

# Grace and Knowledge

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] reflect on the meaning of the resurrection. And this text that I just read, we looked at that last week, the story of doubting Thomas and what it meant for Thomas to come to faith in the resurrection. And so now, appropriately, this week we're going to be looking at not only the reality of the resurrection, but the implications of the resurrection. What does it mean? What difference does it make? And so we're going to begin looking at a theme that is tied very closely to Easter. We actually prayed about this a moment ago in the prayer that we prayed, that we would show forth in our lives the faith that we profess. In other words, we're going to be talking about Christian growth. Because one of the promises of the resurrection is not just that we are reconciled to God, but that there is the possibility of new life, that we can be restored and renewed, that relationships can be restored and renewed, that there is a transformation, a spiritual renewing that can happen as a result of the resurrection. So that's what we're going to be talking about. And this is something that we have to talk about in the life of the church from time to time for a lot of reasons. There are some people in the church, many people I think, and maybe some of us here fit this description. You came to faith at some point in your life, maybe you were a little kid, maybe you don't even remember. Maybe it was as we pray for our kids every week, that you never knew a day apart from the Lord. Or maybe you came to faith at a summer camp, or maybe you came to faith through a youth ministry, or maybe it was in college through a campus ministry, or a friend, that's what happened to me. Or maybe since then, maybe you're just recently now, within the last year, you've come to faith. But there are people who came to faith, and then since then they haven't really known what to do. You know, and some of us have maybe been believers for years, decades, and you sort of look at your life and you think, I haven't really experienced much in the way of growth or change.

So this is aimed at you. There are also people in the church who have been coming for years and fully believe that they are Christians, and the truth is, maybe you're not. Maybe you never really understood what it means to belong to God, or how that happens. So this is aimed at you. And maybe there are people who, at some point earlier in your life, you were growing, you were thriving, you were passionate about the Lord, you experienced tremendous change, but it's been a long time. And when you look at the calendar, you realize it's been years. This is aimed at you. So the hope is, is that by exploring this theme, we can catalyze the growth of Christians, and we can also create an opportunity for people who don't understand really what it means to belong to the Lord, or believe that change and transformation is possible, to invite you in and to extend to you an opportunity to begin to experience that for yourself. So in order to understand this more, we're going to be looking at this fantastic little letter for the next six weeks, which we call 2 Peter, 2 Peter. It's written by the Apostle Peter. It is written to young believers, a variety of believers, Jew and Gentile. And the theme of this letter is all about Christian growth. So we're going to be looking at chapter 1, the first 11 verses. And there's so much going on just in this introduction. One of the great things about Peter is he does not mess around, no flowery introductions, he just gets right into it. And so we're going to see four things about growth. First of all, I say four things, you know, my wife Laura, anytime I say I'm going to do four points, she always says, oh, can't you just do three? Four is just too much. And so the first point is not really a point. It's like a prelude. It's a prerequisite to the other three real points. So if Laura asks, I just did three points with a long introduction. So there's going to be a prerequisite to growth. There's a prerequisite to all Christian growth. You have to have it before growth is possible. Prerequisite. And then we're going to talk about the power that we have for growth. We're going to talk about the practices, our role in spiritual growth. And then ultimately, we're going to bring that together and talk about the purpose of it all. Why should this matter to us? Why is it worth our time? So let's pray as we get started. Our Father, we thank

you for your word, but we know that it's not meant to be inert, that your word is living and active, that because you are risen from the dead, because you are here in our midst, we know that we can open your word and that through your Holy Spirit, we can encounter you face to face in the flesh that you are ministering to us, doing spiritual surgery in us every time we open your word, Lord. And we pray that we would be open to that, and that we would be still and let you do your work. We pray this in your Son's holy name. Amen.

[ 4 : 49 ] So the prerequisite to growth is actually really important. That's why we have to start here. If we can put this up on the screen, Simon starts with a pretty standard introduction.

Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, I've been commissioned to be a missionary and to spread the message of the gospel. That's what we saw happening in John 20, by the way. Jesus breathes on them and commissions them. So he's been commissioned to be an apostle.

