

Grace and Knowledge: Spiritual Growth, Part 2

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[0 : 00] Well, friends, this is my last Sunday with you. Beginning tomorrow morning, we enter into our first experience of sabbatical as a family.

Our parish council, your parish council, has been encouraging me for the last several years actually to take a sabbatical. Our policy at Advent is to encourage pastors to take a sabbatical every five to seven years.

And I've been serving Advent for ten years, and our parish council essentially said, use it or lose it. And so we chose the use it option.

And so we're going to be leaving, and we're going to be gone for about four months. And thanks to the incredible generosity of this church and some of our dear friends, we're going to have an amazing experience.

I have no doubt it's going to be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, especially for our kids. So we're thrilled about that. And sabbaticals are interesting, you know, because sabbaticals aren't exactly the same thing as vacations.

[1 : 08] I mean, I anticipate we're going to do a lot of fun things. We're going to get to travel together. It's going to be great. But the central purpose of a sabbatical is deep spiritual rest and renewal, not just for me, but for our whole family.

The fact is that because pastors lead worship, every Sunday we're up here, we're leading, we're preaching, we're teaching, we're leading in the liturgy.

And it's very easy. It's actually deceptively easy for our faith, for my faith, to start to become a profession.

You know, for my faith to become a performance that is delivered every week. And even the best intentions and even the most faithful spiritual practices, having all of those things in place, nevertheless, you can feel over the years yourself begin to move in that direction.

I read the Bible every day, but I can feel that sense, even in my own reading of Scripture, of how much I'm thinking about a class that I'm developing or a sermon that I'm writing, as opposed to simply enjoying and being nourished by God's Word.

[2 : 21] And so, we grant pastors sabbaticals so that they can take an extended break from leading worship and remember what it is simply to worship, to be a worshiper, and to go and worship in other churches where we don't have leadership responsibilities, and to immerse ourselves in prayer and in Scripture, and to invest in our marriages and our kids.

So, all of the things that I just said are things that I'm really, really excited about for the next four months. So, that's the goal of this time. And a lot of you have asked me what I hope to get out of this time.

What's my goal? I have a lot of goals, but I think my top goal I could summarize with one word, and that is the word integrity. By that I mean, my goal is to spend the time in such a way that when I come back, I'm able to stand up before you, and I'm able to preach God's Word as an overflow of what I'm experiencing in my own life and relationship with the Lord.

That there is a continuity between my words and the experience of knowing God that I have in my own life. And I never want to be a pastor who simply says things that I don't actually believe or experience.

And so, that's my goal. It's to have that kind of integrity and continuity. And for that to happen, it means that I need to be deeply grounded in God's Word. And that's why I wanted to speak tonight, our last night together, about these last few verses in 2 Peter chapter 3, the end of the book.

[3 : 55] We write letters today, and a lot of times we just sort of peter out at the end of a letter. You know, you sort of say everything up front, and then a few nice things, and then you... Very different

in the epistles.

They actually use the last few verses often to summarize what the entire letter is about. So, if you want to know what an epistle is about, just read the very last few verses, and often you'll see the major themes reappear.

And that's what happens here in 2 Peter. And so, I wanted to look at this because Peter's expressing the same desire for Christians, for all of us, that I've just expressed for our sabbatical. He's expressing this desire that their faith would be deeply rooted in God's Word, that they would be grounded in Scripture, and that as a result of that, that they would experience growth and change and transformation, that their faith would be a kind of life-giving anchor in their life.

And so, I think we can summarize these last few verses this way, and this will be kind of the structure that we follow tonight. The more we are grounded in God's Word, the more we grow and glorify God's Son.

[5 : 03] The more we are grounded in God's Word, the more we will grow and glorify God's Son. So, let's pray, and then we'll open God's Word together. Our Father, we call it Your Word because it's not our Word, because our hopes don't hinge on human words, but rather they hinge on Your promise and willingness to speak to us.

And we know that because Your Son, Jesus, has been raised from the dead, we know that because He is present with us here in the power of Your Holy Spirit, we know that even as we open these written words, that You can and will illuminate them, that You will use them to speak the truth that we need to hear from You right here and right now.

And we pray that, Lord. We ask that. I ask that of You, that we would hear Your voice, the voice of our true Shepherd, and that we would recognize it, and that it would nourish us, and that we would follow it.

I pray this, Lord, for our good and ultimately for Your glory. Amen. So, what does it mean to be grounded in God's Word?

