



**“If these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (II Peter 1:8).**

## **Life and Godliness**

**Central Truth:** God grants all things necessary for the development of a godly character.

**L236. Date:** December 1990. **Text:** II Peter 1:1-8; Galatians 5:22-25.

**Topic:** Grace: Growth In; Growth.

Second Peter 3:18 expresses a divine imperative: *“Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”* What does it mean to grow in grace? Since we have already received God's grace and continue to experience it daily, we cannot grow in the sense of receiving more grace. We can, however, grow in being gracious, reflecting God's grace in our own lives. Christian graces are character qualities which manifest the life of Christ in the believer. As the Christian matures in Christ, the Christian graces are more evidently manifest in him.

Two lists of Christian graces are given in Holy Scripture. They are the text for this lesson. It is impossible to cover all those graces in one lesson. Thirteen lessons [L236—L248] are given to a review of the graces which should be in your life.

Please approach this study with four facts in mind. (1) Christian graces must be cultivated by personal effort. (2) They are vital to the Christian's testimony. (3) Their development requires self-discipline. (4) They are to be evident in every believer, growing stronger as he matures in the Lord.

### **I. THE PROVISION (II Peter 1:1-4)**

*“His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness”* (II Peter 1:3). That is the present inheritance of every

Christian. That provision of God can be understood better by four statements made in the text.

**A. His provision is received by faith** (verse 1): We have a “*precious faith*” in Jesus. Faith has given us assurance concerning realities we do not see: God, forgiveness, enabling, and inheritance. We trust Him and He supplies all our needs (Philippians 4:19). The person who does not trust will not experience the sufficiency of God's provisions.

**B. His provision consists of a personal relationship with God** (verse 2). The “*knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord*” is more than intellectual. It is the knowledge of personal experience. We “know” God when we have entered into a personal relationship with Him, and only then do we know Him in truth.

Years after the apostle Paul came to Christ, he expressed this desire: “*That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death*” (Philippians 3:10). He already knew the Lord better than any living person, but his desire was to know Him more intimately than ever.

One can learn much about the Lord. But He is known only by those who enjoy a personal relationship with Him. How well do you know Him?

**C. His provision is possible by His divine power** (verse 3). It is “*according as his divine power*” has given to us all things necessary for us to live and manifest godliness. His power is sufficient to provide us “*all things*” that are necessary. Paul wrote that God's power was able to do “*exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.*” and that power is already at work in us (Ephesians 3:20). Think about that! That is your birthright as a Christian. Never complain that you cannot be or cannot do whatever is appropriate for a Christian. God's limitless power makes all things possible. The failure is not in His lack of faithfulness to provide but in our lack of faith to receive.

**D. His provision is expressed in two precious promises** (verse 4). The first is a promise of our receiving the divine nature. We have! The moment we trusted Jesus, the Holy Spirit came to live within us and the nature of God himself became ours. That is a glorious and present reality!

The second promise is that we can escape the corruption that is in the world. God makes it possible for us to live “*soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world*” (Titus 2:12).

Read the text over and over until you grasp the scope of God's provision. He has given “*all things*” that are necessary for “*life and godliness*” in your daily walk (verse 3). Glory!

## II. THE VIRTUES (II Peter 1:5-8; Galatians 5:22, 23)

**A. The virtues are faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity** (II Peter 1:5-7). Three significant facts are found in the text.

1. The virtues are to be cultivated. “*Giving all diligence, add . . .*” (verse 5). That indicates that you are accountable to God for whether or not you add those virtues to your life-style. It indicates that you can do it if you try; you can have a wholesome, well-rounded spiritual life if you will. Keep on growing, whatever your age. Grow to be more like Christ.

2. The virtues cover all areas of life. There are personal graces: faith, virtue, knowledge, and temperance. There are social graces: patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity. Life involves what we are and what we do. The personal graces relate to what we are; the social graces relate to what we do. Being and doing are the essence of Christian living. God enables both by His provision.

3. The virtues will manifest themselves. Where they are present there is neither barrenness nor unfruitfulness (verse 8).

**B. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and self-control.** The text suggests three things concerning them.

