

2 Peter 3:18

What does it mean?

- I. Intro
- II. What does this exhortation of “*grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*”, mean?

I. Intro

Today we close Peter’s 2nd letter with what can only be described as the “*Devine expectation*” and the “*Believer’s responsibility*” to “*grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*” The very first word in verse 18 is “**BUT**” and it is *a contrasting word*, in which we only need to look at verse 17 and read the exhortation found there in the word “*beware*” to see the contrast. There *the warning in verse 17 was focused upon “avoidance”* whereas *in verse 18 the reader is taken to the “positive in contrast to avoidance”*. *The Christian life is NOT only about what to watch out for, things to avoid keeping us from stumbling. No, it is equally about advancement as the best way to avoid falling backward is to advance and move forward!! There can be NO “static stagnate pathway” that will lead the follower of Christ closer to the goal of God’s glory radiating from their life!* Peter does **NOT** write about some hypothetical vague maturity in the words “GROW” but instead tells his readers specifically what area they were to “GROW IN” “*....grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*” The only problem we have in this verse is to be found in us as we can clearly see “*Who*” we are to grow in and *what such growth will produce in us “grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”*. Our “Old Man” our “Flesh” as developed amazing ways of “*self-centered preservation*”. Even in the clarity of such *Devine expectation*” and the “*Believer’s responsibility*” it will adopted “*intellectual agreement*” as a way of keeping

its self-alive to avoid obedience. Quote the verse, agree with it, say it often and nod in enthusiastic approval and in so doing you can avoid having to “**GROW IN....*grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.***” The question is “How can we avoid this pitfall of *self-centered preservation*”? I believe it can be achieved if we Christians can ask and answer “Three questions with regards to the “***Believer’s responsibility***” to “***grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.***”

1. What does this exhortation of “***grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ***”, mean?
2. How can I do or apply the exhortation of “***grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ***” in my life NOW?
3. How will I know if I have been applying the exhortation of “***grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ***” in my life?

This will be the outline that we will follow so that we can avoid our ***self-centered preservation!***

II. What does this exhortation of “***grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ***”, mean?

Before we can apply this or any other biblical exhortation, let alone evaluate our application we MUST discover exactly what is meant in the exhortation of “***grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ***”. The key word in this understanding is the word “GROW” and it is a descriptive word that causes the reader to ask, “**What things necessitate GROWTH**”? It is here that we begin answering the first part of our three questions:

- A. ***For something to GROW it must already be alive!***: You can’t plant a rock and expect to produce a crop. This means that ***this exhortation presupposes new life in Christ as a pre-requisite. No growth*** in the ***in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus***

Christ may indicate that such a person was never alive to start with! There is never an appeal in the Bible for those dead to behave as if they are alive. The bible is not interested in the conduct and behavior of those who are not Christian. *The gospel never comes to a person who is not a Christian and offer them a way to live a better life!* No, **it comes to a dead individual and offers them a way to be alive!** The Christian who Peter makes this appeal towards is “different” then those whom they share this earth with, they are alive and have become partakers of the Divine Nature. This implies an obvious need to “self-examination” and that in itself may be the start of the answer that we are alive!

B. Life naturally leads to GROWTH! The word “GROW” makes it **impossible for this exhortation to mean that the Christian to apply this has to “ADD” something to their life to achieve development!** This is universally true in all things that are alive they naturally do what “alive things do, they GROW”. The very fact of life is that it always contains the idea of GROWTH! Wherever you find life you find the inherent possibility of GROWTH! There is no better way I know to test my life then to see if it has the possibility or capability of GROWTH. If it cannot GROW then it is clearly not Christian! I need to make sure that I clarify “GROWTH” is not mere “addition”. We can all “ADD” things to our lives that is not growth. **The difference is mechanical verses organic!** Things that are alive are “organic” that is they **“naturally reproduce”**. **Mechanical** growth is a measurement but not signs of life. You can take and add to a pile of dirt and keeping adding to it over time but left alone that mound of dirt won’t on its own GROW to a larger mound of dirt.

C. Organic GROWTH is a process and not instantaneous: We cannot look at “methods” of growth instead we are looking at the “mystery” of growth as it relates to the process. You can be aware GROWTH is happening, but you cannot make it happen or even see it happen in

the moment. What I mean by this is that “GROWTH” is never sudden instead it is “progressive and gradual”! A Christian is never “Suddenly Sanctified” as they are “Suddenly Saved” or “Suddenly Glorified”! Spiritual Growth is similar to physical growth as it is gradual you never see a baby make a “quick instant jump into an adult”. Instead, it’s a gradual step by step process from infant to toddler to young child to a teenager to adult! Its progressive in that there can be no skipping of steps in the process.

D. Growth is specific and not random: Peter is clear in what direction our “GROWTH” will be in as he writes that it will be in the *grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*. Peter has clear objectives in the believer’s growth as it is in two areas both found exclusively in *“our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”*. Peter is not talking about the believer growing in “graciousness” though it may include this characteristic. Instead, Peter aims deeper to say that our growth will be in the realm of “GRACE” and that can only mean that we will grow in our life in the area of the life that we have due to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That GRACE is alive and develops, expands and increases as we go forward in our faith! We GROW in our appreciation, understanding and application as we realize that we are the special object of God’s unmerited favor and kindness to us who have not earned one drop of it! God is continually wanting to extend this favor towards me even though I never deserve it. Growth can be seen as I become increasingly aware that I am NOT GETTING WHAT I DESERVE OR EARNED! No, I am getting grace! Furthermore, I am receiving *“the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”*. The believer is also growing in the ONLY ONE in whom is hidden all TRUTH! I should be growing in my knowledge of Jesus, who He is, What He alone has done and will continue to do. I will grow in trust in what He has done with all my sin; past, present, and future! As I grow I will be at

more peace as I know that He has won, and the events of this life are only temporary and even though I can't see it yet are all pointing to eternity! I will Love Him and what He loves, I will major in what He majors in and want only what He wants!

Growth in the *grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ* will enable us to meet the contradictions the adverse situations and circumstances we face in this life! The more we grow in the *grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ* the more peace and joy we will manifest during difficulties. Paul wrote of it this way in Rom 8:38-39 "***For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.***" Next week will take up the other two questions asked and answered by verse 18:

1. How can I do or apply the exhortation of "***grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ***" in my life NOW?
2. How will I know if I have been applying the exhortation of "***grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ***" in my life?