2 Peter 3, 14. What's going on here?

[6 : 25] Well, Peter's speaking to people who are dealing with false prophets, false teachers who have come into the community. They begin to challenge some of the core doctrines of the Christian faith. In particular, they're challenging the idea that Jesus will one day come again.

These people are facing hardship. They're facing anxiety. They're facing increasing persecution and uncertainty about their own safety and their own ability to provide for the needs of their families. They're facing all of these things that would very rightly cause fear and anxiety. And false teachers are coming among them and saying, you think that Jesus is coming again? You think Jesus is going to fix all this?

Jesus is never coming back. It's been way too long. Every reasonable person knows that Jesus will never come again. And Peter recognizes the incredible importance of this doctrine for the health and the well-being and the thriving faith of his people.

He understands this makes a huge difference. What Peter recognizes is that what we believe about our circumstances dramatically affects how we experience those circumstances.

[7 : 31] The way we make meaning of our present suffering and struggle dramatically impacts our ability to cope with and thrive in the midst of that struggle. Over the last few decades, there's been an emerging consensus among a variety of fields from philosophy to neurobiology to psychology to theology.

There's a fundamental consensus that has arisen around how we go about making meaning of our lives and how we go about developing a sense of identity and purpose in the world.

And that consensus is around the centrality of story. That the way we make meaning, the way we make sense of our lives, the way we have a sense of our own identity and the purpose of our lives is by imagining that we are a part of a story.

Now, you may say, well, I don't think there's any meaning. I don't think that all this is an accident. But that is still a story. We all imagine that we're part of some story and that's how we make sense of our experiences.

There's a philosopher named Alistair McIntyre who says in his book *After Virtue*, he says this, and I've quoted this before because I think it's just a very important idea for us in our culture.

[8 : 43] He says, Man is, in his actions and practice as well as in his fictions, essentially a storytelling animal, a teller of stories that aspire to truth.

I can only answer the question, what am I to do, if I can answer the prior question of what story or stories do I find myself a part. So you understand what he's saying.

He's saying, I don't know what to do with my life. I don't know what life is about. I can't even make one decision about what I should do or what I should prioritize until I become aware of the story that I'm using to make sense of all of this.

What does it all mean? So imagine I were to take everybody in this room and I were to divide you into two groups. And imagine I were to take all of you and I put you by yourself in a small, hot, dark, windowless room.

And I put you in there and I close the door. Imagine everybody's in a room just like that. Everybody by themselves in a room like that. And imagine I come to half of you and I say, I'm going to put you in this room and you're going to be here indefinitely.

[9 : 44] And then I close the door. And then I go to the next half and I say, I'm going to put you in this room, but don't worry. After about an hour, I'm going to come back. I'm going to get you and we're going to go away on this great tropical vacation.

Sit tight. Shut the door. What's going to happen? This is a very simple example, but think about it. You have all, everybody in this room, you're all in the exact same room. You're all experiencing the exact same things for the exact same amount of time.

But that one hour is going to be experienced in dramatically different ways. Right? The people who are told you're going to be here indefinitely, they don't know how long they're in there.

They don't know how long it's going to last. They have no idea what's happening. As far as they know, they're going to be in there for years and years and years or decades and decades. And that might lead very quickly in 10, 15 minutes to complete utter despair.

Whereas you have the other group, they know, you know, this is hard. It's hot. It's windowless. It's dark. This is miserable. But I know, I know that he's coming back. I know that eventually I'm going to get out of here. I know that things are going to improve.

[10 : 44] Dramatically different experiences. Now, life is obviously not just sitting in a room. Hopefully, life is a lot more complicated. And yet, what I want you to understand is the same principle applies.

That our experience of the present, especially of our present suffering and struggle, is dramatically shaped by the story that we use to make sense of our lives.

So, Peter is saying, do you believe the story that Scripture gives us? That you were created by God. That you were placed in the life that you're in. That yes, this life has struggle and anxiety and fear as a part of it.

But this life is a part of a greater story. And even though we've fallen and rebelled against God, the story says that God sent His Son, born of a virgin, to give His life for the sins of the world.

To one day save and restore all of this. Is that the story that we're living in? Or are we living in the story of the great cosmic accident?

[11 : 46] That all of this simply sprang into being. The Big Bang happened and all of the matter and energy of the universe came into being. And from that point on, it's simply been mathematics playing out.

And that we are, as human beings, essentially cosmic accidents. We're an anomaly that arose. And eventually, and however long it might be, the entire universe is either going to freeze solid or it's going to collapse into a fiery ball.

