

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

1 & 2 PETER LESSON 3 (2 Peter, Chapter 1)

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey.

“Prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet. 1:21). Welcome to our study of the Book of 2 Peter. In this epistle, Peter reminds us of things that we desperately need to incorporate into our Christian lives in order to be sure that we are right with God. Peter says that he will not live in this tent forever, and that he will put off this life. Thus, there are some things he wants to leave behind—things he wants Christians to remember.

In chapter 1 we will notice that the key is to remember to grow as a child of God. Growth is an important part of being a Christian. Jesus clearly taught His disciples to grow. “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness” (Mt. 5:6). In 1 Peter 2:2 Peter had stated, “As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.” But how do we continue to grow? What steps must we take, and what avenues must we go down, if we are going to grow as God wants us to?

In this chapter we will notice several keys that will help us in our spiritual growth. The first key is that we must recognize what the source of true growth is. In 2 Peter 1:3 we read that God has “given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us.” God’s power has given us these things. The source of our growth is the Bible, and in it we have everything we need to live a good life. In John 10:10 Jesus said, “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” We also find what we need to be a godly person. The Bible alone is the only guide we need, and it alone can get us to Heaven. We do not need to worry about the books of men. The Bible is all the proof we need. In John 17:17 Jesus said, “Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.” The Bible is not only all truth on religious matters, but is from God—from Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21. It is the full and complete will of God. In Psalm 119:160 the psalmist said, “The entirety of Your word is truth.” Every word in the Bible is true, right, from God, and will get us to Heaven. Jesus said in John 8:32, “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” The truth is God’s Word. Therefore, we need God’s Word to be free from sin. In John 16:13 Jesus said to His disciples in the first century, “When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth.” Not only is the Bible true, and not only is every word from God, but what’s great about the Bible is that it is “all truth” on religious matters. We do not need anything but the Bible in order to get to Heaven. In John 14:6 Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” The source of our growth is realizing that the Bible is the Word of God. It is all we need to get to Heaven. If we will give ourselves to the Bible, then we will be right with God. When we stand before God on the Day of Judgment, it is the New Testament by which we will be judged. Jesus said, “He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day” (Jn. 12:48).

If the Word of God is the only source of truth that we need, then let's make some practical applications. First, we do not need books written by men to be right with God and get to Heaven. It does not matter what the number-one seller on *the New York Times* religious book list happens to be. God is not concerned with that. We do not have to know what someone's favorite preacher wrote about. All we need to get to Heaven is God's Word. Books of men will never get us there. In fact, if we put our trust and faith in the books of men, we will be led down the wrong path. How do I know that? Jeremiah 10:23 says, "O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps." Men cannot get us to Heaven; only God can do that.

Second, if the Word of God is all we need, and if it is our source for spiritual growth, then we surely do not need church manuals to figure out how to be saved or to worship God. We do not need creed books, confessions, prayer manuals, or catechisms. All those books written by men are a foolish waste of time when it comes to getting right with God. We cannot worship God correctly that way. And you cannot learn how to be saved from books of men. The Bible says, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death" (Prov. 14:12). We must realize that the Bible is all we need to get to Heaven. We must not look to books written by men to find the way of salvation. Many people want to put their faith in things like "the sinner's prayer" or "the ABCs of salvation"—things that have been invented by men or that have been written by men. That will not get anyone to Heaven, but very likely will lead people away from the Word of God and down the path to destruction. What is the source for our spiritual growth? It must always be the Word of God.

What must be our motivation? We learn from 2 Peter 1:4 that God has given us "exceedingly great and precious promises" in the Scripture. What is it that motivates us? I know that the source of growth is the Word of God. But what should motivate us to want to grow? It is the "exceedingly great and precious promises" by which we can become a partaker of the divine nature. We can be like God if we will follow the Scriptures and put our hope in His promises. Think about some of the exceedingly great and precious promises we have today. We have the promise that, for children of God, death is not the end. Psalm 116:15 says, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." In Revelation 14:13 we read, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.'" That is an exceedingly great promise that we have. We also have the precious promise of forgiveness of sins. In Matthew 26:28 Jesus clearly taught as He instituted the Lord's Supper, "This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." God said in Micah 7:18-19 that He would cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. The psalmist said in Psalm 103:12, "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us." We have so many wonderful, great promises as God's children. For example, we have the promise of all spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3). We have the promise and hope of a future resurrection (Jn. 11:25-26). We have the promise that one day we will live in Heaven with God (Mt. 25:46). The source of our growth is the Word of God, but the motivation for us to grow is the precious promises that we have as Christians.