And he's writing the letter to those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ. By the way, this is one of the times in the New Testament where they refer to Jesus specifically as God, our God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

But here's what I want you to notice. He's talking to people who have come to faith, Jew, Gentile, apostle, regular, everyday believer. And he says, regardless of who you were, we all have a faith of equal standing that we've obtained by the righteousness of Jesus. So our faith has been obtained by the righteousness of Jesus. Jesus is the one who earned it. It was his excellence that made it possible. Now, why is that important? Especially when we talk about spiritual growth.

Well, because if you're anything like me, and whether or not you want to admit it, I think you are. I think in this way we're very similar, that we tend to tie spiritual growth to our worth.

[ 6 : 18 ] In other words, we tend to think of it as a kind of performance. And I think human beings are hardwired to think of performance and worth as being inextricably linked, right? I strive to grow spiritually so that I can become a better person, a more worthy person. That's a very dangerous way to think about spiritual growth. And I think this is why Peter opens his letter in this way. I had a professor back in university who passed away recently, last couple of weeks. And I've just been thinking about him a lot. And he's a very interesting man. He's very old. He was the oldest member of the faculty for decades. You know, I feel like he's one of these people who's always been old. And so, but I was a psychology major and he was one of the major figures in the psychology department. And he was notoriously difficult as a professor. It's extremely challenging. And he had this thing, this kind of practice that the psych majors knew about called, and it was this practice of at graduation, the graduating psych majors as they would walk across the stage, if he found you worthy, he would give you a little thumbs up. And the criteria for worthiness was very muddy. Nobody really knew exactly what constituted a worthy psych grad. But you knew, and you would sit at graduation every year, and he would be sitting in his place of honor as the oldest member of the faculty. And he would sit there, and certain people would come up, and he would give them a little wink and a little smile, and he'd give him the little thumbs up. So of course, come graduation day, being the psych major that I was,

I wanted the thumbs up. I was more focused on getting the thumbs up than the fact that I'd finished university and was done. And so I'm sitting there, and I'm waiting, and I'm waiting, and I'm looking at him, and every now and then I see a thumbs up, and they finally call my name, Thomas Henson, and I come up on stage, and I shake the president's hand, and I get my diploma, and I'm walking across the stage, and I look at my professor, and he's not even looking at me. He's sitting with his legs crossed, and his arms crossed, looking the other direction. And you don't have to be a body language expert to understand what that means. You know, it was a total rejection. And I was crushed.

I was devastated. I was more upset about that. It robbed the joy of the week. And I didn't even think about the fact that I graduated. I just wondered, why didn't I get the thumbs up? You know, what was it? And I never really went to him and asked, because what do you say? You know, I really wanted a thumbs up. I mean, there's no way to not be completely pathetic. So I just didn't do it, you know? And so time passed, and, you know, so why am I telling you this? Well, it feels good to get it off my chest. But I had also become a believer that same year. And in the years that followed that experience, I began to, as Peter talks about, grow in the grace and the knowledge of Jesus Christ. And one of the things that happens when you grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus is your perspective on your life begins to shift, and you begin to see it in different ways and ask different questions. And as I began to grow and learn about grace, I began to think back on that, and I began

to ask myself, what if I had gotten the thumbs up? Would that have cemented my self-worth for all of time? Did he have the authority to pronounce my life worthy so that I could then not have to worry about that anymore and go on and worry about other things? And what I began to realize is, no, in fact, that would just be one of a potentially endless array of people whose thumbs up I craved. I began to realize there's always going to be a parent or a professor or a boss or a mentor or a peer, somebody you admire, a hero, somebody in your life whose opinion matters to you, whose thumbs up you crave. It reminds me, the film that won Best Picture this year was a film called *The Shape of Water*. I don't know if anybody's seen it. And the bad guy is a pretty bad guy, Colonel Strickland. There's really not much to like about him. But I think the most powerful moment of the movie comes in this rare moment of vulnerability for Colonel Strickland. He's been trying and trying and trying and ultimately fails his superiors. And his boss is reaming him out, and he just kind of gets this pathetic look on his face and just says in this kind of a pathetic voice, he says, when is a man done, sir, proving himself? He says, I've been loyal for years, for 10 years. I've done everything that you've asked me to do. And I make this one mistake. When is a man done, sir, proving himself? And here's the point. If you live your life always looking for the next thumbs up, the answer to that question is never. Never. And that's why Peter begins here, because the point Peter wants us to understand, I believe, is that spiritual growth is not about earning a thumbs up from God. It's not about proving ourselves to God. It's not as though God has done all that he's done just to sit back with his arms crossed and his legs crossed, looking the other way until we attain some minimum standard of excellence. And then God says, now I'm paying attention to you. You seem to be kind of getting your act together. That's not what it's about.

