

# THE SOUTHWESTERNER



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## GROWING GREAT FRUIT!

2 PET. 1:8-9

CODY WESTBROOK

**P**aul wrote, “For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, you are God’s building” (1 Cor. 3:9). God’s people are to be in the fruit production business. That is what Peter had in mind as he used his inspired pen to write 2 Peter 1:8-9. There are three things set forth in these two verses.

### The Condition

Notice the condition set forth at the beginning of verse 8, “For if these things are yours and abound...” The “things” to which Peter refers are the graces described in verses 5-7. Describing them as “yours” points to ownership or possession. The word “abound” carries the idea of increasing or overflowing, and it indicates ongoing activity. So the idea is that Christians should take ownership of the “Christian graces” and allow them to continually overflow in abundance in our lives. That involves real effort on our part. Consider 1 Peter 2:2 which says, “As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby,” and Matthew 5:6 which says, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be filled.” How great is your desire to know God’s word and put it in action? How great is your desire to see the “Christian graces” overflowing in your life?

### The Goal

The goal is stated negatively, “...you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” To be “barren” is to be useless, ineffective, and accomplish nothing (cf. Matt. 20:3, 6; Jas. 2:20). To be “unfruitful” is to be like a tree that is capable of fruit bearing and produces nothing (cf. Matt. 3:8-10; Luke

13:6-9). The goal for every Christian is to be the complete opposite—useful, effective, and full of good fruit. Remember Jesus said, “By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples” (John 15:8). Paul’s prayer for the Colossian Christians was that they grow in their knowledge of God’s word so that they might be fruitful in every good work (Col. 1:9-11). Are you working hard to produce fruit in your life? Can your progress be seen (1 Tim. 4:15)? If not, why not?

### The Contrast

What if a person does not take ownership of the “Christian graces” and allow them to abound in his life so that he is effective and fruitful in the Lord’s work? That person is described in verse 9 as “shortsighted.” The idea is that he is so focused on the menial matters of this world that it blinds him to what is eternally important. Even to the point of losing sight of the greatest blessing of all—salvation. Imagine standing before the Lord in judgment and saying, “Lord, I know you did so much for me but I just didn’t make the effort to do much for you.” What an incredible thing to contemplate! But, in reality, if we fail to produce great fruit, that is essentially what we’re doing! Consider 1 Peter 1:21-2:3.

God wants His people to be about the business of growing great fruit. That only happens if we allow the Word of God to produce within us the great characteristics listed in 2 Peter 1:5-7. If we will take ownership of those “graces” and allow them to flourish in our lives, then we will be abundantly fruitful in the kingdom of God.

# THE CHANGING AND THE UNCHANGING

Dan Flournoy

*Lord, thou has been our dwelling-place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God (Psalms 90:1-2).*

Since we are creatures bound by time, the words “eternity” and “everlasting” are hard to grasp. We can think in terms of seconds or centuries, but beyond this our mind loses perspective. In this Psalm, mountains are representative of that which is stable and enduring. Yet God was before the mountains and will be after they are gone. All material things had a beginning and will end; however, God is from everlasting to everlasting.

In contrast to God’s eternal, unchanging nature, is the changing world in which we live. “*In the morning it flourisheth and groweth up: in the evening it is cut down, and withereth*” (Psalms 90:7). We need to learn this basic truth: **All earthly things change!** Nations rise and fall. Political ideologies come and go. Scientific theories are revised constantly. Religious creeds are updated every few years. With the changing seasons Nature takes on the new and puts off the old. Death continually works its way in our world and our relationship to people and things change. We are reminded of the words in a great hymn: “*Change and decay in all around I see. Oh Thou who changes/ not, abide with me.*”

Oh how we long for that dwelling-place that does not change! A home that is like our God, “*eternal in the heavens*” (2 Corinthians 5:1). We wish we could grasp the meaning of “eternity” as we sing ‘*When we’ve been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun, we’ve no less days to sing God’s praise than when we’ve first begun.*”

While the duration of eternity is beyond our ability to grasp, by faith we accept its reality. We feel the need amidst this changing scene for that which is permanent. The answer to our soul’s deep longing is found in this glorious Psalm: “*Lord, thou has been our dwelling-place in all generations.* May we come to our God in faith and obedience to find our permanent abode. Remember the words of F.L. Eiland in his powerful hymn written to strengthen the failing faith of a Christian brother:

*“Time is filled with swift transition -- Naught of earth unmoved can stand. Build your hopes on*

*things eternal. Hold to God’s unchanging hand.*

*Trust in Him who will not leave you, What-so-ever years may bring. If by earthly friends forsaken, Still more closely to Him cling.*

*When your journey is completed, if to God you have been true, Fair and bright the home in glory, Your enraptured soul will view Build your hopes on things eternal. Hold to God’s unchanging hand.”*

As we travel through life in this turbulent and ever changing world, may we all the more trust in the Lord. Let us continue to live the sentiments of the grand old song by Carl von Weber:

*“My Jesus. as Thou wilt-’ All shall be well with me ; Each changing future scene I gladly trust with Thee: Straight to my home above I travel calmly on, And sing, in life or death My Lord, Thy will be done.”*

*Beltline Road Church of Christ News, Beltline Church of Christ Weekly Bulletin, August 15, 2000.*

SW



## DAVID AND UZZAH

Don Walker '79

It was the time when kings went to battle that David sent Joab and remained behind. Little did he know the sequence of events that would unfold beginning with this seemingly innocent action. After all was said and done, David had looked upon a woman to lust after her, committed adultery with her, had her husband killed to hid the fact that she was with child and then took her to be his wife (2 Sam. 11:1ff). Believing his transgressions had been hidden he continue with his business as king at that point.