Notice the additives of our growth. What must we add to our faith and incorporate into our Christian lives in order to grow like God wants us to? In 2 Peter 1:5-7 we are told,

"But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love."

Here are the things we must incorporate, and the attitudes we must have, in our Christian lives if we are going to grow. If you were to ask, "In what areas do I need to grow?" then

you can look at this list. It begins with faith, which is the foundation for our growth. What is faith? It is trust in God. Romans 10:17 says that we obtain faith by reading and studying the Scriptures. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Faith is trusting God based on the Scriptures. Faith is based on evidence and substance (Heb. 11:1). And faith clearly is a necessity if we are going to please God. Hebrews 11:6 says, "Without faith it is impossible to please God, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." We must start with faith. We must study the Bible and understand Who God is. We must learn to trust in Him as the Almighty Who will always fulfill His promises. Then we must add virtue to our faith. Virtue is the idea of "moral excellence." We put behind us the immortal things of the world. In 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 the Bible says, "Such were some of you...fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, sodomites, thieves, covetous, drunkards..." Those were some of the sins the Christians in Corinth had committed previously. But when we become Christians, we rise out of the muck and mire of sin in order to live a life of virtue. We must try every day to be an example to the world (1 Pet. 2:21). We must be a "lamp set on a hill" (Mt. 5:14-15). We must strive to be a pattern for those around us so that people can see what it means to live the Christian life. We must have moral excellence.

Then we add knowledge to our virtue. The addition of knowledge is an important ingredient in our faith. As Jesus said, we must know the truth to be free. But knowledge is not cheap. Gaining it requires diligent work and effort on our part. The Bible says in Proverbs 23:23, "But the truth, and sell it not." We must work diligently in order to grow and gain the knowledge that God wants us to have. That happens by studying the Scriptures. Paul told Timothy, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). Peter said in 1 Peter 3:15 that we need to "be ready always." But to be ready, we must get ready. We must search the Scriptures daily (Acts 17:11). We must give attention to reading of the Word of God (1 Tim. 4:12). We must grow so that we do not remain in the same state we were when we were baptized. But, as Hebrews 5:12-14 says, we must grow to the point where we can grow and teach others beyond just the first principles of Christ.

Then, to knowledge we are to add self-control. In 1 Corinthians 6:12 Paul said, "I will not be brought under the power of any." We must let Jesus be the One Who controls our lives. We then must have the self-control necessary to not do those things that we must sometimes want to do. Paul said in Romans 7 that sometimes his body made him want to do things. Sometimes our lusts and desires of the flesh are very strong. But we must have the self-control that allows us to say no to our selves. That is the idea of self-control. It is making sure that we can tell ourselves no, and that we can buffet our bodies and bring them into subjection (1 Cor. 9:27). We must realize that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, and then give God glory through them (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

We are to add knowledge to our self-control. Then we are to have perseverance, which is the idea of sticking in there, never giving up, remaining faithful, and enduring in the midst of trials. Perseverance is what keeps us going when the going gets tough. The Bible said in Revelation 2 to certain Christians that some of them were about to be throw in prison for a period of about ten days. But Christ then said, "Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Rev. 2:10). We must have the perseverance to stick in there, to never give up, and to realize that Heaven will be worth it all.

To our perseverance, we are to add godliness, which is the idea of being like God. God's character must be brought into our lifestyles. "As He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct" (1 Pet. 1:15). We are to have the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:5). We are to speak as the oracles of God (Eph. 4:11). And we are to do good unto all men, especially those of the household of faith (Gal. 6:10).

Part of our growth is that we also must develop brotherly kindness. This means that we have the tender relationship with other Christians that we should. In Hebrews 13:1 the Bible says, "Let brotherly love continue." What is a good example of brotherly kindness? It is a willingness to look out and be concerned about others in the body of Christ. Jesus taught His disciples to do this. In John 13:34 Jesus said, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another." Jesus then bent down and washed the feet of His disciples. He said, "You love one another like this." That is brotherly kindness.