He's making it very clear right off the bat that our entire relationship, our faith has been obtained. It's been given to us because of the excellence of Jesus. And what that means is that there's nothing that we can do that will add or subtract anything from the joy and the pleasure and the delight that God takes in us at this very moment. So you can leave here today and grow in all the ways that we're going to talk about for the rest of your life. And you'll be a flourishing, virtuous, you know, sort of standard bearer of Christian character. God's not going to love you one ounce more than he does right now. So this is the prerequisite to spiritual growth.

[12:13] And the prerequisite is this. We have to abandon all of our efforts and all of our striving after self-worth apart from Jesus Christ. Because if you don't, and you think that somehow your growth is tied to your worth, you're not going to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus. You're going to grow in legalism and moralism, self-righteousness, and despair. Okay? So we'll be clear on that.

Now that we're clear on that, now let's talk about spiritual growth. Point one. Okay. They're going to be quick points. Point one. God has given us tremendous power for growth. We're going to move on. He says, may grace and peace be multiplied to you. By the way, he says that again at the very end of the book. This is his whole desire, that you would grow in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. And then he says this in verse 3, his divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness. Now that's an amazing statement. And then he goes on to say this, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, which are so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature. That's an amazing array of things that he says. You've been granted power. You've been granted the opportunity to be a partaker of the divine nature. These are amazingly huge ideas that we could spend our whole time on. But Peter's making it clear that we have everything that we need in order to grow. We have everything that we need. We have, many of you know, we have three kids. They were worshiping this morning in the Brooklyn parish, so they're not here tonight.

But we have a seven-year-old, a five-year-old, and an eight-month-old, Emmeline. And they all, as they grow, it's amazing to see how in different ways they resemble us. You know, they're unique, they're different, they're their own kids, but they also resemble their parents. And the reason is because of many things, but mainly DNA, right? The moment they were born, they had our DNA in them.

And it was like a power at work in them, shaping their growth. And so regardless of what happens environmentally, there is a power at work in them, shaping them and molding them to reflect our image.

And they do it in different ways, and they do it in unique ways. And they're not carbon copies or clones, but they all, in various ways, reflect the image of their mom and dad. And it's because of this power at work in them. And that's a way of thinking about what Peter's talking about, that Christians have in them a kind of spiritual DNA. I think this is part of what Jesus means when he says to Nicodemus, you can't just adopt the teachings. You can't just adopt the lifestyle.

[15:01] You have to be born again. You have to start over with a new lineage and a new family with a new identity and spiritual DNA in you. You need to be filled with the Holy Spirit, and this needs to begin to work in you, to shape you more and more, to reflect the image of your Father in heaven.

And this is what he's talking about, this power that is at work in us. Now, why do we need to make this point? Why does that matter? Well, because I think that, I think for at least 2,000 years, it's been a huge temptation for Christians to think, you know, this is true in Peter's day, it's true in our day. My Christian faith is good. I'm glad I'm a Christian, but I really need this other thing. You know, I'm, yeah, I'm a believer. I'm a Christian, but, you know, what I really need is a really rich emotional experience. I've just felt kind of dry lately in my faith. I felt uninspired. I just want to go away. I want to go to a retreat center. I want to go somewhere where I just really feel an emotional high. That's what I'm lacking, you know. And there are some movements that focus on that. There are some people that say, you know, Christian faith is good, but what you really need are signs and wonders. There's a whole movement afoot right now that focuses on the need for signs and wonders. We need miraculous healings, and every illness, every disease, that should all be healed right now, right here and now. And if you don't have that, you're not really with it. You're missing out as a Christian. You know, and there are other people who say, well, you know, being Christian is good and praying is good, but if you pray in this particular way, it will unlock the blessings that God is waiting to give you. And if you read this book, it'll tell you how to pray in the way that will access those blessings that are just there waiting for you, if you just pray in the white way. And there are some people who say, you know, I'm really struggling and my Christian faith is great, but what I really need is good therapy. Now, am I knocking any of these things? Absolutely not. I love emotional experiences of any kind, right? I love, I used to be a therapist, right, and still do some counseling, right? So I'm not knocking these things. If we could miraculously heal things through prayer every time we prayed, that would be incredible. But what I am knocking is this. Here's the caution. That we are vastly underestimating the resources that we have at our disposal right now as followers of Jesus. That we're vastly underestimating what we've been given, namely the power of the Holy Spirit and the truth of the scriptures. So I'm not saying don't ever go to counseling.

