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SESSION 3 | GOD'S PROVISION: THE MOTIVES AND MEANS FOR OUR GROWTH IN GRACE

"Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity." 2 Peter 3.18

CLASS OVERVIEW

Week One: Understanding our Goal: Growth in Grace

Week Two: Christ-like Lives: The Marks of Growth in Grace

Week Three: God's Provision: The Motives and Means for our Growth in Grace

Week Four: The Local Church: The Context for our Growth in Grace

UNDERSTANDING OUR GOAL: GROWING IN GRACE

"For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works." Titus 2.11-14

RECAP

- God's grace saves us and God's grace trains us
- Justification – "an instantaneous legal act of God in which he (1) thinks of our sins as forgiven and Christ's righteousness as belonging to us, and (2) declares us to be righteous in his sight."¹
- Sanctification – "a progressive work of God and man that makes us more and more free from sin and like Christ in our actual lives."²

¹ Wayne Grudem, *Bible Doctrine*, (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI) 316

² *Ibid.*, 326

I. Motives

A. Gratefulness to God

“Q. What must you know to live and die in the joy of this comfort?

A. Three things:

first, how great my sin and misery are;
second, how I am set free from all my sins and misery;
third, how I am to thank God for such deliverance.”³

“Our pleasure and our duty though opposite before,
since we have seen his beauty are joined to part no more.”⁴

“To see the law by Christ fulfilled and hear his pardoning voice, changes a
slave into a child and duty into choice.”⁵

B. God’s Glory

Ephesians 5:1 “Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.”

1 Corinthians 10:31 “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to
the glory of God.”

“Q. 1. What is the chief end of man?

A. Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.”⁶

C. A Desire to Be Holy

1 Peter 1:13-16: 13 Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being
sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at
the revelation of Jesus Christ. 14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to
the passions of your former ignorance, 15 but as he who called you is holy, you
also be holy in all your conduct, 16 since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I
am holy.”

³ *Heidelberg Catechism*, Q&A 2.

⁴ John Newton. Hymn 3 as quoted in *The Transforming Power of the Gospel*, Jerry Bridges, 74.

⁵ William Cowper, *Love Constrained in Obedience* as quoted in *The Transforming Power of the Gospel*, Jerry Bridges, 74.

⁶ *Westminster Confession of Faith*, Q&A 1.

D. Three truths that enable this motivation:

1. **Our union with Christ:** 2 Cor 5:17-21; Rom 8; Col 2:6-7

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. ¹⁸All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself.”

2. **Christ’s love compelling us:** 2 Cor 5:14-15

“For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; ¹⁵and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.”

3. **The Spirit lives inside of us:** Ez 26, 27; Rom 8; Gal 5; 1 Cor 6:19

“A new heart I will give you and a new spirit I will put within you . . . I will put my Spirit within you and *cause you to walk* in my statutes.”

II. Means of Grace

What are means?

“Ways by which we can regularly have our faith in His promises fortified.”⁷ John Piper refers to this idea as “putting yourself in the paths of blessing.”

So our question should be “What paths has God set up for us to nourish, excite, and strengthen our souls?”⁸

A. Reading, Hearing & Studying the Bible

Psalm 19:7-11:

The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; ⁸the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; ⁹the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. ¹⁰More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. ¹¹Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

⁷ Ligonier Ministries Devotionals, Means of Grace

⁸ Adapted from David Mathis’ post, “Put Yourself in the Path of God’s Grace” on DesiringGod.org

What God's Word is for us:

- True and trustworthy
- Active and at work
- Worth treasuring

Other passages to look at: Ps 1; Ps 119; Heb 4:12; Prov 2:1-15; Isa 55:10

B. Prayer

Heb 4:16 "Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

James 5:16b-18 "The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. ¹⁷ Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. ¹⁸ Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit."

Romans 8:15-17 "For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" ¹⁶ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him."

