

# Guarding and Growing

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[ 0 : 00 ] We'll begin our worship now, and we're singing first today in Psalm 9. Psalm 9a, you'll find that on page 9. And we'll sing in verses 7 to 12.

And on to verse 12 in Psalm 9. And the Lord forever reigns on high.  
He'll judge the world in righteousness, with justice through the light.  
The Lord will be a hiding place for those who are poor.

And He will be that strong defense for those who are dispensed.

[ 1 : 53 ] All those who know your name, O Lord, in you their trust will place.

For you do not abandon those who seek your gracious face.

Sing praises to the Lord who sits inside on His throne.

Among the nations of the world proclaim what He has done.

For Him, the avenger of the man's blood, Redeemer's evermore.

[ 3 : 11 ] The king of the afflicted one, He never will ignore.

Lord, our God, we give thanks once again that we gather together around Your Word in this place of worship.

And we give thanks that Your Word guides us as we come to worship Your holy name. We thank You that You have given us words to sing as well as a record in other ways of Your redemption. And we thank You today that we can have so many young folks as part of our congregations. And we bless You, O Lord, for them today. And pray Your blessing to be with them.

And bless the efforts that are made to teach them in the ways of God at home or here in church services and Sunday school. Lord, we thank You for all the activities they are engaged in as well.

[ 4 : 17 ] And pray that they may become more and more established in Your ways. Established especially in a way that would follow You and love You and serve You even while they are young. And grant that, Lord, You would protect and care them as they go about from day to day in their various ways in the world.

At home or in school or college or university. We ask Your blessing, O Lord, to be with them at all times. Now bless us as we come together. And bless us as we seek our thoughts to be led into the avenues of Your truth.

Hear us, we pray, and cleanse us from sin for Jesus' sake. Amen. Okay, children, a word to yourselves at this time. Are there any paramedics in today?

No paramedics in today? No? Okay, well, everybody knows what paramedics do, I'm sure.

Paramedics are usually found in ambulance.

It's not always on an ambulance. But paramedics are trained health workers called, medics called to minister to those who have special needs, especially in accidents or in illness or whatever different kinds of ailments people may have.

[ 5 : 33 ] Paramedics are those who are trained to actually come alongside and help out. And they have a lot of things to do. They have to be well trained and go through a certain course or courses to become paramedics.

They have to assess people if they're injured in an accident or have fallen ill, try and establish what's wrong with them, and then administer some medication usually, get them stabilized sometimes in order to go from there to hospital.

So they have a lot of skills and a lot of things to learn and a lot to contribute to us as a community.

So we give thanks to God for our paramedics and all the other medical staff along with them.

But paramedics, the little part of the word para, comes from a Greek word which means to come alongside or be alongside.

And you'll find it actually used in the Bible. The New Testament was written in Greek, first of all, and then all the translations that we have come from that, including our English translation.

[ 6 : 39 ] And that word para is used in the New Testament Greek, and it means, as we said, to be alongside or come alongside someone. And it's used of the likes of the Holy Spirit.

The word in Greek is parakletos, which means someone called to help. Someone called alongside someone else to help. That's why it's translated in the ESV, it's translated helper.

In the authorized version, it's translated comforter. And both things come together because the Holy Spirit comes alongside of us in order to help us by his power, in order to comfort us as well.

But Jesus is also someone who is called our advocate or somebody alongside us who's come into the world to help us. Now, just like a paramedic comes alongside somebody who has been in an accident or fallen ill and is able, hopefully, to treat them properly, God remembered us in our sinfulness and in our lostness.

And he sent his son Jesus into the world, not from a distance, not to minister to us from a distance. Jesus has come right alongside us, so much so that he's become one of us.

[ 8 : 00 ] The Son of God took human nature. He became a man. He became human. And that means that he came alongside of us in our need as sinners more than anyone else could.

So much so that he now understands us as human beings as well as God. So Jesus is the greatest paramedic, the greatest healer, the greatest comforter, the greatest helper.

And for you children, Jesus as a paramedic, as a parahelper, is someone who is so important to get to know. I'm going to be thinking today about something to do with growing in grace and in knowledge of Jesus as our Lord.

