

Grow in the divine nature

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[0:00] We're going to read the Bible together now from 2 Peter chapter 1.

! 2 Peter chapter 1 and we'll be reading from verse 1 through to verse 15.

Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ.

To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ. May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence.

[1:28] By which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue and virtue with knowledge and knowledge with self-control and self-control with steadfastness and steadfastness with godliness and godliness with brotherly affection and brotherly affection with love.

For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For whoever lacks these qualities is so near-sighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.

Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election. For if you practice these qualities, you will never fall.

For in this way, there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Therefore, I intend always to remind you of these qualities.

[2:55] Though you know them and are established in the truth that you have, I think it right as long as I am in this body to stir you up by way of reminder, since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me.

And I will make every effort so that after my departure, you may be able at any time to recall these things. Well, good morning, everyone.

Well, this Sunday is Chelsea Bernard's last Sunday with us before she moves to Brisbane. Where are you? There you are. Yeah, all the family pointing at her. You're loving this attention, aren't you? We'll miss you dearly, Chelsea. I'm going to pray and we'll get into God's Word. Yeah, Heavenly Father, we ask that you would establish Chelsea in a new church family that will care for her and grow her in the knowledge and grace of the Lord Jesus.

Lord, I pray the same for us right now as we come to your Word, that you would grow us in the knowledge and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, make him real to our minds and hearts as you are real.

[4:25] In Jesus' name, Amen. We have 2 Peter 1 open. Well, if someone heard you talking about being saved by Jesus and they asked you, saved, what do you mean by that?

From what? What pictures, what biblical images would you draw on? One person might respond from a relational angle.

So, I was once cut off from God. I had rejected God. I was hostile towards God and I was an enemy from his point of view.

But now, because of Jesus, I'm saved. I'm reconciled. I'm at peace. So, you can use that relational picture. Someone else might use a legal picture.

I was guilty before God. Jesus took the penalty, the punishment. I'm forgiven. Now, I'm justified.

[5:36] I'm innocent in his eyes. Declared innocent by the judge. You can use that legal picture. Someone else might talk about freedom.

I was enslaved to sin. Sin overpowered and destroyed my life. And Jesus set me free.

He is setting me free to live for God. You can use that freedom language. Salvation is a big overarching term.

And you need all these beautiful pictures. And there's more that scripture has for us. To understand what Jesus has achieved. By dying for us on the cross.

Now, dare you use, does anyone in this room, are you game to use verses 3 to 4 of what salvation means?

[6:36] That you may become partakers of the divine nature. Having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

Now, I hope there's a part of you that's almost recoiling. You don't want to blaspheme by using that language.

Unless Christ's apostle used it. There is one God in three persons. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He doesn't say we have a divine nature.

That we become gods. In every single way that God is God. No one is omniscient. As much as some people act like they are.

But no one is, has that. Can't share that with God. He says we participate. We share in the divine nature.

[7:39] Now, to my shame, I can hear us in this church talk about becoming like Jesus. And it's a bit ho-hum. We use that language so much.

And this is to my shame. I can doubt, is all the suffering and trials worth it to become like Jesus?

Jesus. This phrase gets under my skin.

And I think Peter is intentionally provoking us. It's lofty. That we get to share in his divine nature.

His meaning is brought out by the contrast of what we are saved from. The corrupted nature of the human race because of sinful desire.

Into eternity, we will be creatures. We'll be dependent creatures. We'll be worshipping the one true God. But being remade in his image, we are not some black market dodgy knockoff of a Nike brand or something.

[8:58] When we use the language of being made in the image of Christ, we are sharing in his very nature. God the Father's goal in sending his son.

Why Jesus chose to die in our place. The goal that the Holy Spirit powerfully enacts God's call on you to become a believer.

That call spoken of here is not a text message where you can opt out, yes, or I'm opting out. It is not a call like that.

It is a sovereign summons. Come, like Lazarus out of the tomb. Lazarus, come out and you come.

To come to his own glory and excellence.

That was his purpose. That's what the triune God is saving us for. When Isaiah the prophet saw his glory and excellence in a vision, he said, woe is me.

[10:17] He was coming apart at the seams. The sight of his holiness made him just quake and feel like he's dying. That was just seeing.