But scientists have been debating over the decades which it's going to be. Right? So which story do we imagine that we are a part of? And by the way, this isn't about the difference between believing in miracles and not believing in miracles.

You either believe in the virgin birth of God's Son or you believe in the virgin birth of the galaxy. But either way, it's a miracle. The question is, what story do we imagine that we are a part of?

And Peter knows that whichever story we ground ourselves in is going to dramatically affect how we live. And so he's urging us to recognize that the best story, the truest story, is the story of Scripture.

[12 : 53] That that is the thing, that is the orientation that we need to have is toward that story. And so he's emphasizing, and really this is a theme that you see throughout the entire letter, the centrality of Scripture.

That we as Christians must come again and again and again to Scripture to remember the story. To remember the story. To remember where it's going. To remember that Jesus is coming. To

remember that no matter how hard things get now, we know how the story ends. Right? And because of the emphasis on Scripture, we can actually draw from this passage out several things about Scripture that I think are very helpful as we think about grounding our lives in it. I just want to make a few points about it because I think that it's very important. The first thing that we see in this passage from Peter is something that's very, very crucial for our understanding of the Bible. And that is that the apostolic writing, the writing in the New Testament, is and was at his time considered Scripture right alongside the Old Testament.

That the New Testament, the apostolic writing, is considered Scripture right alongside the Old Testament. So Paul here, I'm sorry, Peter here refers to the writing of Paul. He says, Now what's so interesting about that is the word Scriptures is the Greek word graphi.

[14 : 30] And that word graphite shows up about 50 times in the New Testament. And every single time, it is used to refer to the canon of Scripture. Right?

So when I say canon, I don't mean like, you know, fires a projectile. I mean, the word canon means a measuring rod. A measuring rod. So what this is telling us is that in Peter's day, and actually back in Jesus' day, there was a canon already established, a canon of Scripture.

And it was a measuring rod. In other words, it was a group of writings that was considered authoritative, of the Lord, inspired by God. And the idea of a canon is that it is the measuring rod between true doctrine and false doctrine.

It's the thing that helps us determine whether our beliefs are true or false, inaccurate. And so what he's saying here is, is that at the time that Peter is writing, which is around 62 A.D., when this letter was written, he refers in this letter to the letters of Paul as Scripture.

What this tells us is by 62 A.D., we had already a body of work from Paul in circulation among the churches, and that was recognized as being graphi, part of the authoritative canon.

[15 : 48] So this is very, very helpful for us as Christians to recognize that the tradition of recognizing apostolic authority goes all the way back to the first century. This is the first point I want to point out.

So when we talk about grounding ourselves in Scripture, we're talking about the whole Bible, Old Testament and New Testament. It all tells one great continuous story. The second point I want to make about the Scripture is this.

The Bible itself recognizes that there are some things in Scripture that are hard to understand. Right here, they are hard to understand. And I think, you know, for me, that's incredibly encouraging. Now, I've been studying the Bible academically and pastorally, formally, for probably about 16 years. And in that time, I feel like I've just barely begun to scratch the surface.

It's the kind of thing that you can study for your entire life and still feel like you're just barely getting below the surface. But I will tell you a couple of things. In that time, I've realized a couple of things.

[16 : 48] That, number one, the most essential tenets of the faith, the most essential tenets of the faith, the things that you, believing them, means that you are a Christian, things like the bodily resurrection of Jesus, which is the foundation of our faith, things like the authority of Scripture, the divine inspiration of Scripture, things like the fact that our only hope for salvation comes through the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ, and that that's received by faith, right?

These things are things that, when you open Scripture and read them, they're clear. Right?

Anybody who can read, anybody with a basic ability for reading comprehension can open the Bible, turn to the appropriate places, and read those passages, and basically understand what's being said.

They're relatively clear. So there are essentials that are clear in Scripture, and really not up for debate. But then there is another category of things in the Christian faith, places in Scripture that are hard to understand.

And so there are other issues in the Christian faith throughout history that have been debated, where there is wiggle room, and where there's the possibility of building a biblical argument on both sides of the issue.

Right? So in the day of the apostles, one of the big issues up for debate was whether or not we can eat meat sacrificed to idols. That was an issue that was debated, that people were relying on Scripture to try to figure it out.

