

# Grow by Grace

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Date: 09 November 2025

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[ 0 : 0 0 ]     The Old Testament reading is taken from Exodus chapter 33, reading from verse 18 right through to chapter 34 to verse 7.

! And you can find this on page 90 in your church Bible. So Exodus 33, 18.

But, he said,

This is the word of the Lord. The New Testament reading is to Peter chapter 1, reading verses 1 to 11. His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

[ 4 : 0 3 ]     For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness, and to goodness knowledge, and to knowledge self-control, and to self-control perseverance, and to perseverance godliness, and to godliness mutual affection, and to mutual affection love.

For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But whoever does not have them is near sighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins.

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Well, when one of my daughters was six years old, she came home from school and announced to me and Michelle that when I grow up, I am going to marry Dylan.

[ 5 : 3 9 ]     Now, Dylan had no idea about this, but in my daughter's mind, that was what was going to happen. She was desperate to grow up and marry Dylan. Of course, today, when she has grown up, she has no idea who Dylan is.

Young love, so fickle. The point is like lots of children, when they're young, they're desperate to grow up, aren't they? Well, Peter is desperate for his readers and us to grow up, not physically, but spiritually.

You see, Peter is riding from prison, and he will soon be executed. As we'll see next week, he doesn't have long to live. And so he's desperate to help his readers grow while he does live.

Why? Well, because some false teachers have come amongst his readers and deny that Christ will return in the future to judge the living and the dead, as we say in the creeds.

In chapter 3, they say, where is this coming he promised? The second coming, the second advent, if you like. And if Jesus won't return to judge in the future, they say, then it doesn't matter how you live in the present.

[ 6 : 53 ] And so in chapter 2, we'll see that they live very badly. But of course, Jesus will return in the future, and we'll see some evidence for it next week. And so it does matter how we live in the present, as we'll see this week.

But for Peter, the way to combat these false teachers is to exhort his readers and us to grow in our knowledge or relationship with Jesus.

Because the more you grow as a Christian, the less likely you'll fall for those false teachers and from your secure position in Christ.

We see this at the end of the letter, which I think are the summary verses for the whole letter. Peter says, You see, Peter is keen that his readers don't fall for the false teachers and from their secure position.

And the antidote, the way to, you know, make sure this doesn't happen is, firstly, verse 17, to guard against it. And we'll see that in chapter 2.

[ 8 : 13 ] But also, verse 18, it's to grow as a Christian, which is today's chapter. Because the more you grow at something, the less likely you'll fall from it, right?

The more you grow and exercise a muscle, the less likely you'll fall into injury. The more you grow at a skill or a hobby, the less likely you are to mess it up or fall from it.

Take an instrument. The more you grow at playing the instrument, the more likely, or less likely, rather, you'll fall from the music and hit the wrong notes. And so on.

That's why Peter is so desperate to see his readers grow up as Christians, so that they won't fall for the false teachers and away from Christ. And the way we're to grow in our knowledge or relationship with Jesus is by God's grace.

Grace is undeserved generosity. What God gives us, even though we don't deserve it. And so we're to use what God has graciously given us to grow, which is what our passage is about.

[ 9 : 19 ] Starting with God's grace through Jesus. So point one, verse one. Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ, have received a faith as precious as ours.

Here Peter is all about Jesus. Three times in two verses, and it's just worth one there, he's talking about Jesus. He's a servant of Jesus, an apostle of Jesus, and he calls Jesus both God and Savior.

For Jesus is God the Son who saves us from the judgment our sins deserve, doesn't he? For at the cross, Jesus took our judgment in our place.

And by doing so, he enables us to be right with God and to be righteous in God's sight. That's what he means in verse one when he talks about the righteousness of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

The righteousness that Jesus gives us by his death and resurrection. Of course, this is God's grace towards us, isn't it? We did not deserve Jesus to die for us, did we?

[ 10 : 33 ] But God graciously gave his only Son, and Jesus graciously died in our place, that we might be made righteous in God's sight. Of course, this is only for those who believe or have faith in Jesus.

But Jesus even gives that to us too. Notice in verse one, towards the end of verse one, how it says, through the righteousness of Jesus, we have all received a faith.

