**Grow in our Lord Jesus Christ**

2 Peter 3:1-18 (key 18)

18But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.”

We have heard about how Gideon could be used by God, to go in the strength he had through shd. Tsibela’s message. We also learned of what true worship entails, what it means to worship God exclusively, to tear down and worship God through b. Ivan’s message. So am thankful to God that he could remind us through the calling of Gideon what a Christian life should look like. Though Gideon came from a small clan in Israel. He doubted himself such that he even asked God for so many signs in order to be ensured that God could use his hand for His redemptive work for Israel. Today as believers we are confronted with so many things. We hear of natural disasters in the world. There are countries as we speak that are at war, South Sudan, Israel, Palestine, Russia and Ukraine. Back home the level of violence and brutality is high. Just two weeks ago a whole family was gunned down, 18 family members killed like animals. Someone or some people went from one home to another just killing.

The high level jobless among young people. Same time we have our own personal struggles with sin, temptations and so on. All these things and happenings can make us become hopeless and num. I remember I used to listen to power FM and find myself so depressed and not knowing why. Until I had a chat with shd Desmond who then told me he actually quit listening to power FM. People are just complaining left and right with not much solutions. Now in the era of social media platforms we receive and see all kinds of news. Some of you may already have difficult situations or painful situations already with either family, friends or work colleagues or even health issues that are never ending. How can we keep on living with the faith of going in the strength we have daily? How can we continually tear down altars of Baal and worship God? How can we keep on being hopeful to live in God’s calling? How can we keep a life of faith in the Lord Jesus in this era? In this message Peter reminds us of the promises of God’s word which we can hold on to, **firstly, that the day of the lord is coming**. **Secondly, in light of that day, what kind of life we ought to live**. **Thirdly, in light of that day, Peter give us direction, to grow in the knowledge and grace of our lord and savior Jesus Christ**. What does this mean for us today? May we receive one word of God so we may grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, as we eagerly await his return. Amen!

Let us look at verse 1, “1Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking.” Peter is emphasizing what should be known in light of the coming of Jesus and the prophecies surrounding His coming. His goal was to stimulate the believers into wholesome thinking. Wholesome thinking means, thinking in a way that is good for you and improves your life, to see the world through Jesus eyes, objectively, not according to our emotions. Other versions of the Bible, use the word to “…stir up your pure minds” in stead of the words wholesome thinking. He says in verse 2, “I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles.” Peter also goes to reflect upon what the holy prophets had taught and lately the apostles of Jesus. He wants the believers to recall the words that were spoken. Showing that as much as the words of the old testament prophets had authority, the words also taught by Jesus disciples also have the same authority. Peter clearly believed that the words of Scripture, whole Bible, were important and that they were inspired by God. And so it is Peter’s desire to remind us of what Jesus taught through the apostles. Let us first look at what Peter is reminding us of today.

**First, Peter reminds us of the truthfulness of the word of God**. That the lord Jesus will return. God’s kingdom will rain one day. Even though there will be a growing unbelieve to Jesus return. Look at verse 3, “Above all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires.” The last days began when Jesus ascended into heaven. And scoffers are those who deny the teachings of the bible. In this case, they reject the truth that one day this world will end and Jesus will return. They say, “Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.” In verse 5-7, Peter reminds the believers that these scoffers deliberately forget that long ago by God’s word the heavens came into being and the earth was formed out of water and by water. 6By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly. God’s word has always fulfilled what it says. In fact one of the reason’s the end of this world may seem slow to come is because God is patient. Look at verse 9, “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”

**Secondly, since Jesus is returning, we are warned of the day of his coming and we are reminded of the kind of life we ought to live**. Let us all read verse 10-11 “But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare. 11Since everything will be destroyed in this way, **what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives.**” We ought to live holy and godly lives. Peter reminds us to make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace at peace with Jesus (14). That means if Jesus was to appear now, will I be at peace with him. As I mentioned in my introduction we may be discouraged by the weight of this life. However, as verse 12a says, we can strive to live this way, **if we but you look forward to the day of the lords coming**. We need to hold on to that promise and believe that Jesus indeed is returning one day. 1 John 3:3 says that all who have the hope of Jesus’ Second Coming purify themselves, just as he is pure. Look at verse 13, “But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.” This world is not final, there is a new world coming, where righteousness dwells. A world where there will no longer be any form of suffering. The end of our struggle with sin. The end of inequality and lawlessness.

