

Grow in the Grace and Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ

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[0 : 00] We're now going to turn to our Bible reading, and we're finishing off this evening our studies in 2 Peter chapter 3. Edward Lobb has been preaching to us in this chapter, and he's going to be focusing on the last few verses, but we're going to read the whole chapter.

So do grab a Bible. We've got plenty of church visitors' Bibles spread around. Do grab one. They're red, some at the front, at the side, at the back. If you're not sure where they are and you wave your hand, one of the welcome team would love to bring one to you, and do open up and follow along. If you're using a church visitor's Bible, it's on page 1019, and we read 2 Peter chapter 3, beginning then at verse 1.

This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved.

In both of them, I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment 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 desires, their own sinful desires.

[1 : 21] 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.

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 toward 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 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.

[3 : 07] 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 to him, as 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. 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. Well, this is God's word, and we will return to it shortly.

[4 : 33] Well, good evening, friends. Let's turn to 2 Peter, chapter 3. And I want particularly to speak from verses 14 to 18 this evening, the final paragraph there in the chapter.

And my title is Grow in the Grace and Knowledge of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Now, you may remember that before Christmas, we had two sermons in which we studied the first 13 verses of this chapter, where the Apostle Peter is writing about the return of Jesus.

He makes the point in verse 3, have a look at verse 3 in this chapter, that in the last days, and that means the whole period of time between the ascension of Jesus and his return, during this period, scoffers will come.

That is, people who will ridicule the very idea that Jesus might return. But Peter strongly refutes them. He says in verse 10, the day of the Lord will come.

[5 : 45] But it will come like a thief. In other words, when you least expect it. And then Peter goes on, immediately after his return, the world as we know it, the cosmos as we know it, will pass away with a roar, burned up, purged with fire.

And then, as verse 13 puts it, the new heavens and the new earth will appear, where righteousness is at home, which it clearly is not in this present world.

Now that verse 13 is a very wonderful promise from God. And Peter is saying there that we are waiting for this new world. We are looking forward to it with great longing.

The hungry schoolboy longs for his Christmas dinner. I hope he received it a couple of weeks ago. But the apostle, with a far greater and deeper longing, looks forward to the appearing of the new world.

And he invites us to join with him in that longing. And in this final paragraph of the letter, verses 14 to 18, the apostle is urging his readers to be prepared for the return of our Lord Jesus.

[6 : 58] If his readers, including us, were to say to him, well, thank you very much, apostle, for assuring us that the Lord will return. But hey-ho, it's a new year.

We'd better get back to work, to earning our crust. I think he would say to us, don't you hey-ho me? Yes, you've got to earn your crust, all right. But there's a lot more to the Christian life than just getting on with life.

You need to take active, focused steps to get ready for the master's return. And I'm going to tell you what those steps are in four commands.

Now let's just notice there are four commands in these final five verses. First, in verse 14, be diligent. Second, in verse 15, count the patience of the Lord as salvation.

Third, in verse 17, take care that you're not carried away with the error of lawless people. And then fourth, in verse 18, grow.

[7 : 59] Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Now in a couple of minutes, we'll head for those four commands as a bee heads for the nectar.

But before we do that, I'd like to say a word about the purpose of the New Testament letters as a whole. As you know, God did not just give us the Old Testament and the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles.

In his wisdom, he knew that we needed something more. So he provided us with these final 22 books of the Bible. And their main purpose, their main purpose is to enable their readers, including us, to persevere in the Christian life, to keep going as believers.

Now that purpose shows itself here in our verse 17, where Peter says, take care that you're not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability.

Now that's the danger. These young Christians, to whom Peter was writing, could lose their stability. That means that they would collapse, like a rickety old building in a gale of wind.

[9 : 14] Peter is writing this letter to give his readers stability, because he knows that endurance in the Christian life is difficult. Now of all people, Peter knew that endurance is difficult, because he never forgot how he had denied Jesus when he was put suddenly under pressure.

Somebody said to him, you're one of this man's disciples, aren't you? No, I'm not, he said. He didn't show much stability at that point of very sharp testing. So Peter knew the weakness of the human heart, and so did Paul and John and the other apostles.

Now bear in mind that most of these letters were written between the year 50 and the year 70 AD. By that stage, the churches were no longer infants, but they were still toddlers, and the apostles knew that they lacked maturity and strength.

