

Growing by the Power of Jesus

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[0 : 0 0] Good afternoon and welcome to our Wednesday lunchtime Bible talk. I'm Josh Johnston. I'm a minister in training here at the Tron Church. And this week we're beginning a four-week look at the first chapter of 2 Peter. So we're going to spend four weeks looking at chapter 1 of 2 Peter. Before we look up our reading, let me pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for all your goodness to us. We thank you that you, as the creator of all things, perfect in holiness, have spoken to us.

First through the prophets and then by your son and his apostles. And we ask now that as we take a break from our weeks, from the busyness of work, of family life, of everyday life, that as we take a break, you would speak to us as we listen to your words, that we'd be able to lay aside all the stresses and strains of life in order to remember the great promises that you've made to us in your gospel. Remind us that we might continue in them and strengthen us by your power, that we might be witnesses by our lives and by sharing the gospel promises of just how good you are to a needy city and to a needy world. Be with us now as we turn to your words, for we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

So please do turn in your Bibles to 2 Peter chapter 1. If you're using one of our church Bibles, that will be found on page 1018. Today we're reading just the first four verses as a way into the letter.

So beginning in verse 1. Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ, may grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. When I was learning to ride a bicycle, it was a very painful exercise.

When the stabilizers were removed and it was up to me to keep on pedaling, it took a while to catch on. I would excitedly pedaling for a while and realize that I was fine and then I'd look around at my mom, hoping she would be looking pleased with me, and I'd stop and fall off. It would happen again and again, plenty of grazed knees. Eventually it clicks that you need to keep pedaling or you'll fall off and hurt yourself. And that really is like the message of 2 Peter. Peter is wanting the Christians that he's writing to you to keep growing so that they can keep going in their faith. That's what we see in 3, 17 and 18 at the very end of the book. Because the same is true of a Christian life. We must keep growing or we won't keep going at all. We will fall and hurt ourselves and with more than just a grazed knee.

[3 : 50] 3, 17 and 18. 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, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. If a shark stops swimming, it will die. If a Christian stops growing, if a Christian stops growing in the way of Jesus, Peter is very clear what will happen. It's a total loss of stability that leads to a great fall. So Peter's letter is one of encouragement to keep on growing. Throughout the letter, Peter again and again tells them how to do that. He wants them to remember the truth, to remember the truth that the apostles and the prophets had spoken. In chapter 1, we'll see a lot of positive teaching from Peter. He's saying clearly that those who do stay with the truth share the same standing as him, an apostle. In chapter 2, Peter spells out in depth what exactly the false teachers had threatened these Christians with. And he summarizes it again in chapter 3 for us.

These false teachers were guilty of two things which really feed each other. First, they didn't believe that Jesus was coming back to judge the world. 3 verse 4, they will say, where's the promise of his coming?

For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation. They say things are going to continue just as they are. Do not fret, they say. Jesus isn't coming back to judge. Don't worry about that. And so this leads to the second error, their lives.

Chapter 2 is crammed full of strong, stark language about really bad behavior. They take sin lightly, and it fits, doesn't it? That the people who think there's no judgment will then live lives that reflect that belief. There's no consequence for what they do so they can do whatever they want.

Their conduct is depraved. They're greedy and they seek to exploit. They're compared to the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. They follow the corrupt desires of the flesh. They despise authority. They're bold and arrogant. And 2.14. They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls.

[6 : 34] They've hearts trained in greed, accursed children. They're springs without water and slaves of depravity. It's really in your face language. But that's not how they would have thought about it.

It seemed right and good to them what they were doing. All sorts of things that are now said to be good and fine, they were going on with. But it wasn't the way of Jesus. And that's the danger.

People who profess Christ and look like they're okay, but say that the culture of the world around is fine. It's okay to be doing it. It's okay to compromise towards it. So the very real danger is that people begin to listen to these false teachers who said that everything in the world is okay.

