

GOD

Growing Up into Him

God, by His love and grace, made it so **easy** for us to be **saved**, born again of His spirit (**Romans 10:9**). Many people, however, once they are born again, **don't** go any further with God, even though so much **more** is available. God's burning desire is for us **not** just to be saved, but to **know Him**.

I Timothy

2:4 Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

The word “**knowledge**” in this verse is from the Greek word *epignōsis*, meaning **full, experiential knowledge**. God wants us to gain full, experiential knowledge of “the truth”, His **Word**. As we **study** and **rightly divide** God's Word (**II Timothy 2:15**), we grow to **know Him**: then we can enjoy the more abundant life **today** and look forward to the **hope** of Christ's Return.

As we enjoy this life and look forward to our future, we have a **goal** to work toward. Let's look at **Ephesians chapter 4, verse 15**:

Ephesians

4:15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ:

The words “**grow up**” are from the Greek word *auxanō*, which means “**to increase**”. As we increase, we **grow** from within without compulsion, from stage to stage. We want to “**grow up into him**”. We'll see that this “growing up” deals with us **collectively** as **the Body of Christ**. But in order for this to happen, **each one of us** individually needs to **grow**.

We **should** start growing as soon as we get born again. Consider **I Peter chapter 1**, where we'll start in **verse 23**:

I Peter

1:23 Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever.

2:2 As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.

How do we **grow**? We go to **God's Word**, our **nourishment**. Remember **Jeremiah 15:16**, which says: Thy words were found, and **I did eat them**: and **thy word** was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart...” As we are nourished by God's Word, we **grow**. In six of the seven critical Greek manuscripts, the words “**unto salvation**” are added to I Peter 2:2: “...that ye may grow thereby **unto salvation**.” As we grow, we can expect to experience “salvation” (here **wholeness** or **soundness**): “a **healthy body** and a **sound mind**” (**III John 2; II Timothy 1:7**).

But growing on **our** part includes **more** than just reading and studying God's Word: we need to **walk on it, to live it**. **When** we were born again, God **accepted** us into His family, into his household. This was made available by the works of Jesus Christ, as we see in **Ephesians chapter 1, verse 6**:

Ephesians

1:6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

The word "**accepted**" in this verse is from the Greek word *charitoō*, which is translated "**highly favored**" in its only other usage, in Luke 1:28 referring to Mary. It's from *charis*, the word for **grace**, and it's by **God's grace** that we are made **accepted**. The words "**in the beloved**" are better understood as "through the beloved": our being accepted by God is made available **because** of the accomplishments of **Jesus Christ**, "the **beloved**".

Once we're born again and **accepted** into God's family, we want to **walk in fellowship** with our heavenly Father. **This** will allow us to enjoy the great blessings and benefits that God has made available, and we will **grow**. Look at **Colossians chapter 2, verses 6 and 7**:

Colossians

2:6 As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:

2:7 Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

When we walk "**in him**" (in **Christ**), we are **walking in fellowship**. Now look at **Ephesians chapter 5, verse 8**:

Ephesians

5:8 For ye were sometimes (*once*) darkness, but now *are ye* light in the Lord: walk as children of light:

5:10 Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.

We were once spiritually blind, walking in darkness, but **now**, when we are **in fellowship** and stand together with like-minded believers in the household, we can **walk as children of light**. Verse 10 tells us that **then** we are "**proving what is acceptable** unto the Lord". The word "**acceptable**" is from the Greek word *euarestos*, meaning "**well-pleasing**".

Our proving, or showing, what is "**acceptable**" or well-pleasing to God as we stand together in the household **begins** with each individual believer **renewing their mind** to God's Word, putting the Word on in their mind **and** acting accordingly:

Romans

12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service.

12:2 And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

When we were born again, God made us **accepted**, highly favored because of His **grace**, and we became members of His household. As we endeavor to **grow** in God's Word, we **now** want our thoughts and actions to be **acceptable**, well-pleasing to God. We **accomplish** this as we **renew our minds** and **walk in fellowship** with Him. **Then**, we are "living sacrifices" that are **acceptable** to God.

Let's look at one more verse where the word *euarestos* is used:

II Corinthians

5:9 Wherefore we labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.

In this verse, the word *euarestos* was **erroneously** translated "accepted" – it **should** be the word "**acceptable**". God made us **accepted**, but we need to **walk in fellowship** in order to be **acceptable**. The Biblical Scholar **E. W. Bullinger** clarified this important distinction in his book *How to Enjoy the Bible* in the section "The Importance of Accuracy in the Study of the Words of Scripture". He concluded: "We do **not** labor to be **accepted**, but having been "accepted in the Beloved," we make it our **aim** for our **walk** to be **acceptable**."

So, we want to **live in fellowship** with our heavenly Father, not only accepted in the household but **acceptable** in our **actions**. **Then**, we can **grow** and be **fruitful**:

Colossians

1:9 For this cause we also, since the day we heard *it*, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding:

1:10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God:

The word "**knowledge**" in both of these verses is *epignōsis*, full experiential knowledge. As we read and study God's Word and then walk out on it, living God's love day by day, we can be **fruitful in every good work**. We **also** will continue to **grow**, increase, in our full, experiential knowledge of God.

The more we **know** God and His Word, the more we can **love God**. We know from **I John 5:3** that **the love of God** is "to **keep His commandments**", to **keep** God's Word in our minds and **walk** accordingly. We need to continually strive to do what we read in **II Corinthians 10:5**: "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and **bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ**."

