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February 15, 2009 by Steve Brandon

Final Reminders

2 Peter 3:14-18

1. Pursue Purity (verse 14).
2. Ponder God's Patience (verses 15-16).
3. Be On Your Guard (verse 17).
4. Grow in Grace (verse 18).

Have you ever said goodbye to a good friend? Perhaps as a child, you lived in a place for a few years, but then, for one reason or another, your family moved out of the area. You had all your friends in your neighborhood or in school that you needed to part with. Can you remember these days? Or perhaps as an adult, there have been other people who have come into your life, with whom you have developed a close relationship. And then, for one reason or another, they moved out of town.

There is always that awful time when you actually need to say goodbye. You know that your goodbye isn't forever. You know that your loved ones are only a phone call away. You can write or email. You can always go visit them. They can always come and visit you. But, you know that it will never quite be the same.

Now, it's not all bad, because their friendship will only be replaced by another friend in your life. And your friendship with them will be replaced with another friend in their life. Furthermore, just as your life has been enriched because of your friendship, so also will your life be further enriched as you meet other new friends.

Well, today, we say goodbye to a good friend. After 3½ months of walking through the book of 2 Peter, we say goodbye to 2 Peter this morning, as we finish with our exposition of this great book. There are other friends in the Bible for us to meet and share some intimate time with together as a church. (In fact, most notably, we will meet Jonah, as we will soon begin an exposition of that wonderful little book of the Old Testament).

It's not that we will never see 2 Peter again. We will. Nor is it that 2 Peter will cease to have an impact upon our lives. You can always pick it up and read it. You can always go to the internet and re-read the messages that I preached. You can always pick up a commentary and be reminded about Peter's message. However, as a church, we won't see this letter again to the depths that we have seen it in recent months. We have picked apart this letter verse by verse and phrase by phrase to see all that God would teach us through it. There are simply too many other friends in the Bible that we need to know better.

I trust that one of the things that you will remember about 2 Peter is that these are his final words. He knew that his end was near. He said in chapter 1, verse 14, "knowing that they laying aside of my earthly dwelling is imminent." That is, Peter knew that he was going to die soon. He was well aware of the fact that this may well be the last letter that God will allow him to write. As he was saying goodbye to us, he made sure that he kept his final words on track. He didn't waste any space talking about superfluous things. When you are dying, there is not time to beat around the bush. No, he got down to the most important things that he wants for us to remember.

In fact, I trust that you will recall that 2 Peter is a book of reminder. Peter saw his role as one of reminding his readers of those things that they already knew and the things that he deemed most important to our spiritual well-being. In chapter 1, verses 12 and 13 Peter writes, "Therefore, I will always be ready to **remind** you of these things, even though you already know them, and have been established in the truth which is present with you. I consider it right, as long as I am in this earthly dwelling, to stir you up by way of **reminder**."

It's not that these things in 2 Peter are particularly new to his readers. Nor should they be new to us. But, they are important. They are Peter's final words, and he wants for us to remember them. Over in chapter 3, Peter said the same thing. In verse 1, Peter wrote, "This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you in which I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of **reminder**." Peter's purpose in writing was clear. He wanted to remind his readers of these things, so that when he left the earth, they could remember the most basic, foundational and important things to apply in their Christian walk (1:15).

Our text this morning covers the last 5 verses of chapter 3. In these verses, Peter realizes that it is the final time to remind us of the most important things. It is for this reason that I have entitled my message this morning, "Final Reminders." Let's consider the text.

> 2 Peter 3:14-18
> Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction. You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, 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.

As you read these verses, you can almost feel Peter's emotion. He knew that he would soon leave his earthly friends. Twice in these five verses, Peter addresses them as "beloved." That is, they are loved by Peter, and they are loved by God. This isn't the first time that Peter wrote this way to them. He first used this term in chapter 3, verse 1. Then again in verse 8. And now in verses 14 and 17. It's as if his emotions these loved believers are growing up within in him as he realizes that this is his last word to them. He becomes more tender. He becomes more affectionate. He expresses his love toward them.

You all know what it's like when you actually say goodbye to a dear friend. Perhaps you can look back to the day when one of your children left the home to go to college or to be married. (If this is in the future for you, then, you can easily imagine the day.) A few days before your child leaves you, you tell them that you love them and will miss them. The day of their departure, you say the same thing. But, as the final minutes approach, tears well up in your eyes and you repeat again and again, several times of your love and care for them. It's the same with Peter. He realizes how short his time is and increases his affection as they time becomes less and less. "Beloved, .. beloved, ... beloved, ... beloved." For this reason, Peter expresses his love for them with more and more intensity.

