

Live and Grow in Christ

3 November, 2010

By Rev. Lonny R. Bower

Scripture Reference – 2 Peter 1:1-21; 3:11-18

Unit Theme: Counsel for Christlike Living

Central Truth: Christians must continue growing spiritually, being obedient to their calling and anticipating Christ's return.

Focus: Discover steps to maturity in Christ and surrender to His indwelling presence.

Key Verse: 2 Peter 3:18 - *grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*

Introduction:

Have you really ever considered what it means to be a Christian? Let's peel that back and peer inside for a moment. The most accurate definition is, ¹*Manifesting the qualities or spirit of Jesus; Christlike.* To delve even deeper would be to live, act, talk, think and pray as Jesus did. Borrowing from our previous lesson, you can see why it is a most difficult thing to say "I'm a Christian." Unless of course you take the view that the majority of the world takes, which simply is, that all who believe in Christ are Christians. Let's get real, if this were the case wouldn't it mean too that the demons would be Christian, since James 2:19 says that they believe in God? Certainly it takes more than a profession or belief. Though profession with our mouth and belief in our heart will indeed get us saved (Romans 10:9), but to be a Christian, definitively means that we are Christlike and this my friends is where the rubber meets the road – I have a long way to go! Praise God for His grace and mercy! So why have we accepted a counterfeit (what I'm referring to are those who call themselves "Christian" be they inside or outside the church who live anything but Christlike lives)? I believe that it has happened over time through a process called compromise and the worse is yet to come. This has affected every facet of Christianity and is the main reason the church is powerless today when compared to the First century church. That is the church is not living or growing in Christ and as a result has become an empty shell with barley a form of godliness. The fact is most people do not want anything to do with the church. Could it be because we have separated ourselves from them instead of reaching them with the message and Spirit of Christ? So, to be a Christian, is to live and grow in Christ. Those who live in Christ are truly Christlike they have answered The Great Commission and regardless of their vocation and ministry (inseparable) they are continually going and preaching; they are continually making disciples. This is the first step to growing in Christ. To be Christian is to live as Jesus did and He lived to please the Father not men. Who are you trying to please, the church, your pastor, your spouse or boss – think about it and then determine to live as Jesus lived!

I. Continue to Grow – 2 Peter 1:1-9

The moment we are saved we start a journey of faith that requires faith. This is why Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3 that one must be born again. Just as a new born babe must grow or die, we too who are born again as Jesus stated, must grow. If we do not, we will die. The source of our growth is inarguable, period. It is not a systematic Bible study, it's not preaching and it's not fellowship or our

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pastor though these may all contribute to our growth. The source indeed is Christ himself, and our knowledge of and dependence on Him is what propels us on in this journey of faith. His divine power Peter says has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness.... You see it's not the institution that provides us these things or gives us an outline for godliness, but His divine power! Oh, by the way, Christians never stop growing. Paul said it best not as though I have attained, but I press on toward the mark and prize and high calling of Jesus Christ (Philippians 3:12-14). Peter goes on starting in verse 5 to list several things that we need to add to our faith. Take a moment and consider them, are they yours, are you diligently pursuing them?

Note Taker: What is provided to us through divine power?

II. Be Sure of Your Calling – 2 Peter 1:10-21

As we continue to grow it is absolutely essential to make our calling and election sure because if we do all these things (everything else already aforementioned) we will never stumble. I have two words for you, "oh my." Can you relate? Before we move on I'd like to encourage you with this scripture - Proverbs 24:16 *for though a righteous man falls seven times, he rises again...* you are righteous because of your faith in Jesus Christ. Therefore, if you fall, get back up and keep fighting the good fight against the lust of the flesh! Peter goes on to solidify his own calling and encourages his readers and us to stay the course because we are not following after some Greek mythological god or chasing some farfetched fable, but indeed are pursuing the one and only most powerful King of kings and Lord of lords who will return in power according to the word of God spoke by the prophets. Finally, it is our nature to doubt our calling, this is why we should be sure of it, so as when the doubt surfaces we can rest on our prior assurance and press on in the work of the Lord. Consider John the Baptist and his doubting of the Messiah, he knew what the prophets spoke of the Messiah so when Jesus returned word to him confirming all that the prophets foretold I am certain that John doubted no more (Matthew 11:1-4).

➤ **Note Taker:** What does it mean to make your calling and election sure?

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III. Hasten Christ's Coming – 2 Peter 3:11-18

This passage of scripture is vast and deep, so for the sake of time and space, we'll stay near the surface. The focus is on the soon (albeit delayed because of God's mercy) return of the Lord Jesus who will come and judge the unrighteous. Peter gives a small glimpse of the things that will take place, that is, the destruction and reconstruction of the heavens and the earth. We are to look for the Lord's return and to hasten it by living blameless, spotless lives. I relate it this way, living and growing in Christ should be such an enjoyment that the sufferings, trials and tribulations of this life will seem like a vapor when we reach the end and see Jesus face to face. Peter's final warning is to be aware lest we fall from our own steadfastness. In other words, let's not get so caught up in serving Jesus that we forget to live for Him and grow in Him. Furthermore, to take it further let's not forget what we were saved from and thereby in our own deception return to that lifestyle. When we live and grow in Christ we become eternally minded and this hastens the coming of our Lord.

Conclusion:

People live for different things; however as Christians we should live for one purpose and that purpose should be to please God. If it is, we would have very little else to worry about. I compare it to my vocation, as a First Sergeant in the Air Force if I tried to please everyone I would end up ineffective and most miserable. As it is I have one boss and it is him I have to please, not his chief or his officers or anyone else. When I work to please him I am very effective and can care less what others think of me or my performance because I know that my boss is happy. Jesus lived to please the Father, period and if we are going to call ourselves Christian then we ought to live as Jesus lived (1 John 2:6). This is living and growing in Christ.

➤ **Note Taker:** What does "the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation" mean?

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Except where I have paraphrased all scripture is taken from the NKJV unless otherwise noted.

This study and others can be found at www.fullmessage.org

¹www.thefreedictionary.com