We get to partake. This is the same Peter who was on the mountain, the holy mountain, when Jesus was transfixed before him.

He got eyewitness seeing the majesty that Jesus faced was brighter than the sun. And that same Peter is saying to you, that glory, you're going to share in it.

You are sharing. You're growing and sharing in it, believer. It's almost blasphemous. Isn't it awesome?

I'm struggling for language to capture it. What a privilege. None of us deserved it. None of us stood out as more worthy of God's call. It's sheer grace.

[11:20] Sheer his choice. Now, this core truth of salvation, we need that image. We need the relational picture.

We need the legal picture. We need the freedom picture. We need this picture, that transformation of our nature. I think Peter is laying this picture, he's pressing this picture to the church he's writing to, because it exposes how twisted and ugly the false teachers that were around in his day.

We're going to look at it more next week. We won't go too much into it. But they were even boldly teaching from the front, indulge in the sinful nature. It doesn't matter what you do with the body. It's just your spirit that counts. Or even indulge, because you're forgiven. It's an expression of your freedom. Who knows what they're saying. But when you realise what Jesus saved us for, it exposes no way.

No way would you fall for that. Now, we may not go so far astray. Like, if we heard someone saying that, I'm guessing most of us will go, no, that's not right.

[12:45] I think it can be more common to find Christians and churches who just have a, we just fall into a cheap grace. It's like a child with their parents or teachers.

They learn that you can just ask for forgiveness later. You don't need to ask for permission. It's that kind of presumptive attitude of grace.

It's God's job to forgive. There can even be a rigid doctrine of Calvinism. Some people who love to label themselves of Calvinists, that it's just your doctrine that matters.

It's like their behaviour and their words. And the way they speak their words, they don't see it. Now, I'm guessing most of us probably do feel how far we are from this call.

To share in his excellence. You don't feel strong enough to let go of something you know is sinful. Not good.

[14:01] And some situations drain you so much, to respond in a godly manner feels impossible. But look at verse 3, the powerful promise here.

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness. He calls us and then he provides.

Now, how do we get this power? Through the knowledge of him. Through the knowledge of him. We're going to come back to that at the end.

Peter knows he's about to die. Verse 13. He knows. 13 and 14. He knows he's about to die. When you're about to die, you do not mince your words.

Every word counts. What does he choose to focus on in this maybe the last chance he gets with this church? Grow.

[15:12] Keep growing. These are mature Christians. They know the truth. They've been established in the truth. Keep growing. Spiritual growth, he uses his dying breath to talk about.

So we're going to look at in this passage what true growth is. The motivations to pursue growth. And then the key that creates growth.

The environment that creates growth. So what is true growth? The motivations to grow. And what's the key to it? How do you create the environment to grow?

So have a look at verse 5. For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith. This is where he begins the letter and he ends the letter with chapter 3, verse 18.

Grow in the knowledge and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. There's no standing still in the Christian life. You're either progressing or sliding back.

[16:15] You can't stay still. He's not writing to immature Christians. Like I've said, this isn't about do you have these qualities listed here or not.

The point is, are you growing in these things? Verse 8. Notice the word increasing. Are you increasing? I think we should see here that growth is essential.

It's not optional. If you're called by God and you have his power, the Holy Spirit in you, you will be growing. It's essential, but it's gradual.

Are you increasing? We see here it's personal. I'm going to go through these in case you're like, hold on, slow down. I'm not catching this, Dave.

It's essential. It's gradual. It's personal. And we need all of them. They grow together. If you picture God at creation, the Holy Spirit hovering and by his word, what happens?

[17:30] Well, growth. He changes everything. I believe that we have everything. We have his word and his spirit. If you're called by God, there will be growth.

There will. But it's gradual. Bit by bit by bit. We say to a child, I think you've grown. Why do we say that?

Why don't we just say, you've grown? We say it because organic growth. You can't just watch a child and see the growth. But you can measure it.

Over time, you can measure it like the markings on the door frame. If I asked, are you growing in the knowledge of what pleases the Lord?

You might go, I don't know. Or you might say, no. I don't feel it. But then you, in small group, you share this insight.