There was an intimation there about a defibrillator and asking that people would volunteer, if they're not already trained, to work defibrillators to actually come to be able to help in that way.

Well, anybody using a defibrillator, a machine to restart the heart or help somebody who's had a heart attack, that's obviously somebody coming alongside that person, usually kneeling down to them if necessary and applying the defibrillator.

[ 9 : 21 ] And Jesus has come alongside us. There's no more wonderful truth than that today, that the Son of God has become our great paramedic and has come into the world and has come into our human nature and all because he loved human beings like you and I, loved them so much as to give his own life to save us from our sins.

Well, may God bless these thoughts. We're going to say the Lord's Prayer now at this point. Amen. Amen. Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever. Amen. We'll sing once again to God's praise now in Psalm 43, page 264, Psalm 43.

And we're singing verses 3 to 5. This is a song the psalmist has given us, a psalm in which he cries out to God.

[ 10 : 46 ] And he's crying out from some difficulties, asking God to send out his light and his truth to be his guides. And so that his soul, which is cast down when he wrote these words, that will be lifted up and that will come once again to rejoice in his relationship with God.

Oh, send thy light forth and thy truth. Let them be guides to me and bring me to thine holy hill, even where thy dwellings be. Psalm 43, verses 3 to 5.

Amen. Amen. O send thy light forth and thy truth. O send thy light forth and thy truth.

Let them be guides to me and bring me to thine holy hill, in where thy dwelling see.

Then will I to all souls are home, to all my deepest joy.

[ 12 : 05 ] Take all my goals, my name to face, my heart I will employ.

Why art thou then cast down my soul? What should discourage thee?

And why with vexing thoughts are come, disquieted in thee?

Still trust in God for him to face, good cause I yet shall have.

He of my land and Israel, my God that doth be saved.

[ 13 : 27 ] Now let's turn to read God's word in 2 Peter, the second letter of Peter, and chapter 3. So that's 2 Peter and chapter 3.

We'll read from the beginning through to the end. This is now the second letter that I'm writing to you, beloved.

In both of them, I'm stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandments of the Lord and Savior through your apostles.

Knowing this, first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing following their own sinful desires. They will say, where is the promise of his coming?

For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation. For they deliberately overlook this fact that the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, and that by means of these, the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished.

[ 14 : 46 ] But by the same word, the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient towards you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn. But according to his promise, we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish and at peace, and count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you, according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters.

[ 16 : 25 ] There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other scriptures. You, therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people, and lose your own stability, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. And may the Lord follow with his blessing our reading of that portion of his word.

Let's engage again in prayer and call upon his name. Amen. Our gracious and eternal God, we thank you that your word guides our thoughts as we come to worship you.

It brings us to things that have been, things that are, and things that will be. You have described for us your great works of redemption in the ages past. And you have especially brought us to know that your word has been fulfilled in the predictions of the prophets of old in regard to the coming of the Saviour.

Lord, we thank you that we can look back with gratitude at that word which is now complete in its written form, and that we can see in it that which will guide our minds for all our lives and give us a true picture of the reality of spiritual matters and a true picture of ourselves, of the world in which we live, of the creation that we are part of, and of the future destiny of human beings.

[ 18 : 06 ] We thank you today, O Lord, that you have reminded us, even as we hear in Peter's epistle that he was reminding us readers of certain truths. You are reminding us also through them, Lord, of these great truths that we need to come and receive and appreciate and believe and receive into our hearts.

We bless you, Lord, for the description you have given us of the coming days in the end of the world when you will bring about that final order of the new heavens and the new earth in which righteousness dwells.

We give thanks, Lord, that as your people anticipate this, so they realize that you will bring it about by your own power and in your time, for you are not subject to our ways of thinking.

And we thank you that you deliver us, O Lord, from falling into the error of those who would dismiss those things all too readily and even ridicule them as being of no substance.

We give thanks, O Lord, today that your word guides us into holiness of life and gives us to realize that we need to live that life that is pleasing to you.

[ 19 : 18 ] You have given us such a sure foundation on which we can build. And we thank you, O Lord, that having come to know of our acceptance with you through the Lord Jesus Christ, so you give your people your Holy Spirit, that they be directed and helped and empowered in the ways of holiness of life and in the way of dealing with the sin that they know is part of them still.