Do you remember how Paul wrote to the Ephesian Christians in chapter 4? He says, the Lord has given us pastors and teachers to help us to grow up to manhood, to maturity, so that we may no longer be children tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine. Now it's in the nature of children to lack understanding and discernment and firm convictions. But the New Testament letters are here to teach us conviction and to help us to grow into maturity so that we can withstand the buffetings of life.

[10:45] So how do these New Testament letters enable us to persevere and develop the capacity to endure? They do it by teaching us at two basic levels.

By showing us how to live and by showing us what to believe. Paul puts it like this to Timothy in 1 Timothy chapter 4.

He says, watch your life and doctrine closely. Your life, that is your conduct, and your doctrine, what you believe and teach. And Paul goes on to Timothy, persist in this, for by doing so, you will save both yourself and your hearers.

Now that's pretty simple to understand, but it's not so easy to practice. Perseverance in the Christian life, which leads us finally to salvation, comes through careful attention to our lifestyle and our doctrine, how we live and what we believe.

And belief and behavior are always very closely connected. If our belief and understanding of God and the gospel are strong and well-founded, we will want to behave in a godly fashion.

[11:59] But if our belief is shallow and not properly anchored, we shall easily be led astray and fall into sin and error. Now every one of these New Testament letters was called for by a particular situation where there was trouble.

There were difficulties that needed to be addressed. As they write these letters, the apostles are troubleshooters. Peter was painfully aware that the young churches that he's writing to here were in danger from false teachers.

These teachers were denying Jesus, as Peter puts it in chapter 2, verse 1. But specifically, they were denying that Jesus was going to return, as we see in chapter 3, verse 4.

But their denials of gospel truth were accompanied by immoral living. The doctrine and the lifestyle always go together. That's why Peter quotes the rather revolting proverb at the end of chapter 2.

Do you see the last verse of chapter 2? The dog, he says, returns to its own vomit. This comes from the book of Proverbs. And the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire.

[13:10] Now it's good that Peter should use such a shocking picture, because a picture like that jolts us into realizing just how dangerous the influence of false teaching is.

It doesn't restrict its damage to the way people think. It issues in immorality. It corrupts the way that people believe and behave.

So this is what these New Testament letters are doing in the Bible. They're teaching the Lord's people a right understanding of the gospel so that the Lord's people should live in a way that pleases the Lord.

And it's when the gospel is properly understood and the ethics of the gospel are properly lived out that Christian people learn how to persevere as Christians with joy.

Now if you're a young adult here, as quite a few are, just think of a Christian person who's about 50 years older than yourself. You'll generally recognize us by the color of our hair.

[14:08] We are the cauliflower tops. Now if you then ask, how and why is this senior Christian still persevering as a Christian, a large part of the answer will be because of the New Testament letters.

They teach our minds and that teaching molds our behavior and the consequence is that we can persevere and persevere with joy. Well with that in mind, let's turn now to these four final commands that Peter gives to the churches.

Commands which, if we keep them, will help us to persevere in the Christian life and be prepared for the return of the Lord Jesus. First then, from verse 14, be diligent.

Now let's see how that phrase fits within the whole verse. Verse 14, therefore beloved, since you are waiting for these, now the word these must be the new heavens and the new earth that Peter has just written about in verse 13.

Since you are waiting for the new heavens and the new earth, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish and at peace. Now this verse is telling us, of course, that we're not only waiting for the new heavens and the new earth, we're also waiting for Jesus.

[15 : 30] In Peter's words here, we're going to be found by him. Isn't that a striking thought? When he returns, he will be coming to find us and he'll be very interested in the state that we're in when he does find us.

Do you remember Jesus' own words in Matthew chapter 24? Similar words. He says, who then is the faithful and wise servant? He's talking about all disciples. Who is the faithful and wise servant whom his master has set over his household to give them their food at the proper time?

Blessed is that servant, whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Jesus, when he returns, wants to find his servants actively engaged in serving him.

It makes me think of one of those delightful historical dramas that we sometimes get on the television. Something like Downton Abbey. Have you seen that? Goes back a few years, doesn't it? But Downton Abbey or maybe one of those Jane Austen novels.

And you sometimes get a scene where the master and mistress of the house, Lord this and lady that, are away for some time. But they then plan to return. And they send a message to the servants about the date of their coming back.