And think, yeah, I fancy me a piece of that. The danger is that they start to think that you don't have to choose between knowing Christ and embracing the ways of the world. Be Christian, but with liberty to live wherever you please. And that's what many people want for the church today, isn't it?

Peter knows how dangerous it is to dwell on the sinful lives lived by unbelievers, by false teachers. If we look for too long longingly at these lives, then the attraction will woo us. Eventually we'll adjust our theology to suit this newfound lifestyle saying, well, is Jesus really coming back? Do we really have to worry about that? And so in light of this temptation, it's easy to forget the true message of the apostles and prophets. In light of this, it's easy to forget what we have in Jesus and to stop growing in our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. The message of 2 Peter is like riding a bicycle. Keep going or you will fall off and hurt yourself. Or like a shark, keep swimming or you'll sink.

[8 : 45] Peter says, keep growing or you will not keep going. Now, as we turn to look at the first four verses of this letter, we must remember this context.

Peter is writing to these people in 3.1 to remind them in order to stimulate them to wholesome thinking, to remind them of the truth they know from the prophets of old and from the Lord's apostles so that they don't become obsessed with the world. They don't become obsessed with looking longingly at people who please themselves because these Christians did know and Peter is reminding them that that is not where true happiness is. So look with me at three things that Peter reminds these believers of. First, we stand with Jesus's prophets and apostles, verses 1 and 2.

We stand with Jesus's prophets and apostles. So keep growing in the true knowledge of God and of Jesus, the true Savior. The first reminder is to look at whose company you keep.

Peter is very careful throughout this letter to show that the Christians he's writing to share the same faith and standing as the apostles. Look at verse 1. To those who have obtained the faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ, Peter is saying to them that they are with him. Real Christians stand in the company of the apostles. They share the same faith. They inherit the same promises. They share together in the righteousness of God. And we see this throughout the letter as Peter wants to make clear that it is the gospel in keeping with the apostles that is the one to keep growing in. He goes on to remind us that it is the apostles who were eyewitnesses of his majesty, verse 16. It was they that witnessed the transfiguration, verse 18. And verses 19 to 21 tell us that the apostles share the same faith and message of the Old Testament prophets. They speak the truth because it is God speaking through them.

Peter is saying to these people that they share his faith. It's the real faith of the apostles, the people who knew Jesus. But in contrast, these false teachers distort the word of God to their own destruction in 3.16. But real believers stand both with the prophets and the apostles.

[11 : 32] Peter is saying that's good company. And as we have seen that Peter is continuously giving out reminders, it's important to know that these all come back to the truth that God has revealed through prophets and apostles, through the scriptures. It is because of this truth that Peter can say, may grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord.

It is through this that Peter says to close his letter, but grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Christians have obtained a faith of equal standing of the apostles because they share the same gospel. It's the only gospel that can be relied upon. The gospel revealed first to prophets and then to the apostles. Christians are in good company. They follow in the footsteps of those who are eyewitnesses of Jesus. They follow in the footsteps of those who testified to the truth of Jesus. And Christians have the same standing as the apostles. They lack in nothing.

Secondly, verse 3, we also stand by Jesus's power. We stand by Jesus's power. So if we know him and grow in our knowledge of him, we shall live powerfully for him. Godly lives, or the lack of, are the big issue being dealt with in 2 Peter. How do real Christians manage to live godly lives that recognize the return of Jesus? Peter's answer is simple. Verse 3, his divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness.

Is the power of Jesus sufficient on its own to strengthen the resolve of anxious and tempted Christians in an attractively pagan world? Or do we need something more? Something else? Something better? Peter's answer is definitely not. His power has already granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness. All things. If you're a Christian, you lack nothing that is needed to live a godly life.

It's easy to look around the world and be tempted by a life that seems to promise more pleasure, more love, more meaning. It's easy to think we're lacking in faith because we don't feel spiritual or holy. But how do we live a godly life? Peter tells us we have everything we need to do it. Jesus has granted it to us by his power. How encouraging. We need to hear that. We need to be reminded of that.