We have not earned it. A part of making us righteous is by giving us a faith as an undeserved gift too, which means our faith is by grace as well.

Of course, it also means that we need to keep praying for those who don't yet have this faith, that God would graciously give them faith as well. And if you're not yet a Christian here or online, then why not ask God to help you have faith?

I mean, what have you got to lose, really? Have you got a whole lot to gain, actually? In fact, Peter calls this faith precious towards the end of verse one, because it's by faith we have life eternal.

[ 11 : 48 ] That's what you've got to gain. And for us who already have this faith, I wonder if we remember that our faith is precious. How often do we give thanks to God for enabling us to have faith?

I often just take it for granted. Do you? What's more, our faith in Christ is of equal worth to Peter's. He says, as precious as ours.

Peter was the leader of the apostles, and yet our faith is just as precious as his. There are no second-class Christians in God's family, you see. Despite what the JW's say with their 144,000 Christians in heaven and the rest of the Christians on earth, you know, first-class, economy class, something like that, that's not what the Bible says.

God has given us a precious faith of equal worth all by grace. And he's given us even more, verse two. Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

You see, through knowing both God and Jesus, grace and peace are ours in abundance, literally multiplied to us. Now, by our knowledge here, Peter means more than just knowing about.

[ 13 : 08 ] He means knowing personally. We use the word knowing in both ways, don't we? For example, I can say I know the movie star John Travolta, by which I mean I know about him.

But our friends can say, I know the movie star John Travolta, by which they mean they know him personally, and have even received a \$2,000 gift from him, a \$2,000 gift from him one time.

Well, Peter will talk about growing in knowledge about Jesus in verse five and six later. Here, though, in verse two, he's talking about knowing personally, in relationship, as a Christian.

And this means that we receive more than a \$2,000 gift. We receive life eternal and loads more grace and peace in abundance, he says.

Such that in times of distress and sorrow, we always have access to more peace from God to comfort us in those times. And in times of need or hardship, we always have access to more grace from God, his undeserved generosity to help us, like giving us strength to persevere through those difficult times.

[ 14 : 24 ] Plus, he's given us everything we need to live a godly life too, which is point two, verse three. His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

Here, Peter ends the verse by talking about God's glory and goodness, which is just another way of saying God's gracious character. And so in our first reading, you might remember that Moses asked to see God's glory.

And then God kind of said, I'll show you my goodness. So they're like synonyms, you know, same thing. And then God actually proclaimed his name, his character. You know, the Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God.

And so they all mean the same thing, his glory and goodness and character. And it's by that character God has called us and given us a precious faith. And it's by that character he has powerfully given us everything else we need to live a godly life.

When I was younger, before I had two knee reconstructions, I used to play soccer in a church team. And when I paid my money, I was given a soccer shirt, shorts, socks, even shin pads and a soccer ball.

[ 15 : 49 ] The only thing I was missing were the boots. I was given almost everything I need to play soccer. Well, when we sign up to be a Christian, when we believe in Jesus, God does give us everything we need to play as a Christian, so to speak, to live as a Christian.

And this everything includes things like access to God in prayer, to help us in times of need so we can be godly. This includes our daily bread so we won't be forced to steal and be ungodly.

This everything includes one another so we can care for each other and encourage one another to be godly. It includes the Bible itself so that we can know God's character, what it means to be like God or godly.

It includes God's spirit who works through our conscience, convicting us of God's word that we might live it out in godliness. And it includes also promises in his word that help us to be godly.

Verse 4. Through these, through his glory and goodness, his gracious character, he has also given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, that is, reflect God's loving character.

[ 17 : 08 ] Be godly. Having escaped the corruption in the world caused by its evil desires. Peter ends the verse by saying we've escaped the corruption of the world, that is, we've been saved from living the world's corrupt way.

We still suffer from its corruption time to time, don't we? But we've escaped from living the corrupt way to living God's loving way. What's more, God's gracious character, his glory and goodness have also given us great and precious promises.

What are they? Well, there's lots in the Bible, aren't there? Like the fact that God will never leave us nor forsake us. But perhaps the ones Peter particularly has in mind are those he mentions in chapter 3.