What Peter shares in these last five verses is very strategic. You can get the sense of how Peter is seeking to bring his final thoughts to an appropriate conclusion. Twice in these five verses, Peter use the word, "Therefore." You can see it in verse 14. You can see it in verse 17. "Therefore" is a word of conclusion. It is a word of summary. Based upon what came before, here is the proper deduction.

As you dig into these verses, you can see that in reality, Peter is merely summarizing up the entire letter. Verses 14-16 summarize chapter 3. They explain how it is that we should respond to the coming of Christ, and how we ought to respond to His delay in coming. Verse 17 is a good summary of chapter 2. This verse explains how we ought to avoid the false teachers. Verse 18 is a good summary of chapter 1. Peter tells us to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." This is the them of the epistle, which began in chapter 1.

Before we actually dig into the text this morning, I have one more observation to make about these verses. In them, Peter gives us four commands. The first can be seen in verse 14, "Be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless." The second comes in verse 14, "regard the patience of our Lord as salvation." The third comes in verse 17, "be on your guard." The final command comes in verse 18, "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." These four commands will form the basis of my outline this morning.

Let's begin with verse 14. In this verse, Peter tells us to, ...

1. Pursue Purity (verse 14).

Look at verse 14, "Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless." This verse is almost a repeat of my message last week, where we looked at the ethical implications of the return of Christ. Verse 10 says that "the day of the Lord will come." On that day there will be massive destruction done to the universe. The heavens will pass away. The elements will be destroyed. The earth will be burned up. Then, verse 11 brings the implications, "since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness."

The return of Christ and the coming destruction of the world has implications on the way that we live. Peter says that we should conduct ourselves in "holy conduct and godliness." We should be holy, separate from the evil that is around us. We should live in godliness, exhibiting the character of God for all around us, being gracious and compassionate and slow to anger and abounding in love toward others.

This is the same thrust of what Peter says here in verse 14. He uses different terms, but the idea is the same. We are to "be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless." Our lives are to be characterized by peace. That is, peace with God and peace with others. We will be found in peace when we know that our sins are forgiven and that we need not fear the judgment, because Christ has wiped us clean, washing us in His blood. We will be found in peace when we are living in peace and harmony with each other, forgiving one another as we have been forgiven, loving one another as we have been loved, and serving one another as we have been served by God.

Peter also tells us to be "spotless and blameless." The words depict a picture of purity. They describe a life that has no blemishes. When you think of spots and blemishes, you may think of clothes. The clothes of little boys are covered with spots and blemishes such as grass stains and holes in the knees. But, with young women, its a different story. They won't wear anything unless it is clean and blemish free. So also are we to be spotless and blemishless, like the young women's slacks.

In a very real way, the only reason that we can be like this is because of Jesus, who was "spotless and blameless." In fact, this is what Peter said in his first epistle, using these very words. He said that our lives were redeemed "with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ" (1 Peter 1:19). This is the great reality of the gospel. We stand before God as Jesus stood, spotless and blameless. We stand before God in purity, not because of our own righteousness, but because of what God imputes to us by faith. We believe God and when we do, God reckons our faith as righteousness. We receive the righteousness of Christ because Christ received the just penalty for our sin upon the cross.

Do you believe this? It's the greatest news in the world. It's the greatest story that we have to tell. In fact, I was talking with someone this week about Christ and church. In the course of the conversation, it came up that he was living with his girlfriend. I said, "That can't be good, now, can it." He said, "No, actually, it is good. We get along really well with each other." Obviously, he misunderstood my first comment. So, I said, "No, that's not what I was talking about. I was talking about good in God's sight. How do you think God feels about the way that you are living right now?" At those words, his heart sunk. You could see it in his face. It's the conviction of God upon his life. Then I said, "You are living in a dangerous situation right now. The Bible says that God will judge fornicators, which is what you are doing right now."

At that point in the conversation, I thought of how Jesus dealt with sinners. They loved Him, because they brought hope to them. And so, after a few moments of silence between us, I said, "Listen, there is good news for you. Your sins can be forgiven in Christ. You simply need

to repent of your sins and trust Jesus. You will be washed clean and forgiven of your sin. That's what our church is about." He promised to come and visit us sometime. ... We'll see.