[18:34] Or a friend comes to you for counsel and your response even surprises you. Like, where did that come from? Now, I know the Holy Spirit can give you words in the moment.

Of course he can. But usually, it's just bit by bit by bit. You're not even noticing you're becoming wiser. It's gradual.

Organic growth is gradual. There are people who used to just rub you the wrong way and you just couldn't be around them.

But now, you have genuine affection for whatever it is about them. You move towards them and you think, years ago, I could never have done that.

What's happened? Did you just wake up on the right side of the bed? No. You've bit by bit by bit, you're growing in brotherly affection.

[19:35] If you planted a... Okay, I'm really worried. All the gardeners and stuff in the room are going to say, Dave, you don't know what you're talking about. But if you planted a gum tree seed...

Can you even do that? People are laughing already. All right. Just stick with me, all right? Just swap the tree image if you need to. But if you plant it next to a concrete slab, if you had a competition between this seed and a concrete slab, slab, who's going to win?

Every time the seed. Every time. You plant it there next to a concrete path or driveway and 10, 15, 20 years later, that concrete is uprooted and cracked.

That kind of organic, bit by bit growth, it uproots and cracks our sinful nature.

That's the kind of growth God wants. It's gradual. Notice it's personal. It's not personality or skills.

[20:53] We can easily confuse the effects we have on others as evidence of our spiritual growth. I'm instructing others in the Bible. I've got these impressive gifts that people applaud me for or thank me for.

But that's evidence of the spirit working in them. It doesn't necessarily mean you're growing.

You've got to be really careful with that one. God's divine power will grow you as a person. It's inner. It's your character.

It's your way of thinking. What you love is changing. What you reject is changing. Virtue in verse 5 is the same word for his excellence in verse 3.

His goodness. What's good about God? You're loving good. Your person is growing in knowledge.

[21:54] The ability to discern God's will in this complex world. You're becoming more discerning. You're increasing in self-control. Think of what James says about your words.

If you can control the tongue, you can control your whole body. You're growing in your thinking and the words you choose.

You're becoming more steadfast, which is you're bearing up under pressure. You're bearing up.

You're becoming more godly. Yes, it's moral, but you're more God-orientated.

You're mindful more of God in the day in, day out, wanting to please him. And brotherly affection and love fills all these things and completes all these things.

It's personal change. It's personal change. The true mark of spiritual growth is not your impact on others necessarily, but your very person is changing.

[22:57] Gradual. Bit by bit, cracking and uprooting and splitting that concrete. Now, finally and very quickly, these personal qualities go together.

Peter carefully links all these terms. He doesn't just create a shopping list where you can go down the aisle, pick which ones you want. He repeats them carefully. Now, some people wonder, is there an order to these?

Does this follow this? I don't know. Maybe. Have a think about it. I think what we can be more sure of is he's purposefully connecting them. I think that points to these go together.

That's how you can know that it's spiritual growth because it's not just your ISFJ-ness. It's not your ENTS. I don't know if people know. You're Myers-Briggs-ness. You're that agreeable, tender-hearted softie who would be a softie even if they weren't a Christian.

[24:09] They learn to display moral resolve. And they bear up under the heavy weight of social pressure. And they don't cave.

That's when you can know it's spiritual. Because it's all these things. Not just your personal temperament. It's the extrovert who, I can pick on extroverts because I'm not one, who knows. You know how to fit in with a crowd on Sunday and then a different crowd on Monday. And you used to be a chameleon. But now you've learned integrity.

There's a godliness now that you're the same person on Sunday as you are on Monday. You're still extroverted. I love you extroverts. But there's a sameness now.

I'm just trying to, it's personal and it's all-round change. It's not just, don't just take your pick. Because you'll probably just pick your personality.

[25:19] So that's what growth, I think, looks like that Peter is saying. Peter ends this section with motivations. He's a preacher giving motivations to pursue growth.

So verse 10, he says something that seems to make no sense. Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election.

It's like saying, make secure your security. It kind of doesn't make sense. In the Old Testament, it's very clear.

God chose Israel. Not because they stood out as better in any way compared to the other nations. God chose. God called Abraham out. He initiated it.

Abraham didn't choose God. He chose Jacob, not Esau. In the New Testament, like Romans 8.30, the believer is chosen in eternity past and then called, summoned.