We also must add love to our brotherly kindness. Love is not just a feeling. It is a feeling based on obedience to the will of God. Love always requires trust and obedience. In John 14:15 Jesus said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments." Love always does what the Master asks. Love seeks the best in others. True love also speaks the truth in love (Eph. 4:15). Here, then, are some areas in which all of can grow.

But we need to realize from 2 Peter 1:9-11 the necessity of growth.

"He who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

Growing in Christ is not an option. It is not something we can do if we feel like it. It is an absolute necessity if we are going to be right with God. Do we realize that if we do not grow, we will fall away and be lost? The idea that once a person becomes a Christian, he can never be lost, is so far from the teaching of the New Testament that it is outlandish. In Galatians 5:4 Paul said to Christians, "You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace." Christians in the first century fell from grace. In Revelation 3:4-5 Jesus told some that their names were in jeopardy of being removed from the Book of Life. If they were not careful, they would have their names take out of that Book. In 1 Corinthians 10:12 we are told, "Take heed, lest you fall." Perhaps the clearest teaching of all is found in Acts 8:20-23. Simon has obeyed the Gospel and had become a Christian. His former life, however, took hold of him once again. He tried to buy the Holy Spirit with money. Peter said to him, "Your money perish with you." Simon's money was going to perish, and so was he. Simon would be lost if he did not repent and pray to God that the evil thoughts of his heart might be forgiven. Here was a man who had just become a Christian. He went back to his old ways, and once more was in a lost state. In 1 Corinthians 9:27 Paul said, "I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." Cast away from what? If Paul did not keep his life in line with the preaching and teaching that he gave others, then he would be cast away from God, and no longer would be a part of God's family. Is it a necessity that we grow? Absolutely! If we do not grow, we cannot be right with God.

But we also need to have an attitude that wants to grow. That attitude is found in 2 Peter 1:20-21. It is a firm belief in the inspired Word of God.

"Know this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."

What is an attitude that will help us want to grow? It is the idea that the Bible contains words from God in Heaven. We must realize that the Bible is not just a book written to people two-thousand years ago, but is the voice of God speaking to men and women for all time. That is the attitude we must have. We must realize that "all Scripture is given by inspira-

tion of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16). The Bible is from God, and gives us everything we need to be right with Him.

We must realize that "the law of the Lord is perfect" (Ps. 19:7). We must understand that it is by the teaching of the Bible (the Word of God that lives and endures forever) that a person is born again. It is through study of the Word of God, and through growth and obedience, that we can be saved. We are to "receive with meekness the implanted word that is able to save our souls" (Jas. 1:21). In Romans 1:16 Paul wrote,

"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith.'"

The Bible is God's power unto salvation. The attitude we need to have is that the Bible contains words from the very mouth of God. We desperately need to incorporate those words into our lives. One attitude for growth that we must have is a firm belief in the inspiration of the Scriptures.

To be right with God, you must make sure that you are one of His children. Before growth can take place, you must make sure that you are in the body and that you are part of the family of God. Jesus built His church, and salvation is found only in it. Jesus did not build a multitude of denominations. He did not build a religious group on every corner. You cannot just "choose the church of your choice" and then be right with God. Jesus built **one** church, and in that one church is where salvation exists. Jesus said in Matthew 16:18, "On this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." He did not build Peter's church, John's church, or Paul's church. He built **His** church. The church belongs to Christ. In Romans 16:16 the Bible says, "The churches **of Christ** greet you." Jesus purchased the church with His own blood (Acts 20:28). He paid the price. The church belongs to Him, and it must give Him honor and glory.

In order to be saved, a person must be a part of the church that Jesus built. The Bible says that there is only one church. In Ephesians 1:22-23 we read that God "put all things under Christ's feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body." Thus, the church is the body. In Ephesians 4:4 we read that there is "one body." If the church is the body, and if there is one body, then there is only one church. God built just one church, which belongs to His Son. It is the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. A person must be in it to be saved. How do we know that? From 1 Corinthians 15:24 we learn that Jesus is going to receive the kingdom and bring it to the Father with glory. What is the kingdom? It is the church (Mt. 16:18-19). If the kingdom is the church, and if the kingdom is going to the Father, then a person must be in the kingdom to be saved.