[16 : 45] We shall be back two weeks on Friday or that sort of thing. And as that date approaches, the servants in the big house get very active. The silver is polished. The rooms are cleaned from top to bottom.

Fresh flowers are brought in from the gardens. The finest dishes are prepared in the kitchens. And when his lordship finally arrives, he is delighted to see the good order and the evidence of hard work because the servants have been preparing for his return.

Now this is what Peter is commanding us to be like. Be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish. Without spot or blemish.

Now this applies to a Christian congregation as well as to the individual Christian. If we ever become conscious of a spot or a blemish, a difficulty, if you like, in the life of the church, it may be a troubled relationship that we need to attend to and put right.

It could be a duty neglected through laziness or selfishness. Then let's set about it diligently. We don't, of course, know when the lord will return.

[17 : 55] But if it were to be in the very near future, would we be glad to welcome him and to have him inspect our church life? It's very challenging, isn't it? But it's a lovely challenge because our aim is to please him.

Paul often uses that phrase, our aim is to please him. This, of course, applies to our individual lives as well. Is there some spot or blemish? Now, of course, we're all sinners.

There's plenty of ungodliness, at least the seeds of sin swirling about in the depths of our hearts.

We know that. But Peter is thinking about a particular spot or blemish which we're aware of but perhaps have never really addressed.

Let me give you a low-level domestic temptation which I sometimes experience by way of a parallel. I'm washing the pots and pans after the evening meal and I have in my hand a particularly greasy pan which has burnt bits of food on it.

You know the sort of pan. You always leave it to the end, don't you, before you wash it up. And there it is. It's got nasty bits on it and I know that the only way in which that pan is ever going to be fit for purpose is if I spend five or even ten minutes of quality time rubbing the wretched pan with a wire sponge and plenty of fairy liquid.

[19 : 16] Ten minutes on one filthy pan. Do I want to do that? I do not. But the spot or blemish is so deeply attached to the pan that it requires diligent and focused attention and the temptation is not to deal with it properly.

Now a besetting I didn't quite hear that. Tell me afterwards. Anyway, a besetting sin, something that we've been wrestling with for many years, can be a little bit like that pan.

And Peter is saying be diligent to be found by the Lord Jesus without spot or blemish and at peace.

This diligent attention to the spots and blemishes will produce peace, peace in our hearts and consciences and if it's a church thing, it'll be peace with one another in the Christian fellowship rather than strife and disharmony.

So there's Peter's first final command. It's really about repentance and what goes on in the deep places inside our hearts. Be diligent, he says. Now secondly, the second command comes in verse 15.

Count. Count the patience of our Lord as salvation. Now if you look back to verse 9, you'll see that the Lord has delayed the second coming with patience.

[20 : 41] The same idea of patience is used there. So let me offer just a brief reminder about the Lord's patience because it's all about the Lord's timing of historical events. Peter says in verse 9 that the Lord is patient towards you.

This is why he's delayed his coming. Not wishing that any should perish but that all should reach repentance. And what he says in verse 15 picks up this same idea of patience.

But you'll see that Peter adds the word salvation in verse 15. Count the patience of the Lord as salvation. So the emphasis in verses 10, 11 and 12 is on destruction.

The burning up of the very heavens and earth when the Lord returns. This fearsome purging and cleansing by fire. But in verse 15 we see that the purpose of the Lord's delay in returning is to extend salvation.

To extend the window of opportunity still open to us today in 2026. So that more people should hear and embrace the gospel. But I want us to notice this very interesting little section on Paul.

[21 : 52] Paul the apostle. Because what Peter says about Paul in verses 15 and 16 adds great weight to the command to count the Lord's patience as salvation. Look with me again at verse 15.

Count the patience of our Lord as salvation just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him. Now why should Peter bring in Paul at this stage?

Well surely for this reason to add weight to the teaching that Peter is giving about the delay in the Lord's return. This question of why the Lord hasn't come back must have been quite a problem in the young churches there.

Think of them. It's about 60 AD. 30 years roughly have passed since the Lord's ascension but he hasn't come back yet. Why might that be?

Because says Peter he is being patient so as to allow more time for the message of salvation to be broadcast across the world. And says Peter Paul has written to you on exactly the same lines according to the wisdom given to him.

