

# Are We Growing?

2 Thessalonians 1:1-4

2 Peter 3:14-18

1 Thessalonians 1:2-10



## Are We Growing in 2020?

- This is a YES or NO question.
- Handout: 2020 Goals
- Examining our growth (being honest with ourselves):
  - T F I am actively doing those things and using God's means to grow as a disciple/child of God. (2 Peter 3:18)
  - T F My prayer life is maturing. (Luke 11:1; Psalm 19:14; James 4:2-3)
  - T F I gather together with others to pray. (Acts 2:42)
  - T F I "give the more earnest heed to the things I have heard (in sermons and Bible studies). (Hebrews 2:2; James 1:22)
- T F I have a reading plan that gets me through the Word of God regularly. (1 Peter 2:1-2; Hebrews 5:12-14)
- T F I am actively ministering to my brothers and sisters, even during this time. (1 Peter 4:10-11; Hebrews 6:6-12)
- T F I know the challenges that my brothers and sisters are facing. (1 Corinthians 12:26; Romans 12:15; Galatians 6:2; 1 Peter 3:8)
- T F I consider my growth important to the growth of the whole Body. (Ephesians 4:16)

## A Picture of A Growing Church

### The Church of God (2 Thessalonians 1:1, 4)

- Church:
  - ἐκκλησία ekklesia {ek-klay-see'-ah} "called out"
  - "Called out" by God: (Romans 8:28-30)
  - "Called out" of darkness. (1 Peter 2:9; Colossians 1:13)
  - "Called out" to praise. (1 Peter 2:9)
  - "Called out" unto His eternal glory. (1 Peter 5:10; John 17:22)
  - This is a PERSONAL call. (John 11:43)
  - Paul calls it a HIGH CALLING. (Philippians 3:14)
- It is called the "church of God" because HE purchased the Church (souls) with His own blood. (Acts 20:28)

★ DO NOT MISS THE WORD "in"! (John 10:27-29; Colossians 3:1-3)

### GRACE and PEACE (2 Thessalonians 1:2)

- Always in this ORDER. You cannot have PEACE with God without the GRACE of God.
- BOTH have God as their ultimate SOURCE.
  - God is the GIVER of His GRACE.
  - God is the GIVER of PEACE.
- Without the PEACE of God you are an **ENEMY** of God. (Romans 5:10)
- The only way to have PEACE with God is by GOD granting His GRACE on you.
- BUT, here, Paul is praying for MORE grace! He wants the saints to **experience** God's grace more and more in their daily lives.
- AND, he is praying that the saints **experience** the "peace of God which surpasses all understand" in their daily lives. (Philip 4:6-9)

### Give Thanks (2 Thessalonians 1:3)

- Thanksgiving is directed to GOD and God alone.
  - "we are bound" – to owe; be in debt to; one's duty.
    - Failing to give thanks to God leads to a reprobate mind. (Romans 1:21-28)
  - "always" – We are to give thanks for ALL THINGS! (Ephesians 5:20; 1 Thessalonians 5:18; Philippians 4:6)
  - Whatever we DO we are to DO **and** give thanks to God. (Colossians 3:17)
  - "as is fitting" – worthy; right; good.
    - Whatever we have we have from above. (1 Cor. 4:7; James 1:17; John 3:27)

### Thanksgiving to God (v. 3)

- Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy **thank GOD** for the GROWTH of the Thessalonians' FAITH and LOVE.
- "The missionaries never took the growth and spiritual change in the lives of those they ministered to for granted or foolishly attributed it to anything in their own ministry (hard work, methods, plans)."
- NOR did they attribute the Thessalonians' growth in faith and love to the Thessalonians!!!
- Notice: The Thessalonians' faith was growing **EXCEEDINGLY!** – despite constant PERSECUTION. (vv. 3-4)
  - **TRUE FAITH** grows stronger in the midst of TROUBLE!
  - **COUNTERFEIT FAITH** grows dull or hard in the midst of trouble. (Matthew 13:20-22)
- **GROWTH IS THE WORK OF GOD!!**

- Our Christian growth is as much the work of God as our rebirth is.
- God has planted the principle of grow in his gift of faith.
- Consider Hebrews 6:1-3.
- Faith is towards GOD and LOVE is towards man. The love of the Thessalonian saints “abounds” towards each other. (Philippians 1:9; Ephesians 3:17-19)

## Growing Faith

- ① Increase KNOWLEDGE. (2 Peter 3:18; Rom 10:17; Luke 16:29-31; Col 1:9-11)
- ② MEDITATING on the WORD. Thinking!! Studying!!! “revolve in the mind”. (Psalm 1:1-3; 119:15, 23, 27, 48, 78, 148; Joshua 1:8)
- ③ Exercise – Do the Word. (Hebrews 5:12-14; James 1:22; Mark 4:24)
  - The more we USE (obey) the Word the more will be given to us. (Mark 4:24)
  - Only those who HEAR and DO the Word are BLESSED. (Luke 11:28)
- ④ PRAY. The disciples asked Christ, “Increase our faith.” (Luke 17:5; Mark 9:24)
- ⑤ FOLLOW Christ’s example. (Luke 9:23; 1 Peter 2:21; 1 Corinthians 11:1; John 10:27-28 1 John 2:6; Hebrews 12:2)

## Evidence of Growth

- When we are becoming more and more depended on Christ and not own self. (Proverbs 3:5-7)
- When we are becoming more and more like Christ – in spirit, works, and words.. (Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 John 3:2)
- When we discern the difference between FAITH and FEELING. Our ANCHOR must be in the WORD of GOD – NOT our feelings.
- GROWTH is EVIDENT to OTHERS. (1 Timothy 4:15-16)

## LIVING the WORD

- ① God is SOVEREIGN – even in the growth of our faith and love. (Heb 6:3)
- ② We are NOT SAVED by OUR FAITH (strong or weak) – we are saved ONLY by the WORK (faithfulness) of Christ. (Galatians 2:20)
- ③ SAVING FAITH WORKS! (James 2:14-26)
- ④ If we want to see our faith grow we need to FEED it and EXERCISE it. Sitting at a dinner table will not grow us. We must EAT and EXERCISE. (Hebrews 5:13-14; 10:17; 1 Timothy 4:7-8)
- ⑤ We must give thanks to GOD (not ourselves) for the growth of our faith. (Romans 1:8)