

LIVINGHOPE

BIBLE CHURCH

9 | 2 PETER 3:14-18

GROW IN GRACE

As children of God, we are all predestined to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. As we await Christ's coming, let us grow deeper in our love for Christ, progressing from one level of Christlikeness to the next!

Outline

Review of the Book

Chapter 1: The Pathway of Christian Growth

Chapter 2: The Protection Against False Teachers

Chapter 3: The Preparation for Christ's Coming

1. PROGRESS IN YOUR WALK (3:14)

Through Focus on Christ
Through Ownership
Through Holiness
Through Peace

2. PROGRESS IN YOUR WISDOM (3:15-17)

With Steadfastness
With Study
With Stability

3. PROGRESS IN YOUR WITNESS (3:18)

The Witness of God's Grace
The Witness of God's Glory

Call to Worship

I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever. ² Every day I will bless you and praise your name forever and ever. ³ Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable. —Psalm 145:1-3

Songs

All Creatures of Our God and King

Nearer, Still Nearer

King of Kings

Turn Your Eyes

Announcements

WELCOME: We are glad you are here! Be sure to grab a Welcome Packet if you are visiting with us.

Introduction

We end with Peter where he began: grow in grace! Jesus is coming, so we need to progress in discipleship with our Lord. God does not wait on His people to jump through hoops in order to grow them in Christ. Rather, he lovingly, patiently, and graciously meets them where they are in order to conform them into the image of his Son.

I'm from a family of eight. Two of my brothers died. One as full-term stillbirth. The other was six weeks old and died of sudden infant death syndrome. Even though there's eight of us, six of us are living. Almost all of us had problems in our births or childhoods with serious health problems. My sister and I were born premature at 26 weeks, about a year after Roe vs. Wade was passed. They were killing some babies and saving others, and I was one of those that was saved and flown in a helicopter from Saint Francis Medical Center in Blue Island, Illinois to Loyola University Medical Center in Maywood. If I go there today, I'm still considered a graduate. If I announce that I'm there, they will clap for me. Praise God, I made it, and my sister made it.

When I was a child, my parents wanted me to grow up normally. There was just one problem: I had a serious heart murmur, a VSD: ventricular septal defect. Essentially, because of a hole between my left and right lower ventricles, my heart would back up with blood. The valve in one of my heart's chambers had a hole in it, and it wouldn't close completely. So the surgeon had to go in and do major open heart surgery. I was just three years old, but I remember as if it was yesterday. That kind of surgery upended my entire family's life. My dad and others took care of the five other children. My mom stayed with me in the hospital. The result of having a healthy heart is that I will live a lot longer and have a better quality of life. Instead of dying young of heart failure, I'll be able to live a lot longer. I turned forty-eight this year, so it must've worked.

If it's important to have a healthy heart to grow physically, how much more important is it to have a healthy spiritual heart that will help us grow spiritually, since that is the purpose of our lives. God gave you a new heart, and he opens the spiritual eyes of your heart. There are no cookie-cutter approaches to growing in Christ. It's a matter of applying the Bible to your heart and mind through prayer and walking in the word as you rest in the finished work of Christ.

REVIEW OF THE BOOK

Peter in these final verses concludes his second letter. He's writing to those scattered along what is today Turkey who live among the Taurus Mountain range.

Chapter 1: The Pathway of Christian Growth

Remember he starts his letter in chapter 1 by saying that you are “partakers of the divine nature” (1:4). He says that you've been given everything that you need for life and godliness in Christ through his word and through his Spirit (1:3). He says the key to growth is you need to “add to your faith” (1:5). The word supplement or add is a beautiful metaphor that everybody back then would have understood. It to “*epichorēgéo*” or “supply” or choreograph your faith with the director who not only directs but he supplies everything. The word has the ancient idea of a “choregeo” or the director who in the Greek and Roman times was both producer and director. He would not only pay for the entire gathering, like a play or an orchestra, but he would also direct it. What a beautiful picture of God, giving us the divine nature and all we need in Christ for life and godliness (1:3). God provides for us the gift of faith, and to faith we are to add virtue, the very excellencies of Christ, and then knowledge, or intimacy with Christ (1:5). That's what every Christian possesses.

But then you're to go out into the world and grow maturely in self-control and perseverance (1:6). You're not just to be a hearer of the word. This is not just theory. You're to go out in worship and witness and do warfare and walk in the word. That's self-control and perseverance. You're

going to fail, but you get up every time and you keep going. Perseverance means you keep going and going and going, no matter how many times you fail, you keep going forward.