The glories of the gospel of Christ is that we are made spotless and blameless. But, the reality of our forgiveness in Christ doesn't leave us in our sin. No, when we know Jesus, He fills us with His Spirit, which begins the sanctifying work in our lives. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (Gal. 5:22-23a). When the Spirit lives in us, it works in us a godliness that can only be explained as His doing.

This is the aim of Peter's words here. He isn't addressing our positional standing before God of being forgiven. Rather, he's talking about our lives and how we are to live. We are to live spotless and blameless lives. We are to pursue purity. We are to be unlike the false teachers who are "stains and blemishes" (2 Peter 2:13). Interestingly, Peter used the same words in both of these verses.

I mention the cleansing of the cross, because it's the only power for us to live this way. You can't live this way on your own. You can't muster up enough strength to do these things. You need to trust in Christ and seek His help in living a pure life. Are you pursuing purity? Are you seeking to live a blameless and spotless life?

Peter tells us to do so with diligence. Look again at verse 14, "be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless." Peter is telling us to make efforts at living a pure life. Don't merely sit back and think that God is going to zap you with a spotless and blameless life. Rather, pursue it with diligence.

This is nothing new to Peter's epistle. It's how he began in chapter 1. He said in chapter 1, verses 5-7, "Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love." We live spotless and blameless lives when we walk in moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and love.

Peter says, "apply all diligence in your faith" (1:5) to see these things work out in your lives. The idea here is that you put forth effort to believe, so that your life might show you believe. Your read the word of God, and seek His help to apply it. You listen to the word of God taught, and pray for wisdom in following it. You apply diligence in your prayers, pleading for God's help to live godly. You surround yourself with godly fellowship to encourage you in your walk of faith. You willingly open up your life to the accountability of others, who will call you back to the right path.

Later on in chapter 1 (down in verse 10), again, he mentions how we ought to be diligent in our pursuit of purity. He says, "Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble." He calls us to make our election sure by a diligent pursuit of godliness in our lives.

Are you pursuing purity? Are you seeking to live a blameless and spotless life? Perhaps you lack the motivation. Peter gives us the motivation in verse 14, "Therefore beloved, since you look for these things." It's the looking toward the end that has a purifying effect upon our lives. Peter is saying, in light of the return of Christ and the destruction of the world and the new heavens and the new earth that will come afterwards, We are to live lives of purity as we await that day. So, church family, pursue purity (verse 14).

2. Ponder God's Patience (verses 15-16).

Peter's second command comes in verses 15 and 16. Peter writes, "And regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction."

These verses meander all around. Peter begins by mentioning the patience of God. Then, it mentions Paul and his God-given wisdom to write letters. Peter then talks about how Paul is sometimes difficult to understand. And some distort Paul's teaching. But, the main point in these two verses isn't Paul's letter writing ability or the difficulty of understanding his words or the trusting of this scripture by others. Instead, these are all illustrations of his main point, which comes at the beginning of the verse, "regard the patience of our Lord as salvation."

I have worded Peter's point this way: Ponder God's Patience. That's the idea behind the word here in verse 15, "regard." It means to "consider" or "think" or "believe" or "suppose." The New American Standard translation of "regard" is good. The way that I have summarized these words seeks to capture all of these ideas, "Ponder God's Patience."

There were many in Peter's day who were doubting the patience of God. This is the thrust of the first half of chapter 3. There are mockers were coming to those in the church saying, "Where is the promise of His coming?" (verse 4). In other words, "It has been a long time since Jesus left the earth. He promised that He would return. Now look, it has been 30 years since Jesus made that promise. But, He hasn't come back yet. Are you really sure that Jesus will return? I don't think that you can trust Him." But Peter affirmed that He will indeed return. In verse 10, he wrote, "The day of the Lord will come." It is as certain as the day is long.

Peter explained the delay in verse 9, "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance." The delay hasn't come because of lack of ability to keep His promise. No, the delay has come because of God's abundant patience with us, as He waits for repentance.

God's patience is far beyond our patience. God can wait a thousand years and have it seem to Him to be but a day (verse 8). We have never experienced anyone who had patience like this. The fault of the mockers of Peter's day is that they didn't understand the patience of God. God will fulfill His promise. Any delay in His coming can be attributed to His patience.

Of concern for us this morning is verse 15. When we think of God's patience, we are to regard it as salvation. His patience with us who believe has given us the time to repent. His patience with those who haven't yet believed is an opportunity for them to repent of their sins and be saved. Today is a day of salvation only because of the patience of God.

This wasn't some new teaching that Peter was bringing into the church. He continues in verse 15 saying that Paul taught the very same thing in his epistles. Look there, "just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things."

There are some marvelous things going on in these words. First of all, there is reconciliation. Perhaps you remember the time when Paul "opposed [Peter] to his face" (Gal. 2:11) and confronted Peter for his hypocrisy. Peter used to eat with the Gentiles, but when the Jews came around, he withdrew from the Gentiles. This was a major conflict in the life of the church. The two most prominent leaders at odds with each other. Paul even claimed before all that Peter "stood condemned" (Gal. 2:11). And yet, here in Peter's epistle, we see them reconciled. Peter is commending the writings of Paul without a hint of conflict between the two.

Another thing going on here is the acknowledgment of Paul's letters. In our Bibles, we have recorded for us 13 letters that Paul wrote. Peter knew of these letters, and made mention of them. But, beyond merely acknowledging the letters, Peter also affirmed their divine origin. He said that Paul wrote, "according to the wisdom given him" (verse 15). In other words, Paul was writing with divine wisdom. I believe that Peter had in mind the inspiration process. He wrote in chapter 1, verse 21 that "no prophecy [of Scripture] was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (1:21). As Paul wrote, he didn't write from his own wisdom, but rather, he wrote from the wisdom that was given to him by God. At the end of verse 16, Peter acknowledges that Paul's writings were Scripture.

Another thing going on here in these words as Peter's acknowledgement of the difficulty of understanding the Bible in some places. He says, "in which are some things hard to understand." Let's face it, the Bible is a difficult book. There are things in it which are difficult to understand. We can study and study and study and still be stumped on the meanings of particular passages of Scripture. This is true of many of the prophetic passages in the Bible. They are hard to fully grasp. Also, Paul's writings raise some difficult philosophical questions. "How is it that God is absolutely sovereign over all things and yet still holds men responsible for their actions?" Further difficulties of Paul's writings come in dealing with the mysteries of the Godhead and the incarnation.

Would you expect anything different from a book that God wrote? Of course there are going to be portions of it that will be difficult to understand. I would be much more alarmed if I was able to understand everything that Paul wrote in the Bible.

This has implications of your own Bible study. When you open your Bible and read it, there may well be things that are difficult and make you think. But, don't let the difficulty of the task cause you to shrink away from what your soul needs to grow in godliness and "to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless" (verse 14). We are all prone to laziness. Reading and studying the Bible can be work. But it's needed for your soul. We need to eat meat. We need protein. We can't live on candy. You need to work to know the difficult things.

But, notice what Peter says, "in which are **some** things hard to understand" (verse 16). The implication of this verse is that most things that Paul wrote are not difficult to understand. You can read through Paul's epistles and pick up on the majority of what he says without much difficulty. This is what makes the Bible such a great book. There are portions of the Bible that can stump the greatest minds the world has ever known. But, there are even more portions of the Bible that are simple enough for even the smallest child to understand.

Too often, people will use the difficult as an excuse to avoid the simple. At least Mark Twain, the skeptic and critic of the church, was honest when he said, "It ain't those parts of the Bible that I can't understand that bother me, it is the parts that I do understand."

How difficult is it to understand Peter's main point here in 2 Peter? He says, "The patience of our Lord is salvation." Have you understood that? Have you taken advantage of the patience of God and called upon Him in a time in which He may be found? "Seek the LORDwhile He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near" (Isaiah 55:6). In His patience, now is the time when He may be found. But, there will be a day when it is too late. And if that day finds you unrepentant and unbelieving, then, it means that you have failed to understand even the most simple and straightforward truths in the Bible: God's patience is our salvation!

Oh, church family, "Ponder God's Patience"! Now, there are some who disdain the patience of God. We saw them in verse 4. We also see them at the end of verse 16. Peter writes, "which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction." Rather than taking heed to the clear call of the Scriptures to repent and turn from their sin, these are the ones who focus their attention upon the more difficult portions of Scripture and twist them and distort them. Peter says that this leads to their own destruction. In the end, they are destroyed, because they didn't repent.

Oh, church family, "Ponder God's Patience"!! and turn from your sin and trust in Christ! Let's move on to verse 17 with my third point, ...

3. Be On Your Guard (verse 17).

Verse 17 reads this way, "You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness." With these words, Peter is picking up the thought from verse 16. He just described those who distort the Scripture and ignore the clear call of God's call upon their lives to repent. At this point, Peter says, "You know that there are people like this. You know that they won't merely stand by and be idle. You know that they will seek to persuade you away from the truth to follow after them. So, don't be carried away by them. Instead, stand firm in your faith."

