

Lecture Xxii. - Growth in Grace.

by Charles Finney

To grow in grace, we must seek increased religious light, conform to all the teachings of the Holy Spirit, and have a deeper personal acquaintance with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Scripture: Ephesians 2:8, 2 Peter 3:18

Topics: "Surrender to God", "Growth in Grace"

Description

Charles Finney emphasizes the necessity of growth in grace for converts, explaining that grace is God's favor and a free gift. He clarifies that growing in grace does not mean gradually giving up sin but rather fully surrendering to God and increasing in knowledge and love for Him. Finney outlines conditions for growth, such as repentance, faith, and the work of the Holy Spirit, while also identifying what does not constitute proof of growth. He stresses that true growth is evidenced by implicit trust in God, weanedness from the world, and a deepening relationship with Christ. Ultimately, he calls for a faith-driven approach to spiritual growth, urging believers to continually seek a fuller appropriation of Christ in their lives.

Transcript

TEXT--But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.--2 Pet. iii.18.

I must conclude this Course of Lectures by giving converts instructions on the subject of growth in grace. I shall pursue the following method:

- I. What is grace, as the term is here used?
 - II. What the injunction "to grow in grace" does not mean.
 - III. What it does mean.
 - IV. Conditions of growth in grace.
 - V. What is not proof of growth in grace.
 - VI. What is proof of growth in grace.
 - VII How to grow in grace.
- I. What is grace, as the term is here used?

1. Grace is favor. It is often used in the Bible to signify a free gift. The grace of God is the favor of God, His free gifts.

II. What the injunction "to grow in grace" does not mean.

1. It does not enjoin the gradual giving up of sin. Strange to tell, it would seem that some have so understood it; but we are nowhere in the Bible commanded to give up sin gradually, we are everywhere commanded to give it up instantly and wholly.

III. What it does mean.

1. It enjoins upon us the duty of growing in the favor of God, of growing in his esteem, in a worthiness of his favor, and in his love of complacency in us.

IV. Conditions of growth in grace.

1. Growth or increase in anything implies a beginning. Growth in the favor of God implies that we have already found favor in his sight, and that we are already indebted for grace received, and that we are already in grace, in the sense of having a place among his favored ones.

2. Consequently, growth in grace implies that we have already repented of our sin, have actually and practically abandoned all known sin. It cannot be that we are in favor with God if we are still indulging in known sin against him. Being in favor with God implies, of course, that we are pardoned and favored by him, for the sake of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Pardon is favor, and implies the renunciation of rebellion against God. The conditions of the Divine favor, as revealed in the Bible, are repentance and abandonment of all known sin, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. I said, as a condition of growth in grace, we must have the commencement of grace; in other words, we must be already Christians, must be in a state of acceptance with God, must have accepted Christ, so far as he is understood, must be in a state of obedience to all the recognized will of God. Without this, we cannot be in a state of grace, or in the favor of God. But being in this state, there is room for everlasting growth. As we know more of God, we shall be capable of loving him more, of having a more universal and implicit confidence in him. And there can be no end to this while we have any being, either in this or any other world. Our love and confidence in him may be complete, so far as we know him. This love and confidence will secure his favor; but there will be no end to our growth in knowledge of him, and, consequently, there is room for eternal growth in grace. The more we love, the more we believe, the more we know of God, if we conform to all this knowledge, the more God must be pleased with us, the higher shall we stand in his favor, and more and greater gifts he will continue to bestow upon us.

3. Of course, growth in the knowledge of God is a condition of growth in his favor. We might grow in knowledge, without growing in his favor, because we might not love and trust him in accordance with this increased knowledge. But we cannot love and trust him more perfectly, unless we become more perfectly acquainted with him. If our love and faith keep pace with our growing knowledge, we must grow in his favor. But growth in knowledge must be a condition of growth in love and faith.

