

May 9

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neither necessary nor advisable to be established in the faith is...that to be established is to be a bigot. And so it is if one is so unfair in mind as to accept and tenaciously hold that which he has never proved either by sound logic or Bible authority. But he is not an unreasoning bigot who, in simple faith, on the authority of God, accepts the

Word of God. And such, and only such, as do so are established in the Truth. The difference between a strong and steadfast Christian and a bigot is that the one is established in the Truth, while the other is established in error. Z./03-199 R3215:2

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"TREES OF RIGHTEOUSNESS"

"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him, rooted and built up in Him, and established in the Faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving."-- Colossians 2:6,7

THE context from which our text is taken seems to show that the Apostle is contrasting with the Gospel hope the various hopes which might go to establish one in some kind of faith, some kind of belief, some kind of course in life. But he is addressing those especially who have already accepted Jesus Christ as God's Representative --those who believe that God has sent His Son into the world to be the Redeemer of the race of Adam, and by and by to be the Deliverer of mankind from the power of sin and death. All those who are in Christ Jesus have received Him with this understanding. This is the only Message which God has sent; this is "the faith which was once delivered to the saints."

DIVINE VS. HUMAN MESSAGE

The Apostle Paul urged those to whom he wrote to continue in this faith, and not to try to combine earthly philosophy with this Heavenly Message. As they had received Christ as God's Anointed and their Sufficiency in all things--the One "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," in whom "dwelleth all the fulness of the Deity bodily"--so they were to walk. As they had recognized Him as the Heavenly Teacher, so they were to continue to make progress in the same way--the path that leads to glory, honor and immortality. They were not to think for one moment that any human teaching could be mixed with the Divine Message; for any other doctrine would serve only to confuse the Heavenly Message in the minds of the hearers.

This would not mean, however, that the teachings of the Apostles were to be ignored, for the Master especially informed the Church that His Twelve Apostles would be His mouthpieces. It would, however, guard us against any supposition that there would be any other teaching or any other Church to take the place of Jesus and His Apostles. To these He declared that whatsoever things they would bind on earth would be bound in Heaven, and whatsoever things they would loose on earth would be loosed in Heaven.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE SPIRITUAL PLANT

Having stated the matter in this way, the Apostle then uses a forceful illustration to show how we are to progress in Christ. Turning from the figure of a man walking in Christ as a member of His Body, St. Paul gives us the picture of a tree, the root of which goes downward and the trunk of which reaches upward, to obtain that nourishment which will give it strength and stability. As the roots of a tree push themselves downward and imbibe the nutriment of the soil, while at the same time the trunk and the branches reach up into the atmosphere to obtain through the leaves the necessary elements of growth, so the mentality of the Christian takes hold of the great and precious promises of the Word of God, while at the same time he is building character through his heart appreciation of these promises, in connection with the experiences of life. The roots of faith push down deep into the knowledge of the Divine Plan, while the tree of character grows higher and higher, developing and maturing the rich fruits of the Holy Spirit of God; for instruction is a form of construction.

While the Christian is thus growing up in character-likeness to our Redeemer, and his roots of faith are reaching deep down into the deep things of the Word of God, he is becoming established, settled. A tree that is well rooted in the earth is hard to uproot. It has a wonderful strength, a wonderful hold upon the earth, and requires years to die out. So it is with the Christian whose faith has been properly established; he should be so fixed, so established in the promises of God's Word, that no wind of doctrine could overturn his faith.

Whoever is continually looking around for something new is thus demonstrating the fact that he is not established in the Faith. Having once made sure that the Divine Plan is the Plan of God, we should not permit ourselves to be moved away from that position. On all Christians who are thus rooted and grounded in the Scriptures the theories of our day--Evolution, Christian Science, New Thought, etc.--have no effect whatever. No Christian growth will be developed nor spiritual life retained unless the soul becomes fixed and

settled in the Truth as it is in Christ Jesus.