And we thank you that you have overcome sin and death through all that you have done already through the cross and through your resurrection. And we give thanks that in your ascension to glory so you established, O Lord, that certain and sure and total victory over the powers of darkness. And we give thanks that your promise is that your people will also prevail and overcome and that you will set them with you in your presence on the throne on high, that they will be before your throne and they will forever magnify your holy name as they praise you for all eternity.

Lord, our God, we ask that you would today make it of great concern to be one of those and to be assured that as we belong to your people, so we are kept in the wonderful custody and security of Christ himself and the perfection of all that he has done and all that you continue to do in and for your people.

We pray your blessing today upon all the gatherings of your church throughout the world. We thank you for the privilege of belonging to your church in this world. And Lord, we ask that you would bless our privileges to us and make us thankful that you have placed us so favorably under the gospel and surrounded by fellow believers so that we may come to help one another in the things of God and the things of holiness of life.

[ 21 : 10 ] And we pray, gracious Lord, as we today gather in your presence and gather to worship you, that your Holy Spirit will direct our thoughts and our minds. Open up our minds again, we pray, and help us to be willing to receive what you set before us in your word and help us to be thankful for the proclamation of your word in the preaching of the gospel.

We pray today that wherever that takes place, that many will come to benefit from it, that those who are unsaved will come to be born again and come to know you as their Savior, their Lord, their Redeemer.

We pray your blessing to the encouragement and the confidence of your people. Help us, Lord, to be confident day by day in your own word of truth.

Enable us, whatever we face in terms of opposition and in terms of suggestions that your word is no longer relevant, Lord, movements that seek to undermine and overthrow your word, Lord, we pray for that confidence that we find the likes of the apostles themselves exclaiming and teaching those they wrote to.

And we pray, O Lord, that we too might have that same confidence in the gospel as the apostle Paul when he said that he was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, knowing that it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes.

[ 22 : 35 ] And so we pray for that belief, for that faith to be strengthened in us today. We pray that it would help us to face the world and all its opposition and face the uncertainties of the future as we see forward, although we thank you that it is all known to you.

And we pray today, Lord, for those who have various adversities in life. We think again of those who are ill, those who have been laid aside in hospital, in care homes, or in hospices.

We pray for all belonging to ourselves, Lord, that you would bless them and bless all others too. We pray for your blessing upon all those who today mourn and miss loved ones.

We know that every week that goes by, Lord, we hear in our community of those who have lost loved ones. And many of us here can reflect upon loved ones now gone from the scene of time. Grant us your comfort, we pray the consolation of your spirit, the guidance of your truth in these times of adversity. Bless the world in which we live so full of terror and war and disease and poverty.

[ 23 : 45 ] Lord, we ask that in your mercy you would send forth the power of your truth in your kingdom that it may advance in the world, that your kingdom may come, that your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Lord, where there is war today we pray that you would bring about peace, a lasting peace, a peace that will indeed not be merely man-made but a peace made through the direction of God himself. We pray your blessing upon the nations of the earth. We pray especially for those today beset with poverty who cannot look to the provisions that other nations have and to look from week to week and month to month and year to year to others to help them during their distress.

Bless them, we pray, in all who seek to help them. Bless all those in our own nation who face poverty and deprivation for whatever reason, O Lord, we know that they are always with us and we ask that every effort made to alleviate their distress might be blessed by yourself.

And bless, we pray, to our own nation and its leadership. We commend to you, Lord, the cabinet of prime minister and all who are with him in cabinet and all those who rule in Edinburgh as well.

[ 25 : 02 ] Bless them, we pray. Bless them with wisdom. Hear the prayers of your people for them. For you have called us to pray for those in authority. We do pray for them that they be guided by your truth, that they be delivered from mere human wisdom and be turned into the wisdom of God.

We ask your blessing for the United States as they come once again to have a president set over them. We pray for Donald Trump as he once again takes up the reins of office.

And Lord, we ask that he may know your guidance, that you would be with that great nation in these uncertain times, that your Holy Spirit, Lord, would direct the government there and all those who seek to do good.