[23 : 04] So he and I are singing from the same song sheet. Now think of Paul's life. He had been a very great traveler. He traveled a great deal in the previous decade or so and he'd been to places like Galatia Cappadocia and Asia.

And if you don't need to do this but if you were to look back to 1 Peter 1 Peter chapter 1 verse 1 you'll see that places like that Galatia and Cappadocia are places that Peter had written his first letter to.

And then if you look at this chapter 2 Peter chapter 3 verse 1 you'll see that this second letter from Peter is written to the same readers as his first letter was sent to.

So when Peter begins to write about Paul here in verse 15 he knows that his readers will sit up and take notice because they know Paul. Some of them would have met him personally.

Some of them would have first heard the gospel from Paul's lips. Paul had founded some of those churches. And when Peter in verse 15 mentions some of the letters that Paul wrote to you he may well have been thinking of Paul's letters to the Galatians the Thessalonians and the Ephesians.

[24 : 16] So Peter is bringing in Paul to make the point that Peter's voice about the return of the Lord is not a lone voice. Paul is equally clear about the second coming in his letters some of which my readers you've read yourselves you know about it.

So Paul's letters add weight to Peter's message. Now there's something about this which is really very interesting. You may remember that Peter and Paul had a bit of a row at one point.

It was it wasn't exactly a public confrontation because there's no record that Peter had much to say to Paul but Paul certainly had something to say to Peter and he had to oppose him to his face.

Let me read to you a little passage from Galatians chapter 2. Paul says but when Peter came to Antioch I opposed him to his face because he stood condemned.

For before certain men came from James from Jerusalem Peter was eating with the Gentiles but when they came he drew back and separated himself fearing the circumcision party.

[25 : 27] Now this was a big question in the early church. could Jews and Gentiles come to Christ on exactly the same terms or did Gentiles effectively have to become Jews before they could become Christians?

Did they need to undergo circumcision and to submit to other Jewish laws the food laws? Now Peter of course knew the answer to that question. He knew that Gentiles should not be required to

submit to Jewish law but he gave way out of fear to this strong delegation of pro-circumcision people who had come from Jerusalem to press their agenda and say that the Gentiles effectively had to become Jews and Paul knew that the whole gospel was at stake over this issue so he had to rebuke Peter to his face.

Now Paul did not lock that incident away in his private papers. He published it in his letter to the Galatians for everyone to see. We read about it to this day and it doesn't reflect very well on Peter but for the sake of preserving the gospel Peter had to be disciplined almost slapped in the face by Paul but look how Peter speaks of Paul here in our verse 15 in this letter that would have been written several years later our beloved brother Paul he says also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him not a trace of resentment only love and affection from Peter to Paul but notice something else Peter is not bringing Paul in to support him on the ground of Paul's ability he's not saying our beloved brother Paul that noted brain box that heavyweight theologian now look at the end of verse 15 according to the wisdom given him given by

God Peter is saying my teaching about the second coming has exactly the same origin as Paul's teaching it is given it comes by revelation it's not because of Paul's cleverness neither Peter nor Paul could possibly have devised the doctrine of Christ's second coming out of their own cleverness you and I today could never come to believe in Christ's return by scientific experiment or by philosophical reasoning we believe in the return of Christ because God has revealed it to us in the letters of Peter and Paul and of course in Jesus' own teaching about it all of the Bible's teaching comes to us from beyond this world it's a message to earth from heaven the Bible's human authors are the channel of revelation not the origin of it well now let's turn to the third command from verse 17 take care you therefore beloved knowing this beforehand take care that you're not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability so the command is to take care not to be carried away by people who flout

God's law by lawless people to be carried away by their error will end up in chapter 2 verse 22 in the vomit and mire of unbridled immorality if we lose our stability as Christians we lose everything in the end we'll be unable to persevere to the gates of heaven now there's an important phrase in this verse which can easily be overlooked but it actually gives this verse all its power it's the phrase knowing this beforehand do you see in the middle of verse 17 knowing this beforehand you therefore beloved knowing this beforehand so what are they and we to know beforehand which will help us not to be carried away with error well the phrase refers to the sentence before in verse 16 writing of Paul's letters Peter says 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 this is the important thing people were twisting