4. Growth in the knowledge of God, as revealed in Christ Jesus, must be a condition of growth in his favor. It is in and through Christ Jesus that God reveals himself to man. It is in Christ Jesus that we got the true idea of the personality of the infinite God. Hence, the text says, "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

5. Growth in grace is conditioned on increased knowledge of what is involved in entire consecration to God.

True conversion to God involves the consecration of our selves and of all that we have to him, so far as we understand what is implied in this. But, at first, converts are by no means aware of all that is involved in the highest forms of consecration. They will soon learn that there are certain things that they did not think of, and that they did not give up to God. At first, perhaps, all that was in their thought was, to lay their naked soul upon the altar, and give up their whole heart to God. But soon they may learn that they did not think of all their possessions and everything that was dear to them, they did not surrender all, and leave not a hoof behind. They surrendered all of which they thought at the time, but they were not fully enlightened, they did not think, nor could they think, at the time, of every appetite, passion, propensity, of every desire and affection, of everything they call their own, and which is dear to them, in the whole creation, to make a thorough surrender and delivery of them all to God. To gain such knowledge is a work of time; and growth in the favor of God is conditioned on making a full surrender and consecration to God of everything we are, and have, and desire, and love, as fast as these objects are presented to thought. As long as we exist, and knowledge increases, there is no doubt that we shall be called upon to grow in grace, by consecrating to God every new object of knowledge, of desire, and of affection, that we may come to know, and desire, and love, to all eternity. As you get new light, you must enlarge your consecration from day to day, and from hour to hour, or you will cease to grow in grace. Whenever you stop short, and do not lay and leave everything that you are, that you possess, or that you love, upon the altar of consecration, that moment you cease to grow in grace. I pray you let this saying sink deep into your hearts.

6. Another condition of growth in grace is intense earnestness and constancy in seeking increased religious light, by the illumination of the Holy Spirit. You will gain no effectual religious light except by the inward showing and teaching of the Holy Spirit, This you will not obtain unless you continue in the true attitude of a disciple of Christ. Remember, he says, "Except a man forsake all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." He will not, by his Holy Spirit, be your Divine teacher unless you renounce self, and live in a state of continual consecration to him. To obtain and preserve the teachings of Christ, by his Holy Spirit, you must continually and earnestly pray for his Divine teaching, and watch against resisting and grieving him.

7. Another condition of growth in grace is a constant conformity to all the teachings of the Holy Spirit, keeping up with our convictions of duty, and with our growing knowledge of the will of God.

8. A more and more implicit faith in God is a condition of growth in grace. By implicit, I mean an unreasoning faith, a confidence in God's character so profound that we trust him in the dark as well as in the light, as well when we do not understand the reasons of His dealings with us, or of His requirements, as when we do. A faith like that of Abraham, that staggered not at a promise, through unbelief, though the thing promised seemed most irrational and impossible. An implicit faith is an unwavering, unquestioning faith, a state of mind that will rest in God, in his promises, in his faithfulness, in his love, whatever appearances may be, and however trying and apparently unreasonable his commands or providential dealings may be. Abraham's faith is often commended in the Bible. God had promised him a son, but did not give him the promised seed until he was a hundred years old, and Sarah was ninety. But notwithstanding Sarah was past age, and he as good as dead, he believed that God was able to fulfill his promise, and when he had received his beloved son, with the assurance that this was to be his heir, and that through him the promise was to be fulfilled through all generations, God tried his faith severely, by

commanding him to offer his Isaac as a burnt sacrifice. He without the least hesitation obeyed, believing that God was able to raise him from the dead. He made all his arrangements to obey this trying command, with such calmness that neither Sarah nor Isaac suspected that any such thing was in contemplation. This was an instance of the exercise of implicit faith. Growth in grace, or in the favor of God, is conditioned upon growth in implicit confidence in Him.

9. A more thoroughly sanctified sensibility is a condition of growth in the favor of God. By the sensibility, I mean that department of our nature that feels, desires, and to which belongs all that we call desire, affection, emotion, feeling, appetite, passion, propensity, lust. The sensibility is an involuntary power, and moral actions and qualities cannot, with strict propriety, be predicated of it. The states of the sensibility have moral character only as they derive it directly or indirectly from the action of the will. The nature of man, as a whole, in his depraved condition, is in a very unlovely state, and although the will maybe given up to God, the sensibility may be in such a state as to be very unlovely in the sight of one that looks directly upon it, and knows perfectly every excited desire, passion, propensity, lust. It is through the sensibility, mainly, that we are assailed with temptations. It is through this that the Christian warfare is kept up. The Christian warfare consists in the battle of the will with these various appetites, passions, propensities and lusts, to keep them in subjection to the will of God. If the will maintains its integrity, and cleaves to the will of God, the soul does not sin in its battle with the excited states of the sensibility. But these rebellious propensities embarrass the will in the service it renders to God. To keep them under, occupies much time, and thought, and strength. Hence the soul cannot render to God so complete a service, while exerting the full strength of the will to subjugate these propensities, as it otherwise might and would render. These appetites, passions, and propensities, although not sinful in themselves, have been regarded and spoken of as indwelling sin. Strictly, they cannot be sin, because they are involuntary. But they are often a great hindrance to our growth in the favor of God. "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit lusteth against the flesh, and these are contrary, the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." This means that we cannot do for God what we otherwise would, because we have to battle so much with the states of the sensibility, to keep them under. As the sensibility becomes more and more subdued and in harmony with the will's devotion to God, we are left free to render to God a more unembarrassed service. Therefore, the more thorough the sanctification of the sensibility, the more thoroughly we are in favor with God.