I like to chapter 3, verse 13. The new creation. In keeping with his promise, we are looking forward to a new heavens and a new earth. A new skies and earth, a new creation, which will be perfect, where righteousness dwells.

And this promise, he says, helps us to participate in the divine nature. That is, to reflect God's loving character, to be godly. I may have told you this story before, but it still is with me vividly.

[ 18 : 21 ] I remember a guy who suffered severe autism at one of my old churches, and he was in my Bible study group. His name is Adam. And he seemed to enjoy the Bible study group.

But boy, was he hard work. Because when it came to supper, we'd have supper at the beginning of the night. And he would take a handful of M&Ms, lick them, and then decide he didn't want them anymore, put them back in the same bowl.

Which meant, well, that's it for M&Ms.; Sometimes he wanted to go outside to see if his parents had arrived yet, but that wasn't safe. And so I had to kind of stop him from leaving.

But the problem was, he is six foot and could sometimes get violent, and I am not. So standing between him and the doorway was sometimes scary. Now, I only tried to care for him one night a week.

His parents cared for him every single day of the week. And I remember after church one Sunday, some people were talking to his mother, and this lady asked her, How do you keep going?

[ 19 : 24 ] How do you keep being patient and loving? And she said, Knowing God's promise that one day in the new creation, I will see him with a perfect, autistic, free body.

That's how. You see, the promise of a new heavens and earth helped her to keep going, to be godly. And that's just one example of how God's promises help us to live a godly life.

The point is, God's gracious character has not only called us into relationship with him, such that we know him personally, but his power and gracious character have also given us everything we need to live a godly life more and more.

And so, says Peter, live it more and more. Point three, verse five. For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness, and to goodness knowledge, and to knowledge self-control, and to self-control perseverance, and to perseverance godliness, and to godliness mutual affection, and to mutual affection love.

In verse five, Peter says, For this very reason, that is because God's grace and power has given us everything we need to live a godly life, then make every effort to grow in godliness and live that godly life.

[ 20 : 43 ] That's the connection. How? Well, by adding to our faith those godly qualities. Now, these qualities are not in chronological order, as though we must first get goodness before we can then get knowledge about God, or we have to get godliness before we can get to love.

I mean, if it was chronological order, I would never make it to the end, to love. You know, I'd get caught on the first couple, wouldn't? Rather, it's more like the fruit of the Spirit, where we're to grow in all these things at the same time.

Though I think Peter does deliberately name these particular things, because they're the very things the false teachers lack, as we'll see in a few weeks in chapter two. But notice Peter says, We're to make every effort, verse five, to grow in them.

And not some effort, not when I feel like it effort, but every effort. And it does take effort. Because the Christian life, it can sometimes seem like a bit of a tug-of-war.

You know, the Christian life rarely stands still. It's always moving in one direction or the other. I love it. I don't know if you can see on the picture, but the mother is smiling, having fun, but the father has a determination.

[ 21 : 58 ] I will win. Very typical of us dads. But for us, it's a bit more like this. You know, our sinful nature and Satan seek to pull us away from Christ, while God's spirit and word pull us towards Christ, and to grow more like Christ.

Now, God's spirit and word are stronger and will win, which is why it has a bigger arrow there. And so we should be moving more often towards Christ than the other direction.

But the point is, there's constant movement in the Christian life. And the way God's spirit works through God's word is by convicting us and encouraging us to make every effort, you see.

Why are we to make every effort in the first place? Well, because it will keep us from being unfruitful for Jesus and forgetful of Jesus. And so Peter goes on to give some reasons why it matters how we live in the present.

He says, verse 8, For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, that's the language of growing, increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[ 23 : 12 ] You see, if we are growing in these qualities, it will protect us from being unproductive or unfruitful in our faith.

You see, no matter how old we are, we can still be fruitful and productive for Jesus. Sometimes we think we've got nothing to offer Christ, but we can all still pray for other people, can't we?

And we can all encourage one another, can't we? Or we can all live a godly life and be a good witness towards others, perhaps buy a Christmas card and send it to others, or take opportunities to speak of Jesus to others.

We can all do those things. But if we're not growing in love and self-control, but being pulled backwards to being unloving and lacking self-control, then we won't be a good witness for Jesus, will we?