[14 : 29] There is nothing that we lack in order to live a godly life. We do not need to hear a direct word from God each day directing us with what to do. We already have everything we need. We do not need to hear a direct word from God every day. We do not need some supernatural signs to strengthen us to be godly.

No. We have already everything we need. We don't need anything more than what God has already given us. His grace and his power are sufficient. He's given us Jesus and through his power we already have all that we need to live a godly life. We have all that we need to keep on growing. So don't listen to anyone who will tell you that you need something that only they can offer. Anything that makes you think otherwise, anything that says otherwise that you're lacking in something is not the gospel that the apostles taught. Look again at verse 3. This all is ours simply through the knowledge of him who called us.

This is ours when we recognize just who Jesus is and how significant he is. This is ours when we trust him as our savior and lord. This word knowledge comes up again and again in 2 Peter. We've seen it in verse 2 and now again in verse 3.

This knowledge is simply what any Christian has when they first believe. It's to know Jesus and love him as savior and lord. Peter reminds us that we never grew past that. It's through knowing Jesus that his power gives all we need for life and godliness. We stand by his power for it is his power that we need for a godly life. But how does he give us it? How does he impart this power to us?

Well, the answer for us is in verse 4. We stand through Jesus' promises. It is through his gospel, his word of promise for us, that we'll be transformed to share his glory.

[16 : 50] In the present, we have Jesus' power, but we can also look forward to his promises. Verse 4, the precious and not just great, but very great promises that he's granted to us.

That through this, we shall be made partakers of God's own nature. Jesus' promises are real for the believer, and they promise something to look forward to.

Peter also reveals that the false teachers causing all these problems make promises too. 2.19, they promise freedom, but in fact, all they do is lead people to slavery.

Their promises are false, and their promises have undermined the real promise of hope for believers. They've said 3.4, where is the promise of his coming?

The very thing that they are denying is the thing that Christians know and hope is real. The thing they deny is the thing that will end up damning them. You see, for a Christian, the gospel word promises that Jesus' return is good news.

[17 : 58] Why? Why? Because when he returns, verse 4, we shall become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption of this world because of sinful desire.

When he returns, we will have fully and finally escaped the corruption of this world. We'll no longer be stained and tainted by it, but rather we'll share in the divine nature.

We'll be holy as God is holy. We'll enjoy the perfect righteousness of Christ. We have not yet completely escaped this world, though. We're still here, and we're still tempted by it.

But we trust God's promises, and that transforms our lives and our expectation. The promise of Jesus' return is a promise that one day we will be removed completely and physically from this corrupted world.

Throughout this letter, Peter is reminding the Christians of this so that they won't go back to the corruption that they've been rescued from. Why on earth would we want to go back to lives that shamed us?

[19 : 11] Like the dog who returns to its vomit, or the sow who, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire, as we see it so starkly put in 222.

Why? Why? What we know the future holds will shape immeasurably how we will live now. If Jesus isn't going to return, then why bother striving towards a godly life?

But if he is going to return, which Peter assures us of, we will get to leave behind completely this world.

We'll enjoy sharing in all that Jesus has, and we'll be made perfect. Peter wants Christians to know that we cannot have the best of both worlds, this passing, fleeting world, and the everlasting world that won't perish or spoil or fade.

We cannot be looking longing at the lives of those who don't believe or those who believe and dabble with the world, because we know that Jesus is coming back to bring perfection to his own, but also punishment to those who scorn him.

[20 : 32] Christians stand with the apostles. They stand by Jesus' power, and we stand through his promises. This is the life that will bring freedom now and freedom forever.

The lifestyle that is given into the world brings enslavement now and enslavement forever. We must keep pedaling.

We must keep swimming. But we have all that we need to do that as we grow in our knowledge of God and our Savior, Jesus Christ.

So, keep loving him. Keep listening to him. Keep growing today and tomorrow and every day.

Amen. Amen. Now, may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all forevermore.

[21 : 37] Amen. Amen.