10. A growing thoroughness and universality of consecration, of spirit, soul, and body, is the condition of more and more growth in the favor of God. It is common, at first, for the steadfastness of the will's devotion to God to be overcome by the clamor of the excited appetites, passions, and propensities, or by the various states of the sensibility. Whenever the will yields to these excited states, you sin. But, in such cases, the sin is not willful, in the sense of being deliberate and intentional; it is rather a slip, an inadvertency, a momentary yielding under the pressure of highly excited feeling. Nevertheless, this yielding is sin. However excited the states of the sensibility may be, if the will does not yield, there is strictly no sin. Still, while the will is steadfast, maintains its consecration, its obedience to God, the appetites originating in the body, and the various propensities of the soul, which inhere in the sensibility, may be so ajar, in such confusion, and in such a state of morbid development, that the soul may be unfitted for the employments and enjoyments of heaven.

11. Hence, the taking on of a greater fullness of the Divine nature is a condition of growth in the favor of God. Both the will and the sensibility of God must be in a state of utmost perfection and accord. All of his desires and feelings must be in perfect harmony with his intelligence and his will. Not so with us, in our

state of physical depravity. The depravity of sensibility must be physical, because it is involuntary. Still, it is depravity, it is a lapsed or fallen state of the sensibility. This lapsed department of our nature must be recovered, sanctified, or completely restored to harmony with a consecrated will, and an enlightened intelligence, or we are never fitted for heaven. As we become more and more the partakers of the Divine nature, and of the Divine holiness, we are more fully sanctified in spirit, soul, and body, and of course grow more and more in the favor of God.

12. A greater and more all-pervading fullness of the Holy Spirit's residence is another condition of growth in the favor of God. You cannot have it too thoroughly impressed upon you that every step in the Christian life is to be taken under the influence of the Holy Spirit. The thing to be attained is the universal teaching and guidance of the Holy Spirit, so that in all things you shall be led by the Spirit of God. "If ye are led by the Spirit, ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh," "If through the Spirit ye do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." "To be spiritually minded is life and peace, but to be carnally minded is death." Always remember, therefore, that to grow in grace, you must grow in the possession of the fullness of the Holy Ghost in your heart.

13. A deeper personal acquaintance with the Lord Jesus Christ, in all his official work and relations, is a condition of growth in grace. His nature, work, and relations are the theme of the Bible. The Bible presents him to us in a great variety of relations. In my Systematic Theology I have considered some sixty or more of these official relations of Christ to the human race, and these are presented rather as specimens and illustrations than as covering the whole ground of his relations to us. Now, it is one thing to know Christ simply on paper, and as spoken of in the Bible, by reading or hearing of Christ, and quite another thing to know him personally, in these relations. The Bible is the medium of introduction to him personally. What is there said of him is designed to lead us to seek after a personal acquaintance with him. It is by this personal acquaintance with him that we are made like him. It is by direct, personal, individual intercourse with his Divine mind that we take on his image. "All we, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." "Faith comes by hearing," and faith secures for us a personal acquaintance with Christ. Christ has promised to manifest himself personally to those who love and obey him. Do not, my dear children, stop short of securing this personal manifestation of Christ to your souls. Your growth in grace will depend upon this. Think not of stopping short of personally knowing Christ, not only in all these relations, but in the fullness of these relations. Do not overlook the fact that the appropriation of Christ, in each of these relations, is a personal act of faith. It is a putting on of the Lord Jesus Christ, a taking of him as yours, in each of these relations, as your wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; your prophet, to teach you, your king, to govern you, your high priest, to atone for you, your mediator, your advocate, your strength, your Saviour, your hiding-place, your high tower, your captain and leader, your shield, your defence, your exceeding great reward. In each of these relations, and in all other of his official relations, you need to appropriate him by faith so as to secure to you personal intercourse with him in these relations. Growing in a personal acquaintance with him, in these relations, remember, is an indispensable condition of growth in his favor.