[18 : 08] Right? These days we have other issues, like whether or not Christians should be able to drink alcohol. That's still up for debate. There are still, and I have friends who are pastors of churches in D.C., where if you drink alcohol, you are not only doing an unchristian thing, and they

will question whether or not you are saved if you drink wine.

Right? So the idea that we would drink wine at communion is scandalous. Right? This is up for debate still. There are issues like whether or not to baptize babies. We do it. There's a strong history of that happening in the church, strong tradition, and there's a strong biblical argument to be made for it.

But there's no verse in the Bible that says, baptize your babies. There's no verse in the Bible that says, don't baptize your babies. There's no verse in the Bible that talks about the sinfulness of doing that or not doing it.

And so you can have a biblical argument made from both sides. Another example is the role of women in the leadership of the church. You can have biblical arguments made for multiple ways of making sense of that.

Right? And so all of these are issues that have been debated over the centuries that will continue to be debated probably as long as we're Christians. And so recognizing this is extremely important because it's one of the main reasons that at Advent we've always distinguished between the essentials and the distinctives.

[19 : 26] And our focus in the life of this church has always been on the essentials. And we've been intentional about creating a space for people to have dialogue and to disagree and to have civil discourse over those distinctives and over the ways that people in this very room might disagree on them.

This really impacts our posture as we approach Scripture. There's an old quote that I love that really captures our ethos. In essentials, unity. In non-essentials, liberty.

In all things, charity. And I think that's a fantastic way to summarize it. In essentials, unity. In non-essentials, liberty. In all things, charity. There are some things that are simply hard to understand.

It's very validating. Because even now, for those of you who are here for the Song of Solomon series that we did in January, I think I told you many times during that series that I would many times open the passage and I would just sit there after several hours just sort of wringing my hands and just sort of wanting to pull my hair out.

What does this mean? That's a reality. The Bible admits it. So that's one thing we need to be aware of. Now the third point is kind of a counterpoint to this. Not only are there places in Scripture that are hard to understand, but there will always be people who deliberately twist Scripture for their own purposes.

[20 : 48] And this is something we need to be aware of. History is full of people who deliberately misuse Scripture. They take verses out of context. They reinterpret or imagine things are happening that are not happening in Scripture.

There's a phrase called eisegesis. You know, exegesis is drawing the meaning of a text out based on the original culture and history and author and audience and all of that stuff.

Eisegesis is reading your own meaning into the text. It's, this is what I want this to mean. Right?

And so throughout history, you have the Crusades. Right? You have slavery.

You have racism and opposition to interracial marriage. You have the liberal Protestant churches' support of eugenics around the turn of the century.

You have all of these, you know, nationalism and extreme xenophobia. You know, all of these are issues on the left and the right where Christians have co-opted Scripture and they've twisted it and used it to justify human ends.

[21 : 52] And Peter is saying, this is something we have to be very, very, very careful about. In his day, false teachers were twisting Scripture and using it to justify sexual indulgence. People can do what they want.

Jesus is not coming back. So we always have to be on guard for that. On the one hand, there are Scriptures that are hard to understand and up for debate. On the other hand, there are people who deliberately misuse Scripture.

And that actually brings us to the last point I want to make about Scripture before we move on. By implication of those points, we can draw out another point, and that is this. There is a right way to interpret Scripture.

There's a way that it's meant to be read. There's a meaning that is meant to be drawn out of it. It's not always clear, but it's there. And I say that it's a very important point because I think in our

culture, and even in our church, it's very common for people to sit down and read the Bible or Bible studies, even in some of our core groups, and some of our leaders have told me over the years that they face a challenge.

They say, we sit down to read this Bible passage together, and immediately a conversation ensues where people say, well, this is what it means to me. Well, this is what it means to me. Well, this is what it means to me.

[22 : 58] And people all draw out a kind of personal meaning, and none of the meanings have anything to do with each other, and then everybody kind of goes their separate ways. What this is telling us is that's not the way we should read Scripture, that we should read it, understanding that there is an objective meaning in this text that was intended by the author, that was intended by God as He inspired the author, that's intended for us.

And so our goal as Bible students, as we open God's Word together in community, the way it's meant to be done, our goal is to work together to figure out what is that original meaning. Now, we'll never be able to do it perfectly, right, because some things are very hard to understand. But that's the way we need to approach Scripture. And Peter warns us about people who twist Scripture or who might say, well, it can just mean different things to different people. And ultimately, he says those are lawless people. Lawless meaning they're not in submission to anyone other than themselves. And he says the way to approach Scripture is to not be lawless, it's to be in submission to the Word, to the community that we're a part of, and to seek to figure out what the text actually intends to say.