ONE CAUSE OF SPIRITUAL DECAY

When once we have seen the Plan of God as revealed in Jesus, and have given ourselves to God and the study of His Word, the only way to retain our spiritual life is to continue in this doctrine, to root ourselves in this soil and remain there. We are not to seek other fields with the thought that we can receive additional nourishment there, and that an admixture of other elements with what we have will be advantageous. No theories will mix with the Lord's Plan. It is complete; it needs no assistance from other systems of belief. Any attempt to incorporate with it theories and ideas of men will only destroy its value. We can never become rooted and built up in Christ by such a course; our spiritual decay, and finally our spiritual death, would be the result.

No child of God can be carried about by every wind of doctrine; nor can he indulge in a morbid curiosity as to what this or that new theory may teach. To do so is very dangerous to the spirituality of a Christian. For one who has never known the Truth there might be some reason for such a course, but for one who has once thoroughly proven what is the Truth in Christ to go hunting around for new pastures in which to feed, there is no excuse. Either he has never been established in Christ, or else he has fallen into a spiritual decline. There is an exhaustless field for thought and for mental and spiritual activity in the Plan of God in all its varied features.

We believe that God purposed to have a Seed of Abraham through whom a blessing would come to all the families of the earth. Those who look for the fulfilment of this Promise realize that Christ is the Seed of Abraham and that His work is to fulfil this Promise. For this purpose He came into the world. Later on, the Church learn that not only Christ Jesus, the Head, but also the Church, His Body, are sharing in the same faith, the same Promise made to Abraham. Each individual called has the opportunity of coming in, of exercising his faith, and of being built up as a member of the Body of Christ. By this time the Body of Christ must be nearly complete. The hour is at hand when this glorious Seed of Abraham is to take hold of the affairs of earth and bring in "the Restitution of all things spoken by the mouth of all the Holy Prophets since the world began."--Acts 3:19-21.

As a tree does not breathe the same element at all times, and as it is not always flooded with sunshine, but needs also the rains and storms for its development, so the child of God needs varied experiences and sometimes change of environment to best develop all the fruits of the Holy Spirit. The great Husbandman knows just what experiences and surroundings each one of his "trees" needs--how much sunshine, how much rain, how much cold and how much heat, how much pruning--and He will supply just what is best adapted to each case. He knows how to vary these conditions, environments, etc., without disturbing the process of rooting and upbuilding, but developing it. This we do not know how to accomplish, but would bring upon ourselves spiritual disaster. So we need to keep ourselves continually under the care of the skilful Husbandman and earnestly co-operate with Him, that we may grow and become strong and immovable--firmly established.

DEPTH OF ROOT SHOWN IN VIGOR AND FRUITAGE

The depth and the spread of the roots of a tree are shown by the vigor and the fruitage of the tree. A tree that is not deeply and firmly grounded can neither bring forth rich, luscious fruit nor furnish cool, refreshing shade to man. Depth of root is absolutely essential. So the Christian's faith must be deeply grounded in Christ; and thus shall we also grow up into Him, learning more and more what is the Divine will as expressed in Him. The rooting process is unseen, and can be judged only by its outward manifestations. When there is luxuriant foliage there is good rooting. But the growth must not stop there; fruit must be borne. And so the spiritual life of the child of God will manifest itself more and more in its likeness to Christ. To vary the figure, the Christian will not only be a branch in the Vine,

but will bear rich clusters of fruit, which should become more choice in quality and size year by year.

We sometimes see Christians who have little knowledge of worldly things and yet have deep spirituality, very deep rooting and grounding in Christ, a clear insight into the deep things of God, and a rich Christian experience. Perhaps their knowledge of the usages of polite society is less than that of many others of their brethren; they may have had fewer opportunities to learn all these details; and yet their ripe attainments in Christ may shame some who are more outwardly correct according to the social standards of the world. How careful we should be that our standards of judgment and our estimates of character are fashioned after the pattern of the Master; that we look beneath the surface; that we note rather the real, the essential traits, than any outward peculiarities of the flesh which in the sight of the Lord would have no weight in deciding the quality of the character or the place in the Kingdom.

SUGGESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

If we are to be the judges of the world in the next Age, how shall we be fitted for this position, if we do not learn now how to take the proper viewpoint, the Lord's viewpoint, in our estimates of our brethren? If our love and our esteem for them is gaged by trifles, yea, by matters even unworthy of notice in the eyes of the Lord, are we developing the qualities of character which will fit us to be the judges of the incoming Age? How are we growing up into Christ in all things? Let us judge ourselves rigidly along these lines, that we may indeed become like the Master and win His final approval.