V. I am to notice some things that are not proof of growth in grace.

1. Growth in knowledge is not conclusive evidence of growth in grace. Some degree of knowledge is indispensable to our being in favor with God; and growth in knowledge, as I have shown, is a condition of growth in grace, but knowledge is not grace, and growth in knowledge does not constitute growth in grace. A person may grow ever so much in knowledge, and have no grace at all. In hell, they cannot but grow in knowledge, as they grow in experience, and in the knowledge of God's justice. But there, their growth in

knowledge but aggravates the guilt and misery of hell. They know more and more of God and his law, and their own guilt, and the more they know, the more wretched they are. From their increased knowledge they never learn piety.

2. It is not certain evidence that an individual grows in grace, because he grows in gifts.

A professor of religion may increase in gifts, that is, he may become more fluent in prayer, and more eloquent in preaching, or more pathetic in exhortation without being any more holy. We naturally increase in that in which we exercise ourselves. And if any person often exercises himself in exhortation, he will naturally, if he makes any effort or lays himself out, increase in fluency and pungency. But he may do all this, and yet have no grace at all. He may pray ever so engagedly, and increase in fluency and apparent pathos, and yet have no grace. People who have no grace often do so. It is true, if he has grace, and exercises himself in these things, as he grows in grace, he will grow in gifts. No person can exercise himself in obeying God, without improving in those exercises. If he does not improve in gifts, it is a true sign he does not grow in grace. But, on the other hand, it is not sure evidence that he grows in grace because he improves in certain exercises, for he will naturally improve by practice, whether he is a Christian or a hypocrite.

3. It is not proof that a person grows in grace, because he thinks he is doing so. One may be very favorably impressed with regard to his own progress in religion, when it is evident to others that he is not only making no progress, but is, in fact, declining. An individual who is growing worse and worse, is not ordinarily well aware of the fact. It is not uncommon for both impenitent sinners and Christians to think they are growing better, when they are growing no better. This results from the very nature of the case. If any person is growing worse, his conscience will, for the time being, become more and more seared, and his mind more and more dark, as he stifles conscience and resists the light. Then he may think he is growing better, just because he has less sense of sin, and while his conscience continues to sleep, he may continue under a fatal delusion. A man will judge of his own spiritual state as he compares himself with a high or low standard. If he keeps Christ before him, in his fullness, as his standard, he will doubtless always, at least in this state of existence, have but a low estimate of his own attainments. While at the same time, if he sets before himself the church, or any of the members of the church as a standard, he will be very likely to form a high estimate of his progress in religion, and be very well satisfied with himself. This is the reason why there is such a difference in people's views of their own state and of the state of the church. They compare themselves and the state of the church with different standards. Hence, one takes a very humbling view of his own state, and complains of that of the church; another thinks such complaints of the church censorious. To him the church appears to be doing very well. The reason why he does not think the church cold, and in a low state, is that Christ is not his standard of comparison. If a man shuts his eyes, he will not see the defilement on him, and may think he is clean, while to all around he appears loathsome.

VI. What is proof of growth in grace.

1. The manifestation of more implicit and universal trust in God is an evidence of growth in grace. The exercise of greater and more implicit confidence, as I have said, is the condition of growing in the favor of God. Here, I say, that the manifestation of this implicit and universal confidence is proof that this growing confidence exists, and is, therefore, satisfactory evidence of growth in the favor of God. If you are conscious in your own soul that you do exercise more implicit and universal confidence in God, this is conclusive proof to you that you are growing in grace, and as you manifest in your life, and temper, and

spirit, this growing confidence, you prove to yourself and to others that you are growing in the favor of God. For as you grow in implicit confidence in him you must grow in his favor.

2. Another evidence of growth in grace, is an increasing weanedness from the world. The will may be in an attitude of devotion to God, while the world's seductive charms very much embarrass the healthy action of the Christian life. All the soul becomes crucified and dead to the world, it grows in the favor of God.

3. Less reluctance of feeling, when called to the exercise of self-denial, is an evidence of growth in grace. It shows that the feelings are becoming less and less despotic, that the will is getting more the mastery of them, that the sensibility is getting more into harmony with the devotion of the will, and the dictates of the intelligence.

