

Greetings:

The study that Pastor Pat brings on Sunday mornings is a reflection of the study for that week. It represents a lot of research. Not all of what he has prepared is communicated. In an attempt to continue the learning process, he is making available his study notes to the congregation.

These notes are edited, but not “book” ready. To the critical eye, mistakes can possibly be found. Therefore, he asks that you take the material with humility, teach-ability, and charity.

Enjoy and if you should have any questions or corrections, please do not hesitate to email him at pastorpat@waukeshabible.org.

Date: November 23, 2014

Sermon Title: To Grow in the Grace and Knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ

Series Title: A Study of 2 Peter and Jude

Text: 2 Peter 3:11-18

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Waukesha Bible Church is a family of families seeking to live in the Storyline of the Bible. She is determined by design to have a God-centered, Christ-exalting worship; a Word-centered teaching focused on personal discipleship through intentional and systematic instruction; a Global-impacting mission that resolves to be a church planting church; and a Grace-based fellowship where disciples are invited to live under a reigning grace characterized by a Gospel-driven sanctification that celebrates a divine monergism to the Christian life.

Date: November 23, 2014
 Title: **To Grow in the Grace and Knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ**
 Text: **2 Peter 3:11-18**
 Theme: **Growth marks the Christian Life.**
 Introduction:

As we close off our study of 2 Peter, we will finish with our last topical or thematic lesson. Let us always remember that such studies can be problematic. I will be sharing with you thoughts that are not necessarily embedded in any one text. It is in the text, but we are simply not turning to every passage. Such studies are more difficult and I would encourage you to pick up the fuller study available and look at it for yourself.



All of us are desirous of growth. As parents, we desire for our children to “grow up.” As individuals, we set “New Year’s Resolutions,” with a desire to be better than we were and to grow. Even as Christians, we have the language of growing, of becoming more mature.

Many within Christianity speak of growth as a series of steps. The following resource used an acrostic for the word “growth”:

How can I grow as a Christian? Spiritual growth results from trusting in Jesus Christ. “The righteous man shall live by faith” (Galatians 3:11). A life of faith will enable you to trust God increasingly with every detail of your life. To help facilitate your spiritual growth, practice the following:

- G** - Go to God in prayer daily (John 15:7)
- R** - Read the Bible daily (Acts 17:11), beginning with the Gospel of John.
- O** - Obey God moment-by-moment (John 14:21)
- W** - Witness for Christ by your life and words (Matthew 4:19, John 15:8)
- T** - Trust God for every detail of your life (1 Peter 5:7)
- H** - Holy Spirit: Allow Him to control and empower your daily life (Gal. 5:16, 17; Acts 1:8)

What I find interesting about this approach is the absence of the local church, but we will come back to this later in our study. In this study, you might hear things that make you uncomfortable. I invite you to simply think on these things and draw your own conclusions. I will begin with five initial thoughts.

- First, the Bible desires for you to grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- Second, there are many activities we do as Christians that are distinctly Christian that we do better as we do them more. For example, studying/reading the Bible, praying,

giving, serving, sharing, etc. Being “good” at these activities, however, does not mean one is growing.

- Third, we desire for you to do these things well. But why?
- Fourth, the answer to why is for you to know who God is, what God has done, and to know who you are in Him.
- Fifth, the issue is one of joy. Your joy in God increases as you come to understand who God is, what God has done, and who you are in Him.

Our current study comes from 2 Peter 3:18 where Peter concludes his Letter with the words, “Grow in the grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Peter’s Point: Growth marks the Christian Life.

THE BIG PICTURE:

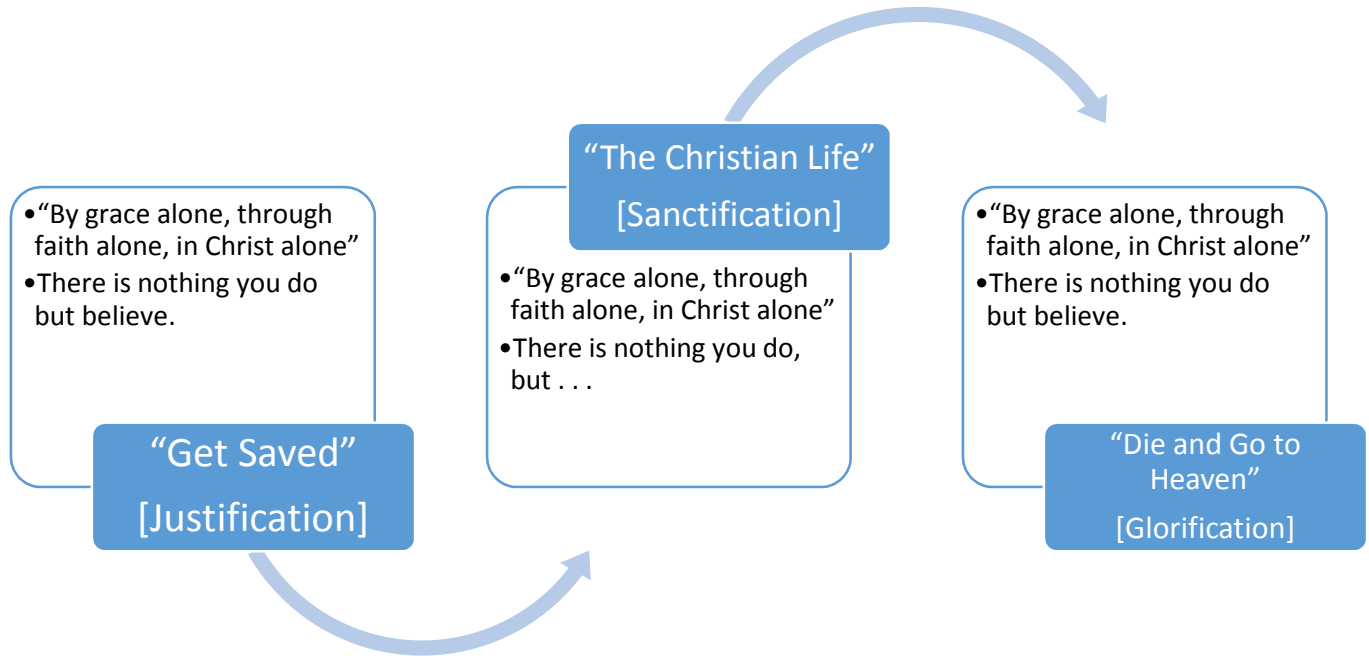
The broadest foundation for our study is three-fold.

1. Election **guarantees** Justification
2. Justification **guarantees** Sanctification
3. Sanctification **guarantees** Glorification

Although each is distinct, they are a “**package**” deal. Let me offer you a quick **word about election.**

1. Election means “to choose.” It is used of people choosing things. However, **it is never used of people choosing God.**
2. Election is **biblically sound.**
3. **God chooses** His people (John 15:16, 19).
4. Cf. Matt. 24:24; Rom. 8:33; 2 Tim. 2:10; Titus 1:1-3; 1 Pt. 1:2; 2:9.

Our desire is to place our study of Christian growth in the larger context of our salvation. Notice how our election plays out in real time.



Notice how . . .

- Your Justification causes your Sanctification.
- Your Sanctification cannot stop your Glorification.
- Your Sanctification is a bridge that cannot be broken.

It is of interest to compare Hebrews 5:10-6:8 with 2 Peter 2:17-22. The language is very similar.

- That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and **increasing in the knowledge of God**; (Col. 1:10)
- As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of **the word**, that ye may **grow** thereby: (1 Pet. 2:2)
- But **grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ**. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen. (2 Pet. 3:18)
- ¹¹ And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, **to the building up of the body of Christ**; ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, **to a mature man**, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. ¹⁴ As a result, **we are no longer to be children**, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; ¹⁵ but speaking the truth in love, **we are to grow up** in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, **causes the growth of the body** for the building up of itself in love. (Eph. 4:11-15)

When we come to the subject of growth, there are many views and some are quite popular. Most are sequential and have a “if you do this, then . . .” approach. In this study, I would like us to rethink growth.

Such approaches are **simple and good**, but . . .

- If such activities are looked upon as **securing position, then it is legalism.**
- The Christian Life is not what you do for God, but rather what God did for you.
- “Growth” is **not based on a formula.** “Growth” is looking to Jesus the author and finisher of faith. Growth rests in the finished work of Jesus Christ.
- GROWTH is **inevitable.** There is no middle ground or halfway.

Outline:

I. Remembering 2 Peter 1:3-11

Let us go back to 2 Peter 1 for a little while.

In Jesus, we have everything we need (v. 3). Salvation causes us to partake of His divine nature (v. 4). It removes us from the corruption that is in the world (v. 4).

Saving faith produces the fruit of love (vv. 5, 7). If the root of faith exists, the fruit of love will appear. Faith causes all of the other virtues to show up leading to love (vv. 5-7). We are to attend to our relationship with God (v. 5).

Our present relationship with God is something in which we exist.

The contrast is between saved and unsaved people (vv. 8-11). The saved are those who believe and thus grow, whereas the unsaved are those who do not believe and do not grow.

The language Peter uses in this paragraph is consistent throughout this Letter.

v. 8 w/ 2 Peter 3:17, 18

v. 9 w/ 2 Peter 2:20

v. 10 w/ 2 Peter 3:13-16

v. 11 w/ 1 Peter 5:10

One of my concerns in the study of Christian growth is how little or absent the local church is from the activity. Here is where I offer you some thoughts to think on.