The Apostle urges that we become established in the faith. This term refers to "the faith which was once delivered to the saints"--the one Faith. This is to hold at all costs. Satan will attempt to divert our minds into other channels, to draw our attention to some new thing. But the Plan of God, the Truth of God, as revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord, is but one. It is given us for our instruction in righteousness, "that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work." (2 Timothy 3:17.) It is not the truth of Geometry or Trigonometry or Geology or Astronomy or any other science that we are to be diligent to study and be grounded and built up in, but God's Word. (John 17:17.) These other truths are very well in their way, but we have little time to study these now. We shall have all eternity in which to learn all the wonders of creation, but now we are to apply ourselves especially to the mastery of spiritual Truth, the deep things of the Mystery of God, revealed to His saints for a specific purpose.

AN ESTABLISHED CHRISTIAN NOT A BIGOT

The Truth embraces all the Scriptural teachings relative to Christ and His work, to our relationship to Him as members of His Body, and to the brethren as fellow-members. We are to abide therein with thanksgiving. We should familiarize ourselves with the different features of this Truth more and more. We should be clear in regard to what our Lord taught and why He taught it, and should know how to connect the different parts of the Truth into a harmonious whole. We are to be *thoroughly* furnished. We are heartily to appreciate the loving kindness of our God in revealing to us these glorious things, and to realize that we did not originate them ourselves, nor was any man the originator of them, but the Lord Himself. They are the Gift of God to us, and we are to be most thankful for this great Gift, to guard it jealously as a priceless treasure, and to let our light shine to the glory of God's name.

The general sentiment among the teachers of false doctrine, and even among the world in general, who do not believe in the necessity or the advisability of being established in faith, is that to be established is to be bigoted. Those who are so unfair in mind as to receive and tenaciously hold what they have never proven, either by sound logic or by the authority of the Word of God, are rightly called bigots. But one who in simple, childlike faith accepts and firmly holds to what God has inspired, what He has caused to be written in His Word for our instruction, is not a bigot, but a strong, established character, and will stand when all the structures built upon the numerous theories and imaginings of men shall have fallen. The great

UNWISE WORDS MAY STUMBLE OTHERS

R1535 "Dear Brother Russell: -- I appeal to you for some assistance... I was not until lately a Christian; because nothing in Christianity drew me; but, rather, the contradictory doctrines of the various denominations repelled me, and caused me to doubt the Book (the Bible) from which so many conflicting views could be drawn...

But when I had read the DAWN⁽⁴⁾ series... I found what my soul had long unwittingly hungered and thirsted after... I found harmony in God's Word;--I found the plan of God therein revealed in fullest accord with my highest and noblest reasoning faculties and sympathies; I found it full of love,

⁽⁴⁾ The six Volumes of DAWN were later named "STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES"

Day now upon us is trying every man's character-structure, of what sort it is, and but very few, even among professed Christians, will stand the test.

The few who will pass safely through this crucial trial without loss are those only who have become established in the Truth of God, "rooted and grounded and built up into Christ." The difference between a strong and steadfast Christian and a bigot is that one is established in Truth, and the other is established in error. The "fire" of this Day will continue to burn and to manifest the great difference between the two classes, until all have been tested and tried and found worthy or unworthy.

IMPORTANCE OF SELF-SCRUTINY

The Apostle's words in our text lead each child of God back to the time when he first made his own consecration. Under what conditions did we come into Christ? We recall that it required much humility on our part to acknowledge that we were sinners, utterly unable to save ourselves. Some seem to forget the way in which they started. They started with faith and humility and meekness, and with the desire to be truly built up into the Master's likeness. But they seem by degrees to lose sight of this, and begin to grow in another direction than straight upward into the fulness of Christ. They like to make some show before the world. They come to neglect the first principles of Christian development, while still talking about the doctrines, or making up doctrines of their own.