There are definitely times and places where we need to go to therapy, where we need medication, where those things are very important, a part of discipleship. But here's what I'm saying. When we are struggling, when we're struggling with anxiety and depression and wrestling through hard things in our lives, the knee-jerk reaction should not necessarily always be, I need to go see a counselor. I need to solve this problem. Because here's a hard thing that we may need to accept.

That if God is always at work in our lives, if his power is always at work, he's also at work in our suffering. And quite honestly, at least in my life, it's mostly been through the suffering that God has really grown me. It's mostly been through the hard times.

[18:18] And so the mentality needs to shift, not just how do I solve this problem and end this as soon as possible, but to be willing to sit in the challenge and sit in the pain and ask, how is God at work in me right now? Right? Emotional highs are great. Retreat center experiences are great. But we need to also realize that faith isn't meant to be lived on mountaintops at retreat centers. That faith is meant to be lived out in the very mundane rhythms of daily life and faithfulness. A kind of quiet, quotidian rhythm of faith. Sometimes it's emotionally rich and deep and rewarding. Sometimes it's dry and uninspiring. But there's a deep value when we recognize it's not about how I feel in the moment.

It's about trusting that God is always at work because his power is in me. Right? So God has given us this tremendous power for growth. We have everything we need right now. So now somebody says, okay, well then why do anything? And this is where the Bible is interesting in its balance. On the one hand, Peter says, you have everything that you need right now as you're sitting here, God is at work in you to shape you into his image. But then the very next thing he says, he says, for this very reason, for this very reason, because you have everything you need, you have a role to play.

And then he begins to lay out what that is. So that brings us to the second point. Like I said, if she asks, the practice of spiritual growth. For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith.

Now that word supplement is interesting. It literally translates furnish. So imagine having your faith is the house, there's no furniture in it. He's saying you've got the house, you've got the shelter, now put some furniture in it. Your house is going to be much more livable, it's going to be much more useful, it's going to be much more life-giving if you furnish it. So furnish your faith with virtue, which this means kind of moral excellence, with moral excellence, and moral excellence with knowledge. That's doctrinal knowledge, biblical knowledge. And knowledge with self-control.

Self-control is the ability to enjoy the good things of life without being mastered by them. Right? Self-control. And self-control with steadfastness. That's trusting God in the good times and the bad times, trusting and holding firm in your faith. And steadfastness with godliness.

Godliness is decompartmentalization. It's living your life, all of your life, in every realm of your life, in reference to God. A totally integrated faith. And godliness with brotherly affection.

[ 20 : 49 ] That's love for other people in the church, your brothers and sisters in the believing community. And then lastly, brotherly affection with love. And this is a different word for love. And this doesn't just mean love for Christians, it means love for everybody. Regardless of creed, regardless of background, regardless of belief, friend, enemy, everybody. Now this is an amazing list of virtues that we have. And, you know, some people have tried to make a lot out of the order.

Rhetorically, the form that we see here is very common in Greek writing, Quinte Greek writing. And honestly, rhetorically, I don't think we're meant to take anything from the order. I don't think the order really matters, nor do I think it's an exhaustive list. Peter's giving us some examples of the kinds of virtues we should be seeking to cultivate to supplement our faith. And so really, you can look at this and say, well, we should, you know, you can just pick and ask the Spirit to guide you. Look at a list like this and say, where am I really lacking? Where am I really deficient?

Some of us may need to gain more biblical and doctrinal knowledge. Some of us may just realize, I'm out of control. I have no discipline in my life. I need more self-control. But here's the couple of things that we do need to keep in mind. Number one, all of these need each other.

So it's not good to have knowledge, a lot of knowledge with no love. That's lifeless. That's cold. Right? It's impossible to have godliness without self-control. So ultimately, these are all qualities that every Christian should seek to have. All qualities that we see reflected in Jesus Christ.