And we ask that that may be of benefit to the whole world. We pray again for those who are caught up in conflict in the Middle East and in Ukraine and ask that you would bring about a true and lasting peace and that you would come, Lord, to deal with the aggressor wherever that is that seeks to destroy the peace that others enjoy.

Receive our thanks, Lord, we pray now. Go before us and pardon us our many sins for Jesus' sake. Amen. We'll sing once again before we turn to the Word of God this time, Psalm 31.

[ 26 : 21 ] Psalm number 31. That's in the Scottish Psalter, page 243. And sing from verse 19 through to the end of the psalm.

How great's the goodness thou for them that fear thee keepst in store and wroughtst for them that trust in thee the sons of men before. In secret of thy presence thou shalt hide them from man's pride, from strife of tongues.

Thou closely shalt, as in a tent them hide. 19 to 24. To God's praise. verse 19. How great's the goodness that for them that nearly keeps it store and brought for them that trust in thee the sons of men before.

in secret of thy presence shall hide them from man's pride, from strife of tongues.

shall hide them from man's pride, from strife of tongues.

[ 27 : 53 ] How grossly shall as in a tent as in a tent them hide.

O praise and dance speak to the Lord, for he hath magnified his wondrous love his wondrous love to be within a city fortified.

for from thine eyes God of all I am I am my my name my name my voice yet hurts thou went to thee with Christ my womb I live.

O love the Lord all ye his saints because the Lord doth guard the faithful and he quenched us lead thy doers the reward be of good God and his strength unto your heart shall send all ye whose hope hope and confidence that of the

Lord he ends well if you would please turn with me now to passage read in 2nd Peter chapter 3 today we're going to look at verses 17 to the end of the chapter especially you you therefore beloved knowing this beforehand take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity amen while scoffing at or ridiculing the truth as we know of Christ's return Christ coming back to the world Christ coming to sit on the throne of judgment all the various ways in which the Bible describes it scoffing at that ridiculing that passing that off as of no importance is not new it was something the apostles had to face in their day and all the way to the way through the old testament some of the old testament some of the the prophets were met with ridicule and scoffing on the part of those who heard them and essentially that's what Peter is doing in this epistle you can see how he writes these words there at the beginning of this chapter where he's stirring up the mind of those he's writing to by way of a reminder and reminders are always important to ourselves they had no embarrassment of bringing out reminders to the people that were reading their letters that were reading their letters or hearing them preaching that things that they had already heard but now come to be reminded of but this is what he's saying talking about how the end of the world will come and the whole epistle indeed you might say is a response to the scoffing and the ridiculing of the idea of Christ's coming and of that day actually coming about you can see in verse 1 and chapter 1 verse 16 he's dealing there we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming



So, knowing these things, beloved, knowing this beforehand, saying you know all about this already, take care, guard yourselves, he's saying, from falling away or from straying. Now, he's saying here, be on your guard, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. There are three things there. Three things there in this guarding against relapse. First of all, there is what he says here, take care, be on your guard.

[ 39 : 15 ] He's serious about this. It's not something you treat casually. It's not something you can give half your mind to. It's not something you switch on on Sunday and then off for the rest of the week.

It's something that's there constantly as a necessity on your part and mine. Take care, he's saying, and be serious about this. Be deliberate. Be concentrate. Be concentrate.

Be actively engaged in thinking about these things, in dealing with these things, in applying these things to your own lives, to your own walk in life. Knowing these things beforehand, be on your guard. Take care. And then he says, take care in case you be carried away with the error of lawless people, heretics, false teachers. That's what chapter two is actually dealing with. And you go through that really solemn chapter, and you see how these false teachers were not some people who lived at a distance from the church of Peter's day. They had actually infiltrated the church. They were amongst those who were professing to be Christians. And yet here is God saying, Peter saying, that these people are actually just making others unsteady. You can see how he puts it there.

that they have eyes, in verse 14, eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls. And you see he's calling here in chapter 3 here for steadfastness. Don't lose your own stability. Don't give in to false teaching, to heresy, to species of doctrines that aren't true in accordance with the will of God. You see, heresy is attractive. It's attractive to the sinful side of us.

