure to bear upon others in connection with their presentation of Truth. If their Message did not seem to be favorably received, they would be likely to feel, They do not like to hear what I have to say; so I will not talk any more on the subject. They might be too easily discouraged. But those who have more force, or combativeness, are liable to manifest this disposition in the way they present the Truth. They are inclined to be *too* forceful--to present the matter as an *obligation*.

But we are to remember that this is not a compulsory matter now. It is now an invitation, and is designed only for the meek, the teachable. By and by force will be needed, and used. Those who now have the hearing ear need only the word of instruction and counsel. Those who require force are not the ones the Lord is now seeking. If any of the Lord's ambassadors endeavor to crowd the Message upon others, it will arouse antagonism and lose its power. Thus our King would not be so well served, and hence would not be so well pleased.

Others of the Lord's people may have great approbateness. They may have pride and may wish to show off their ability in language, or their skill in handling the Scriptures. They might give out the Message with the idea of arousing in others the thought, "See how much he knows--he is a master at handling the Bible!" Approbateness seems to present quite a subtle temptation to many. This tendency of the flesh must be very carefully watched and subdued, or it will ruin the usefulness of the Christian and greatly hinder his own growth. Some naturally like to be in the lime-light, while others are just as anxious to keep out of it. The one might have to force himself in order to speak the Truth in public as an ambassador, while the other would need to curb himself somewhat. The only way for the latter to do is to learn to speak the Truth in love and in humility -- to speak it out of love to God and love to the brethren. The Plan of the Ages is God's Plan. We have nothing whereof to boast. Therefore we should present that Plan in meekness, gentleness, brotherly-kindness and love.

R1919 "The wise are being confounded today by the power of the truth in the hands of the humblest of God's consecrated children! Systems of error which are the growth of centuries are put to confusion and are tottering before it, and the sages of all the sects are troubled by it..."

Why has God chosen these weak, infe-

rior instruments for his great work? why does he not employ the eloquent tongues, the pens of ready writers, and the prestige of great names? Paul tells us why. It is in order "that *no flesh should glory in his presence*."... God is pleased to allow his power to operate through any human instrument that is meet for his use; *i.e.*, that can be used

without injury to itself. If God were to work his wonders through those whose hearts are inclined to pride, that pride would grow, and would arrogate to self the glory that belongs to God, instead of appreciating the honor of being a servant of God, an instrument in his mighty hand..."

Above almost every thing else, there-

fore, beloved, let us guard well our humility. It is only when we are little in our own eyes that God can use us with safety to ourselves... Whatever may be the triumphs of the truth through us, let us always remember that we are among "the things *that are not*." ...

Let our present glory be in that we un-

derstand and know the Lord, and in that he condescends to make use of these poor earthen vessels in his service, that it may be manifest to all men that the excellency of the power is of God, and not of men. -- 2Cor. 4:7."

(1 Pet 3:15 KJV) "But sanctify the Lord God

in your hearts; and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear ["reverence" Rotherham]."

CR437:2 "Be ye holy that bear the vessels of the Lord's house."

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HOW WE MAY GROW UP INTO CHRIST

"Speaking the Truth in love,...grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ."--Ephesians 4:15

IN PROPORTION as any who seek to know God are led to see His true character, they have confidence in Him. After such have come to the point of full consecration to the Lord, they receive the begetting of the Holy Spirit, and become of the Church class, the sanctified in Christ Jesus, the set apart ones --set apart by the Holy Spirit. Of these the Apostle Paul says, "God hath not given us the spirit of fear." The New Creature must repel every attack of servile fear--which belongs to the flesh, the fallen condition. The new mind must triumph over this natural tendency, must cultivate trust in the Lord.

No man could do more than take away our earthly life. No man can take away our future life. "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body." So the child of God is to be very courageous, knowing that no one can do him harm, knowing that God will not permit anything to come to him that will not be for his good. The enlightened child of God would have no fear, or dread, of eternal torment. He would still have proper fear such as a husband would have toward a wife, or a wife toward a husband--a fear of displeasing or disappointing, and thus losing the esteem and confidence of the companion.