Thus gradually these get away from the doctrines and the Spirit of Christ. The Apostle puts us on guard against these dangers: Are you sure that you ever really received Christ? Are you sure that you ever actually made a full consecration to God and became a New Creature? You should know this. If you did, then make sure that you are progressing in His likeness. Without careful scrutiny, you might think you are progressing when you are not. The Narrow Way remains narrow unto the end of the journey; a mere profession of faith and a certain round of observances are not sufficient. Remember that we are to confess the Lord by our looks, by our manner, by all the acts and words of life.

Only by continual scrutiny of ourselves in the light of God's Word can we make real progress in the narrow way in which our Master walked. Truth is to become brighter and fuller and more luminous as we go onward. To this end, we must keep close to the Word and in line with His Program. The Lord will not accept little, undeveloped sprouts for the Kingdom, but He wants those that have grown and matured--strong, sturdy "trees of righteousness."--Isaiah 61:3.

GOD'S WORD ALONE WILL UPBUILD

Delve into the promises of God more and more. As you do this, the roots of faith will draw up the nutriment and send it out into your life, and you will grow, just as a tree grows, because nourished, fed. Thus alone will you become established in *The Faith*, and not in your imaginings nor the imaginings of others. Our faith is to grow stronger and more vigorous day by day. It is not to be a faith in ourselves or in anything apart from the Lord. Faith is what we started with in the beginning, and we shall need it in increasing measure as we go on in our upward way--faith in God and in His sure Word. All that we know as children of the Lord has come to us through the channel of Jesus, His holy Apostles, and the Prophets of old, and we are to continue feeding at this same table with thanksgiving.

We are not to feel a spirit of bondage, and say to ourselves, "I would like to ramble outside; I do not like to confine myself merely to what the Bible teaches. I would like more liberty." This disposition is not the spirit of a true son of God. Such sentiments encouraged would lead to utter spiritual disaster. All such temptations, if they come, must be promptly and positively resisted. Our spirit should be one of deepest gratitude and thankfulness that we have been granted this glorious Divine Revelation. Following thus in the Lord's way, we find the only true joy, and can make the only true progress. "If ye do these things, ye shall never fall, for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."--2 Peter 1:10,11.

full of justice and full of wisdom.

Joyfully I exclaimed.--These DAWN volumes are the Bible keys which God himself has sent to his people; that now, at last, after centuries of darkness and perplexity, we may "see light in his light," and praise and glorify his name, and get fully free from the bondage of error, and enjoy the true liberty of the sons of God!

As you know, I entered the colporteur work; --I gave myself zealously to that work

(selling over a thousand DAWNS in eleven weeks), because I believed that thus I was preaching the gospel more successfully and more acceptably to God than in any other way. But now I have stopped; because doubts have been aroused in my mind (and these by a brother colporteur)...

He differed with its teachings on several points, and in some meetings, which we attended, he seemed to ignore the DAWN entirely. When one older than I in "this way" manifested such lack of confidence in the DAWNS, it shook my confidence, and I said to him, "Were not the DAWNS and WATCH TOWER the channels through which God brought the knowledge of his plan of the ages to your attention? And, if so, why are you ashamed to confess the agency which God thus honored and used to bless you? And if you know more truth than the DAWN and the TOWER present, and in conflict with their teachings, why do you circulate them?" The answer was that I would make of you a pope; and that even some parts of the Bible are errors.

But I was honest and in earnest, and concluded to sell no more DAWNS until I felt sure that they present the truth... It was about this time that the Adversary brought me in contact with the so-called *Spirit of the Word* which for a few days threatened to ensnare me. But I soon discovered that not the spirit of God's Word but the spirit of error forwarded its teachings...

I turned again to the DAWNS and TOWERS, and again the peace and joy and confidence began to come... The fact that no other view harmonizes the entire Bible and rejects none of it, and the fact that the DAWN does this, would seem to my mind to prove that the DAWN had, either directly or indirectly, God's direction and providential leading in its preparation.

I note, Brother Russell, how carefully and modestly you disclaim any special revelations... On the contrary, you claim that all such revelations, etc., ended with the twelve apostles, and that all subsequent light comes through their writings; and that the fact that the much fuller light now shining upon the divine plan is simply because God's *due time* has come for solving "the mystery"...