Apparently, Mahatma Gandhi once said, if it weren't for Christians, I'd be a Christian, which is pretty scathing, really, when you think about it.

[ 24 : 23 ] If it wasn't for Christians doing a poor job, he would be a Christian. It seems he saw too many Christians who were ineffective and unproductive for Jesus.

But growing in these things, by God's gracious help, will keep us from being ineffective and unproductive, you see.

And what's more, it will keep us from being forgetful too. Verse 9. But whoever does not have them is short-sighted and blind, forgetting they have been cleansed from their past sins.

Here, Peter uses the metaphor of sight. He says, if we don't make every effort to grow, then we have an eyesight problem, which I can relate to.

My eyes are actually a bit worse when it comes to distance. Like the time I was up at Shopping Town, and I thought I saw my wife, Michelle, in the distance, so I was waving to her, and then she came up behind me and said, why are you waving to that girl?

[ 25 : 28 ] That's what Peter is talking about here. You see, if we don't make every effort to grow in these things, Peter says we are spiritually short-sighted and blind to what's in the distance.

And what's in the distance is not a boy or girl in front of us, but it's the cross of Christ behind us, where Jesus' blood was shed to cleanse us from sin.

You see, if we don't make every effort to grow in godliness, it's like we're blind to what he's done for us. Or as Peter then says plainly, we've forgotten what he has done for us, the pain he endured for us.

In other words, his death for us ought to move us to make every effort to keep growing as Christians, to joyfully keep living for him. And so here are two reasons why it already matters how we live in the present.

At first, so we're not unfruitful for Jesus. And second, so it shows we're not forgetful of Jesus, what he's done for us in the past.

[ 26 : 33 ] But there's two other reasons in our final verses, why it matters how we live. Verse 10 and 11. Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election.

For if you do these things, you know, grow in them, increasing measure, you will never stumble and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

In verse 10, by making every effort to grow, it shows we belong to Jesus. It confirms our calling and election, you see. If we keep living the world's way, then it shows us we ultimately belong to the world, doesn't it?

But if we keep living Christ's way in increasing measure, it shows we truly belong to Christ, doesn't it? It confirms our calling and election, that we really belong to Jesus.

And on the flip side, it keeps us from stumbling from Jesus. For as we saw at the start, the more we grow at something, the less likely we are to fall or fail at it.

[ 27 : 44 ] And so here are two more reasons why it matters how we live. For by making every effort to grow as a Christian, we confirm that we belong to Jesus and it helps us not to stumble from Jesus, but rather receive that rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of Jesus.

And so do you see why Peter is so desperate for his readers to grow and for us to grow? And again, the good news is we can grow. For God's grace has given us everything we need to grow.

And so why don't we finish by looking at those things in that list, verse 5 to 7, and perhaps ask yourself, is there an area you can make every effort to grow more in this week?

Perhaps it's growing in self-control with your temper or patience or what you watch or how you speak, or perhaps it's growing in mutual affection, that is brotherly and sisterly love towards those at church, or perhaps it's growing in knowledge, you know, being regular at Bible study to understand God's word more so you can understand God more.

Or perhaps it's growing in perseverance because, you know, your church or your family or your health or your life situation is not everything you hoped it would be at the moment. And so you need perseverance in faith to keep trusting God is still good and still at work in your life for good.

[ 29 : 13 ] Whatever it is, we're going to take a moment and I actually want you to pick two things. First, pick something from the list that God has already helped you to grow in, something that you think, I'm not too bad at that. And in a moment, we'll have a time of silence and just quietly give thanks to God for that, that he's helped you grow in that area.

And then second, pick something you think, as I said before, you could grow more in this week and pray for God's help to make every effort to grow in it.

And so a moment of quiet over to you and then I'll close. Let me close.

Gracious God, we thank you for your grace, which gave your son to make us right with you and to give us a precious faith in him.

Thank you that you have also graciously given us everything we need to live a godly life as your people. And so just as your grace has brought us safe this far, may your grace continue to lead us home as we use all you've given us to make every effort to grow as Christians.

[ 30 : 42 ] Help us in this, we pray, so that we won't be unfruitful or forgetful, nor stumble from you, but show we belong to you and so receive that rich welcome that awaits us all.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Thank you.