Finally, you start to experience the payoff of godliness and brotherly kindness and love (1:7). Godliness is knowing and experiencing and walking in the presence of God. “In your presence is fullness of joy, and at your right hand, there are pleasures forevermore” (Psa 16:11). Are you walking in godliness and in holiness, separated from the world because you’re with the King of kings? You don’t walk like the world. You don’t look like the world. You look like the King. You walk like the King. That’s godliness. Brotherly affection or “*philadelphia*”—brotherly love. It’s a synonym to “brotherly kindness” (*chrēstós*) which is a utilitarian word. Jesus said my yoke is “easy” (Mt 11:30). The word is the same word as “kindness.” It means to be utilitarian, to bear a burden. In brotherly kindness “you’re there bearing each other’s burdens, you’re taking the weight of the struggle and the pain, and you’re getting into the yoke with other people. That is the service and sacrifice of brotherly kindness. And then finally, you have love (*agape*). This is the ultimate attribute of Christian growth, radical sacrifice of self on behalf of Christ. Peter encourages us to keep growing, reaching into God’s infinite supplies, and that will keep us “from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1:8). He then warns that the true child of God can become so stuck if he doesn’t keep dipping into the supply God has for him that he becomes “so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins” (1:9).

Then he talks about the sufficiency of the word (1:16-21). We have something greater than miracles. We’re not against miracles. We’re all for miracles. But we have a “more sure word of prophecy” which is the unfailing, written word of God (1:19). It’s more sure even than the witness of the Transfiguration, which Peter describes. That’s chapter 1.

Chapter 2: The Protection Against False Teachers

Chapter 2 is all about how false teachers can poison and weaken and pervert our walk with God. Orthodoxy always results in good orthopraxy. In other words, if you don’t believe right, you won’t live right. False teaching for the Christian is like drinking poison. It’s like getting Lyme disease and getting bit by a tick that paralyzes you. It takes away your desire for living, and life becomes hard. And if you start swallowing false teaching like a performance-based kind of Christianity, which is legalism, then you’ll have these high walls, and you’re supposed to be maturing into spiritual adulthood, but you’re you got spiritual Pampers on, and how sad is that? That’s legalism. You can’t grow in that.

And then there’s licentiousness or license on the other side, which doesn’t take into account God’s presence at all. It says you can be like the world and reach the world by adopting the sinful ways of the world. Yes, we are to be “all things to all men” in a cultural sense (1 Cor 9:22), but wherever a culture is unredeemed and sinful, we are to be a light in the darkness, a reflection of Christ to that rebellious culture.

Ephesians 5:11 | Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.

We are to reject lawlessness in the Christian life since Christ rejects all lawless people (Mt 7:21-23). We are to be controlled of the Spirit, not fulfilling the impulses and desires of the flesh (Gal 5:16).

Chapter 3: The Preparation for Christ’s Coming

Finally, in chapter 3, Peter warns us of the scoffers in the last days, and how we always need to be ready for everything in this world to burn up at the second coming. There is a lot of exegesis here of Isaiah (Isa 66:15-16 cf 13:10-13; 24:19-23; 34:1-4; 51:6). This chapter is sometimes called

“Peter’s apocalypse” since it is a summary of the end times. Peter’s conclusion is “be ready” and “live in holiness” since the new heaven and new earth could be rolled out with the second coming at any moment. In light of all this, Peter says, you need to “grow in grace,” and that’s what this last appeal of Peter is all about.

1. PROGRESS IN YOUR WALK (3:14)

As children of God, we are predestined to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ (Rom 8:29). As we await his coming, let us grow deeper in love for Christ, progressing from one level of Christ’s likeness to the next, to grow in grace and in knowledge there’s a continuing growth in our heart that reflects on our behavior, but it’s from our heart where we grow into Christ’s likeness. Peter tells us in verse 14 how we can progress in our walk. He says you’re waiting for Jesus Christ to bring all things to a climax. You know the trumpet will sound, and the dead in Christ will rise, and we’re going to see that. Isn’t that going to be amazing? Can you imagine? Just think about it. So in light of these things, grow in grace!

No disrespect to Peter, but he is the most loudmouthed and plain of all the apostles. He even complains a bit (under inspiration of the Spirit) that Paul’s letters are “hard to read” at times (3:15-16). You don’t have to guess with Peter. He tells us plainly four ways that we can progress in our walk with Christ.