II. What comes first, the individual or the local church?

What comes first?

- Is it the individual or the local church?
- What we have made **personal** is actually **communal**.
- The “disciplines of the Christian Life” are actually **corporate activities** and are to be celebrated corporately.
- From the overflow of Sunday morning, we are enriched daily.
- From the daily enrichment, we gather for corporate worship.

III. In any topical study, we face some hard facts

Facing some hard facts

In the **Old Testament**, salvation existed in the community. **Those who believed belonged.**

NASB "Cut off from his people."

To be removed from the believing community was tantamount to being lost.

This same principle is true in the New Testament with passages like **Matthew 18, 1 Cor. 5:5,** and **1 Tim. 1:20.**

When we consider such thinking, all of us have experiences that seem counter to this idea.

What about . . .

All of us know of someone or have lived "the exception." Christians who profess Christ, but do not attend a local church. An exception to the rule is simply something which goes against the norm (rule). For instance, there is a rule in English:

I before E except after C, or when used as an A, as in neighbor or weigh.

In other words, exceptions to the rules are things which happen or occur when they shouldn't. Planets in our solar system follow circular orbits except Pluto, which is elliptical. The planets rotate in an easterly direction except for Venus and Uranus, which rotate in the opposite direction. So does Pluto, but it's not a planet anymore. The planets also rotate with 'north' pointing up except for Venus, which is upside-down, and Uranus, which is lying on its side. (Pluto lies on its side, too.)

There is rarely a rule which doesn't have exceptions, or things which simply don't follow the rules. <https://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20110706060502AAli3HG>

The New Testament saves individuals for community. It knows nothing of the Christ-life apart from His body, the local church community. In our thinking, spiritual growth rests with the individual. In the Bible, spiritual growth comes out of the community. Christian growth occurs in the context of the local church.

The Word, fellowship, prayer, giving, gospel proclamation, and the "one another" actions are carried out in the local church. One's private life is the overflow of the local assembly. Let us remember that just as one does not become a car by existing in a garage, no one becomes a Christian by attending a church. No one and nothing apart from faith in the finished work of Jesus saves. Yet we cannot sever the head [Jesus] from His body [the church].

IV. Yet, what is growth?

Yet, what is Growth?

Growth is **learning** who God is, what He has done, and who you are in Him.

Growth is **looking** to Jesus the author and finisher of faith.

Growth is **living** in and out the gospel *Story* within your circle of influence.

V. How can a local church encourage gospel growth?

What can “we” do to encourage and enable gospel growth?

Local churches encourage and enable growth by celebrating . . .

- Gospel Proclamation
- Public Prayer
- Welcoming fellowship [one another]
- Generous giving
- Missional living

What about the Christian disciplines?

The “Disciplines” are simply means of remembering the *Story*.

Church attendance is not **a means among many means**. Church attendance is **the means** by which all other means exist. Why? Because the Christian life is never separated from the believing community. Whatever the activity is, it **could** be done privately, but **should** be done publicly.

Christian Growth

How do the “disciplines” fit into the context of Christian growth?

Consider the following:

- **Learn** who God is, what He has done, and who you are in Him through the systematic study of God’s Word. Go to a fellowship that systematically works through the Bible.
- **Look** to Jesus the author and finisher of faith by talking to God about your story. Turn your thoughts continually toward God throughout your days.
- **Live out** the “one another” passages by identifying yourself with a local church. Get involved.

VI. Growing in the gathering

Notice how the author of Hebrews speaks to the idea of community.

- ²²**let us draw near** with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. ²³**Let us hold fast** the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; ²⁴and **let us consider** how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, (Heb. 10:22-24)

Notice how the New Testament authors speak to the idea of “one another.”

- LOVE ONE ANOTHER (Rom. 12:10)
- BE AT PEACE WITH ONE ANOTHER (Rom. 12:16)
- ADMONISH ONE ANOTHER (Rom. 15:14)
- ACCEPT ONE ANOTHER (Rom. 15:7)
- CARE FOR ONE ANOTHER (1 Cor. 12:25)
- ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER (1 Thess. 5:11)
- CONFESS YOUR SINS TO ONE ANOTHER (James 5:16)

When you talk about growing as a Christian, you cannot separate it from the believing community. Such talk is counter to biblical language. It is not about the "I," but the "we."

Shepherding the Sheep: (What is the NEXT STEP?)

1. Are you saved? Do you know you are a sinner and Jesus is your only Savior?
2. Have you aligned with a local church?
3. What can you do to enhance the corporate experience for yourself and others?
4. Bring your Bible to church and look at the biblical text. Participate in the Sunday School Hour. Participate in the life of this body.
5. When prayer is offered, be engaged.
6. Come early and stay late in talking with "one another".
7. Take public participation seriously. It is God's designed means for biblical growth.