In respect to all the brethren we should have such fear. We should have a filial fear toward God, but not with the thought that He would harm us or torment us or do us violence of any kind, but fear lest we should lose our fellowship with Him. So, then, whatever fear we have of a slavish kind is not from God. Such fear brings a snare. But love, inspired by a true knowledge of God, and begotten of His Spirit, delivers us also from the fear of man, in proportion as this love abounds in us.

God has given us the spirit of love, the spirit of a sound mind, the spirit of power. The Christian knows that "all things work together for good to them that love God." This is to him a source of power, of strength. Circumstances and conditions which would quite overwhelm others, he may expect to have. This spirit is not only a spirit of power, but a spirit of love--a spirit of kindness and gentleness. It is a spirit that loves to do good, to do right, to be helpful. And so the Christian with this spirit of love and of a sound mind becomes more and more Godlike. This enables him to have more and more compassion for those who are out of the way. And as God sent His Son, and as the Son came and provided the blessing of life for all at such a great cost to Himself, so all who have His spirit will strive to bless others.

EVIDENCES OF A SOUND MIND

The fall of Adam has worked ruin to mankind, so that from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot there are none sound. (Isaiah 1:5,6.) None are sound of mind or body. All are out of the way. "There is none righteous; no, not one." (Romans 3:10.) But in proportion as we receive the Spirit of the Lord, and in proportion as that Spirit of the Lord works in us and develops us and influences all the conduct of life, in that same proportion we receive the spirit of a sound mind.

This soundness of mind will teach us how better to use our bodies. A person of unsound mind may either eat too much or eat what does not agree with him. In proportion as we have a sound mind, it influences what we eat, what we drink, and everything we do; it helps to regulate and control everything in life for us. It gives us broad views of all the affairs of life. It gives us more generous views of mankind. We recognize that mankind are under the curse, and we have a feeling of compassion for them. We have much advantage every way, because God has opened the eyes of our understanding.

This spirit of a sound mind makes us more helpful. We know better how to deal with each other as brethren. We know better how to deal with our children, with our neighbors, with the butcher, with the ice man and with every one else. The Truth does not come to many of those who are naturally soundest of mind, and it takes time for the Truth to bring in a measure of soundness. But we notice that

when one receives the Truth in the love of it, it has a healing effect on his mind. He will begin to think more correctly and to act more wisely.

Then he will desire to proclaim the Truth. The Truth is to be spoken humbly, but fearlessly. The Christian is not at liberty to speak contrary to the Truth. If he is a professed minister of the Gospel, when the Truth reaches him, he is not at liberty to continue to preach error just because the congregation appointing him might not desire the Truth. A worldling in that pulpit would have no qualms of conscience. He would say, "I am giving these people the very things they want. They are paying my salary." That would be his attitude because he had not received the spirit of the Truth.

One who had received the spirit of the Truth would say, "I now see that some of the things I have been preaching for years are injurious, dishonoring to God, misrepresenting His character, and more or less turning people away from the Truth. I have been teaching error, the very opposite of what I wish to do; I cannot longer dispense these errors. I am not the ambassador of this denomination; I am the ambassador of God. I am not the servant of this denomination; I am the servant of God, of the Truth. If I should preach error, that which would be contrary to the Truth, I would be guilty before God. I must stop immediately."

Such a person would lose his standing--honor amongst men, favor, influence, etc. But all this is not to be considered. St. Paul says that these things are all but as loss and dross, are but vile refuse, if we can only win a place in the Kingdom. Then we shall have won the "pearl of great price." So, then, the speaking of the Truth is essential to the Christian. In his own heart, of course, he must have it enshrined. When he has received the Truth into his *heart*, he will esteem it a blessed privilege to speak it.

Our tongue is the most powerful member of our body. Its influence is the greatest of all--the most far-reaching. It may be an influence for good or for injury. The Apostle says that with the same tongue we may praise God and injure men. To speak the Truth, to confess Christ before men, either publicly or privately, is a great privilege. But in order to be a servant pleasing to the Lord, we must speak the Truth in *love* and without fear.