How does a person get into the church and become a part of the Lord's body? A person does that by obeying God's plan of salvation. Put aside what you have heard or what people have taught you, and simply listen to what God has to say about salvation. The Bible says that a person must hear the Word of God and it alone. Romans 10:17 says that "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Have you heard what God has said about salvation? Are you willing to accept the Bible as the only authority to get you to Heaven? Once a person has made up his mind that the Bible is God's Word and is all that is needed to get to Heaven, then that person must believe in Jesus. Jesus said in John 8:24, "If you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins." But belief alone will not save a person. Yes, a person must believe in Jesus. But belief alone will not save anyone. A person must do **all** that God has said a person needs to do to be saved. The

Scriptures say that a person must repent before he can be saved. In Luke 13:3 Jesus said, "Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." A person must change his way of thinking and his way of life. Once a person has repented, then he must confess Christ's name before men. In Acts 8 Philip and the Ethiopian nobleman were riding down the road. They came to water. The nobleman asked, "Here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?" Philip then said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." The nobleman answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." He made what we call "the good confession." A person also must be baptized in water for the forgiveness of sins. So many people teach error when it comes to baptism. Listen to what God said. Jesus said, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved" (Mk. 16:16). Peter said, "Baptism does also now save us" (1 Pet. 3:21). Jesus said, "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (Jn. 3:5). Peter said in Acts 2:38, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." Ananias said to Saul by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, "Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). Can you be saved and get to Heaven without understanding God's teaching on baptism? Absolutely not! Once a person has obeyed God's will, as the material contained in this lesson suggests, he must grow and be faithful unto death. Obeying the Gospel and becoming a Christian is not the end. It is the beginning. From that point on we must grow and mature as Christians so that we can bring others to Jesus, too. Jesus said, "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life."

If you are a Christian, then you may want to ask yourself if you have been growing. Have you been studying your Bible like you ought to? Have you been praying and asking God for help? Have you been trying to "do good unto all men, and especially those of the household of faith"? Are you trying to reach the lost? Evangelism is an important part of any Christian's growth. Are you trying to teach the Gospel to people? Are you trying to reach someone? Are you trying to help anyone understand what you have come to know? If not, then you are not growing. You need to repent and make that right with God. Peter said that he wanted to remind us of these things while he still had an opportunity to do so. I want to do the same. Do not ever give up. Always remains faithful. And continue to grow in the knowledge of Christ.

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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STUDY QUESTIONS FOR 1 & 2 PETER LESSON 3 (2 PETER CHAPTER 1)

1. What did Jesus say in Matthew 5:6 that relates to the topic being discussed in 2 Peter 1?
2. According to 2 Peter 1:3, what has God given us in His Word?
3. According to John 17:17, what is God's Word?
4. According to Psalm 119:160, how much of God's Word is true?
5. What, according to Jesus' statement in John 8:32, can truth do for us?
6. What, according to Jesus' statement in John 12:48, will be our judge on the Day of Judgment?
7. What important teaching is found in Jeremiah 10:23?
8. What does Proverbs 14:12 teach us?
9. According to 2 Peter 1:4, what has God given faithful Christians?
10. In 2 Peter 1:5-7 we find several items listed that Christians should possess. What are they?
11. What does Proverbs 23:23 have to say about truth?
12. What important teaching is found in 1 Peter 1:15?
13. What "new commandment" did Jesus give His disciples in John 13:34?
14. According to John 14:15, how do we express our love for Christ?
15. The text of 2 Peter 1:9 Peter speaks of the fact that Christians have been cleansed. From what have we been cleansed?
16. According to 2 Peter 1:20-21, what is the source of the information found within the Bible?
17. What did Paul say in 2 Timothy 3:16?
18. According to James 1:21, what is the Word of God able to do for us?
19. According to Romans 1:16, what is the Word of God?
20. What admonishment to Christians did Paul provide in 1 Corinthians 10:12?
21. According to Romans 10:17, what is the source of a Christian's faith?
22. According to Hebrews 11:6, how important is faith?