Lawlessness is attractive to sinful hearts. Unrighteousness is attractive if you allow yourself to be beguiled by it. There's an attraction in sin. There's an attraction in sinning.

[ 41 : 36 ] And all of these things are set out in the Bible very clearly. That doesn't mean because you've become a Christian, you're no longer going to be tempted towards that side of life, towards those things that God says are unclean, towards that side of living that actually is involving yourself and myself in sin of whatever kind, even privately or publicly, it doesn't matter. There is an attractiveness in that which the devil will use to the advantage, to his advantage, to the advantage of falsehood.

You remember how Paul wrote to the Galatians? Galatians had given in to the heresy that said, you need more than Jesus. You need works. You need some of your own effort to go along with what Jesus has done in order to have righteousness, in order to be accepted with God. What did he say? How did he put it in Galatians 3? Oh foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you? You see, Peter was well aware, as Paul was well aware, that there's a bewitching element to falsehood, to heresy, to false teaching. It has the ability to bring about such a bewitching of people even who have professed Christ, that they fall from their steadfastness or from their own stability, as Peter here puts it. You remember Simon Magus in Acts chapter 8, went about doing some wonderful magical arts. He was involved in the magical arts when he came into confrontation with the gospel, but people were following that and saying, this is indeed, this is one who is from the God who is called great. There are people in the world today, friends, who are bewitched and following false doctrine, false teaching. And you know, I think we're being very negative when we call that out for what it is. People who actually deliberately set about trying to advance themselves and the cause they represent at the expense of the gospel and the true gospel of Christ. Well, the Bible calls it out. Peter is calling it out here. And he's saying to us today who are under the gospel, you knowing this beforehand, take care that you're not carried away, that you're not bewitched, that you're not beguiled, that you're not hoodwinked by the ability of the devil to beguile you. Take care that you're not carried away and lose your own stability. Stability, steadfastness in the truth of God, to a lot of people that sounds very boring. But it's absolutely essential for your life as a human being, and especially your life as a Christian. And it's not just important to yourself as an individual and to myself as an individual, it's actually important to the church at large, because the more people individually lose their spiritual stability, the more the church is going to suffer in result. As we said in chapter 2 there, you can see how verse 14, as we've read it already, verse 14 is saying, they have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls.

You see, the more your soul becomes unsteady, the more it wobbles in relation to the truth of God and what you should and ought to believe, the more liable you and I are then to just falling away in the error of the wicked and to becoming unstable and even to reject that truth altogether.

[ 45 : 44 ] He's saying, you know this beforehand. Take care. Guard yourself. Always remember that there is a dark power going up and down the earth seeking whom he may devour.

That's what Peter said in his first epistle. The devil is a roaring lion. He's intent today on getting you to fail, on getting you to fall, to lapse, to turn away from the truth, to become unsteady, to leave the rock on which you're placed as the Word of God. And he says, take care that you don't lose your own stability. Remember how Paul, Apostle Paul, wrote to the Ephesians in chapter 4, a great chapter to do with the unity of the church and how essential unity is. And for yourselves as well as a congregation, unity has been and is essential and precious. It was one of, when I was here for the eight years I was here, one of the things I valued as much as anything else was the obvious unity in the congregation.

And I know that unity is now important during a vacancy as much as any other time. Well, here is what Paul said in Ephesians 4, verses 11 to 14. He's talking there about growing, of course, until we attain to the unity of the faith and knowledge of the Son of God to mature manhood. He's talking here about the whole believing, the whole church, the whole body of believers, if you like. So that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

Very similar to Peter. He knew about these schemes of the devil. He knew the danger of false teaching. He knew that if we lose our own stability, then that's the way we will go. And instead, he says, rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped.

When each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. In other words, you and I have to say to ourselves today, I, as much as anyone else, have to say to yourself today, am I in any way contributing to others losing their focus on the things of God?

[ 48 : 34 ] Have I lost something of my own stability to the extent that others seeing that will be encouraged to do the same? Well, he says, together in love, build one another up in love. A love for God, a love for his truth, a love for one another.