Now, mentioning these false teachers brings our minds back to chapter 2, where Peter dealt at length with these men. In fact, the entire chapter was spent describing these men. More than two dozen characteristics are given of these men.

- They teach destructive heresies (verse 1).
- They deny the Master who bought them (verse 1).
- They seek and gain a following (verse 2).
- They pursue their sensuality (verse 2).
- They are greedy (verse 3).
- They exploit others (verse 3).
- They indulge the flesh (verse 10).
- They despise authority (verse 10).
- They are daring and self-willed (verse 10).
- They are like unreasoning animals (verse 12).
- They will suffer wrong (verse 13).
- They count it a pleasure to revel in the daytime (verse 13).
- They are stains and blemishes (verse 13).
- They revel in their deceptions (verse 13).
- They love carousing with the people of God (verse 13).
- They have eyes full of adultery (verse 14).
- They entice unstable souls (verse 14).
- They forsake the right way (verse 15).
- They love the wages of unrighteousness (verse 16).
- They speak arrogant words of vanity (verse 18).
- They entice by fleshly desires (verse 18).
- They promise freedom, but are slaves of corruption (verse 19).
- They are entangled in the defilements of the world (verse 20).
- They have turned away from the holy commandment (verse 21).

By way of review and reminder, these men are brought up again in verse 17. Peter calls them "unprincipled" men. That is, they have no law to govern their behavior. Instead, they are driven by their own lusts. If it feels good, they do it. And these men are headed for destruction (as verse 16 states). In chapter 2, Peter spoke in no uncertain terms of their future destruction. On five occasions, he spoke of their destruction. Their denial of the master would bring swift destruction upon themselves (2:1). Their destruction isn't asleep, it's coming (2:3). God knows how "to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment" (2:9). They will be destroyed like unreasoning animals (2:12). The black darkness has been reserved for them (2:17).

In light of the danger of these men, who have crept into the church, Peter says, "Be on your guard." Don't merely accept anything that goes on in the church. Be like the Bereans and test everything according to Scripture (Acts 17:11). Watch closely the character of those who you are following. They may be headed for destruction. Don't you follow them as well.

The danger is real. Don't merely rest upon your laurels, "Once saved, always saved." Now, that's true. But, don't think that this doesn't cause for a diligence on your behalf. In verse 14, Peter told us to be diligent regarding our pursuit of holiness. Here in verse 17, we need to be diligent regarding our steadfastness.

Consider the path of these false teachers. In chapter 2, verse 20, we read of how they had "escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." If you would have looked upon such men, you would probably have assumed that they were born-again believers in Christ. They knew of Jesus. The professed a knowledge of Him. Their lives had changed. They were no longer involved in some of their sinful activities. But, in reality, these men had no faith. Instead, after a short time, they became entangled by the ways of the world and have been overcome. And the last state is worse for them than the first. Peter says here in verse 17, "Be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness." In other words, "Be on guard, so that you don't become like the other false teachers who knew and experienced some escape from the world, but then, fell back into their old sins."

Jerry Bridges puts it well when he wrote, ...

> I was telling a friend about an adulterous affair another Christian worker had become involved in. (It was not gossip; I did not identify the person involved, and my friend would not have known him anyway.) I said to my friend, "When I learn about things like that it scares me. I think, *Could it happen to me?*" My friend responded that he was not concerned for himself because he had long ago set up certain guidelines to govern his association with women.
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> His self-confidence startled me. While I appreciated the guidelines he had established for himself, I could not help but think of 1 Corinthians 10:12, "So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!" Remember the Sunday school teacher sitting alone in church who was approached by a lonely woman? My friends guidelines would not have covered that situation. We can never get to the place where we don't need to watch, even in areas where we think we are strong. As John Owen said, "When [indwelling sin] is least felt, it is in fact most powerful." [1]

Jerry Bridges captures well the danger of verse 17. There is a danger of "falling from your own steadfastness." Oh, church family, "Be On Your Guard."

4. Grow in Grace (verse 18).

Peter writes in verse 18, "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." This verse is really a summation of the entire letter. I have entitled the theme of 2 Peter as "Know and Grow." Here

you see those two concepts coming up clearly in the words of this verse: "**grow** in the grace and **knowledge** of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." But, in a special way, these words are a summary of chapter 1.