Now, excuse the question, please,--Does the Brother I mention know more about the plan of God than you do? Or do you know anything wrong with the DAWNS, that you could correct if writing them to-day? As I said at first, I am but a "babe" in Christ and in the truth, but I desire the truth--the clearest truth to be obtained, and want to spend myself entirely in its service. Help me, I pray, to get settled again on a sure, firm foundation; for I have no desire to deceive myself or others.

Your brother in love, fellowship and His service, _____.

IN REPLY

[...We publish the above, and our answer, for the sake of others; advising all the dear

reapers to be cautious lest the "babes" be even unintentionally choked.--EDITOR.]

DEAR BROTHER: -- I am much pleased with your earnest spirit; and I fully agree with your sentiment that, in consecrating our time, influence and all to the Lord and his truth, it is our duty to use every reasonable means to know just what is Truth. You did perfectly right in stopping your sale of DAWN when in doubt about its truthful representation of God's great plan. Honesty toward God and toward fellow men demanded this of you...

While the sympathy and companionship of fellow-servants are pleasant and desirable, it is needful for each of his servants to have on a personal armor that he may be able always to give an answer concerning his *own hope* (regardless of the hopes and doubts of others) with meekness. (1 Pet. 3:15)...

Now, dear Brother, begin again; and, taking your BIBLE and the DAWNS, study the Plan of the Ages in the light of God's Word, and become rooted and grounded and built up in the present truth. (Col. 2:7.) When thus convinced of God's Word, the doubts and fears of others, on subjects thus proved and fully tested for yourself by the only standard, will not affect your faith, but strengthen you. But let not your strength rest in yourself,--in your own wisdom and knowledge which would merely puff you up and speedily make you unfit for present usefulness, as well as unworthy of the future Kingdom glories, promised to the faithful meek. Neither must you lean upon the DAWN and the TOWER as infallible teachers. If it was proper for the early Christians to prove what they received from the apostles, who were and who claimed to be inspired, how much more important it is that you fully satisfy yourself that these teachings keep closely within their outline instructions and those of our Lord;-- since their author claims no inspiration, but merely the *guidance* of the Lord, as one used of him in feeding his flock.

I trust, dear Brother, that, as you examine these publications, that may seem to you to be true of the author which the Apostle Paul said of himself: "We preach not ourselves, but Christ,--the power of God and the wisdom of God." Whether successful or not, others must judge, and especially the Lord; but I ever seek to hold forth the Word of Life. (Phil. 2:16.) True, it has been held forth in my hands (powers), but never as my Word. Hence in no sense have I, as a pope, taken the place of Christ before his Church.

Indeed, time and again I have seen that the teachings of those who make utterances of their own, but in the name of Christ, by claimed inspiration, or special revelations, or boasted wisdom (which is the real spirit of popery), and without proof from the Scripture, are received by many...

The world will be deceived, and merely so-called Christians also; because error will come in the way that will appeal to

their expectations -- boastfully; but God is now seeking a special "little flock" which always hearkens to the voice of the Chief Shepherd, and flees from all undershepherds who do not echo his words and have his spirit of meekness and simplicity.--Phil. 3:16-18...

And now about brother-colporteurs: ... I regret that any of them should be so unwise in their utterances... I have too much confidence in them all to suppose that any would remain in this harvest work if he had lost confidence in the tools...

The only explanation I can offer of the language you quote is that possibly he thought you were in danger of loving the servant who showed you the truth more than the Lord who gave it to you through the servant. And let us hope it was zeal for the Lord that led him to the other extreme...

The remark, that "all of the Bible is not true," may merely have meant that some very ancient manuscripts of the Bible... were added by unknown parties somewhere between the fifth and tenth centuries. (Of these are Mark 16:9-20; John 21:25; Matt. 23:14; and parts of 1 John 5:7,8 and of Rev. 20:5; besides a few of very minor importance, affecting the sense little or nothing.) Or he may have been drifting, as so many are in these days, into a general doubt of the Bible, and of all except their own so-called "higher criticism:" ... His expression was unwise; because his meaning was not made clear to you, and led you into doubts and fears and questionings, instead of establishing you in the Faith...