In this connection the Apostle calls attention to the fact that we are not to expect to be mature in these respects at the beginning of our Christian way. When we first enter the family of God, less might reasonably be expected of us than after we had been in the family for some time. We as dear children of God are to grow in the likeness of our dear Elder Brother, our Pattern, our Head. We are to "grow up into Him in all things." We are to recognize that He is the Head of the Church. And if we are to be members of that Body in glory, we must be developed. We are to mature in the fruits of the Holy Spirit, that we may be qualified and prepared to share in future that glorious Kingdom which is to bless the world.

"EXPRESSION DEEPENS IMPRESSION"

We are to exercise our function of ambassadorship-- we are to "show forth the praises of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvelous light." And in telling this Message courageously and lovingly we should grow in grace and in knowledge. We are to proclaim the Truth, and at the same time to grow and develop in character. Why attain a growth of character? Because it will make us more like God. "God is love." He has other qualities; but this quality of love is the especially predominating, the overruling quality of His character. God's Justice operates in conjunction with His Love, and His Wisdom would not attempt to carry out any plans that Love would not approve.

And so as we grow, the quality of love should be more and more manifest. The Truth is to be spoken in *love*. This is one of the things we should attain earliest. We are to curb, to bridle, our tongues. We are to see that our words are loving, kind, gentle. Speaking the Truth in love, we shall not only be accomplishing more for others, but the lesson will also thus be more impressed upon our own minds. It has been well said that "expression deepens

impression." Whoever appreciates and speaks forth these things of God in love will receive a blessing in his own heart and mind. In helping others he will be helping himself. "He that watereth shall be watered also himself."

NATURAL QUALITIES THAT NEED RESTRAINT

We see a difficulty in this respect in some of the stronger characters that come into Christ. There are characters that have less combativeness naturally, who would not be inclined to bring force to bear upon others in connection with their ambassadorship. If their Message did not seem to be favorably received, they would be likely to feel, "They do not like this, so I will not talk on this subject." But those who have *more combativeness* are liable to manifest the force of their disposition in the way they present the Truth. They might be too forceful; they might place the matter before others as an obligation.

But we are to remember that consecration is not now a *compulsory* matter. It is an *invitation*. By and by force will be needed. The ones who are now sought are merely those who have the ear to hear; and such need only to have the word of counsel. If any use too great force in presenting the Message, the Great King would not be so well served, and hence would not be so well pleased.

Others may have great *approbateness*. They might have pride and wish to show off in the way of language, or in their skill in handling the Sword of the Spirit. They might give out the Message with the idea of rousing in others the thought, "See how much he knows; he is a wonderful digger in the Bible." This seems to be a temptation to many. They seem to like to be in the lime-light, just as others like to *keep out* of the lime-light. The one might have to *force* himself in order to go and speak the Truth in public as an ambassador; while the other would have to *curb* himself somewhat in this respect. The only way for the latter to do is to learn to speak the Truth in humility, in love--the love of the Truth, the love of the brethren. It is *God's* Plan, we have nothing whereof to boast. We are always to present His Plan in meekness, gentleness, brotherly-kindness, love.

The Apostle Paul urges that we "consider one another, to provoke unto love and to good works." The word *provoke* here means to *stimulate*, to call forth. Love is not easily called forth to anger. It is long-suffering. We might say, strictly speaking, that it is not the quality of *love* that would be moved to anger. Yet righteous anger is not incompatible with love. God is the highest representation we have of love--"God is Love." Yet the Scriptures assure us that God is angry with the wicked every day. His anger is righteous indignation against sin.

Looking to God as the Great Example, we see that His love was manifested toward His creatures in the beginning. It was love for humanity that provided the Garden of Eden with all its blessings and its perfect life, just as for the angels His love provided for all their blessings. But when sin came in, Love stepped back; in other words, Justice was the special attribute of God then manifested. Yet it was for the good of mankind that there should be this punishment for sin. Even here God's Love persisted, though man had by sin become an opponent of God--an enemy of God; and Love was provoked to anger.