[29 : 50] Paul's letters says Peter now this is a contemporary issue for us today just as much as it was back then people who have a predetermined agenda of living a dissolute and immoral life those that would be described by Peter as ignorant and unstable people they were going to Paul's letters they were reading them but they were twisting them and deliberately misreading them so as to get them to support their own particular agenda now the pointed issue is this Paul's letters and other parts of the Bible can be twisted that's Peter's word in verse 16 distorted by people who are unstable and ignorant because they want to be lawless now they may look to be spiritual but these people are reading Paul's letters and are giving the impression that they are submitting to them but that's exactly what they're not doing they have predetermined the conclusion that they want to reach so they reshape the obvious meaning of

Paul's teaching so as to fit in with their desired conclusion an obvious modern example of this concerns the way that we understand sex and marriage today let me ask this how much of our understanding of sexual morality is molded by the secular world around us maybe more than we think think of this as an example if you're watching a film which portrays sexual attraction between a man and a woman leading perhaps to embracing passionate kissing unbuttoning of various items of clothing etc etc how many of those scenes are portraying a married couple none a man and his wife are never portrayed heading for the bedroom with excitement because the assumption is that married sex is old hat that by the way is one of the biggest lies in the whole world but the assumption is that sex outside marriage often involving adultery is where the excitement really lies because it's breaking boundaries it's edgy it's adventurous so the message is live like this it's fun have many partners if you want to the old morality is boring but the new is liberating and the new morality will also say the same thing goes for same-sex relationships the modern world says go with

the flow little chicken young man you can't get a girlfriend well get a boyfriend or if you're a young woman and no man has looked at you with a twinkle in his eye look for a woman to share your life with now we all know that this is the atmosphere that we live in today if you're younger than about 40 you have known no other atmosphere if you're older you'll remember how different it all was a couple of generations ago when the boundaries taught by the Bible were generally upheld in our society now what we're thinking about here is Paul's teaching and how it can be twisted a young Christian a new Christian who has not yet been deeply gripped by the Bible might say I'm a Christian I trust Jesus I believe in him as my savior but as for Paul's teaching about sex and marriage well that was obviously given in a cultural context very different from today's yes he's clear that homosexuality is wrong he's clear that sex is for marriage that adultery is wrong that marriage is a relationship between a man and a woman till death parts them but I'm aware that there are some modern theologians and church pastors who teach that the Bible's ethical instructions are only guidelines they're best regarded as fluid and flexible they say that culture changes and the church can adapt itself to new ways of thinking I rather like that so I think I'll think of Paul now as having an important historical profile informative but not normative now friends that is an example of what

Peter is writing about here in verse 17 reading Paul but twisting his teaching and Peter says that leads to their own destruction to twist Paul's teaching is to embark on a course of self destruction the person who reads Paul like that may think that he's honoring Paul because he's reading Paul but in reality he's disobeying the Lord Jesus because in verse 2 of this chapter verse 2 Peter explains that the apostles writings are conveying the commandment of the Lord and Savior so to reject Paul's teaching is to reject the teaching of Jesus now you younger folk the under 40s roughly speaking you're going to have to stand firm against all this in our present generation there'll be great pressure on you not only will there be but there is great pressure on you in this 21st century to be in Peter's words carried away by the error of lawless people which will mean that you will lose your stability and not persevere with the Lord and the truth it won't be easy for you and it will demand a great deal of courage but with the

Lord's grace you can do it Peter's message is know this beforehand know that people will twist Paul's letters and the other scriptures to their own destruction so be forewarned and forearmed and then you will be able to stand firm and then the Lord will be able to say to you at the end of all your battling well done good and faithful servant take care says our apostle not to be carried away by these errors and the twisting of Paul's teaching now fourth the fourth and final command comes in verse 18 grow or to be a bit more precise but grow the but is important because it implies a great contrast to what has just come before you're in danger Peter is saying of losing your stability you're in danger of not surviving as Christians because of the pressure of false doctrine which will threaten to carry you away but by contrast with all that I will tell you finally what to do in order to stand firm make sure that you keep growing not only keep going but keep growing the

[36 : 42] Christian life is not static if it's to be strong against false teaching it needs to be continually moving forward and developing it's a bit like riding a bicycle if you're not moving forward you fall off so let's think about this final verse of the epistle it's a lovely verse and it sums up so much that the New Testament teaches about the Christian life the first thing is that growth presupposes life you can't grow in the Christian life unless you have begun the Christian life Peter reminds his readers back in chapter 1 verse 4 of this letter that through God's precious and great promises they are able to become partakers of the divine nature that means they can have the very life of God in them through the new birth but once the new birth has occurred growth in the new life needs to follow if there's to be stability and strength to resist false teaching when a baby is born you have new life but there then has to be growth or else there will be disaster but secondly let's see how