THROUGH FOCUS ON CHRIST

The first thing he says we need in order to grow is a focus on Christ as we await Christ’s coming.

2 Peter 3:14 | Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace.

Focus on Self Discourages Us

Do you think Christ’s coming is bigger than all the sports programs on TV? Is his return bigger than your favorite show on TV? And whatever movie is coming soon or next? Don’t you think it’s infinitely more important to be focused on Christ’s coming and the trumpet sound and me and you and all the saints of God meeting him in the air (1 Thess 4:17)? I mean, I can’t wait for that. What about you? But how much do we focus on that? How much do we instead focus on ourselves? “I’m so depressed. I’m so anxious. I’m angry.” Can I make a confession to you today? I’m such a mess. But here’s the thing. I’m not a mess in Jesus Christ. I say with Paul, “By the grace of God I am what I am” (1 Cor 15:10). In Christ, though I am weak, yet I am strong, but I need every one of you, and you need everyone around you. We need each other to keep our focus, not bent inward. If you put your focus inward, you will become miserable. I believe that. You’re never going to grow by looking at yourself. All you’ll get with flesh is meals of bitterness, bites of hatred, with lots of anxiety, fear, and insanity. Listen to what Martin Luther said so well.

I am more afraid of my own heart than of the pope and all his cardinals. I have within me the great pope, Self.¹—Martin Luther

In other words, the greatest tyrant that can destroy us is not outside of me, but inside of me. If you are having marriage problems, realize it’s not about your marriage, it’s about your selfish flesh. Turn your eyes to Jesus. Notice Peter does not endorse naval gazing (looking at your own

¹ Martin Luther in George Augustus Lofton, *Character Sketches* (Nashville, TN: Southwestern Publishing House, 1890), 344.

belly button). Our gaze is on Jesus Christ. The only way to grow and change is by beholding God in the beauty of his holiness.

Martin Luther says, “My flesh is more tyrannical than the pope who at that time was killing people!” Do you know what the flesh is? It smells like anxiety. It stinks like anger, like selfish, self-righteous anger. It’s so ugly. It reeks of despair and hopelessness. And you feel like you’re paralyzed. Like there’s no way forward. That’s the flesh, saints. When you feel that way, that means your focus is not on the second coming. Listen, whatever your problems are, in an instant, they’re all going to be gone. At his coming Jesus will wipe away all tears from your eyes. No more funerals, doctor’s visits, or prescriptions. No more physical therapy. Jesus is coming. He’s coming soon. Get your eyes off of yourself and give them on to the King of kings and the Lord of lords. Be watching and waiting. This is how we walk. We don’t walk bent inwardly, as miserable slaves of our flesh. As believers we walk look upward and outward to the King of kings, waiting for his coming, anticipating his glorious face with joy.

Focus on Christ Transforms Us

Let us be lifting up our eyes, magnifying the Lord and not magnifying our own weakness and inability to solve our problems. You weren’t meant to solve your problems. Listen, we wait for the Lord who we worship. One theologian rightly that as Christians, we gaze at Christ, and we become what we worship.

What people revere, they resemble, either for ruin or for restoration. We become what we worship.²

If you worship your own way, your own comfort, your own opinions, then you are going to become inflated with flesh and selfishness, because you worship self. If you worship Jesus Christ, you will become like him. Focus on Christ, and you’ll have the fruit of the Spirit, you’ll be walking in peace and love and joy and satisfaction.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. If you fear the Lord, you’ll fear nothing else. Sometimes the flesh is creeping in through fear or through anger or through despair. How does the devil take authority over the true saints of God? How is that possible. It’s because of unbelief. You’re not intentionally experiencing the awesome presence of God. And you’re becoming what you worship. You worship yourself. And you don’t want to become that. You want to worship the Lord and become like Jesus.

Peter tells us to be “waiting” for Jesus, and that is what promotes holy, consecrated living. Our gaze is on Jesus. We are not to be waiting and hoping for our next raise or our next car. Sure, we will do that, but it ought not consume us or be the center of our hope. We have hopes and dreams for our family, for our calling and vocation, for our legacy. But those things are always subordinate to what we are really waiting for.

Focus on Christ Encourages Us

Where should our hope be? Seek Christ and his kingdom!

Matthew 6:33 | Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.