Well, that's what Peter is actually saying here as well. Guarding against relapse. Now, positively, and the other side, growing in grace and knowledge. As we said at the beginning, you guard against falling away, you guard against losing your stability, pretty much by growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This is the alternative. It's not just an alternative, it is a counter to the falling away. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Now, what does he mean by that? The grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Well, the grace of Jesus Christ, the grace of God, really sometimes means the whole business of the salvation into which you've been brought. For example, in Romans chapter 5, you find him there dealing with being justified by faith in Christ. But he goes on to say, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him, we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand. This grace there meaning our relationship with God and Christ.

He has brought us and introduced us into this relationship with God as our Savior, as our Redeemer, as our Keeper. And now Peter is saying, grow in the grace of Jesus Christ. Grow within that environment that he's brought you into, into this new relationship with him through Christ. It's like taking a plant out of a certain area where there was not much growth, where it was suffering, and giving it the best possible conditions in which to grow. That's what you are and I am as Christians in this world. God has taken us out of the coldness of the world. He has taken us out of that negativity and non-productiveness spiritually and righteously of the world and of living as part of the world. He's put you into the environment of grace. He's put you into this relationship with himself where you have all the advantages.

You see what Peter is saying as well as we see here in chapter 1, where you find chapter 1 and verse 3, his divine power. He's saying, may grace and peace be multiplied to you. Then verse 3, 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, by which he has granted to us precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having

escaped the corruption that is in the world from sinful desire. For this reason, make every effort to supplement your faith, to build on what you already have. See, there's the great advantage that we have under the gospel, that we have especially in a saving relationship with Jesus. God has brought us into this environment where we can grow in the grace of Christ, where the provision he's given us is a provision that is especially itself marked by suitability for us in which to grow. So in other words, he's given his people the Holy Spirit.

He's given them the grace of prayer. He's given them this written word, this revelation of his will. He's given them fellowship with one another. We grow in the grace of Jesus by making use to our advantage of all of these things. Don't let any moment pass where you can actually make use of the advantages he's given you in order to grow in his grace. Because there's a sense in which others are depending on you and I growing in grace, so that will be an encouragement to them as well.

[ 52 : 59 ] Grow in the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, but also in the knowledge. Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Well, you could say at the end of the day, it's really all about communion with Christ. Not just communion with Christ on your own, that's great. Communion with him, reading your Bible, learning from works that teach you what the Bible means. Not just communion praying on your own to the Lord, essential as that undoubtedly is. I don't do enough of it. I'm sure you say the same. But growing in the knowledge of Jesus Christ means growing along with other people in this knowledge. Here we are today as a congregation of people. Congregation united together under the gospel. United together by the truth of God. United together by the teaching of the gospel.

And by the injunction of the scripture here that says, grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. That's what you're here for today. You haven't come here today to listen to a human voice. You've come here today through the preaching of the gospel to grow in the knowledge of God. That's why it's absolutely essential that the church continues to preach the gospel and to preach a teaching gospel, a teaching ministry. We need that. All of us need that. To be taught by the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the word of God. To grow in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Every occasion that you meet together, every time there's something or other to do with meeting together in the Lord's name, it's so that you will grow in the knowledge of Christ. It's so that you will give more attention than ever before to the importance of his truth as the foundation of your knowledge. Grow in knowing him personally, not just knowing him off the written page. Heretics can do that. But you need to know him personally as your savior, as your friend, as your companion, as your redeemer. And that will mean we grow not just outwards to bear certain fruit, but also downwards. Downwards for our own stability. Not losing our stability, but instead countering the loss of stability by growing downwards, by being more and more rooted in the truth of God. More and more rooted in Christ himself. Through fellowship with him privately and together. Our roots go downwards.

We become more stable in the truth of God. And we need that. We live in a world where we're open to all kinds of, as Paul himself put it to the Ephesians, as we read, all kinds of winds of doctrines and heresies.

We're open to them. We meet them every day we live. We find them even in aspects of the wider church. Grow in the knowledge of Jesus. Grow in the knowledge of Jesus. Grow in the knowledge of him as your savior and your Lord.