Now, I said the order doesn't matter at all. I am actually going to contradict myself a bit. The order does matter in this one way. That if you look at the overall progression, if we go back to verse 4...

[ 22 : 43 ] Actually, let's go to the next one. Yes, there we go. Peter says that we have escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. We've escaped sinful desire. And if you go all the way to verse 7, the ultimate end of all of this is love for all people. And that aspect of the order does matter. That the journey for all Christians begins when we are liberated from sinful desires. And that our desires are so radically transformed that we become people who love not only God and not only other people in the church, but we actually become people who love everybody. Everybody, regardless of their friend, enemy, family, stranger. That we love everybody. This is the root of Christian hospitality. It's the root of reconciliation ministries. It's the root of everything that Christians are called to be and to do in the world.

It's this capacity to love selflessly all people. Right? So that's the ultimate end of all of the striving, our role in cultivating Christian character and virtue is that we become better able to love people. That's the end. So furnish your faith with these virtues. Become a better lover of all the people in the world. So this is, you know, as we kind of stop here, okay, this is the prerequisite to growth. We have to understand that God loves us and accepts us only through Jesus Christ. And because of that, we can't earn his love or prove our worth to him. And then we have to realize that we have a tremendous power at work in us right now, but that we're not off the hook, that that doesn't mean we just let go and let God, that we actually have a role to play. And that's about the cultivation of Christian character. So now lastly, why does this matter? Why are we talking about this on a Sunday evening together? The purpose we see in verses eight through 11, for if these qualities are yours and are increasing, we never arrive, but if they're increasing, they should always be increasing.

They will keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. That's the first reason this matters is that, is that Christian character enables us to be effective and

fruitful in our calling. He says, you don't want to be ineffective. You don't want to be unfruitful. If you're seeking to grow, you will be effective. You will bear fruit in your calling. Now, what is our calling? Well, we could sum it up this way. The calling of the church, the calling of Christians in the world is to be a radically countercultural community. You know, people who use things like sex and money and power in, in radically countercultural ways, in ways that don't point to the glory of human beings in the world, ways that point to the glory of God, to the way of the kingdom, which is radically different. It's completely upside down, right? And in order to fulfill that calling, that hinges on our ability to create, our willingness to cultivate Christian character. And by the way, even talking about character is countercultural.

[ 25 : 44 ] Back in the 1970s, when they took people in their 20s and 30s, and they said, as you think about your life, rank all of these items in order of priority. What are the most important things in life to you, and what are the least important? And one of those items was being famous. And in the 1970s, being famous was at the very bottom of the list. It was like 15th out of 16 possible choices.

Well, of course, they've done that study today. And guess what happened? Spoiler alert, it's at the top of the list now. You know, being famous is at the very top of the list, being wealthy and being famous right up there at the very top, which shows us, among other things, that we do now live in a culture of celebrity. And in a culture of celebrity, external appearance matters way more than internal quality. And in a culture of celebrity, what matters is your ability to grab and hold attention, your ability to say and do things that are most shocking, your ability to garner likes and followers, your ability to have an impact through the sheer volume of your voice, so to speak. It's a culture of celebrity. It doesn't, we don't, we, not much talk about the inside, not much talk about virtue, a lot of talk about appearance and profile and image, you know.

And unfortunately, this hasn't just affected our, the world of politics and the world of media, but it's deeply affected the church. The church has its own subculture of Christian celebrities, which, if there's anything more antithetical to the gospel, I don't know what that is. But the world of Christian celebrities is, I think, a kind of cancer in the church. And yet, it's a reflection of the world that we live in. And so what I think this is making clear is what the world needs is not more celebrities. We need people of character. You know, like what C.S. Lewis calls men with chests.

You know, we need men and women with chests, who are fortified, who have a depth to them, who have a quality to them internally, right? So that's the first thing, that we need to recognize the connection between Christian character and being effective in our calling as Christians in the world. Number two, if we keep going, for whoever lacks these qualities, can we go back to verse 9, whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. So this is the next reason that we should care about this, is because Christian character enables us to see things as they are, to see things as they are.