The Lord said through the Prophet, "Why have they provoked Me to anger?" (Jeremiah 8:19.) Many Scriptures speak of God's anger. The anger of God has been against *sin*. It has been resting upon the world for six thousand years. But the Love of God has not been violated by this; therefore Love can be provoked to anger.

"Love is not *easily* provoked." It required the act of intentional disobedience on the part of *Father Adam* to provoke God to anger. It was not because *Mother Eve* was deceived that the sentence came upon the world. The anger of God came upon the world, and the sentence of death was pronounced, because of *Father Adam's* sin, which was committed with full knowledge. During these six thousand years of sin God's Love has been in abeyance, so to speak, provoked to the point of withholding its manifestation.

But all the while God's character has not changed. He did not cause the diabolical conditions which prevailed in the Dark Ages. Love would never sanction sin. "The wages of sin is death." And everything that goes with death is a part of that penalty, that sentence. But God has permitted these conditions for man's ultimate

good. This love of God, held in abeyance, has bided its time to manifest itself to our race.

In due time God sent forth His Son to be man's Redeemer. He came and gave His life a willing sacrifice for human sin. In due time the call went forth to gather the Church. And this Church is being gathered--during this Gospel Age. In due time the Church will be exalted in Kingdom glory. In due time that Kingdom will lift up from sin and degradation all those of mankind who are willing to accept life on God's terms.

CULTIVATION OF LOVE ESPECIALLY NEEDFUL

How earnestly we need to watch and pray, that we may indeed be fitted for our great future work! There is a danger that love will not be sufficiently strong in us; for by reason of the fall sin and selfishness have come to be preponderating influences. These principles, having the ascendancy, and operating for six thousand years, have made man very lacking in love, sympathy, brotherly-kindness and long-suffering. Now there is a greater natural tendency toward anger, malice, strife, hatred, than toward love. Consequently, when God accepts us into His family He tells us that one of the first requirements is love. Love must grow in our hearts and minds; it must permeate all our thoughts, words and actions.

The Apostle in speaking of love as respects the Church assures us that if we would be pleasing to the Lord we must develop this grace richly. Those who possess this quality in goodly measure will not be easily provoked to anger. Those who possess little love will be easily angered. The love which the Lord appreciates is long-suffering. This does not mean that there would not be proper occasions for anger in God's people. There should be a feeling of righteous indignation when we see injustice. Why? Because injustice is wrong. God is angry with injustice; and so God's people should have no sympathy with injustice in any form.

If the Lord's people do not *cultivate* the quality of *justice*, they will get into that attitude where they will not *appreciate* justice *at all*. While knowing what is right and what is wrong, and while appreciating justice, we are to cultivate the quality of love. None can say that his own estimate of justice is altogether right and the other man's is entirely wrong. None can say, "I do not need to cultivate this quality, but my brother needs it." But each should think, "Here is a brother--perhaps he labors under greater disadvantages than I have to strive against. He is a brother of mine according to the spirit. He seems to me to be doing wrong, but I sympathize with him because he probably does not see that it is wrong. On the other hand, it is possible that I may be wrong myself."

LET US HAVE SYMPATHY FOR ALL MEN

God has no sympathy with sin. But He has so much sympathy for the sinner that He has provided His Son to uplift the sinners, and has set apart a thousand years for the work of uplift. We note injustice. We ought to note it. But it is not for us to flay, to inflict the punishments. It is for us to leave the punishments to the Almighty. We are, therefore, to "judge nothing before the time." We see wrongs committed. We say, "I know that to be a crime; but it is not for me to settle with the criminal. God knows to what extent he is responsible; I do not. It is my duty to look at him from the standpoint of sympathy. It is my duty to pray for him and to assist him all in my power--out of his wrong views into right views. But even in this I am to be wise as a serpent, harmless as a dove. I may know that such *conduct* is wrong, but I cannot know as to the individual--how wrong he may be."