1. The fruit is produced by the Holy Spirit. Hence, it is called “*the fruit of the Spirit.*” The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit and His work in the Christian make the fruit possible. Apart from Him we are “*hateful, and hating one another*” (Titus 3:3). But with His blessed ministry, we become like Jesus who gives us the Spirit as our companion. Do not quench or grieve the Spirit. Be filled with the Spirit instead, and produce the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

2. The fruit covers all areas of life. There are three basic areas of human relationships: self, other people, and God. Notice how the Holy Spirit works in all three areas.

In your inmost self, the Holy Spirit produces love, joy, and peace. Ask any Christian. Watch his lifestyle. Notice the change wrought in him. He is a different person in himself because of that blessed threefold fruit of the Spirit.

In interpersonal relationships, the Holy Spirit produces long-suffering, gentleness, and goodness. The Christian seeks to “*live peaceably with all men*” (Romans 12:18). The word translated “*goodness*” in Galatians 5:22 is elsewhere translated “*kindness.*” The Holy Spirit makes the believer a better companion.

In respect to God, the Holy Spirit produces faith, meekness, and self-control. That means the believer trusts Him, yields to Him, and obeys Him. Do you find the Spirit prompting those responses in your heart? He is working at that very thing. Recognize His work and cooperate with Him.

3. The fruit violates no principle but promotes good to all. That is why there is no law against love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness; goodness (kindness), faith, meekness, and temperance (self-control). Who would want to stop a person from doing any of those good things? No one. That is why becoming a Christian makes a person a better member of his family, his community, and his nation. God works out good in those who follow Him.

### III. THE APPLICATION

Here is a study which must be put into practice. It would be tragic to hear these truths without conforming our lives to them. So think about how to apply these verses to your daily life, beginning today.

**A. Check your faith.** Whom do you trust? Is your faith practical, dealing with life in this world as well as in the world to come? Are you so heavenly minded that you are of no earthly good?

Faith is the foundation. Without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). Without faith one cannot be a Christian, cannot know God personally, and cannot receive the Holy Spirit. Begin by checking your faith.

Are you trusting Jesus Christ alone as your Savior, and are you yielded to Him as your Lord?

**B. Seek to know God more personally.** Jesus said of the Scriptures, “*They . . . testify of me*” (John 5:39). So if you would know God better, devote yourself to meeting Him in His infallible Word. As He speaks to you through the Bible, you speak to Him through prayer. Bible study and prayer are inseparable in the Christian life. You cannot have one without the other. Otherwise, life will be out of balance and you will cease to grow. It is good to attend religious meetings, perform the rituals of worship, and fellowship with the people of God. But that is no substitute for God himself. Never be content with things concerning Him. You can meet Him! Practice His presence by daily communion with Him. Pause right now and write down how you will seek Him this week.

**C. Rely on His power.** Make a record of times you have rested on the Lord and He acted in your behalf. There are those obvious times of sickness, danger, etc. But how about His presence in daily life? Make a list, and it will surprise you how active God is in your daily life.

**D. Cultivate the Christian virtues.** Memorize the list given in II Peter

1:5-7 and Galatians 5:22, 23. Identify the enemy of each virtue. For instance, the enemy of long-suffering is impatience; the enemy of faith is doubt. Look for a verse of Scripture which encourages the grace and opposes its enemy. Carry on a spiritual warfare in which you cultivate the one and reject the other.

Write down ways that you can help cause each virtue to become more evident in your life. Seek to make them grow, each and all of them, as you would cultivate a bed of beautiful flowers in your yard. Be content with nothing less than your best.

**E. Be filled with the Holy Spirit.** His filling means His control. It is not an emotion or an experience. It is surrender to His control. Ask Him to make you more and more like Jesus, convicting you where you are wrong and strengthening you where you are weak. He will delight to answer such a prayer.

**F. Memorize II Peter 1:3:** *“His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue.”* Let it become your anchor through these studies. Expect God to work in you, making you more like Jesus each day.

Christian graces are attributes of character which enable the Christian to serve the Lord. Do not be content unless you are growing in grace and in the knowledge of your Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

### Questions for discussion

1. What is God's command stated in II Peter 3:18?
2. What is the meaning of II Peter 1:3?
3. What is the *“knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ”*?
4. What are God's two precious promises in II Peter 1:4?
5. How can you cultivate the virtues of II Peter 1:5-7?
6. How is the fruit of the Spirit produced in your life?
7. Why should you seek to develop a character like that?
8. In what sense is faith the foundation of all spiritual growth?
9. What can you do this week to cultivate those virtues?
10. Will you commit yourself to memorize II Peter 1:3 this week?