

GRACE GAZETTE

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Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Hebrews 12:12-13

GROWING IN GRACE

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

II Peter 3:18

There are many who equate morality with Christianity. *"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."* (Pro 14:12) It is indeed true that the LORD has brought HIS people, out of darkness and into the light, however that walking in the LIGHT, which they are called to, is not primarily concerned with "morality" as natural man would define it. While this calling of the sons of GOD is not primarily to morality, it surely is not defined as amoral or immoral either. *"Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ:"*(Php 1:27)

The sons of GOD owe no loyalty to any man made systems or standards, but rather their allegiance is strictly and solely unto HIM who has called them. Even when they demonstrate subjection to the rulers of this world, they do it not for the rulers sake but because they would be the servants of their KING, and HE commands them thus. *"Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well."* (1Pet 2:13-14) *"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God."* (Rom 13:1)

Some have twisted these scriptures to define "patriotism" as a godly exercise, often even going so far as to describe such "patriotism" as a loyalty to a certain political persuasion or economic philosophy. While waving the flag is not necessarily a wicked thing to do, it most certainly does not define an adherence to the ways of CHRIST, nor can the sons of GOD ever be discovered thereby. A man can be the greatest of "patriots" and yet have no knowledge of, or interest in the kingdom of GOD. In like fashion a man may have no interest in politics, pledges, or national anthems (etc) and yet be desirous of giving glory to CHRIST and honor to the king as prescribed.

So it comes as no surprise when we hear some define "growing in grace" as a measurable change in conduct according to standards which either they have set or some religious organization purporting itself to be the representatives of CHRIST in the earth have established as proper behavior.

It would be impossible to argue that the sons of GOD are not exhorted to "grow in grace" just as surely as it would be impossible for one of them to add one cubit to his stature by taking thought thereto. The exhortations of the scriptures are not given to the sons of GOD to effect "change" in them, but rather to drive them to the feet of CHRIST, where they must needs find all that is necessary for them, both in this world and that which is to come.

This sinful flesh in which we were born is both incorrigible and corrupt, and no changes shall ever occur therein. The flesh will continue its war against the SPIRIT in the sons of GOD until this mortal puts on immortality. *"For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."* (Gal 5:17) *"I find then a law (i.e. an active principle), that, when I would do good, evil is present with me."* (Rom 7:21)

Some teach that "growing in grace" is seen as the sons of GOD improve their lives, stop their bad habits, and generally become productive citizens. This is often called "sanctification" and is supposedly the demonstration of men becoming more and more conformed to the image of

CHRIST in their daily walk. Now we would never oppose such changes nor say that such might not indeed occur according to the operation of the SPIRIT in the sons of GOD. But we would never seek to call such "sanctification" nor characterize this as "growing in grace." Rather this is the evidence that HE works in the sons of GOD both to will and to do of HIS good pleasure.

Growing in grace is simply that, "growing in grace". As a man grows in grace, he is made ever more mindful of his own innate corruption. (see Rom.7:18) The more of CHRIST that he is enabled to see, the more repugnant and reprehensible he sees himself to be. He becomes increasingly "convinced" that in his flesh dwells no good thing.

As he grows in grace, he is evermore convinced of the LORD's justice in the condemnation of sinners. It is natural for man in his flesh to question why various calamities occur in the earth along with their resulting destruction and mayhem especially when they beset himself.. Yet as a man grows in grace and the knowledge of the LORD, he is made to say with Job. *"Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD."* (Job 1:21) Whereas the natural man wonders why such calamities occur; the man who grows in grace is amazed that anyone (especially himself) is spared from absolute destruction.

The natural man rebels against the notion that GOD has chosen to redeem some of this fallen race while creating others for the pit of destruction. Yet as a man grows in grace, he is struck with amazement, not that GOD would destroy some, but that HE has not destroyed us all. Thus he must simply fall down upon his face and magnify the glory of HIS grace in ordaining some to eternal life. He comes to marvel at the words of the LORD JESUS, when HE said, *"I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight."* (Mat 11:25-26)

To "grow in grace" is to embrace the unconditional election of that people which the LORD has loved with an everlasting love. For that man who is convinced of his own inability to save himself rejoices that *"as many as were ordained to eternal life believed."* (Acts 13:48) To "grow in grace" is to understand that *"faith is the gift of GOD"*. To "grow in grace" is to glory in HIM who gives faith. *"For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?"* (1Cor 4:7)

To grow in grace is to rejoice in the freedom from the Law of sin and death that has been granted to the sons of GOD, strictly by virtue of the redemptive work of CHRIST as their PERFORMER of the law in its jot and tittle in their behalf.. That man who grows in grace is humbled before the KING as he is brought to behold that there is therefore now no condemnation to the sons of GOD. He is constrained by love rather than threats and he is made to rejoice in the unconditional promises which are given to him in CHRIST.

To grow in grace is to be brought to love and esteem the brethren above oneself. It is evidenced by a delight in showing mercy as much as one delights in being the recipient thereof. *"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves."* (Php 2:3) The natural man shows the work of the law written in his heart each time that he desires that someone receive their just comeuppance. He who grows in grace delights in forgiveness and rejoices as he is enabled to live peaceably with all men. *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."* (Gal 5:22-23)

To grow in grace is to rejoice in the singularity of the gospel, wherein CHRIST is the CENTER, SUM, and SUBSTANCE. There are a multitude of subjects which surround the gospel which naturally minded religious men become enamored with. Some include "high doctrine", "low doctrine", spiritual gifts, end time prophecies, etc. Yet that man who grows in grace delights in the simplicity of the profound message which Paul declared; *"For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."* (1Cor 2:2)

To grow in grace is to desire that CHRIST alone be magnified, whether it be in life or in death. Paul describes this mind when he says; *"Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh."* (2Cor 4:10-11) *"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."* (1Cor 10:31) May HE cause us to grow in grace. mam