

Last Words from The Apostle Peter

2 Peter 3:14-18

When we read this passage, it is only natural that we give some thought to the man that wrote it. We are privileged to know much about the life of the apostle Peter. From his call into service at the seashore in Mk 1:16 to his last epistle in 2 Peter we see his discipleship develop. He served as an apostle, preacher, author, and an elder 1 Peter 5:1. Peter is pictured with his weaknesses as well as his strengths. Peter was part of that inner circle of apostles (Peter, James, and John) that was privileged to hear and see things that the others did not.

When we think of Peter we think of the one that walked on water Matthew 14:22-33, one that was present on the mount of Transfiguration when Moses and Elijah appeared with Jesus, and the voice from heaven was heard Matthew 17:1-5. It was Peter that boldly drew the sword in the garden John 18:10, and it was Peter that denied his Lord three times Matthew 26:69-75. Peter would recover from the denial and stand in the strength of the Lord on the day of Pentecost and proclaim the gospel of Christ Acts 2:14.

Peter's first epistle speaks often of the hardships and suffering that accompanies the Christian life. In the epistle he encourages disciples to continue to do the right thing even though times are difficult 1:6; 2:20-24; 3:13-17; 4:12-19. In 2 Peter he refers to the importance of knowledge, using the word "knowledge" or "to know" some sixteen times.

He warns of the danger of error (2:1; 3:3, 16) and exhorts Christians to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord. Peter had himself been through the growth process, with its mistakes and hardships. In writing his final words, it is not surprising that he is led by the Spirit to speak to others about the importance of continuing and growing.

A young boy noticed a big difference in his physical maturity one summer. His older sister used to easily overpower him as they wrestled and played, but after his growth spurt, he found that she was the one most often being knocked to the ground. **But he also noticed that he now had the size and strength to help her up.** Peter is using his spiritual growth, his past failures and recoveries, to warn and encourage and help others.

Let us consider some of the points in the text that will help us to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

To Grow We Need To Look Forward To The New Day.

Peter said, *"...since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless...."* Peter had just spoken of the end of our material universe and the reception by children of God into what is called the *"new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells."* The Christian anticipates the day of God's deliverance from a world that is stained by sin into the new heavenly home. Since we look for that day we should conduct ourselves accordingly. Anticipation of our Lord's coming and expectation of heaven has an impact on the decisions we make today. Peter says, *"Be diligent"* regarding these things. We will indeed be found by our Lord, but the question is, how shall He find us? Hopefully as Peter says, *"In peace, spotless and blameless."*

A woman lost a coin. She went to get a light. When she got the light, she saw the dirt. When she saw the dirt, she got the broom. When she swept the dirt away she found the coin. The dirt had always been there, but the light revealed it. And just so, the light of God's word reveals the truth about us and soon something of great value is recovered. Let us recover what has been lost and may He find us ready when He comes again.

To Grow We Must Look To Our Present Opportunities.

Peter said, "...and regard the patience of our Lord to be salvation." The infinite God does not view time as finite man. As Peter says, "*With the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day*" (2 Peter 3:8). We must not think less of the judgment of God nor His promises because they are not fulfilled according to **our schedule**. Instead of considering the delay as a weakening of His word we should view it as a demonstration of the patient, longsuffering nature of our God, whose desire is that we come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9).

Most of us are blessed with a multitude of opportunities to repent and obey our Lord. We are blessed with opportunities for service and growth in the Kingdom of God. Yet many reach false conclusions because of these opportunities. Concluding that because the end of time and judgment is delayed that it is not forthcoming, or perhaps concluding that there will always be another opportunity. These are indeed false conclusions. Many that serve our Lord in foreign places with less freedoms and resources than we enjoy would gladly receive the opportunities that we have. To grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord we must seize the opportunities that are before us.

To Grow We Must Carefully Look Into The Word Of God.

Peter said, "*...the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.*" Peter related how his beloved brother Paul had taught the same truth that he was teaching. He says that some things are hard to understand. He doesn't say **impossible** to understand, but hard. There is a big difference in something being hard and something being impossible. If something is hard it may take more time and effort, but it can eventually be understood. It is not uncommon for unbelievers or the spiritually immature to announce that the Scriptures can't be understood. The truth is that they probably have not really made an investment in understanding. Worldliness, or lack of good consistent Bible study methods, or religious prejudice, or pride, and a host of other things can interfere with learning Bible truth.

The Bible is not impossible to understand, it may be hard in places, which requires of us more diligent effort (2 Timothy 2:15). One reason we should so labor is because of those who distort (pervert or twist) the scripture. The importance of this whole matter is clearly seen by the fact that Peter says Christians should be on their guard, and that those who distort the scripture do so to their own destruction. **It is a matter of life and death.** The word of God is spiritual milk and meat for the Christians growth (I Peter 2:1-2; Hebrews 5:11-14). To minimize its importance in our Christian life and the life of a congregation is a grave error.

To Grow We Must Give Our Lord the Glory.

Peter said, *"To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen."* Peter at one time compared himself to others and boasted of his superior allegiance (Matthew 26:33). As we know Peter was not as strong as he thought.

Most of us have fallen into this trap of the Devil. Yet, Peter returned and was forgiven, and he gave a life of service to the Lord. Peter was aware of his weaknesses and gave the Lord the credit for his redeemed life. We should certainly all do the same.

"To Him be the glory". Jesus is the head of His body, He is the King of His Kingdom, He is the Savior of His church. May Christ always have first place in the church (Colossians 1:18) and in our life. Whatever we do in word and deed, let us do it in His name (by His authority) (Colossians 3:17). May He always be our focus.

"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."