

GROW IN CHRIST!

As the apostle closes his second letter to the Christian churches, he renews his opening charge. Peter encourages in 2Peter 3:18, *"grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."* These titles linked together like this are used three times by Peter, once by Jude, and once by Paul. Like chapter 1, Peter aims this growth not simply for personal individual spiritual growth, but especially in the corporate sense for the local community of believers together. Peter prefaces his final sentence with this phrase: *"don't lose your own stability."* He appeals to the authority of the Scriptures, as written by God for His people, to serve as our standard of truth and instruction. So you will not succumb to the seductions of scoffers and false teachers. Let's look at five ways Peter encourages believers today.

1- Grow in the LORD. When Peter preached in Acts 2:36 he declared, *"God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you have crucified. And when they heard this they were cut to the heart."* They realized that Jesus Christ was God in the flesh, and they had executed the Lord of glory. In New Testament *koine* Greek the word *"kurios"* translates *"Lord."* This respectfully refers the title to Christ as sovereign master, with all the authority and power of the position, and the one to whom all will give account. Jesus is Lord whether you recognize Him or not. The apostle Paul in Romans 10:9 says, *"if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."* A person declaring "Jesus is Lord" (*Jesu ho kurios*) claims Jesus as superior to any Caesar, even upon pain of death. This phrase became a watchword among the disciples.

2- Grow in the SAVIOR. The word *"soter"* translates to Savior, and refers to Jesus Christ as deliverer, restorer, rescuer, reconciler, re-creator. In 2Peter 1:1 the apostle appeals to *"our God and Savior Jesus Christ our Lord"* in a description that clearly ascribes deity to Jesus. Likewise in Philippians 3:20 Paul refers to our *"Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ"* and 1Corinthians 1:30 *"He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom and our righteousness and sanctification and redemption."* Jesus described Himself in Luke 19:10 as *"come to seek and to save the lost."* JI Packer notes, "the glory of God's nature, character, power, and purpose is open to view in the person and role of His incarnate Son, the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

3- Grow in JESUS. This is the personal name given to the Son of God, come in the flesh into the world. The angel instructed Joseph about the son to be born to Mary, *"you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."* The Greek *"Iesous"* translates the Hebrew name Yeshua *"Jehovah saves."* God ascribes His personal name to the "Son of God" as the second person of the co-equal and co-eternal trinity becomes incarnate as the "Son of Man" who had been prophesied to fulfill all of God's promises for His covenant people. Jesus said I AM the only way to be saved, I AM the good shepherd of His sheep. "Jesus" is the beloved name by which we address the One who eternally loves and saves us.

4- Grow in CHRIST. In Matthew 16:16, Peter previously professed, *"You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God."* The word *"christos"* refers to the *"anointed one"* who was promised by God to fulfill His plan. MG Johnston notes, "Christ alone has power to save His people and rescue the world He has made. He alone has the authority and ability to reorder all things by His wise and loving rule, because He is God. Christ has all the limitless resources of God Himself." Theologians point out the Bible clearly teaches that to be a Christian is to be in *"union with Christ"* as you are in Christ and Christ is in you. And as Peter notes, this is corporate in nature. Don't buy the nonsense that says you can be a Christian without going to church. Scripture knows nothing of a professing believer who does not identify and participate with a local body of believers. As Kevin DeYoung warns, "the one who attempts Christianity without the church shoots himself in the foot, his children in the leg, and his grandchildren in the heart." If you are one of Christ's sheep, you will gather with His flock. And not just for a Communion service or holiday. Don't be carried away by error, but obey the truth, as written in Scripture, and personified in Jesus Christ.

5- Grow to glorify HIM. Peter says, *"to Him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen."* Be diligent and take care to bring Him glory every day, until the new heavens and earth. Many Scriptures underscore this, including: Colossians 3:17 *"whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus."* Philippians 2:9 *"the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."* Hebrews 1:3 *"He is the radiance of the glory of God."* Romans 11:36 *"for from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be glory forever. Amen."* Jude 25 *"to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen!"* Revelation 1:5, *"Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, firstborn of the dead, ruler of the kings on earth, who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood, and made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever."* As we pray together, "For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever"! ☐