When I was 16, I met the girl who is now my wife. Jill ended up going a different direction and went to nursing school in another state. But she loved Jesus. She was beautiful and godly—the girl of my dreams. When I thought of her, I was always encouraged. I wouldn’t settle for any other girl. With her father’s permission, I pursued her. I wrote her. I called her. I put her first. I waited

² Greg Beale, *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2008), 16.

for her. She's a year younger, so I moved to Chicago, got a good paying job, and asked her to marry me. I waited. I pursued. But finally, the wedding day arrived. It was worth the wait! I encouraged myself with her love, and it helped me wait and endure so much.

It wasn't easy waiting. There were many temptations to be discouraged. But the joy of my love for Jill motivated me to live a certain way. The possibility of marrying Jill made me patient and persevering, having her in mind with every decision I made. My marriage to Jill is just an earthly illustration of a heavenly truth. In an even greater way, we live for the day of Christ's coming, patiently waiting. Having him in mind with every decision we make. Our love for him motivates us to live not overcome by our circumstances or emotions, but looking unto Jesus at all times, we can have a calm and patient spirit.

THROUGH OWNERSHIP

The Christian life is not theoretical. We must do our heart homework. We must not just check boxes. We must all learn to lead and be providers and not merely consumers. Peter returns to his theme of our need to "make every effort" to grow your faith (cf 1:5, 10). Peter calls us to be diligent.

2 Peter 3:14b | Be diligent to be found by him.

The word "be diligent" means "to run to do something, to exert oneself."³ In this sense, it is Christ who has revealed his beauty to you through his irresistible grace. He's opened your eyes—the eyes of your understanding have been enlightened by the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:18). That's a miracle of God. He says, "You did not choose me, but I chose you" (Jn 15:16). Now be diligent to run what to what Christ has revealed, Peter says. Run to Christ. "Be diligent to be found by him." It's really commitment that is the difference between childhood and adulthood. Some of you young people are wondering what does it mean to be a true man of God or a true woman of God. It's about responsibility and commitment. "If you know these things, happy are you if you do them," said Jesus (Jn 13:17). You're going to be miserable as a true believer if you disobey the Lord (cf 1 Jn 1:6-2:2). So be diligent to be found by him.

When I think of diligence versus coasting in the Christian life, I think of thanksgiving dinner. Mom gets up early. She's already prepared for days. But she's the one who a month ago was planning the meal. She puts the turkey in the oven and bastes it. She's prepared the pumpkin pie and the chocolate pie and the pecan pie. So many, many hours have gone into this meal. Mom, as the provider, is glad to sacrifice. Then the consumers arrive. "Ding-dong" goes the front door. A line of hungry relatives arrives. Somehow dad and the kids skedaddle to the wafting aroma of roasted turkey and stuffing. Mouthwatering morsels are inhaled in minutes. And what took mom twenty-five hours to plan, and cook is enveloped within a half hour. Then comes the football game and the nap. Such is the life of a consumer.

Spiritually, we may begin as consumers, and of course we always need to be consumers of the word, but we need to move on from being spoon-fed to feeding ourselves and teaching others. We need to not just be a consumer but a provider. Are you diligent? Do you study the Bible for yourself, or is all you get on Sunday morning for an hour?

Applications

To grow in Christ takes diligence. Have you learned to walk and feed yourself spiritually? Don't stay a baby. Are you diligent in the word each day? You will know if you are diligent because if you miss a day, you really feel it. The word keeps your spirit encouraged by the Holy Spirit. When you are not in God's word, you feel the flesh rising up within you. You can't grow without a constant, regular habit of having a quiet time each day.

³ Phillips, *Exploring the Epistles of Peter*, 2 Pe 3:14.

Are you diligent in fellowship? That means you get here early and stay late. It's rare that you come in late to church, and if you do, you vow never to do it again, just because you don't want to miss the fellowship and the corporate worship.

Are you diligent in prayer? What a joy to pray without ceasing! Are you diligent in discipleship—meeting and encouraging and studying the Bible together.

THROUGH HOLINESS

What a joy that the Lamb of God who is without spot or blemish gives us his holiness, his righteousness, his heart.

2 Peter 3:14c | Be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish.

As we said, the word “be diligent” means “to run to do something, to exert oneself.” We are to run to the life of holiness and blamelessness.⁴ This means, we are diligent first and foremost for what we might call “heart holiness.” Is there anything that is robbing you of your peace and joy in God and your love for God and others?