[26:24] And that is the rock-solid basis that it's in God that you will definitely reach glory. It wasn't about you. He knew our failures when he chose us.

Unlike a professional soccer player who's not playing well and is transferred out of the team, if Satan came up to God and said, gee, you made a bad choice with her, look at all their failures recently, he will never transfer you out.

Never. Because he chose you, knowing your failures and knowing you will share in his divine nature at the end.

It's beautiful security. It's wonderful. We should respond in thankfulness and relax. No one can snatch us out of the Father's hand.

No one. No one can't.

[27:51] There's an active wanting to know Jesus and grow in the grace of Jesus more and struggling against sin.

That's all we can see. Now, there's mysteries around God's sovereignty and how our human responsibility works. No theologian has ever resolved that.

So you're in great company. But the scriptures always use the certainty of God's call and election to motivate our choosing to pursue growth.

You'll find it. I believe every time. Someone can try and prove me wrong. But what we see is growth.

And of course we will if we have God's spirit residing in us. Keep in mind the gradualness.

[28:54] I know there's probably some fear hearing that. You've got to remember the gradualness and that God's the one who provides us all we need. So Peter gives us four images to motivate us to pursue growth.

Three of them are negative. A lot of 2 Peter is a warning. Next week is going to be a lot heavier. It's a strong warning. Three are negative and then he finishes with a positive motivation.

Verse 8. Verse 8 there. We don't want to be ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The word knowledge there is full knowledge. It's not just the ordinary Greek word for knowledge. It's full knowledge. When you've come out of your unbelief, you've been brought into a full knowledge.

You know God as Father. You know Jesus as Lord. There's a fullness about it. Yes, we grow in knowledge. But we've been brought into a state of God is our Father.

[30:04] Now in the riches of that knowledge, all you need to believe is the gospel. And you have that. In the riches of that, the picture here is someone choosing not to use that.

It's choosing to be unemployed. It's choosing not to use all those resources I've been given to do anything. I'm just going to come before God on the last day, being a Christian for years and years, and I've sat on this wonderful knowledge I have.

I've done nothing for his kingdom. Now, if the spirit is in you, as I believe he is in many of us, you don't want that.

I want to be an instrument in God's hand. I want to have a spiritual impact on my children and my grandchildren and my great-grandchildren.

I want to be an active member in this church body. I want to be an eye or a foot or the back of the elbow. I want to be something. I want to alleviate the suffering that I come in contact with.

[31:16] I want to be a light in my workplace. I don't want to get there on the last day, having done nothing with this wonderful, full knowledge I've been given. Now, it's a negative picture, but Peter's assuming the positive.

I don't want to be ineffective. Now, the second picture, verse 9, is being nearsighted that he is blind. Now, I think this person, they probably do know the Lord. They're going to be saved on the last day, but they've forgotten the joy of their salvation. The call heavenward has worn off.

Maybe they were super active in their university days, on fire. But then just the grind of work or their mind is just all in their family.

It's just their family they're thinking about. It's like they're just turned in. They've just forgotten about spiritual realities. You have to put it right under their nose. Don't you realize that the spiritual things going on all around you, your workmates are on their way to hell, and it's like they're oblivious.

[32:37] No spiritual, I don't want to be that. You don't want to be that. I want to grow.

I want to be effective. I want to be able to see what's actually real and going on. The third picture, verse 10, if you don't pursue growth, a believer can be so malnourished, they fall.

They come to grief. Now, maybe some fall in a way that you question whether there was even a call. But there's many, many other believers who will be in heaven.

They'll be in heaven. They're forgiven. They've come to serious grief. It's really sad to hear of another great Christian teacher fall into sexual immorality.

You've probably heard about Philip Yancey, 76, having run so much of the race, but he's confessed to an affair of eight years.

[33:46] I have failed morally and spiritually. I've realised that my actions will disillusion readers who have previously trusted in my writing.

Worse of all, my sin has brought dishonour to God. He can't ever be fully trusted and useful again. He's come to serious grief. If you practise these things, you will never fall. Spiritual growth, you take seriously our sinful natures.