As for his holding variant views on any doctrine of importance taught in the DAWN and TOWER, I think that very improbable; and hence that his wiser way would have been to have ignored motes and trifles unworthy to be mentioned with the blessed truths now shining upon and refreshing us all. (And I may here answer one of your questions by saying that, if I knew of errors in the DAWN, I assuredly would contradict and correct them.)

Besides, let us remember that the colporteurs also are fallible, and often subjects of special temptations,--as are all public representatives of the truth. (Matt. 18:1; Luke 22:24; Num. 16:3-9.)...

Our observation, covering several years, is that those who love the truth, but are ashamed of the channel through which God sends it, never prosper in it, but finally lose it as well as its spirit. "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted, and he that exalteth himself shall be abased," is God's rule...

Let ambition of the flesh die in you, dear Brother, and take instead that "fervency of spirit, serving the Lord," which the Apostle enjoins;--an ambition to be and to do, simply and solely, to please and to serve our great Redeemer, and through him the Father. To do this, "Keep yourself in the love of God," and "let it dwell in you richly and abound." ... C. T. RUSSELL"

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"GROW IN GRACE"

"Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

To him be glory both now and forever. Amen."--2 Pet. 3:17,18

THERE is a touching tenderness in the epistles of the aged Apostle Peter to the household of faith, showing that, while he realized that the time of his departure was drawing nigh (2 Pet. 1:14;

John 21:18,19), his solicitude for the growth and development of the Church was increasing. Accordingly, he writes two general epistles, not so much to advance new truth, as to call to remembrance truths

already learned and fully received (2 Pet. 1:12-15), and to counsel all to faithfulness and to growth in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

In the preceding verses he has been calling to mind some of these truths, and he recognizes the fact that those addressed are already established in them; but, in view of his knowledge that false teachers would arise to pervert the truth, he counsels special watchfulness against being led away from their present steadfastness by the error of the wicked. That this counsel of the Apostle has a special fitness to the Church in the last days, our days, and was evidently so designed by the Spirit of God, is clear from verse 3--"There shall come in the last days scoffers," etc.

Let us observe the manner in which the Apostle would have us guard against being led away by the error of the wicked. Is it by a careful investigation of all the claims which every new false prophet that arises may intrude upon our attention, thus giving heed to every seducing spirit (1 Tim. 4:1)? No: that would be quite contrary to the teaching of "our beloved brother Paul," to whom Peter so affectionately refers, and whom he so fully endorses; for Paul had given no uncertain counsel on this subject; saying, "Shun profane and vain babblings; for they will increase unto more ungodliness, and their word will eat as doth a canker;" and "I entreat you, brethren, to mark those who are making factions and laying snares contrary to the teaching which you have learned, and turn away from them; for they that are such are not in subjection to our anointed Lord, but to their own appetite [for honor and praise among men, as great teachers--1 Tim. 1:6,7]; and by kind and complimentary words they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting. ...I wish you to be wise with respect to that which is good, and harmless with respect to that which is evil."--2 Tim. 2:16,17; Rom. 16:17-19.

Peter felt the force of Paul's wise and earnest counsel, and with emphasis re-echoed the same sentiments. To give heed to such seducing doctrines, contrary to the doctrine which we have already received from the Lord and the apostles, argues a lack of faith in those doctrines. Such a one is not *established* in the faith. And indeed there are those--and such is ⁽¹⁾the general sentiment among the teachers of false doctrine-- who think that it is not either necessary or advisable to be established in the faith. To be established is to be a bigot, is the idea they advance. And so it is, if one is so unfair in mind as to accept and tenaciously hold that which he has never proved either by sound logic or Bible authority. But he is not an unreasoning bigot who, in simple faith, on the authority of God, accepts the Word of God. And such, and only such, as do so are established in the truth. The difference between the strong and steadfast Christian and a bigot is that the one is established in the truth, while the other is established in error. The former knows the truth, and the truth has made him free from all doubts and misgivings, and from all desire to delve into the muddy pool of human speculations. To all such Paul says, "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him, rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught [by us, the apostles], abounding therein with thanksgiving."--But, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."--Col. 2:6-8.

With these sentiments of "our beloved brother Paul," Peter's counsel is in fullest harmony, his advice being, not to waste valuable time in investigating "the errors of the wicked;" but, on the contrary, to endeavor the more earnestly to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ," who is the way, the truth and the life. The more thorough our knowledge of the Lord and the more intimate our acquaintance with him, the more secure we are in our own steadfastness.