In that chapter, we read that "His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence" (2 Peter 1:3). We have been given everything that we need to live a godly life. Surrounding this verse, we have other We need look no further than Christ in us to live godly. And since we have everything, Peter instructs us to "apply all diligence" in our faith to grow. The list he gives in verses 5-7 is a list of growth. You start with moral excellence. And to your moral excellence, you grow more in your knowledge. And in your knowledge, you grow more in self-control. And in more self-control, you grow more in your perseverance. And in your perseverance, you grow more in your godliness. And in your godliness, you grow more in your brotherly kindness. And in your brotherly kindness, you grow more in love. That's the picture of these things.

And then, in verse 8, Peter writes, "if these qualities are your and are increasing, they render you neither useless, nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." He's talking about an increasing growth in us. And that's what he's getting at in 3:18. He is getting at growing in godliness.

Peter lists two things here in verse 18 in which we should grow. First of all, we should grow in grace. We can easily pass such a phrase by as religious jargon, "grow in grace." But, I want for you to really think about this for a bit. We are to grow in grace. Grace is God's favor upon us. We are to grow in God's favor upon us.

Now, I don't think that this means that we are to work and do things in an effort to please Him, that He might reward us with His grace. Then, grace is no longer grace! "To the one who works, his wage is not credited as a faovor, but as what is due" (Rom. 4:4). No, I believe that Peter is talking here about growing in our dependence upon the Lord. He's talking about growing in our faith. He's talking about growing in our understanding that all we have is by His mercy and grace. You grow in grace by leaning more and more and more upon Him, realizing that anything that you have is only because He has given it to you.

You have life, only because God extended His grace to you. You have food, only because God extended His grace to you. You have clothing and shelter, only because God extended His grace to you. You have faith in Christ, you have forgiveness of sins, you have the Scriptures to guide you, you have many promises of hope, you have an inheritance in heaven to look forward to receiving, only because God extended His grace to you.

I love Paul's thoughts in 1 Corinthians 4:7. He wrote, "What do you have that you did not receive." Oh, church family, embrace this fact. Love this fact. Rejoice in it. Always ask yourself, "What do I have that I did not receive?" As you grow more and more convinced that the answer is "everything," then you are growing in grace.

The second thing that Peter gives us here in verse 18 to grow in is knowledge. We should grow in the knowledge of Christ. "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." If 2 Peter has been about anything, it has been about the priority of pursuing and possessing a proper knowledge of God and His gifts to us. Sixteen times in these three chapters, Peter mentions "knowledge." [2]In fact, John MacArthur outlined the entire book around this theme. His outline is as follows, ... [3]

1. Know Your Salvation (1:3-11).
2. Know Your Scriptures (1:12-21)
3. Know Your Adversaries (2:1-22).
4. Know Your Prophecy (3:1-18).

Peter instructs us to grow in our knowledge of Christ. How do you do this? May I remind you how to do this? Read your Bible and pray every day. We read our Bibles that we might learn of God and His grace to us. We read our Bibles that we might be reminded of God and His grace to us. We pray, for God to teach about His grace. We pray, for God to help us live His grace in our lives and in the lives of others.

How well are you doing in growing in the knowledge of Christ? You need Jesus to grow. He is everything. Jesus said, "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither [can] you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing" (John 15:4-5).

Peter concludes his letter with these words, "To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen." God said in Isaiah 42:8, "I am the Lord, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another." And yet, here, we see Jesus Christ receiving the glory. This final phrase speaks to the deity of Christ. Forever and ever and ever, Jesus Christ will receive the glory. May our lives be filled with worshiping Him.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on February 15, 2009 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

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[1] Jerry Bridges, The Discipline of Grace, p. 216. The John Owen quote in the passage is footnoted as follows: John Owen, *Sin and Temptation*, ed. James M. Houston (Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1983), 5. In his illustration, Bridges mentions a Sunday school teacher that he had mentioned earlier in the book. A few pages earlier, on page 212, Bridges had written, "A Sunday school teacher was sitting alone in church one Sunday because his wife was ill. A woman from his class, who apparently had an unhappy marriage, sat down next to him and subtly began to suggest an affair. This temptation came out of nowhere without warning, in an environment where one would least expect it."

[2] See 2 Peter 1:2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 12, 14, 16, 20; 2:9, 20, 21, 21; 3:3, 17, 18.

[3] John MacArthur, MacArthur Bible Commentary, p. 1926.