4. Less temptation to sins of omission, is another evidence of growth in grace, e.g., less temptation to shun the cross, to neglect unpleasant duties, less temptation to indolence, less temptation to shirk responsibility, less temptation to neglect prayer, reading the Scriptures, private and family devotions, in short, less and less temptation to shun the performance of any duty, is evidence of growth in grace. These temptations consist in the excited states of the sensibility. As these become less in strength and frequency, we learn that our sensibility is becoming more completely subjugated to the law of the intelligence, and the decisions of the will, and consequently, that the work of the sanctification of the spirit, soul and body is progressing, and that therefore we are growing in the favor of God.

5. A growing intensity and steadiness of zeal in promoting the cause of God, is evidence of growth in the favor of God. Sometimes Christian zeal is comparatively cool, at other times deep and intense, sometimes it will be steady, at other times fitful and evanescent. As Christians grow in piety, their zeal becomes deep, intense and steady, and as you are conscious of this, and in your life and spirit give evidence of it to others, you have, and give proof, that you are growing in the favor of God.

6. Losing more and more the consciousness of self, and respect to self, in every action of life, is an evidence of growth in the favor of God. Some have so much consciousness of self in everything, and so much respect to self in everything they say and do, as to be embarrassed in all their Christian life, whenever they attempt to act or speak in the presence of others. As they lose this self-consciousness, and have less respect to self, their service of God becomes more free and unembarrassed, and they are all the better servants by how much less they think of self. Sometimes young converts cannot speak or pray, or perform any public duty, without being either proud or ashamed, as they think themselves to have performed those duties with more or low acceptance to those around them. While this is so, their piety is in a feeble state. They must lose sight of their own glory, and have a single eye to the glory of God, to find acceptance with him. But as they lose sight of self, and set God always before them, having an eye single to his glory, they grow more and more in his favor.

7. Consequently, a growing deadness to the flattery or the censure of men, is an evidence of growth in grace. Paul had grown in grace so much, that he counted it a light thing to be judged of man, he only sought to commend himself to God. As you find yourself growing in this state of deadness to the flatteries or censures of men, you have evidence that you grow in grace.

8. A growing cordiality in the acceptance of the whole will of God, is evidence of growth in his favor. Some rebel against his will as revealed in his word, and in his providence. Others, under trying circumstances will barely tolerate his will, as revealed in his word and in providence; but those who are growing in grace, find it more natural to them, to embrace his whole revealed will, with greater and greater cordiality.

9. Growing calmness and quietness under great afflictions, is an evidence of growth in the favor of God. This evinces a broader and more implicit faith, a fuller and more cordial acceptance of the will of God, as revealed in these afflictions, and shows that the soul is more steadily and firmly at anchor upon its rock, Christ.

10. A growing tranquility under sudden and crushing disasters and bereavements, is an evidence of growth in grace. The more tranquil the soul can remain, when sudden storms of providence come upon it, sweeping away its loved ones, and blighting its earthly hopes, the greater is its evidence of being under the particular favor of God. This tranquillity is both a result and an evidence of the favor of God.

11. Growing patience under much provocation, is an evidence of growth in the favor of God.

12. "Long suffering with joyfulness," is an evidence of growing in favor with God. When you find that you cannot only tolerate, but accept the will of God, as revealed in calling you to suffer, and especially, when you can accept these sufferings, and endure them long and with joyfulness, you have evidence that you are growing in the favor of God.

13. A growing cordiality and joyfulness under crosses and disappointments, and severe pain, is evidence of growth in the favor of God.

14. An increasing deadness to all that the world has to offer, or to threaten, is an evidence of growth in the favor of God.

15. A growing repose in, and satisfaction with, all the allotments of providence, is an evidence of growth in grace.

16. Less temptation to murmur or repine at any allotment of providence, is evidence of growth in grace.

17. Lest temptation to fret, when we are crossed or disappointed in any respect, is an evidence of growth in grace.

18. Less and less temptation to resentment, and the spirit of retaliation, when we are in anywise insulted or abused, is evidence that the sensibility is becoming more and more thoroughly subdued, and consequently, that we are growing in favor with God.

19. Less temptation to dwell upon, and to magnify our trials and troubles, to think of them, and speak of them to others, is evidence that we think less and less of self, and accept our trials and troubles with more and more complacency in God. It is sad to hear some professedly good people, dwelling ever upon and magnifying their own troubles and trials. But, if they grow in grace, they will think less and less of these, be more inclined to think of them as "light afflictions." The more we grow in grace, the less stress we lay upon the evils we meet with in the way. Said a good man to me once, who was really passing through what the world would call very severe trials and afflictions (he had lost a beloved wife, and his children had died one after another), "I have many mercies, and few afflictions." When, under such circumstances, a man can say, "the lines have fallen unto me in pleasant places, I have a goodly heritage," he has the most satisfactory evidence that he is growing in the favor of God. For this state of mind is both a result and an evidence of the favor of God.