**Thirdly, because Jesus is returning, Peter cautions us to be on guard and gave believers clear direction**. Let us look at verse 17, “17Therefore, dear friends, since you have been forewarned, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of the lawless and fall from your secure position. How can we be on our guard in this lawless and dark world? How can we make sure we do not lose our secure positions in the kingdom of God? How can we keep on fighting against sinful desires and remain hopeful? How can we look forward to the lord’s return? Peter gave us a clear direction, let us all read verse 18, “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.” God’s word firstly directs us to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. For us to know how to stand, and to be preserved from falling, God’s direction was this: grow in grace, for the way to stand is to grow; the way to be steadfast is to go forward. There is no standing except by progression. Grace is not merely the way God draws us to Him in the beginning. It is also the way we grow and stay in our steadfastness. We can never grow apart from the grace and knowledge of our Lord, and we never grow out of God’s grace.

We will never hear the bible talk about grace growing, the verse also does not say that grace grows. It tells us to ‘grow in grace.’ There is a vast difference between grace growing and our growing in grace. God’s grace never increases; it is always infinite, so it cannot be more; it is always everlasting; it is always bottomless. It cannot be more; and in the nature of God, it could not be less. God’s word direct us to ‘grow in grace.’ We are in the sea of God’s grace; let us grow now we are in it.

Secondly, God’s word directs us to also grow in our **knowledge** of our lord and savior Jesus Christ. This means knowing more *about* Jesus, but more importantly, *knowing Jesus* in a personal relationship. This entails seeing life circumstances and challenges through Jesus. I have actually found that times that I have grown in my spiritual life was when I had to go through a difficult life situation. For example, I used to hear the bible say when we plan to do something we should say, God willing. It was only when my father past on that I could have peace in my heart that God willed it. This was because I was still not in the country when he past on so I felt why could not the lord at least take him when I had returned, so I had a bit a chance to see him catch up on the years I missed been apart from him. And so I had a bit of anger actually. However, I remembered James 4:15 ”Instead you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.'” This made have a new way of understanding God, it made all the more realize indeed God is God, and he wills whatever he wishes. The other area of growth was when I had to cut off a girlfriend I had some years back. It was difficult for me because of the strong emotions I had for her. We would break up and make up. I seemed to have no power or authority to completely break away from her. However, through Joshua 6:4, 10, “4Have seven priests carry trumpets of rams’ horns in front of the ark. On the seventh day, march around the city seven times, with the priests blowing the trumpets. 10But Joshua had commanded the army, “Do not give a war cry, do not raise your voices, do not say a word until the day I tell you to shout. Then shout!”” I knew this verse before, however this time around in my situation, these words became so personal. The lord was saying to me, to be quiet because at that time I was thinking many things.

When I heard Joshua 6:10, my mind could immediately be quiet. And also felt Lord saying the sounding of the trumpets of the priest should be God’s word, that I should focus on God’s word rather than my thoughts and feelings. There was an immediate release and I could have the authority and power to separate with the lady. The recent point of growth was how I got married. Knowing how stubborn I am to my ways and what I wanted. It was difficult to accept the lords leading and direction to marry by faith. Here Jesus gave me a drop in the ocean of his experience on the cross. When he said, lord take away this cup, but not my will but your will be done. I could also learn Jesus experience on the cross newly and receive faith to also utter same words, not my will but your will be done. I could then have God’s peace to move forward in marriage. I will end here but my point is that It has been areas of difficulty, pain and challenges where I have come to grow in grace and knowledge of our lord and savior Jesus Christ. Since been married and been challenged many times to deny myself, my wife Becca can attest to how stubborn I can be in my thinking and how thins should be done. I thank God that because of what Jesus did for me on the cross and what he is continuing to do, I can go in God’s grace and the knowledge of our lord Jesus Christ. I cannot wait to see what I am becoming through the grace Jesus has bestowed upon me. Amen!

**In conclusion**, looking at verse 18 once more it says, “18But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. **To him be glory both now and forever! Amen**” the last part says, to him be glory both now and forever! Amen. Ultimately, our journey is to enter the kingdom of God, the importance of looking forward to the return of Jesus is to complete the glory that belong to Jesus. Jesus came to save sinners like us so that we may be complete in him. Such that all the glory that is to him becomes our joy and meaning. It is really God’s desire that we may grow in God’s grace and knowledge of our Lord and savior Jesus. May all our past and future life challenges, pain and dark times be seen as opportunities for growth, may God use them in our lives for moments of growth in knowing him personally. May we not be discouraged by our dark times but rather look forward to Jesus return. for I believe God speaks to us through life circumstances, that is where we can fully experience God’s grace, because these hard situations are hard and real. They are places we too can experience Jesus personally in a real way. May we study our bible faithfully and meditate in God’s word through testimony writing weekly. Then when dark times and life happens we can experience God’s grace and Jesus more personally because of His word in our hearts. May we grow in the grace and knowledge of our lord Jesus Christ. Amen!