So love looks out and sees that the whole world is in much difficulty through the fall. And love says, "Be gentle toward all--be meek. I am ever to remember that we are in a world of sin, pain, sickness, death." From this viewpoint love will not be easily provoked, but will think kindly and sympathetically of others. So, dear brethren, let us grow up into our glorious Head in all things, until, made perfect and complete, we are "presented faultless before the presence of His glory, with exceeding joy."--*Jude 24*.

"The time is short! Then be thy heart a brother's

To every heart that needs thy help in aught.

How much they need the sympathy of others!

The time, the time is short!"

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"GROW IN GRACE"

"Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. To him be glory

both now and forever. Amen."--2 Pet. 3:17,18

THERE is a touching tenderness in the epistles of the aged Apostle Peter to the household of faith, showing that, while he real-

ized that the time of his departure was drawing nigh (2 Pet. 1:14; John 21:18,19), his solicitude for the growth and development of the

Church was increasing. Accordingly, he writes two general epistles, not so much to advance new truth, as to call to remembrance truths already learned and fully received (2 Pet. 1:12-15), and to counsel all to faithfulness and to growth in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

In the preceding verses he has been calling to mind some of these truths, and he recognizes the fact that those addressed are already established in them; but, in view of his knowledge that false teachers would arise to pervert the truth, he counsels special watchfulness against being led away from their present steadfastness by the error of the wicked. That this counsel of the Apostle has a special fitness to the Church in the last days, our days, and was evidently so designed by the Spirit of God, is clear from verse 3--"There shall come in the last days scoffers," etc.

Let us observe the manner in which the Apostle would have us guard against being led away by the error of the wicked. Is it by a careful investigation of all the claims which every new false prophet that arises may intrude upon our attention, thus giving heed to every seducing spirit (1 Tim. 4:1)? No: that would be quite contrary to the teaching of "our beloved brother Paul," to whom Peter so affectionately refers, and whom he so fully endorses; for Paul had given no uncertain counsel on this subject; saying, "Shun profane and vain babblings; for they will increase unto more ungodliness, and their word will eat as doth a canker;" and "I entreat you, brethren, to mark those who are making factions and laying snares contrary to the teaching which you have learned, and turn away from them; for they that are such are not in subjection to our anointed Lord, but to their own appetite [for honor and praise among men, as great teachers--1 Tim. 1:6,7]; and by kind and complimentary words they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting. ...I wish you to be wise with respect to that which is good, and harmless with respect to that which is evil."--2 Tim. 2:16,17; Rom. 16:17-19.

Peter felt the force of Paul's wise and earnest counsel, and with emphasis re-echoed the same sentiments. To give heed to such seducing doctrines, contrary to the doctrine which we have already received from the Lord and the apostles, argues a lack of faith in those doctrines. Such a one is not *established* in the faith. And indeed there are those--and such is ⁽¹⁾the general sentiment among the teachers of false doctrine-- who think that it is not either necessary or advisable to be established in the faith. To be established is to be a bigot, is the idea they advance. And so it is, if one is so unfair in mind as to accept and tenaciously hold that which he has never proved either by sound logic or Bible authority. But he is not an unreasoning bigot who, in simple faith, on the authority of God, accepts the Word of God. And such, and only such, as do so are established in the truth. The difference between the strong and steadfast Christian and a bigot is that the one is established in the truth, while the other is established in error. The former knows the truth, and the truth has made him free from all doubts and misgivings, and from all desire to delve into the muddy pool of human speculations. To all such Paul says, "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him, rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught [by us, the apostles], abounding therein with thanksgiving."--But, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."--Col. 2:6-8.

With these sentiments of "our beloved brother Paul," Peter's counsel is in fullest harmony, his advice being, not to waste valuable time in investigating "the errors of the wicked;" but, on the contrary, to endeavor the more earnestly to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ," who is the way, the truth and the life. The more thorough our knowledge of the Lord and the more intimate our acquaintance with him, the more secure we are in our own steadfastness.