Our diligence is to be aimed at being unblemished and unspotted from the world. False teachers are “blots and blemishes” (cf 2:14) so true believers are to be without spot and blemish. They are to embody holiness. What is holiness? Holiness means to be. Set apart. So that means put away whatever excuses that you have for your sinful habits. Your sinful thoughts. You need to walk in the light with brothers and sisters that will hold you accountable. Not to make those excuses. You need to be found by him. Growing and changing. But without. Or blemish. Remember the Levitical laws for the animals in the Old Testament? And the Lambs were to be what? Here's the language. Without spot. Without blemish. Who is the Lamb of God who is without spot, without blemish? Who are you supposed to be looking like on a daily basis without spot, without blemish? Jesus! It's Jesus seven days a week. It's Jesus 24 hours a day. It's Jesus 365 days a year. It's Jesus. Jesus. Jesus. It's all about Jesus. When Jesus comes into your life and fills you, he crowds out your desire for the world. Thomas Chalmers, who trained Leonard Ravenhill, had a sermon, and turned into a book called “The Expulsive Power of a New Affection.”⁵ Chalmers point was that the power and presence of Christ leave no room for fleshly affections. You may object and say, “I've viewed pornography for so many years. How do I get over that?” “Let Jesus crowd it out. Well, I've been such an angry person, and I don't know how to get over my anger.” Oh, dear one, you need to walk with Jesus, and he'll crowd out your anger. “Oh, but listen” you say, “I've been so fearful.” You see, when you walk with Jesus, he'll bring you before the throne of God in such a way that it will change you. It's just like how the burning bush changed Moses (Exo 3:1-15). Your face will glow as you go from one level of Christlikeness to the next (2 Cor 3:18). And you will fear nothing because you fear God.

We are born again unto a “living hope”—a resurrection hope. A person who is truly born again, has a new nature that hungers and thirst for righteousness and holiness (Mt 5:6). The Spirit within us causes us to “be careful to keep his statutes and obey his judgments” (Eze 36:27). Can we change the color of our skin or hair? “Can a leopard his spots?” (Jer 13:23). The prophet is talking about our nature. Can a fish fly a hundred yards in the air or can a bird swim in the deep sea? No. For a fish to fly it'd have to take on the nature of a bird. We who have God's divine nature cannot continue in sin (Rom 6:1-2)! “Sin will have no dominion over you” as a child of God (Rom 6:14).

We are called to “be found by him” pursuing holiness at Christ's coming. The Bible teaches that the one who is truly justified in Christ is not only perfect before his throne by the righteousness of Christ (Rom 8:1) but also has a new nature that motivates the believer to pursue

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Thomas Chalmers, *The Expulsive Power of a New Affection* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell & Co., 1901).

the righteous way of thinking and living in his heart and life (Eze 36:25-27; Jn 3:3). Consider the truth of the apostle John.

1 John 3:9 | No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God.

Are you advancing and progressing in your holiness? Are you addressing any spots or blemishes in your personal life, your thought life? Are you ascending from one level of glorious Christlikeness to another (2 Cor 3:18)?

Make your calling and election sure (1:10). Be sure you have the fingerprints of God on you. If these qualities of holiness are in you and abounding it is certain that you will never fall away as a pretender (*cf* 1:10). So be diligent to live out your standing in Christ (*cf* 1:1).

THROUGH PEACE

We are to be diligent, exerting our effort, but how? By resting in Christ and enjoying our peace with God and with each other. In other words, we grow in sanctification by resting in our justification. "Sometimes you are sanctified by pointedly remembering that God justifies you on the basis of Christ's righteousness, atoning sacrifice, and resurrection."⁶

2 Peter 3:14d | Be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish and at peace.

Many Christians have heads filled with Bible knowledge but are tossed about by anxiety and hurt and bitterness and despair. Sanctification takes place as we are at rest in the finished work of Jesus Christ. Growing in Christ is not "hoop jumping." It's not performance. It's rest. This is what Jesus promised— "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Mt 11:28, NIV).

Real Christian maturity is not measured by our doctrinal theories, but our internal rest in Jesus Christ. The kingdom of God is not external at this time in human history, but internal. "The kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom 14:17). Are you advancing in the peace of the Holy Spirit? Put off sin and put on the word of God until you come to experience the "peace that passes all understanding" (Phil 4:7) and the "joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Pet 1:8).