20. A growing disposition to make light of our trials and to magnify our blessings, is an evidence that we are growing in the favor of God.

21. Less and less anxiety and carefulness about the events of providence, and especially about the things that nearly and deeply affect ourselves, is evidence of growth in grace. This is an evidence of a broader and more implicit faith, of a more submissive will, and of a diminishing tendency to self-seeking; and is, therefore, an evidence of growing favor with God.

22. Being less and less disturbed and troubled by the events of life, especially those that go counter to our own plans, and hopes, and expectations, and desires, and that thwart our most cherished aims, is an evidence of growth in grace.

23. A growing and realizing confidence in the wisdom, benevolence, and universality of the providence of God, a state of mind that sees God in everything, is evidence of growth in grace. Some minds become so spiritual that they hardly seem to reside in the body, and appear continually to perceive the presence of God in every event, almost as if they were disembodied, and beheld God, face to face. They seem to dwell, live, move, and have their being, rather in the spiritual, than in the natural world. They are continually under such a sense of the Divine presence, agency, and protection, as hardly to appear like inhabitants of earth. They are a living, walking mystery to those in the midst of whom they dwell. The springs of their activity are so divine, their life is so much hidden in God, they act under influences so far above the world, that they cannot be judged by the same standards as other men. Carnal minds cannot understand them. Their hidden life is so unknown, and so unknowable to those who are far below them in their spiritual life, that they are necessarily regarded as quite eccentric, as being mystics or monomaniacs, and as having very peculiar religious views, as being enthusiasts, and perhaps fanatics. These persons are in the world, but they live above the world. They have so far escaped from the pollutions that are in the world, that they can truly, and understandingly say with Paul, in Gal. vi.14, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, whereby the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." Such persons are evidently growing in the grace of God.

24. Being less and less disposed to dwell upon the faults and foibles of others, is an evidence of growth in grace.

25. Being less and less disposed to speak sarcastically or severely, or to judge uncharitably of others. A growing delicacy, or tenderness in speaking of their real or supposed faults, behind their back, is an evidence of growth in grace.

26. An increasing reluctance to regard or treat anyone as an enemy, and an increasing ease and naturalness in treating them kindly, in praying for them heartily, and in efforts to do them good, is an evidence of growing in grace.

27. Less and less temptation to remember an injury, and the abatement of all desire to retaliate when injured, is an evidence of growth in grace.

28. A growing readiness and cordiality in forgiving and burying an injury out of sight, and a kind of moral inability to do otherwise than seek the highest good of those who have injured us most deeply, is an evidence of growth in grace.

29. When we find in our own experience, and manifest to others, that it is more and more natural to regard all men as our brethren, especially to drop out of view all sectarian discriminations, all ideas and prejudices of caste, and of color, of poverty, and of riches, of blood relation, and of natural, rather than of spiritual ties, and to make common cause with God, in aiming to do good to all men, to enemies and

friends alike, we have then ourselves, and give to others, the highest evidence of our growing in the favor of God.

30. Especially is it true, when we find ourselves very cordial and full-hearted, in making great sacrifices for those that hate us, and having a willingness to lay down our lives, to promote their eternal salvation, that we have evidence of growth in grace.

31. Still more especially, when we find ourselves less and less inclined to account anything a sacrifice that we can do for God, or the souls of men; when we can account our lives not dear unto us, if called to lay them down to save the souls of enemies, when, for the "joy of saving them," "we can endure the cross, and despise the shame," or any sacrifice that we are called to make, we have evidence that we are growing in favor with God.

32. Again, when we find ourselves more and more inclined to "count it all joy, when we fall into divers temptations," and when we are disposed to look upon our trials, vexations, losses, and crosses, in such a light as to lay less and less stress upon them, we have evidence that we are growing in patience, and therefore, in favor with God.

33. When we find less and less reluctance to making full confession to those whom we have injured, when with increasing readiness and cordiality we lay our hearts open to be searched, take home conviction of wrong-doing, and when in such cases, we cannot rest till we have made the fullest confession and reparation within our power, when to own up, and confess, and make the fullest satisfaction, is a luxury to us, rather than a trial and a cross, we have evidence that we are growing in the favor of God.