In other words, listen to Jesus. Look out for the voice of God. Isn't that why you came to church today? Not just to express your thanks to him with your voice, but to listen to his voice, speaking to you through the scriptures, through the preaching of the word. You've come here surely because you value the voice of God, the voice of Christ.

[ 56 : 59 ] You want to hear that voice again today for your guidance, for your benefit, for your strengthening, for your growth. Isn't that why you're here? Isn't that what church means to you? Isn't that really important?

Important above most other things. Well, this is Peter's exhortation. And it's very likely his last exhortation. This is his second letter.

And he is well aware that his own demise is nearby. He's talking about putting off his present state in this world.

And he's paying attention to the fact that he himself too will need to leave this world. He knew he was near the end of his life.

So who was better qualified than Peter to give out this exhortation? Because after all, he's writing as somebody who had himself failed badly.

[ 58 : 29 ] He had gone astray. He had denied his Lord three times just prior to the Lord's crucifixion.

Why was that the case? What was it that led to that lapse on Peter's part? He had failed to take account of his Lord's teaching.

He had heard the words of Jesus, but he hadn't reckoned with them. He had heard them speaking to him about what would happen, about the need to continue to pray, and he didn't do it.

And he lapsed three times into a denial of Christ. Yes, he was restored by Jesus.

That was due to the Lord's kindness, not to Peter's deserving. And as he did lapse, he undoubtedly heard the words of Jesus again, who said, Satan has desired to have you, Peter, that he may sift you all as wheat.

[ 59 : 40 ] But I have prayed for you, that your faith will not fail, that it will not completely fail. And when you are recovered, strengthen your brothers.

That's what this epistle is about. That's what the previous letter is about. Strengthening his fellow Christians by learning from his own laps and now saying to them, be careful, be on your guard, that you do not get carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability, but grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Well, no one else was better qualified to write these words or the words of 1 Peter 5, verses 6 to 11. And I'll close by just reading these words.

1 Peter 5, verses 6 to 11. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him because he cares for you.

Be sober-minded, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.

[ 61 : 13 ] And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

to him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen. Let us pray. Lord, our God, we pray that you would increase our thankfulness for your word, for its teaching, and our dependence upon its reliability. Help us especially, Lord, to deepen our relationship with yourself. Grant us today, whatever that relationship may be, that we may be found, Lord, in Christ.

if we have not yet come to accept you, grant us the grace to do so. If we have in any way been conscious, Lord, of some lapses or failures in our lives, grant us the grace of recovery.

And if we go on, O Lord, as we have begun to walk in your ways and to seek to make you known to the world around us, grant us the grace of your protection.

[ 62 : 22 ] We pray these things, Lord, asking that you would bless this congregation now in the days to come. Guide them and steer them as they look for a pastor to lead them in the things of God.

And Lord, we pray for Calamuro. We ask for him as assistant at this time and as he has made his mind known that this is his preferred choice. We pray for him. We pray for Johan and their family.

We pray for him in his relationship with the congregation. We pray for all in the congregation, for every family, for every office bearer, for every home.

We ask that you would provide for them, Lord, richly and give them together that they may know the grace of patience too as the weight upon yourself. Receive our thanks now, we pray in Jesus' name.

Amen. We're going to conclude our worship today now, Psalm 119. Psalm 119 and sing Psalms, that's page 167 and section 21, verse 161 of Psalm 119.

[ 63 : 26 ] Though rulers hound me without cause, my heart fears nothing but your word, for in your promise I rejoice, like one who finds great spoil, O Lord. all falsehood I abhor and hate, with all my heart I love your law, I praise you seven times a day, for your commands I hold in awe.

Psalm 119, verse 161, to God's praise. O rulers hound me with her claws, my heart fears nothing, not your word, for in your promise I rejoice, like one who fights, grace, father, O Lord.

all falsehood I am born and hate, with all my heart, I love your law, I praise you seven times a day, for your commands I hold in awe.

Great peace are those who love your law, they will not sound the wind, the way, I wait for your salvation, Lord, and your commands I will obey.

I will observe your statutes, Lord, my love for them is great and true, your laws and peace set high, O faith, for all my ways are known to you.

[ 66 : 18 ] Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and evermore. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen.