

# Fulton County Gospel News

*Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World*

“... Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body.” - Ephesians 5:23

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## GROW IN GRACE AND KNOWLEDGE

### Part One

by Lee Moses

*“But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen” (2 Peter 3:18).*

The notion that the Christian can grow in grace should give pause. The grace of God is incomparable, and in many ways inconceivable. Grace is defined as “practical application of goodwill, (a sign of) favor, gracious deed/gift, benefaction.”<sup>1</sup> Certainly there have been those among men who have bestowed grace in this sense. But throughout mankind’s existence, God has bestowed grace far exceeding that of man, nowhere more so than in the grace given through Jesus Christ: “*And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace*” (John 1:16). The grace that a Christian receives is from an inexhaustible supply, continually replenishing him with fresh blessings neither earned nor merited.

But notice that the word of God commands **us** to grow in the grace of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). The process of receiving grace is not an entirely passive process. One’s personal involvement in the process is directly related to the amount of grace he receives. And parallel to one’s growth in grace is his growth in knowledge.

### THE GRACE OF KNOWLEDGE

Knowledge itself is a grace, a sign of God’s favor. That one grows in knowledge demonstrates that there is an absolute standard of objective truth toward which one strives. Otherwise, every man and woman’s “knowledge” would be subjective and on equal footing. There would be no reason to study or “learn” anything, because one’s knowledge could not improve or increase with such efforts, it could only be altered. Yet the apostle Paul wrote, “. . . I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ” (Ephesians 3:3-4). Jesus promised, “*If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*” (John 8:31-32). Knowledge and understanding of the truth is promised to those who “read” and “continue in Jesus’ word.” How wonderful it is to have knowledge of the truth rather than to be aimlessly drifting through an uncertain life! And it is this knowledge which will “make us free”; for Christians “*have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*” (2 Peter 2:20, emphasis added).

Knowledge is absolutely required for the defense of the Christian individually, and of the church collectively, against all perils of the soul.

*This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But ye have not so learned Christ; If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus (Ephesians 4:18-21).*

One who has correctly learned and continues to learn the truth that is in Jesus Christ protects himself against ungodly living, and thereby protects himself against alienation from God. But one who succumbs to ignorance, willfully or otherwise, opens himself to every peril of the soul. And the perils of the soul are greater than they have been in past years; as one considers the rise of fornication, pornography and other forms of sensuality, divorce, drug abuse, materialism, post-

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modernism (basically the denial of absolute truth), liberalism (the loosing of what God has bound), and other evils.

**A DECLINE IN KNOWLEDGE =  
A DECLINE IN GRACE**

The grace of knowledge is needed now more than ever; yet it seems clear that instead of growth in the knowledge of professed Christians, there has been a significant decrease in Biblical knowledge. An elder who can be described as *“Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers”* (Titus 1:9) is now the exception rather than the rule. “Gospel preachers,” completely inept at preaching Scriptural sermons whereby an honest heart could be pricked unto true submission to God, choose instead to amuse their audiences

with light-hearted anecdotes and personal “testimony.” The average person in the pew is no longer able to give Scripture for the most basic of subjects.

It is as wisdom personified asks, *“How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?”* (Proverbs 1:22). Wisdom proceeds to describe the fate of those who chose to disregard knowledge: *“For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD: They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices”* (vv. 29-31). As God lamented concerning post-exilic Israel: *“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children”* (Hosea 4:6).

Peter warns Christians, *“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”* (2 Peter 3:17). Certainly the failure of many of God’s people to arm themselves for the spiritual warfare has allowed Satan to have easy inroads. Perils to the soul so obviously present in society are also painfully present among God’s people. Paul spoke of those who *“creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts”* (2 Timothy 3:6). And there are far

too many of God’s people bearing all the characteristics of these “silly women,” and are thus led captive by Satan away from God’s hand of blessing (compare with Isaiah 59:1-2). If we allow ourselves to continue to diminish in Biblical knowledge, we will continue to diminish in God’s grace. “. . . *But through knowledge shall the just be delivered*” (Proverbs 11:9). [To be continued in June with “How to Grow in Knowledge . . . And in Grace”].

<sup>1</sup> Bauer, Danker, Arndt, and Gingrich, **A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature**, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Chicago: Univ. Of Chicago Press, 2000), pp. 1079-1080.

## A SHAMELESS WORLD

by Chris Perry

It cannot be said that sin’s entrance into the world was a positive event for mankind. Quite the contrary, sin is a disease that *“eats as doth a canker”* (2 Timothy 2:17), and the cure for that disease is *“the gift of God,”* obtained through obedience to Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:8-9). However, if we trace sin back to its roots—the sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden—we might see one somewhat positive thing that accompanied it into the newly-fallen world: shame. Concerning the sin in the Garden, it is recorded:

*And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make*

*one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons* (Genesis 3:7-8).

Prior to this sinful act, *“they [Adam and Eve] were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed”* (2:25). Immediately after their transgression, however, they were overcome with feelings of shame—shame over their nakedness and, likely, shame over their sin.

All who have inhabited this imperfect, temptation- and sin-riddled world must surely have realized that shame can be a help to man. God designed man with the ability to recognize right and wrong—when properly trained by his word (cf. Acts 23:1; 1 Timothy 4:2)—and to feel a pang of conscience—again, when trained—when confronted with that which is wrong. Through shame at its weakest we hesitate before we sin; through shame at its strongest we are prevented from giving in to the temptation.

But the sad question of the modern era looms large before us: What happens when man no longer feels shame? A quick survey of American society reveals a culture that is losing—many would say has lost altogether—its sense of shame. And we must all realize that *every society that lost its ability to feel shame faced destruction from God*. The pre-flood world had reached a point in which *“every*

*imagination of the thoughts of his [man’s] heart was only evil continually,”* and God destroyed that society with the flooding waters of His wrath. The inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah seized upon Lot and his family with shameless perversion, and *“the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven”* (Genesis 19:24). Jeremiah said of the nation of Judah, *“Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush”* (Jeremiah 6:15), and God pronounced, *“Therefore I am full of the fury of the Lord; I am weary with holding in: I will pour it out upon the children abroad, and upon the assembly of young men together”* (verse 11).

What has happened to *this* nation, which once was founded *“One Nation Under God,”* that has caused us to lose our collective sense of shame? First, we must acknowledge the role that television has played. To be sure, television as a medium can be and is being used for good. The mass, almost instantaneous communication of ideas bridges cultures and continents and provides a great path for the spreading of the Gospel. However, television’s largest affects have been negative. Movies and music videos promote a lifestyle of godlessness; news and network shows glorify homosexuality and promiscuous living; foul language and pornography are a button away from our adults and our children. Slowly and persistently, this constant bombardment of worldliness erodes the feelings of

shame that must accompany sin. One writer treating the subject noted:

After a while, when the burden becomes too heavy, we either turn to another channel or switch off the set, or we continue to watch without feeling, having switched off our emotions inside...I sometimes wonder if we are breeding a new “gospel-hardened” generation because they have been subjected ad nauseam...to television pictures which have permanently damaged their mechanisms of emotional reaction.<sup>1</sup>

Along with television, the world of fashion has done a great deal to handicap our ability to blush. A trip down the grocery store checkout lanes reveals men and women on magazine covers wearing the latest fashions in “swimwear” and other fashions that often reveal more than they cover. Stores like Abercrombie and Fitch and others encourage girls as young as eleven or twelve to wear revealing and provocative clothing, and the same trends prevail for men and women of all ages. Slowly but surely, even members of the Lord’s body have allowed the world’s view of “fashion” to bleed dry their sense of shame. Even those outside the religious world are feeling the effects, as one researcher noted:

Research in psychology, sociology, family and consumer science, shows a direct correlation between how one dresses and how



one thinks, feels, and acts or behaves, and how others react or respond. The clothing communicates to the individual as well as to others.<sup>2</sup>

It is interesting that after the sin of the Garden, man attempted to cover their shame by making “aprons,” a word indicating a “belt” or “girdle” only covering the most essential parts of the body (Genesis 3:7). However, God stepped in and “clothed” them with “coats of skins” or robes that hid the entirety of their nakedness (3:21).

If America’s sense of shame has so diminished, what are we to do? Can we get back the ability to blush? God inspired Paul to state very simply the principle at work: “*Be not deceived: evil communications corrupts good manners*” (1 Corinthians 15:33). “*Communications*” in the above verse comes from a Greek word meaning “companionship” or “intercourse,” and “*manners*” relates to “moral habits.”<sup>3</sup> The indication—the closer we get to sin, the more likely we are to be hardened and affected by it. Thus, to overcome the influence of a sinful and shameless world, we must distance ourselves from it. Christians must “*be not conformed to this world,*” but must be “*transformed by the renewing of your mind*” (Romans 12:2). Preachers, teachers, and all Christians must maintain the biblical lines, calling those things sinful that God calls sinful and never calling “*good evil and evil good*” (Isaiah 5:20). Each individual, every congregation, and every nation must be “set apart” and “called out” as the

church was intended to be (Ephesians 5:25-27). And finally, concerning television, fashion, and all that the world uses to entice us, we must always remember Paul’s admonition: “*Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things*” (Philippians 4:8).

<sup>1</sup> John R. W. Stott, Between Two Worlds: The Challenge of Preaching Today.

<sup>2</sup>[http://www.conselles.com/Business\\_Programs/Low\\_Down\\_on\\_Dressing\\_Down.html](http://www.conselles.com/Business_Programs/Low_Down_on_Dressing_Down.html)

<sup>3</sup> Strong’s Complete Dictionary of Bible Words

**GOD’S AUTHORIZED WORSHIP  
- COLOSSIANS 3:17**

1. **LORD’S SUPPER** - The New Testament and early church history record that Christians met on the first day of every week (Sunday) to worship God and remember Christ (Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 11:23-34; 16: 1-2).
2. **PRAYERS** - (Acts 2:42; Philippians 4:6-7; I Thessalonians 5:17-18).
3. **SINGING** - God’s word authorizes only vocal music and specifically singing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12). The New Testament shows no use of mechanical instruments of music in worship to God by the church Christ established. Church history notes no such use for nearly 700 years after the New Testament was completed. It is an innovation of men, not of God.
4. **GIVING** - Free-willed, cheerful, generous, and every week (Acts 20:35; I Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8 & 9).
5. **PREACHING OF THE WORD** - The gospel of Christ, not men’s doctrines nor entertainment, saves and strengthens us (Acts 2:42; 20:7; Romans 10:17; I Corinthians 1:18-23).

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