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But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. 2 Pet. 3:18.

In Zion's Landmarks of Feb. 15th, I notice a request by sister Jane White, of Jackson Co. Ga., for my views of the evidences of a growth in grace. Such as I am able to write I freely give.

This is a subject about which many an "aged pilgrim" as well as sister White, has felt deep concern, and often no doubt have thought the evidences of their growth in grace were all against them. The solemn admonition of the text is specially addressed to the subjects of grace, and not to those who scoff and mock at the promise and threatenings of God, as mentioned in the third verse of this chapter.— One grand object of writing this and a former Epistle was to "stir up the pure minds" of the beloved brethren to be mindful of the words of the holy prophets and of the commandments of the Apostles of the Lord and Saviour, lest being forgetful and negligent they might at some unguarded moment, be led away with the error of these wicked scoffers who walked after their own ungodly lusts, instead of giving heed to the teaching of grace. Grace in its broadest sense embraces more than any other term that we could possibly use to explain it. Everything pertaining to our eternal salvation is by the grace of God. It means gift or favor freely bestowed on those who in and of themselves deserve banishment and death. Some of the evidences of a growth in this doctrine of salvation by grace, are to be more and more cut loose from all trust in ourselves, to loathe and abhor oneself feeling that we are vile and polluted, entirely helpless and dependant, and that nothing but the grace of God can ever help or save us.

A growth in grace is different from a growth in nature. As we grow in nature, we feel much stronger in our mental and physical system, and in proportion as we feel this increased strength we have increased confidence in our own attainments and abilities, which often leads to a more full development of other traits of our nature, such as, ignorance, haughtiness, vanity, pride, boasting, scoffing and other carnal lusts. As

persons grow in nature, they grow in pride and in treating lightly the solemn warnings and threatenings of God. They grow in every sinful indulgence and take the sacred name of God in vain, and calling him "Old Master" in a very light and scoffing manner. They treat his word in the same light and vain manner. "The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain." Deut. 5:11. Prov. 30:5:9. "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. Mat. 12:36.

If the natural development of the natural mind is turned in a religious channel it leads its votaries to follow the doctrines and commandments of men in preference to the doctrine of God our Saviour; it puffs them up with the vanity of self-importance, turns their ears away from the truth and turns them unto fables, it leads them to handle the word of God deceitfully, professing great regard for it, when in fact they are laboring ingeniously to mystify and pervert its plain teachings. To grow in grace is to be more and more weaned from all these errors of the wicked, and to be more steadfastly planted in the doctrine of sovereign grace, to feel that in ourselves we are poor, having nothing that is good or acceptable to God only as we receive it as the gift of God by grace; to be able by the teaching of grace to see and feel our own vileness our ignorance, our carnal mind, our sinful lusts, our hard hearts, our cold affections, our lightness of mind, our conformity to the world, and to hate and abhor all these carnal things, to mourn over them and feel to be sunk very low in consequence of them, and often led to say like David, that the "sorrows of death encompassed me about, the pains of hell get hold upon me.— I found trouble and sorrow." Now sister White, have you ever felt the full force of these words of the Psalmist? If you have ever been in that very condition that those words describe, I know they have a meaning to you that is unknown to other characters. The hand of God is as much engaged in bringing us low as in lifting us up. He brings us low by showing us our true condition by nature, opening up the blackness of our carnal hearts and showing us the Justice of our con-

demnation. Grace does all this, it is not the work of nature to reveal its own deformities. Has not every "Old Pilgrim" grown and become more and more confirmed in this truth of the utter helplessness of the sinner and of the all-sufficiency of grace. Grace teaches the denying of ungodliness and worldly lusts, and that we should live soberly righteously and godly in this present world. Titus 2:12. Do we heed this gracious teaching? Faith and works must go together. "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." If our works are not the result of faith in Jesus Christ as the only Saviour and Law-giver in Zion, they are works of the flesh and will not glorify God. Faith is itself a fruit of the Spirit of God, and is called grace. Gal. 5:22.

"It is of faith that it might be by grace." Rom. 4:16. The whole gospel system, embracing Christ and every point of gospel doctrine, is sometimes called faith. As in Jude 3. "Earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints," and in 2d Cor. 13:5.

Now in this faith or grace, christians are admonished to grow, to become more acquainted with it by reading the word of God, by meditation and prayer for light and understanding. The evidences of their growth in this particular are seen by their rejecting everything else as false and spurious and holding fast the "form of sound words" as received by inspiration of God.— They "desire the sincere milk of the word that they may grow thereby." 1st Pet. 2:2. This will greatly promote their growth in grace—"sincere milk of the word," the pure doctrine of the gospel, unadulterated by the sleight or cunning craftiness of deceitful men—the spiritual understanding of the word, is pure milk, that will cause every child of God to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Saviour Jesus Christ." Without this "sincere milk of the word" there is no growth in the knowledge of our Lord. Skimmed milk is not so nourishing, after the cream is taken off. So if the rich doctrine of God's immutable purpose, election, predestination special redemption, effectual calling, and the like, be skimmed off from the gospel of salvation, there will be but little, if any, growth in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour.

The admonition of the text sup-

poses that those addressed have already some knowledge of Christ. They are therefore admonished to grow in that knowledge. But how come they by that heavenly knowledge? "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." This knowledge therefore is the gift of God. It is eternal life. Man cannot impart it to his fellow man. It is a revelation made by the Spirit of God and every enlargement in that knowledge is by the same Spirit. This was the fervent desire of the Apostle, that he might know him, and he was determined to know nothing else as gospel but Jesus Christ and him crucified.— The evidences therefore of growth in the knowledge of our Lord are, to be crucified to the world with all its pride, its doctrine and ways, and to count all things that we have attained unto in worldly things "but less for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord." It is to know him in his doctrine, in his ordinances; to know him in his authority and government of his Church; to know him as he presents himself in his poor and afflicted children in this world; to know him by feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and by bearing reproach for his sake. Do we know the Spirit of Christ when we see it manifested in a poor penitent sinner? Do we know it in an offending brother when he turns again and says I repent, and humbly asks forgiveness? Now if we grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour we will be able to discern a marked difference between truth and error, between the true Spirit of humility and that voluntary humility that leads only to follow the commandments and doctrines of men. But alas how many of us often say by our conduct like poor Peter, "I know not the Man." "There is a knowledge to which christians cannot attain by reading, by study, prayer, hearing preaching or anything else except by wearing the yoke of Christ. They must attain it by obedience to our Lord. "Add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge." In the faith of obedience we obtain a knowledge that the disobedient cannot know. Thus we grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour,