

If you would turn in your Bibles to 2 Peter, chapter 3, 2 Peter chapter 3, and our verse this morning will be verse 18. So if you please stand for the reading of God's Word, 2 Peter chapter 3, verse 18. God's Word reads, But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. Oh Father, we pray. Fill us with your Spirit. Holy Spirit, teach us your Word. And Father, our heart's desire is to grow, to increase in the grace and the knowledge of your Son, Jesus Christ. To know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, Father, to be filled with the fullness of you. Oh, Father, that we would grow more in love with you. Oh, sanct, that we would grow more in love with you. Oh, sanctify us. Stir our hearts to love and good works. Stir our heart to pursue hard after holiness and righteousness and godliness and faith and steadfastness and gentleness. That, Father, in the power of the Holy Spirit, we indeed would fight the good fight of faith. And, Father, do give us a greater understanding of our enemy. Equip us, prepare us to fight this good fight of faith. And Father, equip us, prepare us to go out into the battle. To carry out the great commission of your son Jesus Christ our Lord. Stir our hearts. That we indeed would be this light. The light shining here. Where you have us. So that the world would indeed know you have sent your son Jesus Christ into the world to save sinners, and that this world would indeed know that we are disciples of your son Jesus. As we, by your grace, take up our cross, deny himself, and follow your son Jesus and father who here is lost you know father who here is deceived? You know. Oh, that those dry bones indeed would live. That the dead would be raised. Dry bones indeed would live. That the dead would be raised. And given life as the gospel which is your power for salvation goes forth. Father draw lost sinners to saving knowledge of your son for your glory. That you be worshipped in spirit and in truth. Amen. I'm just thinking throughout this week and, you know, we've encountered a lot of things here lately. A lot of trials. Understanding that the Lord is working good through them. And I was just thinking, I wrote this down, many dear brothers in Christ have alluded to the fact that if God were to pull back the veil of this visible world, this physical world that you see. I can see you. You can see me. We can see this physical wall. But if he were to pull back the veil, and there is a veil, brothers and sisters. There's a veil before us of things of reality. Great reality that we can't see that if God were to pull back the veil of this visible world. Believers, we, brothers and sisters, would see an intense ongoing spiritual conflict between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness. It's going on right here. In some way, form, and fashion. And brothers and sisters, we need to recognize that we are at war. Again, we talked a little bit about this in Sunday school. It's amazing how a lot of things from Sunday school transfer up here. I wonder who's behind that. Oh, I think it's the Holy Spirit. We're at war. We're at war. We have an enemy that's battling for your souls, brothers and sisters in Christ. Praise be to God. He can't snatch them, but he is trying to destroy our souls. But you know what? There's also a battle for lost souls in here. We have children sitting back there. There's a war being raged for their souls. And there may be adults here. But there's a battle going on, distractions, anything to keep you

from hearing from the word of God. There is a war. There are forces and weapons at our enemy's disposal that are being used to try to destroy and weaken and strip your faith to shreds. To bring you, dear brother and sister in Christ, there are enemies out there trying to bring you to the point of confusion, frustration, to become like little faith in Pilgrim's Progress, to bring you to little faith, to be much like Lot. There are enemies out there to bring you to the point of confusion, frustration, to become like little faith and render you indistinguishable from the world. That when others see you... they can't tell a difference between a follower of Christ and a follower of the prince of the power of this air, worldliness. There's a force out there who's striving to make you bitter, to make you melancholy, to make you lukewarm, to make you melancholy, to make you lukewarm, to make you complaining, to make you practically useless in the kingdom of God. There are forces out there. The enemy is striving to make you practically useless in the kingdom of God, except for being an example of Christ's people who we are not to follow. What's going on? What's going on? 2 Peter 1. This is why Peter's writing this. Let's get a little context here. Peter's about to die. This is the last letter he writes. It's not too soon afterwards. This man is going to watch his wife be crucified. It's easy to get her out of that. All he had to say is, I don't believe in Jesus anymore. Oh, spare her life. Yeah, this Jesus stuff is all a hoax. He could have said that. He didn't. And then following in her footsteps, he will be crucified. And then following in her footsteps, he will be crucified. And as we have seen from extra-biblical accounts, he will be crucified upside down, because he did not count it worthy to be crucified as his Lord and Savior was crucified. That's the context, brothers and sisters. And the context is this, is that his brothers and sisters. And the context is this, is that his brothers and sisters in Christ are going through intense persecution. Something that you and I, for the most part, do not understand. But there's another wicked, evil force out there that, oh, I think we way too often understand. It's called complacency. It's called lukewarmness. In many ways, it's more insidious and more dangerous to be at ease in Zion than to be persecuted greatly for your faith. Because remember what the reformers taught us that the seeds of the church the seeds of Christianity are planted with the blood of the saints. We're at war. We are at war. And our brothers and sisters who have gone before us, Peter, Paul, they understood this. And what did they do? They constantly warned. Peter is writing a love letter inspired by the Holy Spirit to his brothers and sisters in Christ who are going through great trials so that it would be used of God to persevere them through them. And Paul did the same. Notice what Paul says. Ephesians 6.12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. That is the battle now, folks. You see that word wrestle there? Here's the idea behind the word wrestle back then. You take down your opponent and then you put your foot on their neck. And you crush down. That's wrestling. That's exactly what Satan's trying to do to you. And he's going to use the world. He's going to use his followers. And who are his followers? Who are the followers of Satan?

Everyone who is not born again. Every person who has not been redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ is a servant of their father, Satan. And Satan would you say beautiful Satan? Beautiful liar. And he is. Oh, I love the kudzu illustration. I'm stealing that one. Yeah. He's going to make sin look very, very beautiful. It's like a Christmas present. Oh, I hope that's my present. Just look how beautiful it is until you what? You open it up and you see how insidious and vile and wretched it truly is. That's our sin. And that's what Satan's trying to do to you, brothers and sisters. He can't steal your soul. You cannot lose your salvation if you are in Christ. But he can wreck your witness. He can destroy your effectiveness for God's kingdom and leave you in a cave. With no hope. Just like righteous Lot. There's a spiritual warfare going on. And that's what I wanted us to take a look at. Again, we're starting a new year, whatever that means. Starting a new year, and I wanted to share, again, to encourage you, encourage us, to live Christ. To live Christ amidst the spiritual darkness and the spiritual warfare that we are in. To live Christ, and in order to live Christ we must live nearer to Him and continue to increase and grow in our walk to increase and grow in our relationship with Him. Don't become stagnant. That's called complacency. It is a great weapon of Satan that brings God's people into what? As we see in Revelation chapter 3, lukewarm. Lukewarmness. And what did Jesus say about lukewarmness? I will vomit you out of my mouth. That's what our King, our Lord, our Savior, our God said. So brothers and sisters, may we be encouraged by what the Apostle Peter has to say to us here. Again, this is the last words of him before he's going to die. His encouragement to his brothers and sisters in Christ. May it be an encouragement to die. His encouragement to his brothers and sisters in Christ, may it be an encouragement to us. And what do we see here? Immediately we see, again, Peter writes, but grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Again, this word, grow here. This is important. It is in the present active imperative. Meaning it's an ongoing thing. That's what that means. That's so important. It's not a one time deal. It's not I got my ticket to heaven. Now I'm good to go, right? Wrong. It's a life lived. And it's constant. And it's a life lived. And it's constant. And it's a command. Peter's not asking his brothers. The Holy Spirit is writing, is guiding Peter to write this. And he is not asking you, oh, brothers and sisters, sisters grow in grace. No, in love, telling the truth, He's saying grow. As an apostle, the foundation of the church, Jesus Christ being the cornerstone, I command you in the power, in the name of Jesus Christ, grow, increase. Increase in grace, the grace, the grace of Jesus Christ and the knowledge of Him. And again, what is that? Well, grace is this beautiful gift, isn't it? We're saved by grace. We sing amazing grace. We sing a form of it this morning, right? Seems like churches sing a lot about grace and have very little understanding about it. Grace is a gift. It is a gift given out from God's love and delight in His children, for His children. Don't miss that. Grace, God is love. And grace is a gift out from the love of God. a gift out from the love of God. And this grace is a gift of joy. And a gift of delight. It's a gift of pleasure and favor. It's a gift that is marked by loving kindness. That's what grace is, given to us by our God. This grace is not deserved. Actually, this grace is

ill-deserved. We absolutely don't deserve it. We deserve the opposite of God's grace. We deserve God's wrath and judgment. Why? Because we're all sinners. We've all sinned against the God of love, who is love. That God has given you another day, that God gives you all the material blessings that you have, all the money that you have, everything that you have has been given to you by God. I don't care if you're a believer or an unbeliever. You have absolutely nothing apart from the common grace of God in which He shines the sun on the saved and the unsaved. He brings the blessings of the rain upon the saved and the unsaved. He's given you life. He's given you family. I'm talking to lost and saved. And yet what? If you're not in Christ, your life is just simply lived in rebellion against Him. Your disobedience, your not coming to repentance and faith until the only one who can save you is just shaking your fist in rebellion and hate. Whoever is listening to me and that is not in Christ, you are a hater of God. That's not me saying it. That's the Word of God. And your hate is demonstrated by unbelief. Your hate is demonstrated by ungodliness, the way you live your life. You live your life for yourself and you indulge in the things of the world. You believe that what the world has to offer is what's best. And you have no regard, little regard for Jesus Christ. That's every lost person on planet earth. That's every lost person that's in here today. And you're unrighteous. Again, due to your sin. Your life of disobedience. Is that you? Am I describing here? And again, there's a spiritual warfare going on here. And that spiritual warfare is anything that will distract you from the gospel of Jesus Christ. That spiritual warfare is everything that is distracting you from listening to my voice. Even though my voice in and of itself is nothing. But as an ambassador of Christ, you must listen. It's ill-deserved yet God offers you this grace today and brothers and sisters you know but are you ever negligent of God's grace are you ever negligent another way to say that, of so great a salvation? I mean, let's be honest. What's the only difference between... Between you brothers and sisters in Christ. And the lost people of this world. Basically one thing. Jesus Christ. That's it. And brothers and sisters look at what he's given you. Eternal life. You're one with him. You're one with Him. You're one with the Son. You're one with the Father. You're an heir of God and a co-heir of Jesus Christ. That's the grace He's given you. And in this grace that we have joy and delight and pleasure and favor, loving kindness, all these things, ultimately this gift is, as I've already said, it's eternal life, isn't it? The gift, the beautiful gift of God, the grace of God that we don't deserve is eternal life. That you can be in this intimate relationship with Him. Which ultimately means that this gift of grace that Paul or Peter is talking about. Ultimately this gift of grace is Jesus. Jesus is the gift. Because Jesus is eternal life. Jesus is the gift. Because Jesus is eternal life. Jesus is our life. And Peter is saying, grow in that, increase in that. In John 1.14, God's word says, and the word became flesh, Jesus became flesh, the word became flesh and dwelt among us. And we have seen His glory. Glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace. Jesus, full of grace and truth. And then verse 16, And from His fullness, we, brothers and sisters, we have all received grace upon grace. That's true of everyone who's been redeemed by the blood of Jesus. It's just grace

upon grace being inundated by grace. God's favor, God's joy and delight, His loving kindness towards you. That this grace is demonstrated that for those who love Christ, all things, even the difficult things, all things are going to be worked together. That He withholds no good thing from His children. That's the grace that we are given. We're given grace in the great times, we're given grace in the most difficult of times, and we're given grace all in between. That's what's true about you. So we must grow in that. How do we grow in that? How do we increase in that? Well, it's by increasing in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. It's coming to know more about Him and coming to know Him more. Again, what does Peter say? Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. If Jesus is the gift of grace and we are to what? Grow or increase in that, then we must come to know Him. Understand Him. And then come to know and grow experientially in Him. Because ultimately, that's what it is to grow in this grace. And brothers and sisters, how do we get to know one another better? You tell me. Fellowship. Just every once in a while, when you feel like it? No. Who knows you best? Your family, right? Husband, wife, mom, dad. Right? Am I right? Those are the people that you know the best. You know most intimately. What's the common denominator in general? What's the common denominator in general what's the common denominator in the developing and growing in that relationship? It's being with one another. It's being with one another. So if we're to grow in grace, and Jesus is indeed the gift of grace that we've been given this eternal life and we are to increase in the knowledge of him so that we can grow in this grace that we need to be with him. Is Jesus the passion of your life? Is Jesus your first love? Your top priority? What does your life say about that? Are you spending time with Him? Are you spending time with Him in His Word? This is how He's communicating to you. This is what He's saying to you. From Genesis 1 all the way to the Amen, the chapter 22 of Revelation and everything in between. Here. Jesus is speaking to you. You, dear brother and sister, are you talking back to Him? Are you responding back to what He has to say to you? And what do we call that? Prayer. What does your prayer life say? About how you love Jesus. Oh, I don't have time. Yes, you do. Yes, you do. We all have the same amount of time. Everybody in here has the exact amount of time. The question is, how will you prioritize that time? And don't we make the most of our priorities geared towards those whom we love the most? Or what we love the most. Or what we love the most. Is there really anything on planet earth. More important dear brother and sister in Christ. Than you growing, increasing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ so that you can know Him more and to know His love for you more so that you can grow in your relationship with Him. Is there anything more important than coming to know God more and more in His love for you? What does the Bible tell us? No. What is the greatest commandment? To love the Lord your God with some of your heart, some of your soul. Make sure you have enough to give away, right? Or is it all? With all of your heart, with all of your soul, with all of your mind, with all of your strength, with all your ultimately what? What does that mean? All your being. You'd love God with all of your being.

Oh, that's way too much. No? Because what I'm going to tell you, what the Bible tells us, that if that's not our top priority, everything else you do is all out of whack. You cannot love your husband and your wife. You cannot love your children. You cannot love your grandchildren. You cannot love your brothers and sisters in Christ. You cannot love a lost world properly unless this relationship has top priority. Your relationship with Jesus Christ. And that's what Peter knows. He fully understands it. And he is writing to his brothers and sisters in Christ, grow, increase in the grace and the knowledge of Jesus. Because it's in that, everything else will work out. Does not Jesus teach us that? Seek first the kingdom of God. Who is the kingdom of God? It's Jesus. He is the King of God. Who is the kingdom of God? It's Jesus. He is the king of kings. It is His rule and reign. Seek that first and what? Everything else will fall into place. Oh, but do we believe it? Do our lives demonstrate that? Well, yeah, Jesus, I believe that. Doesn't? And what's the world telling you? You've got to dress a certain way. You've got to have this in your life. Need an education. Need to have money. Got to get that career going so you can have your dream house and you can have all the wonderful vacations, Disney World, and all of those things. You know you are an irresponsible parent if your kids are not being able to play in every sport that's out there and be involved in every program that's out there, and you're taking them to Disney World and Disneyland and Disney this and Disney that. You're a miserable parent if you are not doing those things. That's what the world will tell you. And when you can't afford to do some of those things, what kind of parent are you? You need to work harder. You need to get a better job. You need to make more money because money is the God of this nation, isn't it? So what do you do? You listen to the world. You just work, work, work, work. I don't have time. You don't have time? You have the same amount of time as everybody on planet Earth does. How are you going to prioritize it? and who's behind the people telling you, putting those commercials on, and again, you know what one of the most insidious things that's going on right now, and you see it all the time, gambling. Gambling, hey, every game, if you're watching any football game or basketball game or whatever, it has gambling, and they make it look fun, right? And you're going to be a winner, right? And you win all this money and then you get to have anything you want on earth. That's what the ruler of this world, that's what the enemy is working towards. To convince you, as a believer, to confuse you, to make you bitter, to make you complain that you don't have enough. You don't have enough money, I don't have enough of this, I don't have a nice enough car, I don't have a nice enough house. That's what the enemy does to the people of God. By firing those arrows. And to drag them down. And to make them little faith. Oh, you know what? My house isn't as big as my neighbor's. I kind of wish God would give me a bigger house. as my neighbors. Yeah. I kind of wish God would give me a bigger house or a nicer car. I see all these people that are 30 years younger than me making lots more money than I am. God, do you really love me? God, why do all these people have all these things and I don't? That's a lie from the enemy, isn't it? That's the enemy. Peter knows it. But why is it that Peter is encouraging his brothers and sisters

in Christ to increase and grow in the grace of Jesus Christ and the knowledge of Jesus Christ? I'll tell you why. Who forsook and left everything to follow Jesus? Peter did. This is at the end of his life. Peter is going to be crucified upside down. So ultimately, what's Peter telling us? It's all worth giving everything up for the sake of knowing Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. That no matter what the world can give you, it is but dung, it is rubbish, it is filth, it is sewer compared to the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus Christ to have this relationship with Him. And again, we must grow in the grace of Jesus Christ. Because when we are not growing we become stagnant. And we become complacent. This is what Peter knew. And that's why he's writing this and he's exhorting his brothers and sisters. By God's grace I'm exhorting you. I'm exhorting me. I'm exhorting us. Grow in the grace of Jesus and grow in the knowledge of Him. And whatever in your life is keeping you from that, either get rid of it or rearrange it. So that you, brother and sister, that we together would be diligent in putting Christ first. It's not easy. It's a war. Peter knows that. And if you've been walking this walk for a while, you know it's a war. And it's a battle. And we can't be at ease. We can't be at ease. And your greatest weapon is what? The gospel. The greatest weapon we have is remembering who Jesus is and what he's done for us. And then remembering, reminding yourself what's true about you all because of who Jesus is and what he's done for you by his life, death, and resurrection. That's our greatest weapon. That's why I keep saying it. Preach the gospel to yourself. And keep reminding yourself what's true about you. You don't need the things of the world. You don't need them. God's going to give you what you need, amen, but you don't need everything that the world says you need. That's a hard thing to do here in this nation, isn't it? I will never, ever forget. Chase, I know you were with me the first time, and then the second time Christy was with me. And I remember Chase, and I can't remember, it was somebody else that was with us, Chase, I don't remember, but Naftali was with us. And we took Naftali to Slavinsky's donut shop. Yeah, okay, Rick, was you with us? And he was overwhelmed with overwhelmed with the choices of donuts that we had. It blew his mind. And then Christy and I took him to Q39 so he could have Kansas City barbecue. You remember this? He didn't know what to order. I said, well, you got this, this, and this. Order whatever you want. He ordered the chicken. They brought the chicken what to order. I said, well, you got this, this, and this. Order whatever you want. He ordered the chicken. They brought the chicken out to him. Was he crying? He was crying. You know what he said to us? This is enough to feed my entire family. In the United States, you've made it if you eat at Q39. You've made it if you can order anything you want. You've made it when you've got a thousand different choices of donuts. That's what the world tells you. And it's all garbage. It's all garbage. It's all garbage. Compared to the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus Christ. Oh, that we would prioritize our lives, brothers and sisters. That we would increase and grow in the grace and the knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord. And why? What's he say? To him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. That's why. Brothers and sisters, what is it to live Christ? Yeah, it's to live for one another. It's to love one another. It's to live for the

progress and joy of one another's faith. It's to be invested in a lost world, proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ because there are lost sheep out there. But what's the number one motive? What was the number one motive Jesus Christ came to die on a cross? His motive should be our motive. And Jesus' number one motive for dying on that cross was to glorify His Father in heaven. That His Father be worshipped in spirit and in truth. Because He indeed is the greatest gift. Our Lord God Almighty is the greatest gift. There's nothing greater He can give us. And brothers and sisters, we need to set the example and we need to manifest that glorious fact to a dark, wicked world under the rule of... of Satan who has people like the Assyrians took their captives and had fish hooks in their cheeks and dragged them along to captivity. That's where every lost person is like that and they're being taken down a broad path to destruction. And the only hope that they have is the only hope that we have and that hope is named Jesus Christ. Oh, that we would grow in the grace and the knowledge of Jesus Christ so that we can become more like Jesus and so that we can be used by Jesus to continue to build the church. Jesus is still building His church. Remember back in Matthew 16, Jesus says, I will build my church. He's the one still doing it. Except how's He doing it? Through His body. We're the body of Christ. Amen? Who's the head? Jesus. And he's building his church. He's advancing his kingdom. Through us. Oh, that we would grow in the grace and the knowledge of Jesus Christ. That we would walk in love and that the love of Christ would control us, and that we would be about the ministry of reconciliation, that we, brothers and sisters, would be the ambassadors of Jesus Christ, standing out where He has sovereignly placed us, Standing out where He has sovereignly placed us. And being that ambassador and proclaiming. The salvation of God is found only in Jesus Christ. That He indeed is the Son of God. That He indeed died on the cross to pay your sin debt in full. All the wicked things you ever think, say, and do. Even to pay for your unbelief. Jesus died on that cross. And he died because the wages of sin is death, and he was buried, and on the third day he arose from the dead. Proving the resurrection is the proof that Jesus Christ is who he claimed to be. And the resurrection is the proof God was satisfied with his propitiation, his sacrifice on the cross to pay your sin debt in full. And that everyone who comes to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ will be saved. Everyone who puts the... their trust and calls upon the name of the Lord to save them will be given this beautiful glorious wonderful gift of grace. Eternal life. Jesus Christ. That's for you lost person. Why are you waiting? Why are you waiting? Why are you waiting? Why are you waiting? I mentioned this yesterday. Charlie and Victor. They had plans to go down to Oaxaca with me. They wanted to go minister with me. They were coming to BTCP. They were working hard. They wanted to be used of the Lord. So they get in their car and they're headed towards the border to come back home with the idea, they will have a December 30th. See, what I'm talking about is December 29th. And in their mind, they had a December 30th and 31st and January 1st, a new year, 2026. Yeah. What a blessing it's been to hear the Word of God, and now we're on fire to go serve Him the rest of our lives. December 29th was the last day that

they would see. They got no December 30th. Praise be to God, they went home to be with the Lord. Why? Because they came to repentance and faith in Jesus. That's why. That's the only reason why. Jesus saved them. They went home to be with their Lord and Savior. they went home to be with their Lord and Savior. But if you sit out there, well, all of us, this is true of all of us, we're not guaranteed a January 19th. That's tomorrow. None of us. You've been given today. You're not even guaranteed the rest of this day, actually. And if you sit out there apart from Christ and rejecting Him, rejecting His love, His mercy, and His grace, and you die today, you die today. You will spend eternity in hell. And that's one thing I do not want to have. If I could save you, I would, but I can't. Because I'm nothing more than a sinner saved by grace. But I do know the one who can save you. His name is Jesus. And if from your heart you call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to save you he will guarantee it mark it down it will happen but if you continue to live your life in rebellion you continue to reject the gospel message you're not guaranteed another day and in that unbelief you stand already condemned by God You're not guaranteed another day. And in that unbelief, you stand already condemned by God. Jesus is your only hope. So brothers and sisters, may we finish our race strong. May we take the means of grace God gives us, His word and prayer and fellowship. And may we arm in arm, striving side by side with one spirit and one mind pursue to increase in the grace and the knowledge of Jesus Christ all to the praise and honor of His glory. May we dedicate our lives to that may we purposefully live Christ that he be glorified bow our heads in prayer