But ⁽²⁾what is it to grow in grace? It is to grow in favor with the Lord through an intimate personal acquaintance and fellowship of spirit with him. It implies, first, a knowledge and recognition on our part of our redemption through his precious blood and a personal faith in and dependence upon all the promises of the Father made to us through him, and then an intimate communion with him in our daily life of prayer, and of observation of his will and obedience to it. If such be our constant attitude of mind and heart, there must be a constant ripening of the fruits of the spirit, rendering us more and more pleasing and acceptable to our Lord. A sense of the divine acceptance and favor is given to us from day to day in increasing

measure, in fulfilment of that blessed promise of our Lord, "If a man love me he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."-- John 14:23.

This, as nearly as words can express it, is what it is to grow in grace; but the full and blessed understanding of it is best appreciated by those who from day to day walk with God in faith and obedience and love.

⁽³⁾To grow thus in grace and not grow in knowledge is impossible; for the very object of such communion is to build us up in a more perfect knowledge and acquaintance with the Lord--to bring us into closer fellowship with the divine plan, and to give us the privilege of being "workers together with him" in executing that plan. If, therefore, we love and obey the Lord and desire to grow in his favor, his written Word is our daily meditation and study; and thus we grow in knowledge: not, however, by finding out each year that what we learned last year was false, but by adding to what we learned last year, by putting on more and more of the armor of God until we realize its glorious completeness in the full discernment of the divine plan of the ages. We are then ready to do valiant service for the cause of truth in withstanding the encroachment of error (Eph. 6:10-13), being established, strengthened and settled in the faith (1 Pet. 5:10.) But even to those thus established in the faith there is abundant opportunity to grow in knowledge; for while they will see nothing new or different in outline or design, they will be continually charmed and cheered with newly discovered lines of harmony and beauty in the divine drawings of the wonderful plan of the ages. As pupils we may ever study the master workmanship of the Divine Architect,

"And still new beauties shall we see,

And still increasing light."

Our beloved brother Peter, zealous for our growth in knowledge, endeavors to inspire us thereto, by calling our attention to the wonderful events and the close proximity of the day of the Lord; saying,--

"The day of the Lord will come as a thief [unobserved by the world], in the which the heavens [present ecclesiastical powers] shall pass away with a great noise [tumult and confusion], and the elements [the various parties and sects composing it, split and torn by discordant views] shall melt with fervent heat [the heat of public discussion and investigation]: the earth also [society as at present organized under civil and ecclesiastical authority] and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (destroyed, in the strife and friction caused by increasing knowledge combined with selfishness. This will not be a literal fire, but, as described by the prophets, the fire of divine jealousy--Zeph. 1:18; 3:8). (2 Pet. 3:10.) Already the noise and tumult, which shall thus eventuate in world-wide anarchy, are distinctly heard in every nation: for the day of the Lord has indeed begun, and the heat of human passion is growing more and more intense daily, and the great time of trouble is very near.

"Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved [seeing that present arrangements and institutions shall all go down], what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens [the present ruling powers] shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?" Let us indeed lay to heart this solemn question, for we stand in the very presence of the Judge of all the earth. These words, while addressed to God's people eighteen centuries ago, and serving a purpose for good all along down this Gospel age, are specially meant by the spirit for us, who are living in this very Day of God.

"Nevertheless, we [we who have come into covenant relationship with the Lord--we, unlike the rest of the world, know of the divine plan and], according to his promise, look for new heavens [the Kingdom of God--to be established in power and great glory] and a new earth [a new organization of society under the rulership of Christ and his glorified bride, the Church] wherein dwelleth righteousness." Blessed assurance! how favored are we above the people of the world who have not this knowledge!

"Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be *diligent* that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless." (2 Pet. 3:11-14.) And Jude (24) reminds us that the Lord, in whose grace and knowledge Peter desires us to grow, "is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." Amen.

⁽¹⁾ May 9 Manna, Col. 2:6-7

⁽²⁾ ½ May 14 Manna, Eph. 4:16

⁽³⁾ ½ May 14 Manna