If you're not growing, you can backslide to the point of falling. I don't want to fall. Do you want to fall? I don't want to fall.

So there's three negative images. I don't want to be ineffective. Unproductive. I don't want to be so nearsighted that I don't even realise the spiritual reality.

[34:50] I can't see what's actually going on. And I don't want to fall. And he finishes with a positive picture. Verse 11.

In this way, there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

The image that came to my mind is Pilgrim's Progress. After Christian's arduous journey, he enters the celestial city to the sound of victory.

Trumpets. Angels saying, well done. Enter into the joy of your master. I don't want to be like the 1 Corinthians 3 person who everything they've done has been burned away in the judgment and they just scrape through the flames.

Yes, they're saved. This person, this picture, there's going to be trumpets. It's a rich welcome. Well done, good and faithful servant.

[36:06] You don't need to have written books or planted 20 churches to receive that rich welcome. You simply need to pursue personal growth.

And there's going to be this fanfare when you walk in. So they're the motivations to pursue growth. How do we create the conditions for growth? How do we... What's the key to growth? Like gardening, organic growth, you can't produce it yourself.

You can create the conditions, but God gives the increase. All we can do is create the conditions. Verse 9, it's not forgetting.

But then verse 12 to 14 put positively, and this is Peter's whole point of writing. Therefore, I intend always to remind you of these qualities, to stir you up by way of reminder.

[37:22] I will make every effort so that after my death, you may be able at any time to recall these things. The key to growth is not forgetting, but remembering.

Forgetting is not a long-term memory problem. One of the most memorable days of my life was M and I's wedding day.

It's such a significant day. Intellectually, well, there probably are some things I forget. I don't forget a lot of things about that day.

It was so momentous. But then, sometimes on our anniversary, we watch the video montage Pete put together for us, and it stirs the mind.

It renews the affection. It strengthens the bond. The reality, the significance of that day, it renews.

[38:23] It's as if that day, we're in it again. It's so fresh, and the affections are stirred, the resolve is stirred.

Now, what's going on? I've recalled. It's not just intellectually recalling, but it's fresh. It's pressed in on your mind and affections.

I think that's the picture here. That's the key to growth. Growth, grow in knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Press him in.

Use every means available to us. We're doing it right now by gathering together, singing together. Use the means. Use every means of grace to make him real to your heart and mind.

Feeling guilty? Remember that cleansing. Thinking you'll never grow. Remember his call. Remember.

[39:22] You have all things for life and godliness. Press in the privilege of sharing in the divine nature. Think on his excellence.

Eagerly await. He's going to come in power and glory. Life is so hard, but he's going to come. Fill your mind.

The new earth where righteousness dwells. I'm going to be there. Philip Yancey's wife.

Hear what she says. God grant me the grace to forgive also, despite my unfathomable trauma.

She's recalling. God's forgiveness. She's making that real to her mind. And that's helping her be steadfast under enormous pressure.

[40:41] She's growing in steadfastness by recalling. We will only love other people when we recall and sense the reality.

Jesus laid down his life for me. Not because I'm lovable. Far from it. Simply because he loved me.

How will we grow in brotherly affection?

When we remember the ascended Lord in his majestic glory, he is not ashamed to call you brother, sister.

How will we get self-control until we see that we've already got him who is going to ravish my heart already?

He's going to ravish my heart the most. I don't need this other thing. May we help each other to be caught up in the wonder that this glorious and excellent one, out of his sheer sovereign grace, he came down and suffered, cleansed us, and then summoned us.

[42:09] Come, partake in my divine nature. Yes, in the future, but now through my promises. All our worry, all our bitterness, all our immorality comes from forgetting him.

Recall at any time, make him real. Help each other, make him real. And let's just wait for that concrete slab of our sinful nature to be cracked and uprooted.

As we grow in the knowledge and grace of our Lord. Will you pray with me? Let's pray. Lord, why you would share your divine nature with us, I don't have an answer for that.

Accept that that's the kind of God you are. Lord, I pray that you would fill us with the wonder of that. Fill each of us with the assurance that you will provide all that we need. And I pray that you would motivate us to pursue growth.

[43:38] Yeah, I pray that you would help us do that as a church family.
In Jesus' name, amen.