[ 28 : 21 ] And here, you know, he's talking about being nearsighted, being blind. It's important to understand that in the Greek, the nuance of this is willful blindness. It's not somebody who actually has an inability to see. It's somebody who willfully is looking away. They're squinting their eyes. They don't want to look. And so he says, character enables us to overcome that, to be able to see clearly. Well, how does that actually look in life? Well, it's people who are willfully blind to the truth of God's Word. You know, if you've ever had somebody in your life, or maybe this is you, maybe you've done this, and we've all probably done this to a certain extent in our lives. You ever had somebody who said, you know, they're knowingly, they're a believer, and they're knowingly doing something that contradicts God's Word. They're knowingly sinning. They're knowingly rebelling against God. And finally, one of their friends gets up the courage and says, what's going on here? Why are you doing this? Why are you, you're a Christian.

Don't you believe? And the response that you get, that I get all the time, is, well, I'm just not really sure what I think about that issue. You know, I haven't really done the research yet. I'm not really sure what I think. And that's sometimes, I think, the truth, but I think many times it's a form of perpetual agnosticism. You know, as long as I don't actually read what Scripture says about this, that, or the other issue, as long as I don't really know, then I don't have to be held accountable to it. It's a kind of willful blindness, a perpetual agnosticism.

And Peter says something pretty severe about this. He says, when you do that, it is as though you're forgetting that you've been cleansed from your sins. In other words, he's saying, you're denying your baptism. You're denying that you belong to the Lord. You're living essentially as a functional atheist. And so he says, maturity means overcoming that willful blindness and being

more and more and more able to see things as they are, to see God's word for what it really says. And then the third and the final reason that this matters, so it enables us to be fruitful in our calling. It enables us to see things as they are.

And then finally, Christian character is evidence of our citizenship in the kingdom of God. If you look at verses 10 and 11, therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election. Now, does this mean that we have to earn, we have to convince God to let us in?

[ 30 : 31 ] Absolutely not. What this means is simply this, is that the clearest evidence that we truly understand and believe the gospel is reflected in our desire to cultivate a Christian character, a life and a heart that reflects the kingdom of God and the values of God. So imagine if you're terminally ill and a doctor gives you, gifts you with an amazing medicine and that medicine is able to save your life. Would you not take that medicine? You know, and if you weren't taking that medicine, people would say, do you really understand how sick you are? Do you really understand that this is your role? Why are you not taking the medicine? You know, or if you're fleeing an unjust and terrible dictator and you're a refugee and a government gives you the gift of citizenship, it says, come and be a citizen of our country. We welcome you. Would you not then begin to try to learn the language and the customs of that place?

Right? And if you didn't, and if you totally rejected that, people say, do you really understand where you're coming from? And do you really understand the opportunity that's on offer here? Why are you not taking it? You know, if you're sitting on death row and you're dazed from your own execution and a court comes through and gives you the gift of a pardon and you just continued to sit in the cell and you never got up and left, people would say, what's wrong? Don't you understand what's going to happen? Why aren't you leaving? Right? And the gospel is like all of these things, but it's more than all of these things. It's like life-saving medicine. It's like a new citizenship. It's like being pardoned on death row. It's all of those things and more. And Peter's essentially saying, don't you understand the life that you were living when you were enslaved to sinful desires? And don't you understand the freedom that is on offer? Why are you not trying to learn to live as a free person? Walk out of the cell. What are you doing? And that's the nuance that we need to understand here. He says he's not talking about confirming our calling to God. God knows that we're called.

He's the one who called us. We need to confirm our calling to ourselves. Are you really sure? Have you really confirmed in yourself that this is the trajectory that you're on purely because of what God's doing in your life? And if you practice these qualities, you will never fall, he says. This always has to be on our minds. For in this way, there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. So do you want to grow? Do you want to begin to experience the kind of freedom, the kind of life that is on offer through the Christian faith, through Jesus Christ? The prerequisite, abandon all of your striving for worth apart from Jesus. It is only because of his mercy that we have faith. Point one, recognize, recognize the power that is already at work in your life, the tremendous spiritual resources that you have right now.

[ 33 : 22 ] You can access those through prayer and through the scriptures. Practice the cultivation of a Christian character. Be radically countercultural. Care about the inside more than the outside.

And then lastly, do these things so that you will be fruitful in your calling, so that you will be able more and more to see things as they are without looking away. And then ultimately, so that you can confirm to yourself that you understand the tremendous gift and the hope that we have in Jesus Christ.

and citizenship that we have in his kingdom. Let's pray.