But ⁽²⁾what is it to grow in grace? It is to grow in favor with the Lord through an intimate personal acquaintance and fellowship of spirit with him. It implies, first, a knowledge and recognition on our part of our redemption through his precious blood and a personal faith in and dependence upon all the promises of the Father made to us through him, and then an intimate communion with him in our daily life of prayer, and of observation of his will and obedience to it. If such be our constant attitude of mind and heart, there must be a constant ripening of the fruits of the spirit, rendering us more and more pleasing and acceptable to our Lord. A sense of the divine acceptance and favor is given to us from day to day in increasing

measure, in fulfilment of that blessed promise of our Lord, "If a man love me he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."-- John 14:23.

This, as nearly as words can express it, is what it is to grow in grace; but the full and blessed understanding of it is best appreciated by those who from day to day walk with God in faith and obedience and love.

⁽³⁾To grow thus in grace and not grow in knowledge is impossible; for the very object of such communion is to build us up in a more perfect knowledge and acquaintance with the Lord--to bring us into closer fellowship with the divine plan, and to give us the privilege of being "workers together with him" in executing that plan. If, therefore, we love and obey the Lord and desire to grow in his favor, his written Word is our daily meditation and study; and thus we grow in knowledge: not, however, by finding out each year that what we learned last year was false, but by adding to what we learned last year, by putting on more and more of the armor of God until we realize its glorious completeness in the full discernment of the divine plan of the ages. We are then ready to do valiant service for the cause of truth in withstanding the encroachment of error (Eph. 6:10-13), being established, strengthened and settled in the faith (1 Pet. 5:10.) But even to those thus established in the faith there is abundant opportunity to grow in knowledge; for while they will see nothing new or different in outline or design, they will be continually charmed and cheered with newly discovered lines of harmony and beauty in the divine drawings of the wonderful plan of the ages. As pupils we may ever study the master workmanship of the Divine Architect,

⁽⁴⁾And still new beauties shall we see,
And still increasing light."

Our beloved brother Peter, zealous for our growth in knowledge, endeavors to inspire us thereto, by calling our attention to the wonderful events and the close proximity of the day of the Lord; saying,--

"The day of the Lord will come as a thief [unobserved by the world], in the which the heavens [present ecclesiastical powers] shall pass away with a great noise [tumult and confusion], and the elements [the various parties and sects composing it, split and torn by discordant views] shall melt with fervent heat [the heat of public discussion and investigation]: the earth also [society as at present organized under civil and ecclesiastical authority] and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (destroyed, in the strife and friction caused by increasing knowledge combined with selfishness. This will not be a literal fire, but, as described by the prophets, the fire of divine jealousy--Zeph. 1:18; 3:8). (2 Pet. 3:10.) Already the noise and tumult, which shall thus eventuate in world-wide anarchy, are distinctly heard in every nation: for the day of the Lord has indeed begun, and the heat of human passion is growing more and more intense daily, and the great time of trouble is very near.

"Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved [seeing that present arrangements and institutions shall all go down], what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens [the present ruling powers] shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?" Let us indeed lay to heart this solemn question, for we stand in the very presence of the Judge of all the earth. These words, while addressed to God's people eighteen centuries ago, and serving a purpose for good all along down this Gospel age, are specially meant by the spirit for us, who are living in this very Day of God.

"Nevertheless, we [we who have come into covenant relationship with the Lord--we, unlike the rest of the world, know of the divine plan and], according to his promise, look for new heavens [the Kingdom of God--to be established in power and great glory] and a new earth [a new organization of society under the rulership of Christ and his glorified bride, the Church] wherein dwelleth righteousness." Blessed assurance! how favored are we above the people of the world who have not this knowledge!

"Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless." (2 Pet. 3:11-14.) And *Jude* (24) reminds us that the Lord, in whose grace and knowledge Peter desires us to grow, "is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." Amen.

⁽¹⁾ May 9 Manna, Col. 2:6-7

⁽²⁾ ½ May 14 Manna, Eph. 4:16

⁽³⁾ ½ May 14 Manna

⁽⁴⁾ Hymn 49