

It Is Written

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Cultivating a Taste for the Spiritual

By David Gibson

When my wife Sara first tasted avocado when she was young, she thought it tasted like butter, and it did not appeal to her. But over time, she learned to enjoy it enough to put it in salads.

My first memory of eating cheese was its strange, unfamiliar flavor. In time, I learned to like it.

No doubt many reading this have had similar experiences. What you did not find appealing at first, you later came to appreciate.

In the spiritual realm

Note these passages from both the Old and New Testaments:

- “How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” (Psalms 119:103).
- “Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!” (Psalms 34:8).
- “Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation— if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good” (1 Peter 2:2-3).

What a tragedy it is when Christians turn away from the faith, even though they “have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come” (Hebrews 6:4-6).

An acquired taste

Does this describe us? “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night” (Psalms 1:1-2).

If we are not there yet, what can help us develop and share this blessed man’s delight in God’s word?

- Give it time to work! Diligent, daily exposure to the Scriptures enables us to find great satisfaction in studying them as we recognize the Big Picture they present and how passages connect with one another in a beautiful tapestry of truth. In other words, it grows on us!
- Applying what we read brings the blessing that comes with obedience: “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves . . . the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who is but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing” (James 1:22, 25).
- By never being satisfied with our current level of Bible knowledge, we press on toward a deeper understanding, graduating from the milk to the more challenging meat (1 Corinthians 3:1-2; Hebrews 5:11-14; 6:1-3). There’s more in God’s word than we can digest in a long lifetime.

The more we study, the more confident we can be in sharing what we learn with others. “For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the Lord, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel”

(Ezra 7:10). Ezra “set his heart” (made up his mind) to study, practice, and teach. As a result, he exercised a powerful influence on the lives of others.

And so may we!

Grow in Grace and Knowledge

By Edwin Crozier

Peter began his second letter saying God’s “divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence” (II Peter 1:3 ESV). Coming full circle, he ends the letter saying we must “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (II Peter 3:18 ESV).

He has granted us all things. While the Greek word in II Peter 1:3 differs from the word translated “grace” in II Peter 3:18, the concept is similar. God has bestowed favor. He has given gifts. He has graced us with all that is necessary for life and godliness.

Further, God granted all that was necessary through the knowledge of Jesus Christ. He then instructed us to add knowledge as one of the qualities of spiritual maturity (II Peter 1:5). No wonder he concludes by telling us to grow in knowledge.

When Peter tells us to grow in knowledge, he doesn’t mean general knowledge. Learning calculus and American history are good things, but Peter doesn’t have that kind of increased knowledge in mind. We must grow in our knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We must move from mere acquaintanceship to devoted followers. At no point can we be satisfied saying we know Christ well enough. Let us grow in that knowledge.

Growing in knowledge makes immediate sense to most of us. Growing in grace, however, puzzles many. Many equate grace with forgiveness. For those who do, “grow in the grace” sounds like increasingly relying on forgiveness as we continue following Christ. That, however, seems contradictory to the whole point of the letter, which claims we are to increase in holiness and godliness. As we add virtue, self-control, steadfastness, and godliness to our faith and as these increase in our lives, shouldn’t we be sinning less? Shouldn’t we need forgiveness less? All things being equal, that is precisely what we expect from the maturing Christian.

How then do we grow in grace? We do not do so by sinning more and more so God can forgive us more and more (for corroboration, see Romans 6:1-2). Rather, we recognize that while forgiveness is a gift of grace, it is not the sum total of grace. Grace not only forgives us when we have sinned, but it also trains us and strengthens us to overcome sin (see Titus 2:11-12). If God has granted us all things pertaining to life and godliness, we grow in grace by relying more and more on what God has given us.

The battle against sin never ends. Though we increase virtue, self-control, steadfastness, and godliness and, therefore, decrease sin, the enemy still attacks. The false teachers still make their appeals. The persecutors still persecute. The scoffers still scoff. The fleshly desires still lure. We must never believe we have so conquered sin that we no longer need the grace of God to conquer it. Rather, we continue to rely on all God has given us in the battle so we can increasingly overcome. In this way, we grow in grace.

But as we end the letter, we must remember the beginning. God has given us all we need. We can grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus and be found by Him without spot or blemish because of God’s power and promises. We will make every effort, but our efforts are only effective and fruitful because of God’s grace and gifts. Yet, we can take comfort that God has given grace; therefore, we will make every effort to grow in it. And grow we will. For as Peter said at the end of his first letter, God is the one who will restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish us.

Praise the Lord!