34. When we are more and more impressed and affected by the mercies of God, and by the kindnesses of our fellow-men and those around us, when we more deeply and thoroughly appreciate manifestations of kindness in God, or in any one else, when we are more and more humbled and affected by these kindnesses, and find it more and more natural to "walk humbly, love mercy, and do justly," and live gratefully, we have evidence that we are growing in favor with God.

35. When we find ourselves drawn, with increasing earnestness to follow on to know more of the Lord, we have evidence of growth in grace.

36. When we find ourselves more and more readily impressed and affected, quickened and stimulated by religious truth, and when we find an increasing harmony in the action of all our powers, intellectual, voluntary, and sensitive, in accepting, and resting in, the whole will and providence of God, however afflictive they may at present be, we have evidence that we are growing in grace.

37. A growing jealousy for the honor of God, for the purity and honor of his church, for the rights of God, and for the rights of all men, is evidence of growing in conformity to God, and, of course, of growing in his favor.

VII. How to grow in grace.

1. Fulfill the conditions noticed under the fourth head of this lecture. I need not repeat them.

2. Remember that every step of progress must be made by faith, and not by works. The mistake that some good men have made upon this subject, is truly amazing. Dr. Chalmers affirms, that the way to be sanctified is to work for it. A few years since, Dr. Pond published a pamphlet, in which he took ground on

this subject, with Dr. Chalmers, and affirmed that the idea of being sanctified by faith was an absurdity. Indeed, the custom has been almost universal, to represent growth in grace as consisting in the formation of habits of obedience to God. Now, it is quite surprising that so many good men have fallen into this mistake. The fact is, that every step of progress in the Christian life, is taken by a fresh and fuller appropriation of Christ by faith, a fuller baptism of the Holy Spirit. As our weaknesses, infirmities, besetting sins, and necessities, are revealed to us, by the circumstances of temptation through which we pass, our only efficient help is found in Christ, and we grow only as we step by step more fully appropriate him, in one relation or another, and more fully "put him on." As we are more and more emptied of self-dependence, as we more and more renounce and discard all expectation of forming holy habits by any obedience of ours, and as by faith we secure deeper and deeper baptisms of the Holy Ghost, and put on the Lord Jesus Christ, more and more thoroughly, and in more of his official relations, by just so much the faster do we grow in the favor of God. Nothing can be more erroneous and dangerous than the commonly received idea of growing in grace by the formation of holy habits. By acts of faith alone, we appropriate Christ, and we are as truly sanctified by faith as we are justified by faith. In my Systematic Theology, in pointing out the conditions of entire or permanent sanctification, I have noticed some sixty of the official relations of Christ, as I have before said, and have there insisted, as I here insist, that growth in holiness, and consequently, in the favor of God, is secured only by fresh, fuller, and more thorough appropriations of Christ, in all these official relations. If you would grow in grace you must do it through faith. You must pray in faith for the Holy Spirit. You must appropriate and put on Christ through the Holy Spirit. At every forward step in your progress, you must have a fresh anointing of the Holy Spirit through faith.

REMARKS

1. We see, from this subject, the vast importance of rightly instructing young converts. In many cases, they have very little instruction suited to their experience and degree of Christian intelligence. By some, such views are taken of the Perseverance of the Saints, that it is assumed that babes in Christ will grow without nursing, and without that sincere milk of the word, by means of which they must grow. Some, taking it for granted that they need instruction, unwittingly give them false instruction, set them to work outwardly and zealously, without paying much regard to the strengthening and developing of their inward life. They do not teach them how to appropriate and live on Christ as their life, but continually press them up, to do their duty, to labor for God, and labor for souls, not sufficiently impressing upon them the idea that their doing is of no account, unless it proceeds from the life of God in their own souls. The result of this is a bustling, outward activity, while the inward spiritual life is decaying. This must end in disgust at one's own want of heart, and a settling back into apathy and neglect.

2. Sometimes there is a mistake made in the opposite direction. They are taught to rest in Christ, in such a sense as to take on a type of quietism and antinomian inactivity. They are exhorted to exercise faith, but they are not earnestly impressed with the conviction that it must be a faith that works and works by love, that purifies the heart, and overcomes the world. The result is, they do nothing in religion. Sinners are allowed to sleep on, and go to hell, in their midst, and they make no effort to save them.

