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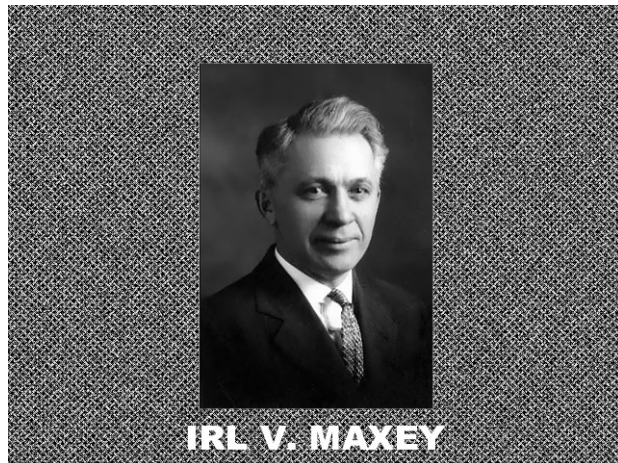
**GROWING IN GRACE
A Sermon By Irl V. Maxey
Dated: January 19, 1907**

Digitized By Duane V. Maxey

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INTRODUCTION TO THIS FILE

Papa's sermon titled "Growing in Grace" is quite short and was dated as written January 19, 1907 -- 99 years ago today! -- as I begin to digitize it. It was written in Witt, Illinois, a small town on State Highway 16 northeast of St. Louis, Missouri and northwest of papa's home-town, Mt. Vernon, Illinois. At the time this sermon was written, papa would have been 24 years old, soon to be 25 less than two months later.

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SERMON TEXT: -- "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).

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GROWING IN GRACE

A Sermon By Irl V. Maxey

Peter is exhorting the Christians of the churches of Asia to steadfastness (cf. 2 Peter 3:17). He would not have them carried about with "every wind of doctrine" (Eph. 4:14), but be established -- not only able to stand the storms but be stronger and stronger to meet the accusations of ungodly men, and to remain firm in the faith in Jesus!

Already ungodly men had said, "Where is the promise of Jesus' Coming? -- or would say it: "Why, Paul has died, John, Peter, Jude, and all the rest -- and Jesus has not come yet. Where is the promise of His Coming?"

But Peter would have them say, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise... For one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day." Then he says, "Be careful, lest you are led away from your own steadfastness, but grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ (cf. 2 Peter 3:17).

Now observe: -- We are talking of a growth in grace, not a growth in morals. The old, dead log by the roadside gathers fungi upon its old, rotten sides and gets larger and larger. The mushroom gathers the decaying vegetation up to itself and grows larger and larger. So, the man or woman who knows nothing of life in God may pay more to the church, quit swearing, false dealing, or may attend church services more often, or even not get so violently angry any more, and thus he or she may grow better and better morally. But this is not the growth Peter speaks of. It is growth in grace.

What is grace? you ask. Grace is variously mentioned in the Bible. There is saving grace, sufficient grace, riches of His grace, sanctifying grace, and abounding grace. Grace as here mentioned ("grow in grace") is that consciousness by faith in Jesus of being a son of God -- or "saving grace".

Now we are not to grow "into" grace but to grow "in" grace. Saving grace is given which is sufficient grace for us to increase and have the riches of His grace. Sanctifying grace is given that we might meet the things of this world and come off more than conquerors through Him who abides -- hence, abounding grace.

Then we are to grow in this knowledge -- grow in knowing, not grow to know. When we think of growing we think of a little seed that has been cast in the ground. We see it breaking the cells of starch until it breaks forth into the great light of the sun. It has reached a new world, the sun smiles upon it; the rain fills its parts: it increases in size. Leaf after leaf appears: the wind rocks it to and fro until with all

its verdant power it reaches maturity. The gardener prunes it, and it casts its fruit. Or, we think of the scion taken from a tree, placed in the limb of another tree and bound there until each layer of the grafted twig's composure becomes firmly united to the tree into which it is grafted -- resulting, after pruning, in perfect fruit-bearing. Or, we think of a child coming into this world with a consciousness of its existence; growing more to know its relation until maturity, and then still growing. *But we cannot make a good allegory for growth in grace from either the grafted scion or from the birth of a child, for each step therein involved would not teach the spiritual truths of growth in grace I wish to set forth. Let us, therefore, take the plant and gather some facts from that to suggest the spiritual truths of growth in grace.

[*As originally worded, my father's exact meaning in the last two sentences of the above paragraph was difficult to discern. I therefore re-worded the first of these sentences, and added the word "therefore" to the last sentence, so as to set forth to the reader what I think he probably intended to say.]

First, there must be preparation of the ground. Next, reception of the seed and germination to life, and last, growth dependent upon location, sunshine and rain, and cultivation fruitage by pruning.

First, our life must be prepared before receiving God -- by the Holy Spirit, and by ourselves. Second, we must receive the Word and it will germinate to salvation. Third, we must grow in the grace of salvation by God's spiritual sunshine, rain, and cultivation by pruning.

Ah yes, you see before there can be any growth there must be life, and before life a preparation for its place. The Great Father reaches out and pleads with a man here and there, constrains him from this and that, knocks at his door day after day, in order to bring him into His great salvation.

But man has his own preparation, as it is said of Ezra in Ezra 7:10 -- "Ezra.. prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it..."

We must believe in God, in His Son, and in the verity of the Bible -- and at once "bring forth fruits meet for repentance" (Matthew 3:8). We must let God search us, straighten things around, and break up the great deep of our heart. Ah, I'll tell you brethren, if this you have done God at once gives the Word in the remedy. The reception of the Word to salvation, a soul all broken up for sin, feeling the deep guilt of sin, at once reaches the promise, stands on it, and light comes forth. Hallelujah!

Old things pass away and behold all things are become new. People look different, talk different -- all things are so lovely. Heaven is so real, life such a pleasure, and Jesus is so sweet -- "'Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus." Yes, the songwriter expressed it exactly: "Grace to trust Him more." Then comes growth.

This growth is not dependent upon location, for there is not a place in Witt, Illinois, the Far East, Africa, China, or Japan, that God's grace is not given. Hallelujah! The grace that is given all depends upon you reaching down and outward.*

[*Often the reception of grace is said to come through a reaching "upward" to God, but here papa employs the analogy of a plant putting roots "downward" and outward. It is true that one must, in a sense, reach "downward" in humility to receive the grace of salvation. However, papa seems to be simply employing the plant-analogy here, rather than implying such an application.]

This growth is primarily power and capacity -- secondarily it is in better works. You know you are His by His Spirit, and the sunshine of His love is upon you. As you read His Word, pray in secret, and in public, attend Sabbath school, and hear the Word expounded, or even around the family altar, He rains the blessings upon you.

Your cultivation comes by working. As you work with His love upon you, raining blessings upon you, you grow.

But the gardener says you need pruning -- Sanctifying Grace. This does not come by growth, lest something would hamper you and you would come short of it. Nor does it come by death, for this would make death a factor of God, when we know an enemy causes death. But the Great Master's loving hand does this, that all our power might be concentrated in Him for fruit-bearing and for His glory.

"He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit" (John 15:2). Get this grace and grow in it. Amen.

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Exhortation to the Means of Grace:

"Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing.." (Psalm 92:13-14)

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THE END OF THIS SERMON