In another episode from the life of David we read of he and his army going forth to retrieve the ark of the covenant up to Jerusalem. The ark was placed upon a new cart, brought out of the house of Abinadab and transport began. During this transport the oxen stumbled, the ark shook and Uzzah put forth his hand and took hold of the ark. The record reveals, “And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him

there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God (2 Sam. 6:7). On the surface, one would be tempted to conclude that David's sin was far more grievous than that of Uzzah and yet David was allowed to live on and Uzzah received immediate and deadly retribution. The shallow appearance is one of inequity and injustice. How could God respond in such a manner in these two instances?

It is a question that has perplexed the righteous at times and supplied supposed ammunition against the character of God for the skeptic. Was God unjust in his handling of these two situations? Did He show undue partiality for David and against Uzzah? These are questions we would present for your consideration at this time with some Biblical principles and thoughts that may help us sift through this apparent contradiction of God's nature.

In beginning, I would suggest that man should be very careful in charging God with any blemish upon His character as it is revealed in the Word of God. Considering the very nature of God, Who is infinite in His attributes, including knowledge, and man's attributes who is very limited, including in his knowledge reveals to us that man may not always be equipped to make judgments concerning God's activity. In John 2:24, 25 it says that Jesus, Who is God,

did not commit himself unto them,  
because he knew all men, And  
needed not that any should testify of  
man: for he knew what was in man.

In Mark 2 after Jesus proclaimed forgiveness for an invalid who had been brought to Him, there were certain scribes who "reasoned within their hearts" concerning the matter (Mark 2:6). Mark goes on to reveal for us that Jesus knew what they were thinking in their hearts and responded accordingly. Because Jesus is God, he had and has the ability to know what is in the very hearts of man. This is an attribute of God. God knows our thoughts afar off (Psa. 139:2). God is "acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, But, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether" (Psa. 139:3, 4). This is an ability that man does not have. So, when we contemplate activity of men in the Bible and God's dealings we must admit that God has far more information than we do and has the divine and sovereign right to respond as He sees fit. He has that right and should be able to do it without the creation questioning His character in doing so.

Now let's study this matter a little further to see if there may be some light cast upon it from God's Word that will further help us to understand the different

responses of God in this matter. When we look at David and his character, we have revealed from God much information. David was called by God, "a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfill all my will" (Acts 13:22). Consider David's response after he was rebuked by David. A study of Psalm 51 and then Psalm 32 shows us a man with a broken and contrite heart. He does not try to shift the blame, but rather owns his actions and turns to the only One that can cleanse him and satisfy his great need. His response is one that was ultimately prescribed by the very God he served. We know that because God revealed it to us.

When we consider Uzzah and the account of his death, we are given very little information concerning the man. However, our lack of information does not indicate that God did not know just as much about Uzzah as he knew about David or knows about any man. Did Uzzah have the same soft heart that David had or was Uzzah a man whose heart was hard and had he been given the time that David was given would he have shown the remorse and contrite spirit that David displayed? You and I do not know the answer to this question. However, we can be certain that God did know the answer to that and to all of his character. We know that Judge of all the earth will do right (Gen. 18:25). If Uzzah would have never repented, was the Creator out of place to punish in the timeframe that He determined? The answer to that question would of course be absolutely not. It is well within the rights of the Sovereign One to deal with His creation as He sees fit. The thing created does not have the right to question the dealings of the Creator. It is not natural nor reasonable.

Our God has revealed Himself to man and has proven His great love by sending His Son to die on the cross for our sins. We must recognize that He would not destroy man arbitrarily without cause or reason. When we see the destruction of men in the pages of Holy Writ or read of the ultimate punishment of the wicked at the end of time, we must understand that the decision that God has made is one made know **all the facts and details** – facts and details to which we may not be privy. In the end, when we stand before our Creator and are allowed to view things to a greater degree like God views things then we will see that there has been no injustice or contradiction in the nature of our great God. May we ever live with this confidence as we study our Bibles more and more.

SW

Record for the Week of April 21, 2019

Bible Class .....	115
Morning Assembly.....	231
Evening Assembly .....	145
<b>Iglesia de Cristo</b>	
Morning Assembly.....	N/A
Contribution .....	\$N/A

**PLEASE REMEMBER IN PRAYER:**

**Bud Wade** is in **Seton-Kyle** after experiences some health issues.

**Tom Hanks** is now in **Brookdale Rehab (Westlake)**.

**Health Concerns:** Lois Ewald, Debra Johnson, Diana Rodriguez, Clarence Whetstone, Angela Young.

**Shut-ins:** Jeannette Hansen, Rosemary Garrett, Jon Little, Bobby Johnson, Elvira Martinez, Ginny Oswald, Jan Smith.

**Others:** Sonny & Lee Barr, Bill Ellison, Bonnie Gomer, CK Holt, Deborah Hoover, Nell McCown, Bill & Nancy Ponds, Cheri Sarten, Kay Westbrook, Gib Young.

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