No matter what's going on, you know that Jesus Christ is on the throne. He's coming again. Hallelujah. There'll be no more sin. There'll be no more noise of anger and anxiety, despair and addictions to harass you and enslave you. That will all be gone. But you don't have to wait for Jesus to come again for that to happen. That's the point. Be waiting for Jesus but be experiencing the new heaven and the new earth right now. "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Mt 6:10). Live the kingdom life now. Jesus will soon rule and reign on this earth physically. He's coming soon. But he's ruling and reigning in your heart. You can experience that peace right now, through Jesus and Jesus alone.

2. PROGRESS IN YOUR WISDOM (3:15-17)

Growing in Christ means that we work on our heart and our walk, and this requires that we study the word and experience stability in our lives.

⁶ David Powlison, *How Does Sanctification Work?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2017), 55.

WITH STEADFASTNESS

We need to count the silence of God and our waiting for him to fulfill all his promises as God's loving patience and mercy in salvation.

2 Peter 3:15a | And count the patience of our Lord as salvation.

What does it mean that God's patience is our salvation? You're a sinner, right? You've know what sin is. You've tasted of sin. And you've been delivered from sin, and you're groaning for the coming of Jesus to rid the world of sin forever, right? Because you've been given the new nature. You groan with all creation (Rom 8:22-26). You groan for the new heaven and the new earth to come, and for heaven and earth to be one again. We are longing for a restored earth, a renewed earth with no more sin and with Jesus Christ ruling and reigning forever and ever. And you are wondering, "Lord, how long will you tarry your coming." But the Lord views the sin that you don't even see—the sin that you've forgotten in your own life. He sees all that. And he also sees the sin of every murderer. There's no unsolved mysteries. God doesn't have to watch the murder shows to find out who did it, right? We like to see who did it. God never had a question about who murdered who, who lied to who, who did what to who because he knows all the sins. And with all that knowledge, and his righteous justice flowing over the portals of heaven, he's still patiently waiting. He's the most righteous being in the universe. He should be crushing us with his justice. Yet he is waiting. Count that as your salvation!

Do you wait for your loved one to be saved? Keep praying! He hears you. He is more concerned about your loved one than you are. He sent his Son for them. Waiting and patience is not passive here, but active. Aren't you glad that God waited until you came in? Are you glad that God was steadfast? See, there's a diligence in patience. Sometimes we think of patience as passive. I found a quote from someone in my grandpa's hometown. This man was a preacher in Glasgow, Scotland, where my grandpa, born in 1899, is from. George Matheson, the Scottish preacher of Glasgow says we are to cooperate with God in his salvation and sanctification of sinners.

We are to cooperate with Christ in patient sanctification. We commonly associate patience with lying down, yet there is a patience that I believe is harder—the patience that can run, that perseveres. It is the power to work under stress, to continue under hardship, to have anguish in your spirit and still perform daily talks. This is a Christian thing. The hardest thing is that most of us are called to exercise patience, not in the sickbed but in the street.⁷

Look at God's love for the lost. He's not taking his time. He's urgently working with sinners. He is patient and persevering with them. He's calling them. The Spirit is calls us, even hunts us in order to bless us with grace, so irresistible, he opens our eyes to his beauty, and we are irresistibly drawn to him, not only in salvation, but in our sanctification.

God is patient and drawing the lost to himself. Christians should regard God's patience with joy, knowing that he is daily adding to his family until it is complete.⁸ God will bring the world to an end soon enough. Until that time, be steadfast in rejoicing in his patience as you study God's word. God's word helps us experience God's compassion and be filled with joy at the patience of God to wait for salvation to have its full effect on a lost and dying world.

WITH STUDY

You can study the patience of God in "our beloved brother" Paul's writings. Look at the wisdom of the mysteries God gave us in Romans 6-8, how God patiently conforms us to his Son. Or

⁷ George Matheson, *Times of Retirement: Devotional Meditations* (London: James Nisbet & Co. Publishing, Limited, 1902), 168.

⁸ MacArthur, *2 Peter and Jude*, 134.

Romans 9-11, how God has chosen us in Christ for salvation. Some of these things are hard to understand, but we are to study the patience of God in all of Scripture, including Paul's writings.

2 Peter 3:15b-16 | Just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, ¹⁶as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. 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.

Paul's letters were a specific part of Scripture utilized by false teachers to try and twist the Scriptures and confuse people.