Peter teaches this growth he says it must take place in two ways in grace and knowledge or more precisely the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in the New Testament the grace of our Lord Jesus is a way of speaking about his kingdom about the whole realm over which he presides grace is the whole environment of his favor freely and undeservedly given to us Paul writes you are not under law but under grace so when we become Christians we are transferred from the jurisdiction of God's law which frowns on us and condemns us as sinners and we are brought into this new realm of freedom and forgiveness and undeserved favor so Peter is saying to us grow in your experience of that realm of love and forgiveness explore it rejoice in it it is now your

habitat but then

Peter shows us this other thing knowledge we're to grow in our knowledge of the Lord Jesus himself you may have heard Christians speak like this sometimes the important thing is not so much knowing about Jesus but knowing him now I understand what they're saying but it's not a very helpful distinction to make because the truth is we need both we need both to learn about him and to learn to know him personally in fact the two things go together you can't move forward in knowing him personally unless you also move forward in getting to know about him Paul says famously in Philippians chapter three that I may know him that's Paul's aim in life to know Jesus but Paul goes on that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and may share his sufferings becoming like him in his death so knowing Christ is going to be an overwhelming experience it's also about suffering and death and resurrection knowing

Christ is not for the faint-hearted and Peter knows all that even though he doesn't actually mention it in this final verse but this final command of Peter's really sums up the Christian life grow in knowing Christ this is the purpose of our life expressed in a very short sentence now there are other forms of knowledge which are very good it's good to grow in knowledge of physics chemistry music art architecture how to steer a big boat across the ocean but all of that sort of thing is low level and secondary in the end to grow in knowledge of our Lord Jesus is the only important thing if we live to be a hundred we shall never exhaust our study we shall want to know more and more about his wonderful being how it is that Godhead and manhood are combined in his person we'll want to know about his purpose his determination to intervene in our corrupted world so as to die for his people to rescue them to pluck them from the wreckage of unredeemed humanity we'll want to know about his resurrection his indestructible life because we're destined to share it if we belong to him we'll want to know about his ascension his kingly rule seated at the right hand of God the father we'll want to know about his character his teaching his commitment to service his joy his love we shall want to know about his sorrows for it is we who have caused them we want to understand his victory over Satan and over all the powers of darkness how then can we grow and keep on growing what steps can we take to ensure that growing in his grace and knowledge is a permanent feature of our life let me suggest seven things okay quick fire we're all over in a minute seven things to help us to grow first let's delight in the

Bible and devour it as if our life depended upon it which indeed it does second let's delight in the Lord's people and give the Lord's people our prime time Christians belong to the body of Christ which is the church just think of the tiniest little finger on a newborn baby's hand have you ever seen that noticed how very small it is about that long isn't it that tall how does that baby baby finger grow into a big finger simply by staying in the body third let's learn obedience for Christ it's when obedience hurts and is costly that we really begin to grow as Christians fourth let's talk a great deal with our Christian friends and often about everything yes about the weather and the football but particularly about the Christian life because the encouragement of Christian friends is a powerful growth hormone fifth let's walk with the

[43 : 18] Lord Jesus as if we were on the road to Emmaus with him talking with him often sixth let's serve him and delight to be servants active servants if you're aware that you're in danger of becoming an idle sluggard go to some senior person in the church and say to him or her I'm in danger of being an idle member of this church help me please into a role of service real service seventh let's think often about the cross and then we shall be thankful people take care says our apostle that you're not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability that's the danger that's the apostles loving warning there's only one way to counter that danger and that is to grow and to keep growing in this year 2026 in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and

Peter ends to him therefore be the glory both now and to the day of eternity amen let's bow our heads and we'll pray for a moment our dear heavenly father you love us so deeply and you care about the quality of our lives we're aware that the danger of being carried away with the error of lawless people is never far away from us have mercy on us and help us to love you and the Lord Jesus with joy and tenacity so that throughout this coming year we may grow as a church and as individuals grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and we ask it in his name amen amen