"Prayer establishes communion between us and the Creator, thereby empowering us for belief and faithful, effective service."⁹

Other passages to look at: Matt 6, Ps 32:6, Ps 69:13, Phil 1

C. Worship & Singing

"Just as an indescribable sunset or a breathtaking mountaintop vista evokes a spontaneous response, so we cannot encounter the worthiness of God without the response of worship."¹⁰

Revelation 5:11-14 "¹¹ Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, ¹² saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" ¹³ And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!" ¹⁴ And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" and the elders fell down and worshiped."

Scriptures to look at: Rev 5:12-13; John 4:23-24; Ps 37:4; Ps 95-96; Ps 117; Ps 145-150

⁹ Ligonier Ministries Devotionals, "Means of Grace"

¹⁰ Donald Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, (Navpress, Colorado Springs, CO) 87.

D. Fellowship & Community

“²⁴ Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near” (Heb 10:24-25).

Know this, that in our age “It is possible to socialize without having fellowship.”¹¹

Scriptures to look at: Heb 10:24-25; Eph 4:11-16; Heb 3:13; Prov 15:22; Prov 21:2

E. Serving

“⁴ Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵ and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; ⁶ and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. ⁷ To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (1 Cor 12:4-7)

Three truths to note:

- God has given gifts to all believers – 1 Cor 12:7
- God is at work, regardless of the gift – 1 Cor 12:4-6
- God uses gifts to bless others – 1 Cor 12:7

Activities in the life of our church:

- Children’s ministry
- Set-up & tear down
- Greeting
- Band and signing
- Sound & video
- Security
- Leading a community group
- Babysitting for families (community group and/or date night)

Scriptures to look at: Eph 4:11-16; Rom 12:4-8; 1 Cor 12; 1 Cor 14

F. The Sacraments

What are “sacraments”?

“Sacraments are visible, holy signs and seals. They were instituted by God so that by our use of them he might make us understand more clearly the promise of the gospel, and seal that promise.”¹²

- Baptism – Matt 28:19-20
- Lord’s Supper – 1 Cor. 11:23-26

¹¹ Whitney, 241.

¹² Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 66.

Two pivotal promises:

“First, as surely as I see with my eyes the bread of the Lord broken for me and the cup shared with me, so surely his body was offered and broken for me and his blood poured out for me on the cross.

Second, as surely as I receive from the hand of the one who serves, and taste with my mouth the bread and cup of the Lord, given me as sure signs of Christ's body and blood, so surely he nourishes and refreshes my soul for eternal life with his crucified body and poured-out blood.”¹³

G. Evangelism

“To present Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit to sinful people, in order that they may come to put their trust in God through Him, to receive Him as their Savior, and serve Him as their King in the fellowship of His Church.”¹⁴

2 Corinthians 5:20-21: “²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

Scriptures to look at: Acts 1:8; Matt 28:18-20; 1 Peter 3:15

H. Fasting

Simply put, fasting is abstaining from food for spiritual purposes.¹⁵

Jesus Matthew 6:16-18 - “¹⁶ “And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ¹⁷ But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

Purposes in Fasting (examples)¹⁶:

- To strengthen prayer
- To seek God's guidance
- To express grief
- To seek deliverance or protection
- To express repentance and return to God
- To humble oneself before God
- To express concern for the work of God
- To minister to the needs of others
- To overcome temptation and dedicate yourself to God

¹³ Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 75.

¹⁴ Whitney, 100.

¹⁵ Adapted from Whitney, 160.

¹⁶ Whitney, 164-179.

Though other forms of fasting are mentioned in the Scriptures, the two most typical forms are a partial fast or normal fast:

- Partial fasts are when the diet is limited to certain foods or drinks.
- Normal fasts are usually without food, but not from water.

I. Giving & Stewardship

We give primarily of our time and our money knowing that:

- Our time is limited on earth
- God owns everything
- Giving pleases God
- Giving guards our hearts
- Giving builds the church

Scriptures to look at: Eph 5:16; Matt 6; 2 Cor 9:7; Hag 2:8; Ps 24:1; Job 41:11; Ex 19:5

III. Encouragement for the Road Ahead

A. Aim for consistency

B. Start slowly

C. Express your need daily