For us to **do** all this and **grow** in God's Word, we need to **trust God**. **Proverbs 3 verses 5 and 6** tell us: "**Trust** in the Lord (*God*) with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge **him**, and he shall direct thy paths."

So, as **individuals**, we can **grow in God's Word** as we love God's Word, put it in mind and act accordingly, and walk in fellowship.

We are **also** members of a **household**, the **Body of Christ**. As we **stand together** with our brothers and sisters in Christ in the household, the **Body of Christ** can **grow**, too. Look at **Ephesians chapter 2, verses 19 through 22**:

Ephesians

- 2:19** Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;
- 2:20** And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ (*Christ Jesus in the text*) himself being the chief corner stone;
- 2:21** In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:
- 2:22** In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

Here we see the **Great Mystery**, that no matter what our previous background, when we became born again we became **members of God's household**. In **verse 21** we see that when **each one of us** in Christ (in fellowship) **stands together** with our brothers and sisters, we **collectively** are **growing** (the Greek word is *auxanō*) "unto an holy **temple** in the Lord." As we stand together in the household ("in the Lord"), **the Body of Christ** to which we belong, the **Temple**, God's habitation in this Grace Administration, will **grow**.

This brings us back to the great **truth** of **Ephesians 4:15** that we read earlier, which said that we are to "**grow up into him**". We'll read some of the previous verses in chapter 4 for **context**, then consider this verse in greater detail to better understand **what it means** to "grow up into him" and **how** we accomplish this as we **live God's love**.

Ephesians

- 4:7** But unto every (*each*) one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.
- 4:8** Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.
- 4:11** And he gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers;
- 4:12** For the perfecting (*mending*) of the saints, for (*with a view to*) the work of the ministry, for (*with a further view to*) the edifying of the body of Christ:
- 4:13** Till (*until*) we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ:
- 4:14** That we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive:
- 4:15** But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ:

The word "**But**" in verse 15 sets this verse in **contrast** to what came before (being like children **tossed to and fro**). Because we have the **gifts** that God made available, including holy spirit and the five "gift ministries", we can **avoid** being tossed to and fro.

According to verse 15, as we “**speak the truth in love**” we **grow up**. We are no longer like children but instead we become **more like Christ**, who is the **head** of the Body.

The words “**speaking the truth**” are all translated from a single Greek word, *alētheuō*. This word is derived from *alēthēs*, meaning “**true**”, a word used of God that cannot lie. Thus, the word *alētheuō* literally means “**truthing it**” or “**acting truly**”.

According to the *New Strong’s Expanded Dictionary of Bible Words*, *alētheuō* means “to be true in doctrine and profession”, “to deal faithfully or truly with anyone”, or “to deal truly”. So, this Greek word, translated “speaking the truth” in Ephesians 4:15, **really** covers **all aspects** of our **walk**. We are to be true in our walk, **dealing truly** with one another in **everything** we do.

Also, verse 15 says that we are to do this **in love**. Only by walking with **the love of God** as we manifest our renewed mind can we express the right words or actions at the right time to provide the greatest benefits to others in the Body.

Verse 15 **then** says that **as we live truly**, dealing truly with others with the love of God, we will “**grow up into him in all things**, which (*who*) is the head, Christ.” The word translated “**grow up**”, *auxanō*, is **also** the word translated “**increase**” that we find in **I Corinthians 3:6**, in which Paul wrote: “I have planted, Apollos watered, but **God** gave the **increase**.” As we **deal truly** with one another in **love**, God gives the increase, and we “**grow up**”: we are no longer like children, tossed to and fro.

From the **previous** verses in this chapter we know that the “gift ministries” in operation help to **keep us on track** as we live truly, while at the same time adding new members to the Body so **it** can grow “unto a perfect (mature) man” mentioned in verse 13. Verse 15 says that we will **grow up “in all things”**, in all the parts that make up the whole, the Body of which we are members. And we, **collectively** as **the Body**, will “**grow up into him**”, into **Christ** who is the **head** of the Body. The word “**into**” is the Greek word *eis*, which means “with a view to” or “with the goal of reaching or obtaining”. The Body is to grow up with the **goal** of being like Christ, the head.

By considering how this important verse reads in **two other versions** we can gain **greater understanding**:

Aramaic-English Interlinear New Testament:

But we should be steadfast in our love, that in everything we may grow up in the Messiah who is the head.

Amplified Bible:

Rather, let our lives lovingly express truth (in all things, speaking truly, dealing truly, living truly). Enfolded in love, let us grow up in every way and in all things unto Him, who is the Head, Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One).

Next, **verse 16** explains more fully **how the growth and edification of the Body** takes place:

4:16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

We have been **perfectly fitted together** as **members** into the **one Body**, held firmly together by the **bond** that provides us with the needed supply, the **power of the holy spirit** that we can operate. In order for the Body to benefit the **most** from this supply, **we each need to do our part**.

The word “**increase**” in this verse is *auxēsis*, related to the word translated “**grow up**” in verse 15. God wants the Body to **increase**, to **grow** or **mature**. And, as we perform our function “**in love**”, with the **love of God** in the renewed mind in manifestation, the Body will be **edified**, built up.

As we **stand** on God’s Word, **speaking** truly, **dealing** truly, and **living** truly, **living God’s love**, we **grow** to be more like Christ. As we **each** do our part, operating the gifts and callings that God gave us, **the Body** of which we are a part will continue to **grow** and be **edified**. As this happens, we all will reap the greatest benefits of the more abundant life.

- Dr. Rick Batt