Appreciation. The fact that Peter placed Paul's writings on a par with the rest of the Scriptures clearly affirms that Paul wrote divinely inspired truth (*cf* 1:20–21; 1 Thess 2:13; 2 Tim 3:16–17). The New Testament writers were aware that they were writing the word of God, as surely as the Old Testament prophets were.⁹ Peter and Paul likely worked together in Rome when 2 Peter was written. The first epistle of Clement suggests, they worked together in Rome at the end of their lives (5:2-5).¹⁰ They were both looking for Jesus to come again in their lifetime. Peter said that Paul's writings wrote with the same inspiration as the "other Scriptures" of the Old Testament.

Apostasy. What exactly is Peter alluding to when he says some wolf-like false pastors were "twist the Scriptures"? Peter probably is alluding to Paul's doctrine of justification by faith which was, we know, twisted by unscrupulous teachers to mean that once justified a man could do what he liked with impunity.¹¹ After all, when "sin abounds," Paul says, "grace much more abounds" (Rom 5:20). They were willing to twist God's word, missing Paul's own commentary on his words.

Romans 6:1-2 | What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? ² By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?

Paul's writings flooded the world with light. But some of that light is too bright for the beginner.¹² Self-aggrandizing preachers in Peter's day were twisting the word of God to their own destruction. Then and now they teach God's people to sin whether by giving subtle and sanctified excuses for sin ("We all sin anyway, don't we?"), or teaching outright antinomianism ("Since grace abounds, let's sin all the more"). The false teachers confused true believers and made them unstable in their faith. Instead of looking with holiness, they were distracted by loose living.

Application. We need to be wise! Don't be distracted by false teachers. If a church starts approving of lawlessness, you should leave. Today churches are affirming the lawless practices of homosexuality and gender blending. There is confusing in the pulpits. Let us not be confused. Gender blending does not make a boy into a girl or a girl into a boy. It just makes the parents who support that confusion into those who commit child abuse.

The way to wisdom is the study of God's word. Readers have sometimes been mistaken that Peter himself somehow found parts of Paul's letters hard to understand, but in fact this is false. He clearly suggests that such passages are open to misinterpretation only by the ignorant—"uninstructed and unstable" people. In other words, the false teachers, for all their pretensions to be teachers, had never taken the trouble to acquire a broad, sound knowledge of apostolic teaching.¹³ The only defense against these kinds of wolves is a rich and broad study of God's word.

⁹ Ibid., 136.

¹⁰ Green, *2 Peter and Jude*, 170.

¹¹ Ibid., 171.

¹² Phillips, *Exploring the Epistles of Peter*, 2 Pe 3:16.

¹³ Bauckham, *2 Peter–Jude*, 106–107.

WITH STABILITY

As in the first chapter, Peter warns the believer not to “lose your own stability.” When we see Christians who fall away and are lawless, we might fall with them if we are focused on mere the actions of sinful men instead of the mighty God.

2 Peter 3:17 | 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.

If we keep too close company with lawless false teachers, we will be led away from Christ.¹⁴ This is true among the lawlessness of has been termed “wokeism.” One popular teacher of thousand recently said, we need to “unhitch” from the Old Testament because Christians are free. He’s twisting God’s word. Now the same teacher is promoting LGBT living among his membership. This is contrary to Scripture which says if you continue in any life dominating sin, you will not enter the Kingdom of heaven (1 Cor 6:9-11; cf Rev 21:8).

On the other hand, Peter’s calls us to the “stability” of holy living. Peter comes full circle—not only in this letter, but in his life.¹⁵ He’s told us that it is the Scripture that brings us stability—a more sure word of prophecy than any miracle (1:19). Ground yourself in the Scripture for stability.

Psalm 1:1-3 | Blessed is the man... ² his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. ³ He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.

Ephesians 3:17, 19 | That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may ¹⁹... know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

We must have our focus rooted and grounded in the Lord who never fails. That’s where stability comes from. We all hear about the “lawless” activity of so-called Christians that we’ve trusted, and it can bring great instability, as Peter says. People we trusted and followed now have a rift in their marriage. An unwed daughter is unexpectedly pregnancy. You find out about an abusive relationship in the life of someone you have cared about. Other times it’s in the area of doctrine. Someone you love starts believing lies. Wolves enter into churches and start deceiving your loved ones. Their lawless activity can really discourage us and bring instability.