So in all of these ways, Peter is emphasizing the importance of Scripture, and he's calling us to be grounded in Scripture. He's wanting to root ourselves in the orthodox interpretation of Scripture.

[24 : 18] Right, when I say orthodox, I mean a tradition of interpretation. Right, so you say, well, how are we supposed to know this person's meaning versus that meaning, and who are you to say that it means this and not that, right?

Well, that's why it's very helpful to have a tradition of interpretation, what we call orthodoxy. Right, so when I'm reading a passage, whether it's 2 Peter 3 or anything else, I'm going to get up here and teach you that passage.

I do a lot of research on that. I say, okay, what did Jesus say about it? Because by the way, on virtually every page of the Gospels, Jesus is quoting Scripture. So, did Jesus say anything about this particular passage?

You know, people say, well, you know, do you really think that Moses was the author of the Pentateuch? Because I think it might be this other thing. And I say, well, you know, Jesus thought it was. You know, that was his take on it, so I'm just going to side with him.

You know, because I think he knows what he's talking about, you know? And so, I look, what did Jesus have to say about it? You know, what do other books of the Bible have to say about this passage? You know, one of the best ways to interpret Scripture is to allow Scripture to interpret itself.

[25 : 21] And the Bible quotes itself all the time. And then I look at what the church fathers wrote about it. These early writers and church leaders in the first few centuries of the church, you can go back to the first few centuries and look at these leaders who are quoting and interpreting and preaching and teaching on the very same passages of Scripture that we have.

So, you see, what were they saying, you know, 1,700 years ago about this text? Then you can look at the medieval theologians and figure out what were the medieval Catholic theologians saying about this text.

And then you can look at the modern Bible scholars and see what were the modern Bible scholars, what do they think about this text? And what you will begin to see when you do all that study over time is there is a clear tradition of interpretation.

And that tradition is called orthodoxy. And so, what Peter is encouraging us to do is to root ourselves, not just in the Bible as we understand it, whatever it means to us, but root ourselves in the tradition of orthodoxy, the tradition of interpretation that's been handed down to us.

And the reason this is so important is because it leads us to two ends. First, it enables us to grow in Christ, and then it enables us to glorify Christ in our lives.

[26 : 34] And I'll just say a quick word about each of those. The more we ground ourselves in God's Word, the more we grow. That's the simple fact. You can go to Christian retreats, you can go meditate, you can go do contemplative prayer, you can do all of those things, you can fast, you can

do all of those disciplines, but if you're not grounded in God's Word, you simply will not grow.

It's the only nourishment we're made to take in that will produce spiritual growth. And he's talking about Christians growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, growing the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

You know, those go together. Right? Grace, how do I grow in grace? Well, I look at Jesus' command for me to go and love God and go and love my neighbor, and I go and I do that.

And I fail colossally. And then I come back and I confess that failure. And I have words of grace spoken over me. And I'm reminded of the fact that my relationship with God does not hinge on what I do or don't do for Him.

I'm reminded of His grace. I'm reminded of the fact that there's nothing I can do that even if I were to obey perfectly for the rest of my life, I could never impact His love for me. That there's nothing I can do that will make Him love me any more than He does at this very moment.

[27 : 57] And the same is true for you. And I'm reminded, oh, my relationship is not based on what I do for Him. It's based on grace. And I grow in grace. And then I go out and I fail and I come a little quicker to the throne of grace.

And then I go out and I fail and I come a little quicker. And every time, and you get to the point where you're almost desirous of seeing sin in your life so that you can come back to the throne of grace.

And you realize that's what it's about. That's growing in grace. And then the more you do that, the more you try to obey and the more you try to seek God's will for your life and the more you fail and the more you come to the throne of grace, the hungrier you become for knowledge.

How do I obey Jesus here? How do I follow the Lord here? And you want to know, what does Scripture say? And that makes you hungry for it. So you grow in grace and then you grow in knowledge and together you mature as a believer.

And then, of course, the ultimate end of all of this is captured in the very last line. To Him, this is the doxology, to Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity.

[28 : 58] Amen. What does it mean to glorify Christ? You know, that's one of those Christian phrases that you hear it and it's easy for preachers and anybody reading it to just skip over that.

Oh yeah, to Christ be the glory, right? But what does that actually mean to glorify Christ in your life? This is the whole point. Imagine a solar system.