3. We see the importance of a Holy Ghost anointed ministry. The great want of the church is a ministry so thoroughly anointed by the Holy Ghost as to know how to lead the church onward and upward, to the fullest development of Christian piety. In order to instruct converts, and keep the church progressing in holiness, the minister must progress himself. He must be a truly living, growing Christian. I have good reason to know that the churches in many places are deeply pained by the want of living piety and growth

in their ministers. Their ministers are intellectual, literary, philosophical, theological, in their teaching, but they are sadly deficient in unction. They have but little power with God or with man. They instruct the intellect to a certain extent, but they do not meet the wants of the heart. Converts starve under their preaching. They preach an intellectual, rather than a spiritual Gospel. They preach religion as a theory, a doctrine, a philosophy, and not as a real living experience. It is often exceedingly painful to hear ministers preach who manifestly do not know what they say, or whereof they affirm. They speak of religion as an inward sentiment, instead of heart devotion to God; as an emotion, a feeling, instead of an all-embracing and efficient love, a voluntary state and attitude of the mind, from which necessarily proceeds a holy life. They speak of faith as a mere intellectual state or conviction, and not as an act of trust, and of committal of the whole being, to do and suffer all the will of God. They speak of repentance as if it were a mere involuntary sorrow for sin. They do not teach that repentance is a change of mind towards God, a renunciation of the self-seeking spirit, and a turning of the whole mind to God. They speak of holiness, as if it were a state utterly unattainable in this life. Indeed, I say it with sorrow, but I must say it, the teachings, of a great many ministers is but a stumbling-block to the church. Under their instruction, converts do not, and cannot get so established in grace as to be greatly useful, or to live lives that are honorable to Christ. Just think in the Nineteenth Century, ministers preach to converts that they must grow in grace by works. Be heaven and earth amazed at this! Such teachers do not know how to grow in grace themselves. Shall I be accounted harsh if I say, "They be blind leaders of the blind."

4. We see the reason of so much backsliding. Converts will of course backslide who are led by false instruction. It on the one hand, they are set to work out sanctification by works, their works will soon become dead works, and not be the result of that faith that works by love. If, on the other hand, they are crammed with abstract notions and doctrines, and taught to rest in an antinomian faith, they will sink into supineness and inactivity. I fully believe that in nearly all cases where there has been disastrous reaction after a revival, it has been owing to the want of timely and proper instruction. But to be timely and proper, it must be anointed instruction.

5. The Theological Seminaries need to pay vastly more attention to the growth in grace of their students. They need a professor of experimental religion, who has experience and power enough to press them along into those higher regions of Christian experience which are essential to their being able to lead the church on to victory. It is amazing to see how little effort is made to cultivate the heart of young men studying for the ministry. We must have a change in this respect. A much higher standard of Christian experience must be required as a condition of ordination. It is painful to see how carefully men will be examined in regard to their intellectual attainments, while the accounts they give of their Christian experience will barely allow us to hope that they have been converted. How sad it is to set such young men to feed the church of God. How do old Christians mourn, when they see the appointed leaders in the church of God but spiritual babes.

6. I have never been present at the examination of a candidate for ordination where anything more than simple evidence of conversion was required of him. I never heard them questioned touching their progress in Christian experience, and regarding their spiritual ability to lead the flock of God into green pastures and beside the still waters. I never heard them questioned in a manner that manifested the slightest conception of what are the indispensable spiritual qualifications of a man who is to stand forth as the leader and spiritual instructor of the church of God. More hours are spent in ascertaining the intellectual attainments of a candidate than minutes to ascertain his spiritual and experimental attainments. The whole examination will plainly indicate that the ordaining body lay very little stress on this part of a minister's

education. Is it any wonder that the church of God is so feeble and inefficient, while its leaders and teachers are, many of them, mere children in spiritual knowledge, while a ripe Christian experience is made no part of the indispensable education of a minister. Why, this is infinitely more dangerous and ridiculous than to intrust men to lead an army in the field, while they merely understand mathematics, and never have had any training or experience in military matters.

In this respect, too, there must be a great change. Churches should refuse to ordain and receive pastors, unless they are fully satisfied of their having made much progress in Christian experience, so as to be able to lead on, and keep the church awake.

They should insist upon the education of his heart as well as his head; upon his ability to take young converts, and conduct them on to those deep experiences that will make them stable and efficient workers in the cause of God. Think of theological seminaries like those over which Dr. Chalmers and Dr. Pond have presided, where the leaders of the church of God are taught that sanctification or growth in grace is attained by works and not by faith. Tell it not in Gath. Alas for Zion, when her great and good men fall into such mistakes.

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