

Resolve to Grow In Grace and Knowledge

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[0:00] Turn in your Bibles to 2 Peter 3. We're going to read the whole chapter this morning, 2 Peter 3, the day of the Lord.

Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking. 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.

First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, where is this coming he promised?

Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation. But they deliberately forget that long ago, by God's word, the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water.

By 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 ungodly men.

[1:19] But do not forget this one thing, dear friends. With the Lord, a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness.

He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief.

The heavens will disappear with a roar. Therefore, the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be?

You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in its heat.

But in keeping with his promise, we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless, and at peace with him.

[2:33] Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote to you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters.

His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other scriptures to their own destruction. Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard, so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

To him be glory both now and forever. Amen. Well, I'm sure you are putting away your Christmas things or thinking about it already.

Throwing out extra candy. Throwing out extra cookies. Finishing off the leftovers. And you're switching gears. You're getting ready for a new year.

Perhaps you're making resolutions. Those are good things. Ambition. Pursuit. Those are supremely Christian attitudes.

[3:54] If anyone should have a reason to get up and pursue something, it is a Christian. Christ died that we might live. We sing that song, life is mine to live, bought by his precious blood.

Jesus didn't die so that we could not do anything. He died so that we could live and live life to its fullness. But even more than that, our labor in the Lord is not in vain.

The world has no reason to do anything that they do, ultimately. It will all be taken away from them. But we have a hope and a future.

We've read about it here in 2 Peter. And so I say ambition, pursuit, those are supremely Christian attitudes. And so today I want to talk to you about just making one resolution for 2014.

One resolution for 2014. It's found in 2 Peter 3, verse 18. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

[5:05] That's it. That's the resolution that I want you to make for 2014. And I feel pretty confident in asking you to make that resolution.

Because I'm standing beside the Apostle Peter, who was sent by Jesus Christ. And so Peter says, whatever else you want to do or you don't want to do in 2014, whatever resolutions you may be making for next year, here is something that you must do.

But grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Peter the Apostle commands it. The word grow is in the imperative.

It is a command. That was Paul's resolution. Whatever was to my prophet, I now consider a loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord.

So Paul, what are you about? What are you resolved to do? He says, this is my one holy passion. This is my one magnificent obsession.

[6:19] This world is empty, pale, and poor compared to knowing you, my Lord. So would you make that same resolution that Peter commands, that Paul exemplifies for us?

Three simple questions as we think through this, this morning. First, what am I resolving? Secondly, why am I going to do it?

Why resolve it? Third, how am I going to do it? So what, why, and how? Pretty simple. So first, what am I resolving? Well, first thing that you see about it is that you are not resolving to do something one time.

You can't grow at one time. Peter says, grow. You don't grow all at once. Your children don't grow up all at one day. And one day, you don't grow in the grace and the knowledge of Jesus Christ in a day either.

It's a process. So you're resolving to do something long term. You're resolving to do a process. Not once in a while, but all of the time. Resolve to grow.

[7:27] So you're to resolve to grow. Where you are now, you want to move on, move up, move forward. You want to, you can't stay there. So you can be complacent.

You can be satisfied about your weight, about your job, about your income. You can say, I'm happy here. I'm satisfied here. This is a good place for me to be.

I'm happy at this job. I'm happy at this weight. But you can't say that about knowing Jesus. You can't say that about knowing Jesus Christ. The only way is up. The only way is forward.

And isn't that what Paul said? Forgetting what is behind, but straining for what is ahead. I press on. Paul was not a satisfied man about knowing Jesus.

And we can't be either. We have to grow. So let me put this as bluntly as possible. In 2014, it is going to be either a year where you grow, or it's going to be a year where you fall behind.

[8:33] The Christian life is not standing still. Sometimes growth is slow and gradual. Sometimes it's inch by inch.

Sometimes it's against the wind, and it's against the current. But the Christian life is never standing still. It can't be that. In 2014, you will either grow, or you will fall behind.

So resolve, Peter says. Resolve to grow. Well, grow in what? You say, you still haven't answered the question.

What am I resolving to do? Well, he says, resolve to grow in the grace of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Resolve to grow in grace.

Now, that phrase is just so vague. Sometimes we can say it, and we understand each word, but we still don't understand what that even means.

[9:36] How do you grow in grace? And I can already imagine what some may be thinking. We think Peter is saying, and this is the tendency that we have to think, that he's saying grow in holiness, grow in spiritual disciplines.

Peter is saying, read your Bible, develop a better prayer life, and grow more like Jesus Christ. And that is on the right track. I think if you compare it to what Jude says, and Jude and Peter are very

close in this respect, what they say about this, about growing, it's sort of on the right track. But that's not all that it is. Peter's not quite saying that. He's saying, grow in grace. Grow in grace. Now, we so often think of grace as being sort of a packet of strength that God sends to me. So I'm in need, and I need to do something. I need God's help to do something. And so God sends me some strength.

But before grace is anything else, it's mercy, isn't it? This is what I want you to think about.

[10 : 54] Before it is strength for us, before we feel it as strength, before we experience it as help, it is the undeserved mercy of God in Christ Jesus.

Before we experience it, it is first something that marks and characterizes Jesus Christ. The grace that we experience is his mercy.

It's something personally attached to him. So John, in John 1, says he's full of grace and truth, and from him we receive grace upon grace.

Grace is never detached from Jesus Christ. It's not something that he sends to me, that he somehow detaches from himself and sends to me.

It's who he is, first of all. It's first of all who he is and what he has done in the gospel. And so when we grow in grace, we're growing up into something that is part of Jesus Christ.

[12 : 04] Now let me read something to you that has helped me. It has helped me very much to understand what Peter is saying here. This is from Sinclair Ferguson. And he wrote this.

It is legitimate, it's right, to speak of receiving grace. And sometimes we speak of the preaching of the word, prayer, baptism, and the Lord's Supper as means of grace.

And that is fine. So long as we remember that there isn't a thing, there isn't a substance, or a quasi-substance called grace.

All there is, is the person of the Lord Jesus. Christ clothed in the gospel, as John Calvin loved to put it. Grace is the grace of Jesus.

If I can highlight the thought here, there is no thing that Jesus takes from himself and then, as it were, hands over to me. There is only Jesus himself. Now grasping that thought can make a significant difference to a Christian's life.

[13 : 10] So while some people might think that this is just splitting hairs about different ways of saying the same thing, it can make a vital difference. It is not a thing that was crucified to give us a thing called grace.

It was the person of the Lord Jesus that was crucified in order that he might give himself to us through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

So when I grow in grace, when I experience grace, I don't experience a thing, a packet of strength, a spiritual energy.

I experience and I grow in Christ. I experience more of his power, more of his wisdom, more of his kindness into my life. More of who he is and what he has done overflowing into me by the Spirit.

It's as John Calvin said, and Sinclair Ferguson quoted him saying, it's experiencing more of Christ clothed in the gospel.

[14 : 17] Now, so this resolution to grow in the grace of Jesus is not an impersonal thing. Peter is not saying, get more of that thing called grace into you. And the way you get more of that thing called grace into you is by these means of grace.

He's not saying that. He's saying grow in your life in Christ Jesus. See your need more and see his fullness more.

As you see your need and your emptiness and your poverty, experience more of his fullness and his richness and his goodness and his wisdom. So listen to how John Calvin put it.

We see that our whole salvation and all of its parts are comprehended in Christ. They're all in Jesus Christ. We should therefore be careful not to derive the smallest bit from anywhere else.

If we seek strength, it lies in his dominion. It lies in his strength. If purity in his conception.

[15 : 22] If gentleness, it appears in his birth. If mortification of the flesh in his tomb, in his death. If newness of life, it's in his resurrection.

And on and on he goes. And then he sums it up and he says, In short, since rich store of every kind of good abounds in him, let us drink our fill from this fountain and from no other.

So what do you do if you need strength? Will you find it in his dominion? You find it in his strength, in his power, in his kingdom.

What if you need purity? Calvin says it's in his conception. That is in his purity. That he was born without sin.

Do you need gentleness? Where do you find it? You find it in Jesus Christ. In his birth. That is, in his gentleness. When Jesus came, he didn't come with a sword in his fist.

[16:28] He came as a baby. In gentleness for his people. So growing in his grace is growing in my reliance on who Jesus is.

And what he's done for me. It's growing in my appreciation. In my understanding. In my trust in all that Christ is for me. Now, that's why Peter adds to the resolution next.

He says, to grow in knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Now, again, Peter is not talking merely about doctrinal knowledge. Although, that is part of it.

And we're going to see that shortly. This knowledge, though, is a knowledge of a person. It's personal. It's experiential. And so you can read all about a baseball player.

And you can have all of his stats memorized. And that is one kind of knowledge. Or you can know him. Because you've spent time with him. You eat with him.

[17:29] And you drink with him. You spend time with him. You speak with him. You listen to him. And so Peter isn't talking about baseball stats. He's talking about growing in your knowledge of who Jesus is experientially.

And so that's the goal for this year. That's the grand goal for 2014. The resolution of this year. By faith to taste and enjoy and live more with the Lord.

So Demas knew the Lord. The Pharisees knew what he taught. Judas knew the Lord. But they never tasted that the Lord is good.

They never experienced his love in their hearts. So this knowledge that Peter is recommending to us. And he's saying strive to grow in.

Is experimental. It's experiential. And this kind of knowledge says. I've tasted the wickedness of sin. I know how evil sin is.

[18:31] Not because it's just out there. And I know it in theory. I felt the evil and the power of sin. And I hate it. I know that Christ is the one thing needful.

Because I found him to be that. I found him to be the only one I need. It says I know God's love is better than life. Not because it's just merely written here.

But because I have felt it in my life. I know the comfort of the spirit. Because I've enjoyed his comfort. I just haven't heard it in preaching.

I haven't just read it on the page. I've felt it. I know the goodness of God. The glory of Christ. His love. His pleasure. The forgiveness of sins. I know the goodness of those things.

Because it's made my heart leap for joy. That's the resolution for 2014. To know Christ.

[19:28] Now is that all mystical and ethereal. Sort of like out there in the spiritual realm. Is it just my feelings without my mind. No. This isn't fuzzy.

This isn't mystical at all. It's personal. But because it is personal. It is objective. It is personal. So it is objective.

There are edges to it. It's doctrinal. It's full of truth. Because Christ is a real person. He has real experiences. He has real attributes.

Real characteristics. He's not just whatever I want him to be. He's not just whatever I feel like he should be. He's revealed in scripture. He's revealed in the Bible.

And so let's say someone here wants to get to know me better. But they think that Jason has blonde hair. And he surfs. And he went to Harvard.

[20:27] And he plays the guitar. Now they could want to know that Jason. All they want. They could feel like that's me all they want.

But there is no such Jason. There is no person. Like that. I am a certain way. I've done certain things. And knowing those things. Is a prerequisite.

To knowing me. So. True doctrine. Biblical truth. Is a gateway to knowing Jesus personally. It's as I understand.

Who Christ is. And what he has done. That I come to know him better. That I come to trust him more. It's not until I know how sin sick I am.

How bad I am. How weak I am. That I find in him to be the perfect answer. The perfect answer to all of my need.

[21:26] And when I find in him. The perfect answer to all my needs. That draws me closer to him. I know him better. I experience him more.

And so no one can say. It doesn't matter what you think. It doesn't matter. Doctrine doesn't matter. No. There's only one Jesus that can truly help you. It's the Jesus revealed in scripture.

There's only one Jesus that you can grow in the grace of. And the knowledge of. And he's revealed in scripture. And so Peter says. Resolve to grow. In the grace.

In the knowledge of Jesus Christ. So grow in your reliance on his grace. Grow in your experience of his power. His goodness. His wisdom. In your life.

Grow in your understanding of who Jesus is for you personally. Grow in your knowledge of what he has done. And how that matters to you. So whatever degree of doctrinal or personal experiential knowledge you have of Jesus.

[22:28] Peter says. You still need to grow. 2014 is a year to go up higher. Go in further. You need to find more and more. How he is your Lord.

How he is your Savior. How those truths affect your life. So it's grow in your relationship with him. That's what this is. Peter is saying.

Grow in your relationship with him. Now secondly. Why do it? Why should you do this? Well it's commanded.

It's commanded. Peter on behalf of Christ. Says grow. God says. By his spirit. Through his spirit. Inspired words.

He says grow. Now you can choose. To lose weight. Or not to lose weight. You can choose to do this. Or that. In 2014. You can't choose.

[23:26] To not grow. In Christ. In 2014. You can't choose. Not to grow. In Christ. In 2014. God.

Says. Do it. So if you. If you don't walk out. If you're choosing. To do it. Choosing to say. I am going to grow.

In the grace. And knowledge. Of our Lord. And Savior. Jesus Christ. You are disobeying. You are sinning. It's commanded.

So it doesn't matter. What you think of me. Or how. You feel about me. You don't know me. Or anything like that. God says do it. So you have to do it.

But there's more than that. God's commands are for our good. God doesn't command things that are for our bad. He commands things that are for our good. Because he's full of love. And this command is one that's for our good.

[24:22] So there's more reasons than just. Because he commanded it. Why grow in the grace of Christ? Because it will keep you from falling. Verse 18. 2 Peter 3.18.

Comes in the context. Of Peter. Warning against false teachers. Warning against false doctrines. He says they distort scripture to their own destruction.

They take the word of God. And they distort it. And it destroys them. And so verse 17. He says. Therefore dear friends. Since you already know this.

Since you already know that these false teachers are doing this. Be on your guard. So that you're not carried away by the error of lawless men. And fall from your secure position.

But. Grow. In the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. So. What is the opposite of. Falling away.

[25:19] What is the opposite of being carried away. And distorting scripture to your own destruction. How do you stand secure. Grow. And. Grow. In this personal.

Experiential. Knowledge. Of Jesus. The only way to. Keep from falling away. Is to stand secure. To grow. In who Christ is.

To move forward. With him. Now maybe you think. And. I'm speaking to. The members of Grace Fellowship Church. Especially. But all of you.

Maybe you think. Well I go to a good church. We have the truth. I'm not exposed to false teachers. And.

You're wrong. You have a tempting devil. That will gladly teach you. You'll gladly. Whisper in your ears.

[26:18] False doctrine. You have a flesh. That will gladly. Whisper. In your ears. Well. You don't need Jesus so much. Or he's not really enough.

Cause you to doubt. Cause you to wonder. And you have a. A world. That will gladly put on. A preacher suit. And stand in a pulpit. The pulpit of your heart. The false teaching is all around you.

And you have an enemy within. And the only way. To stand against it. Is to experience. More of this power. And this growing knowledge. Of who Christ is.

To experience more. Of the grace of Christ. Now why? What is Peter thinking. When he says. The antidote. To false teaching. Is to grow in the grace. And knowledge of Jesus Christ. Why is that the antidote? Why is that the opposite? Because. If you understand. The nature of false teaching. [27:17] It always has one thing in common. And this is why. You can always have. The pretty much. The same conversation. With a Jehovah Witness. With a Mormon. With anyone. Who does not believe.

The Bible. Because it always. Has this one thing in common. It always. Jesus is never enough. It always. Adds to Jesus. Jesus.

He's not enough. You have to add something to him. God isn't satisfied with him. You have to do something. You need to do something. I need to do this.

Or I need to do that. To be right. Or I need to do this. Or I need to do that. To stay right. But Jesus isn't enough. Or in my ongoing life. Yes. That's good. You can have a good relationship.

With Jesus. But you need to be doing this. And this. And this too. False teaching. Always has this one thing in common. It says. To the sinner's heart. It says. To the sinner's mind.

[28:10] That Jesus isn't enough. You can't trust him. With everything. You need to do more. Now the only way. To stand against the doubts.

Whether they're in your heart. Whether they're emotional. Or whether they're. Intellectual. That say that Jesus isn't enough. Is to grow. In your experience. That Jesus is enough. That he's more than enough.

That he's the only fountain I need. I've. I've learned. That whenever I have need. I go to him. And he helps me. Whenever I have a problem. I go to him. And he's all I need.

Whenever I have a sin. In my life. I go to him. And he's the only answer I need. And it's. As I grow in this. As I grow in the idea. That he is the only fountain. That I need.

That the counterfeits. Lose all their charm. The counterfeit. I don't need those counterfeits. That false teaching. Holds no attraction to me. Whatsoever.

[29:11] Because. I have the real deal. I have Jesus. And when I am experiencing him. I. Am secure. So why grow? Because if you don't.

You will fall into false teaching. And I'm not saying you'll go join a cult. You could do that. I'm not saying you'll. Go off the deep end doctrinally.

For most of us. It's much more subtle than that. We lose our assurance. And we lose the. I'm not. Maybe God is angry at me.

And I start looking around in my own life. And I don't trust Jesus all the way. And I lose my joy. It's because I've fallen into false.

That false teaching. That says. Don't. You need to look somewhere else. Other than Jesus. So why grow? Because if you don't. You're going to fall into false teaching.

[30:15] Well why grow? He gives us another reason. Because this is where worship comes from. This is where worship comes from. How does Peter end? Look at the second half of 318.

To him be glory. Both now and forever. Amen. Now Peter ends this. This letter. In this spiritual excitement. This thought of Jesus Christ.

Sends him into worship. These two sentences. About growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. And then to him be glory forever and ever. They belong together.

That one comes from the other. So as Peter thinks about Jesus Christ. He exclaims to him. Be glory now and forever. And that's the flourish that he ends with.

He ends this letter with a shout of joy. Because he's coming right off of this thought of. How gracious and glorious and good Jesus Christ is. So Christian.

[31:15] Is your life marked. By the spiritual joy. Is your life marked by joyous worship.

Do you get into these spiritual excitements. That Peter is in. Where you can't help it but say something about how good Jesus is. Is that you?

Or not? If not. What do you need? What do you need? What's the answer to that dry state?

Well you need to grow in your experience of Christ. To know him. To see how he's so perfect for all your needs. To know him. To find that in him I have forgiveness of sins.

In him I have cleansing. I can have a clean conscience. In him I can walk with God my father. In him I can go with God. To God with all my concerns. And all my needs.

[32:15] And all my sadness. And I can speak to him as a friend. As a father. As my God. To be experiencing Jesus as a perfect Lord and Savior.

That is the greenhouse for worship. Maybe you've found it's very difficult just to command yourself to rejoice.

How does that come out of a heart? It comes when you're dwelling much on who Jesus is. When you're living on him. Worship will fly out of you when you're growing in Jesus.

Because that's what we were created for. What is the chief end of man? To glorify and enjoy God forever. Well you become that. You do that.

You live the life you were meant to live. As Christ fills you up more and more. As you're building yourself up in your most holy faith. As you're seeing this area.

[33:18] And the next area. And the next area. How he is full. And he satisfies. And he's strong enough. As you build yourself up in your holy faith. That's when you rejoice.

So why do this? Why set your mind to doing this resolution? Because this is the path of joy. This is the path of worship. This is the path of comfort.

This is the path of hope. This is the path of confidence. Peter isn't giving us a command that's for. Isn't giving you a command that's for your bad. But for your good. So that's the second question.

Why do it? Because it's so good for you. Third question. How do you do it? We've seen what you should resolve. Resolve the grow and the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Now why you should do it. We've seen why you should do it. Now third. How do I go about doing it? How do you go about doing this? Let me just give you some simple directions.

[34:18] And this is not complete. But I think this gets us on the right path. First, get rid of all unnecessary distractions. What does a couple do when they're trying to restore their relationship?

What does a married couple do when they want to draw closer together? When they want to grow in their relationship with each other? They simplify their lives.

They simplify their lives as much as possible. They make their relationship a priority. And anything that distracts them from growing closer together, you have to do what you can to get rid of it.

Have you found, like I have, that I only have so much mind? Only so much emotional energy. I only have so much will. We are only so big.

The world wants to spread us as thin as possible. It wants to stretch us as far as we can go. And I just find that I can't spread myself too thin.

[35:27] Because when I am spread too thin, then my love grows cold. The world wants us as thin as can be. But God is satisfied when we are with Mary at the feet of Jesus, focusing on him.

So I have to learn what distracts me from Jesus. And what brings me closer. What are the things that I do that helps my relationship with Jesus? And what are the things that hurts my relationship with Jesus?

And I am not talking about, at this point, sinful things. I am talking about just normal parts of our life that spread us too thin.

So maybe for some of you it is the internet, it is Facebook, it is Pinterest, it is all those things. You get wrapped up in those things. And when you get into them and you are into it, your affections for Christ grows cold.

Maybe it is sports. Maybe it is a hobby. I just... We have to get to the point where we are...

[36:34] Christ and our relationship with him is so precious that I will start saying no to this and no to that because it distracts me from him. So I have to say I am not going to sacrifice my communion, my fellowship with Jesus Christ for TV, for games, for a hobby, for these kinds of books, for sports, whatever it might be, to get rid of distractions, simplify your life, and make your relationship with Jesus Christ the most important thing.

And I can say, just from my own limited experience, that when you do this, when you narrow your life down until it's just... You're careful about this.

That's the place of joy. You don't rob yourself when you focus on Jesus. He more than rewards you. Now, the second direction.

Be careful not to grieve the Holy Spirit. Be careful not to grieve the Holy Spirit. The way we come to know Christ and grow in Christ, that is a ministry of the Holy Spirit.

He is the Spirit of Christ dwelling within us. He is God's gift to us to give all that we have in Jesus to make it real to us, to make us experience it.

[38:07] And so just for an example, we're adopted in Christ Jesus. That is true. But the Spirit is given so that we can know it.

He testifies to our spirits that we are the sons of God. So the things that are true for us in Christ, the Holy Spirit comes and makes real to us. He makes it powerful to us.

He makes it so we can live upon it and enjoy it and experience it. And so we can't grieve the Holy Spirit. We have to be more sensitive about who is staying in our house.

We have to be careful to obey. We have to keep short accounts. We should be frequently praying, Lord, search me. Show me.

Is there a sinful thing that I'm doing? Show me my sins. Show me any wicked way and lead me in the way everlasting. I don't want to go three steps out of Christ if I can pull up and stop at one and get right back into him.

[39:13] Keep short accounts. And maybe that's why some of you are discouraged, downhearted, so weak spiritually.

Maybe the answer is, and it could be lots of things, but think about this for yourself. Maybe it's because you're careless. You're grieving the Holy Spirit.

You aren't abiding in Christ. You aren't abiding in Christ by loving obedience. And that's what he says. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love.

You'll remain in my love. So how do you remain in this felt experience and communion? How do you grow up more in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ? Well, you obey his commands.

You're careful not to grieve the Holy Spirit. So do you want to grow and keep short accounts with Christ? Don't grieve the Holy Spirit.

[40:13] Then third, grow in your doctrinal understanding. Grow in your doctrinal understanding. Maybe the reason you aren't experiencing more joy, more peace, more growth is the simple reason that you don't know the Jesus that you are united to all that well.

See, we can't ever say the doctrine is not important. This book is big. It's full. It's there's places that are easy. There's places that are complicated.

It's full of teaching. It's full of truth. It's not there so that we can ignore it. It's meant for us to receive it, to believe it, to understand it.

There's not a single book in this Bible that by God's help, we can't understand and begin to apply to our lives. And so, grow in your doctrinal understanding.

You can't believe. You can't put your hope in. You can't rely upon. You can't claim what you don't know, what you don't understand. And so the answer is Bible study.

[41:25] Careful, thoughtful, Bible reading. And I know you're busy people, but this is worth it because Jesus is at the end of it. If you look to him and say, I want to know more about you, Lord.

I want to grow in my knowledge of who you are. The Holy Spirit will honor that. If we ask for the Holy Spirit to do that, he will do it. It is promised. And so you aren't studying physics.

You're studying the Savior. You're studying your Savior, your Lord, your friend, your husband, the one who promises you life and salvation. And so studying him will bring you joy.

It will bring you comfort. It's not for nothing. You have everything to gain. Now, that's how you should do it.

Simple directions. Don't grieve the Holy Spirit. Grow in your doctrinal understanding. And then the first one was get rid of all unnecessary distractions.

[42:25] Now, as we end, what will 2014 be for you? Will you grow or will you wither?

Christ invites you this morning to grow in him. God commands you to grow in him, experiencing more of his fullness, more of his power, more of his truth.

He's not disinterested. He's not disinterested. Even now, he's saying, I'm knocking, standing at the door, knocking.

Whoever lets me in, I will come in and I will fellowship with him. I'll eat with him. He's not disinterested. And to the lost, Christ is not disinterested in you either.

He died that so whoever would trust in him could have their sins forgiven. And what I mean is that Christ Jesus died for sins.

[43:33] He died for sinners. That whoever sinner, whoever they might be, whatever is in their past, might come to him and find that his sacrifice is enough, that his death was enough.

And so, he's not disinterested in you. He wants you to come and get to know him. He wants you to come and find out how good he is and what a great savior, what a great lord he is.

So he sends preachers out. He sends men out to preach the gospel that whoever would hear that gospel and believe might not perish but have everlasting life.

And so, just a final word to you and to you especially who have been here with us. 2013 is now at an end and you are still not saved.

Another year gone. Another year spent on yourself. Another year wasted. You should learn something from the deaths that we have seen in the last few weeks.

[44:54] Last week or two, that at the end everything will be taken away from you and it will be over and you will stand before God. It is appointed for man to die and to face judgment.

So 2013 is now at an end and you're still not saved. I wonder what God will have to do to wake you up. And I just say come to Christ.

Repent of your selfishness. Repent of your idolatry of self that puts you at the center of everything. You think you are the center of the world and God is not willing to give that place up.

So you either repent and tear that idol from its throne or God will do it for you. And even now Christ stands ready to receive you saying I'm enough. I'm enough.

You don't need to do anything. You don't need to even clean up your life. You just come right out of your sin and you turn away from it and you say here I am Lord. Lord as a sinner full of shame covered with filth and I need cleansing and I need forgiveness and he'll receive you.

[46:05] There's nothing to do but look. Well let's pray. Oh Lord our God we I pray for my brothers and sisters.

I pray for all of us who are in the Lord Jesus that you would teach us what it means more to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ that we would grow in our experience and our understanding of all that he is for us that we might build ourselves up in our most holy faith that we might remain in your love as we wait as we wait for the day of your coming Lord Jesus and that is a day that we eagerly long for and anticipate and we pray that you would come quickly for those who are not saved Lord my prayer would just be that you would look upon them that you would see them and that you would have mercy upon them Lord you are full of compassion slow to anger abounding in love so I pray that you would be those things for the lost among us you know the words of a human the words of a man aren't able to penetrate to bring light into those dark places of their hearts

Holy Spirit you must go you must shine the light of Jesus Christ into their hearts you must show them how perfect Jesus is for them you must show them how needy they are the state that they are in pray that you would do that for your glory for Christ's glory that they might turn away from themselves and turn to Jesus that Jesus might have more adoration more glory more appreciation for all that he has done and all that he is so Father this is your son so I pray that you would honor Jesus in the salvation of sinners because you love to do so please bless us all send us on our way rejoicing in who Christ is and what he is for us personally help us to rejoice even as we sing and it's in his name amen well please take your hymnals and turn to hymn 400 we're going to sing come thou fount of every blessing you