To guard against that kind of instability that can carry us away—both in our families and our churches—God’s people need to know who the Lord is on a very personal and intimate level. Our knowledge of God through his word is the first line of defense against the conflicts and instability that threatens to tear us apart.

3. PROGRESS IN YOUR WITNESS (3:18)

As Peter writes his last words before he and his wife are crucified, he urges us, as he did in the beginning of his letter, to grow! We witness our progress in Christ by God’s grace and for his glory.

THE WITNESS OF GOD’S GRACE

We are to grow! Grow means “to advance or increase in the sphere of something.”¹⁶ We are to progress and advance in knowing Christ.

¹⁴ Green, *2 Peter and Jude*, 174.

¹⁵ Helm, *1 & 2 Peter and Jude*, 273.

¹⁶ MacArthur, *2 Peter and Jude*, 137.

2 Peter 3:18a | But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Knowledge here is not merely information, but a spiritual intimacy with Jesus. A spiritual understanding of Christ is the only bulwark against spiritual deception. The only way not to become unstable (3:17), is the way of growth in grace and knowledge. It is through personal encounter with Jesus as Savior and Lord that the Christian life begins. It is through constant contact with him in both those capacities that Christian character develops.¹⁷ What grace Peter had! What growth! What knowledge. Peter went from denying Christ to declaring Christ at Pentecost and dying for Christ through crucifixion.

Peter grew from a headstrong Galilean to a humble apostle—from a simple fisherman to a legendary fisher of men. We, too, can follow him on his remarkable journey of spiritual growth as we heed his warnings, recall his reminders, and embrace the divine promises he describes, applying diligence and hope and relying on the provision of the Holy Spirit.¹⁸

THE WITNESS OF GOD'S GLORY

Peter can almost taste the glory of heaven as he is ready to depart, that he suddenly bursts into singing.

2 Peter 3:18b | To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

This song of praise contains the final words we hear from Peter on this earth. In writing them, it is as if he has already arrived. Imagine the joy of singing your way into heaven.¹⁹ Let's join Peter in his passionate praise of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ: "all glory to God!"²⁰ To give glory is to "give the right opinion of" someone. We are called to give God all the glory for what he's doing now, and what he will do with us in the eternal state. Reflect his excellencies and his honor back to him. All glory to God!

Conclusion

"Glory," shouts Peter. "To him be glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen." It's like Peter takes his readers back to the Mount of Transfiguration, where Jesus' glory had been displayed. He saw the glory of Christ unveiled. "To him be glory!" he exclaims. Then he adds his last "Amen." With that, Peter puts down his pen. We have heard the last of him—for now!

One day, the expected knock came at his door. Nero's attention had been drawn to him at last. He was arrested and sentenced to death by crucifixion. It was a cruel way to die. It is said he didn't feel worthy to be crucified in the manner of his Lord, so he was granted an upside-down crucifixion. The end came soon enough. The gates of glory opened, and Peter was absent from the body and present with the Lord. We can almost hear him, his voice rising in unison with all of the other ransomed saints of God: "To him be glory both now and forever, and ever, and ever!" Amen and amen!²¹

Let me challenge you as we finish the book of 2 Peter. My family and I got to go to the Shedd Aquarium in Chicago. And of course, one of our favorite aquarium exhibits was the sharks. According to the Smithsonian Institute, if you catch a small shark and confine it, it will stay a size proportionate to the aquarium you put it in. Sharks can be six inches long yet fully matured. But if you turn them loose in the ocean, they grow to their normal length of eight feet.²² That is like

¹⁷ Green, *2 Peter and Jude*, 175.

¹⁸ Swindoll, *Insights on James and 1 & 2 Peter*, 330.

¹⁹ Helm, *1 & 2 Peter and Jude*, 275.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Phillips, *Exploring the Epistles of Peter*, 2 Pe 3:17–18.

²² David Shiffman, "The Ocean Portal Team Reviewed—Sharks," *Smithsonian Ocean*, October 16, 2019, <https://ocean.si.edu/ocean-life/sharks-rays/sharks>.

what happens sometimes happens to some Christians. They stay isolated from other Christians. They don't grow in grace, but they shrink in isolation. I have seen some of the little six-inch Christians who swim around in a little puddle. You can look at them and comment on how fine they are. But if you were to put them out into a larger arena with robust Christian fellowship and sweet spiritual food, they become great and mighty sharks for the Lord. They become powerful. Oh, that we would all grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ! This is our inheritance. Take hold of it now child of God. Amen, and amen!