Imagine our solar system. Why do all of the planets maintain their own orbits and yet at the same time there's perfect harmony and no planets ever crash into each other.

There's no hint of chaos. In fact, it's incredibly, precisely ordered to all function in perfect harmony.

Now, how could that possibly happen? Well, obviously, it's because all of those objects are oriented toward the same center.

They're all orbiting around the same center, in our case, the sun. Now, take that same image and think about our lives. Right?

[30 : 04] If you remove that center, what would happen? If all of a sudden the sun blinks out of existence? Well, all of those orbits would begin to shift and change. Things would spin out of control.

Planets would start colliding into one another. That would be catastrophe. The entire thing would begin to break down. And that's essentially how the Bible describes human beings after the fall, after our relationship with God was broken.

That each human being goes along in our lives, and I know this is true for me. I live as though I'm the center of my own solar system.

I live with the assumption that everything and everyone should be in orbit around me. When I look at the reasons that I have conflict with Laura, when I look at the times that I'm not a good dad to my kids, I'm neglecting them, doing other things, or that I'm angry to them, almost always, when I look at these things that I most dislike about myself, when I see the self that I want to be and I see the self that I actually am, you know what causes that disconnect?

It's because I'm living in that moment as though I'm the center of things. I'm assuming that they should be orbiting around me. I see that again and again and again in my life. And the Bible says, essentially, that's the human condition apart from God, that we all think we're the center.

[31 : 24] And you know, many people, many people who call themselves Christians, they think of their Christian faith as something that orbits around them. You know, I have my job, I have my

friends, I have my hobbies, I have my family, I have all of these things, and one of those things out there is my Christian faith and my church friends.

And you sort of have all of these things orbiting around you as the center. So what it means to glorify Christ is a Copernican revolution.

It's where Christ, who is out here on the periphery, an object of interest, an object of inquiry, an object of maybe some further investigation or curiosity, all of a sudden something happens and that being begins to come into the center and it begins to displace you.

You cannot have conversion without a kind of collision. where you are forcibly displaced and your life is reoriented and you begin to orbit around Jesus as your center.

And you know what? Same thing that we see in our solar system. When that happens, all of that chaos begins to come back into order. Right? Your life begins to go from total chaos and it begins to look more and more and more like a dance, like a cosmic dance because it begins to reorder your loves, it begins to reorder your priorities, it begins to reorder everything.

[32 : 48] Right? So this is essentially what it means to glorify Christ. The word glory is connected to a word that means reality or real. So when you glorify Christ in your life, you're saying He is the most real, most central thing and I'm in orbit around Him.

And if there's any ever discrepancy between me and Him, it's me that needs to change because He's the center. Right? So this is the difference between people who appreciate the teachings of Jesus, people who appreciate the Christian tradition and people who think it has a lot to offer modern society and then people who are actually converted Christians.

Has that Copernican revolution happened in your life? life. And the Bible actually says that one day, and this is what 2 Peter is really about, that one day Jesus is going to come again.

And like it or not, on that day, everything will be reoriented around Him. You know, we live in a society where there's an infinite array of people who are oriented in all different kinds of directions, lots of different orientations, and everybody's sort of going along in their own orbit, assuming they're their own solar system.

But one day, Jesus is going to come and when that happens, all of those orbits are going to be forcibly realigned. And instead of an infinite number of orientations, we will all have the same orientation toward the infinite.

[34 : 19] And that's the day of the Lord. And it's in that great hope that Peter is teaching. So here's my final word to you before we conclude. Here it is.

Life is hard in a place like D.C. It is unpredictable. It is full of anxiety. It's full of fear. Many of you I know personally are struggling even now.

I know the things that you're facing. And I know there's a lot more that I don't even know about. Life is tremendously challenging. And what we need is a story that helps us make sense of all of these experiences and that gives us hope and a direction to move.

What Peter's telling us here and the proposition that I leave you with is that the story of Scripture is the best and the truest story there is. And that when we ground ourselves in this story, we will become more and more secure and stable.

He uses the word stable and we will be found at peace. Meaning, regardless of what happens, regardless of what upheaval we face, we are steadfast, even keel, and securely grounded and rooted in that great story of the gospel.

[35 : 31] And the more we ground ourselves in God's word, the more we will grow and the more we will come to glorify Jesus, gently but firmly displacing us as the center.

So this is my prayer for you, my friends. This is my prayer for myself and our family. May the Lord make it so for His glory. Let's pray. Let's pray.

Let's pray.