

2 Peter 3:18 - Grow in Grace

Calvary Vista you are an amazing Body – Denise and I Love you so much – You are such a special Church family

A) One of my greatest Joys in life has been being your pastor for the past 30 yrs

B) I resonate with Paul – I thank my God upon every remembrance of you in my prayers –

C) Your Faithfulness to the Lord – His word
Partnership in the Gospel –

1) You love for all the saints

D) That is exactly how Denise and I feel about all of you – You are an amazing church family.

One of My greatest ministry Joys has been standing in the pulpit

A) Week in and Week out – Sundays – Wednesdays – teaching you the Word of God

B) I was telling Denise a couple of weeks ago after the Sunday sermon –

1) I feel a special anointing – preaching in this pulpit

C) You should it is your Pulpit – Your calling

D) The Lord has blessed me with the Privilege of teaching in many other places and churches

1) all over the world in my 30 yrs here

Thankful for the opportunity to share in other places

A) But There have been many times.... Somewhere else – I wish I was at CV today.

B) See those other places are not you.

C) Pray for me I am going to be speaking other places more often in this coming year.

1) God's grace and anointing – to Bring a special Word in those churches on those days.

But As I was praying about today – Final message...

A) Here is the Word that I felt the Lord led me to give you today in my final message as your Lead Pastor

B) The Lord placed on my heart 2 Peter 3:18

¹⁸ But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him *be* the glory both now and forever. Amen. 2 Peter 3:18

Now Peter is credited for writing two epistles or letters in the NT

A) 1&2 Peter are amazing letters written by Peter under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit

B) In these letters he instructed the Church about having Hope in Suffering 1 Peter 1:3-9

C) He has exhorted about Living Holy lives

1) About their spiritual identity in Jesus as a Royal Priesthood 1 Peter 2:9,10

He wrote to the Pastors regarding the right and wrong way to shepherd the church 1 Peter 5

A) He wrote about the need to Grow in Maturity 2 Peter 1:5-8

B) He wrote about the Authority of Scripture 2 Peter 1:19-21

C) He wrote about the Certainty of Christ return 2 Peter 3:3-10

D) He wrote about Living in light of Eternity 2 Peter 3:1-14

But I am intrigued in the way that Peter ends his letters. He ends it with the exhortation to grow.

A) That makes total sense – because in the Christian life we are to never stop growing

B) Now He could have said: Grow in your perseverance – definitely needed

C) Grow in your Knowledge and understanding of the Word – Must

D) Grow your Holiness – Yes and Amen

D) Grow in your longing for Christ to return – Essential

E) But he doesn't emphasize any of those things. –

His message to the Church is to Grow in the Grace and Knowledge of our Lord Jesus.

A) Peter experienced the RADICAL GRACE OF GOD 1st hand

B) Peter was what I would call a can do guy. – I can do it – I’ve got this

C) He tried to serve Jesus in his own strength and stand for Jesus in his own strength –

1) Failed miserably

On the night that Jesus was going to be arrested and go to the Cross – Peter did the unthinkable – the unimaginable

A) Jesus told his disciples that all of them would forsake him that night

B) Peter boasted – not me.... Losers – I am ready to die for you.

1) You know the story that night Peter denied that he even knew Jesus 3 times

C) It has been said that when a man gets to the end of himself – he gets to the beginning of God

That night Peter came to the end of himself – he came to realize –

A) I can’t follow Jesus and serve Jesus in my own strength

B) Peter was stripped of his pride – which was Key

1 Peter 5:5 be clothed with humility, for “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

C) Peter was humbled by his failures.

After Peter denied even Knowing Jesus 3X –

A) Rooster crowed – EYES met – Not I told you so – Looser – Done with you

B) It is going to be ok - The rest of Peter’s story supports that idea

C) After the Resurrection – Jesus meet with Peter – Peter received Forgiveness from Jesus –

1) But not just forgiveness but a 2nd chance

See Peter wasn’t just forgiven – he was recommissioned by Jesus into ministry

A) He was used Powerfully – as an Apostle and servant of Jesus

B) And Because Peter was a recipient of Great Grace Peter became a Champion of God’s grace

C) In 1 Peter 5:12 He calls it the Grace in which we stand

D) What is Grace?

Grace is God’s Unmerited, undeserved, unearned Favor

A) Grace is getting what you don’t deserve.

B) Grace is God giving and blessing / not because of what you are doing but in spite of what you are doing or have done

C) Grace is essential for our Christian walks

D) As I was praying about today – The Lord prompted my heart to encourage US –

1) Grow in Grace

E) 3 REASONS WHY we need to grow in Grace:

1. Because: We need God’s Grace personally
2. Because: Your church family needs God’s Grace collectively
3. Because: Our world needs to experience God’s Grace practically

#1 Grow in Grace because we need it personally

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹not of works, lest anyone should boast. Ephesians 2:8-9

A) We are saved by God’s grace through Faith

B) When we get to heaven – no boasting – no look what I did –

C) We will all be rejoicing in the Grace of God !

Author Phillip Yancey wrote In his book, “What’s So Amazing About Grace?”, “The notion of God’s love coming to us free of charge, no strings attached, seems to go against every instinct of humanity. Here is one of the reasons I am so convinced the Bible, and the Christian Gospel, come from God: never in a million, zillion years would performance-prone humans come up with the concept of grace.”

Max Lucado writes, “*I have never been surprised by God’s judgment, but I am still stunned by His grace.*”

I could not agree more!

So it is God's grace that saved us – and it is the Grace of God that continues to Sustain us

A) Or as Peter put it – It is thru grace that we STAND – GRACE SUSTAINS US

B) Pastor Chuck Smith wrote a wonderful book entitled Why Grace changes everything.

C) Great title because it really does. –

D) The more we grow in Grace the more that we understand the truth of that title

Early in my Christian experience – I lived with a Performance based acceptance mentality with God

A) Meaning: If I was performing well – Reading...

B) Praying, witnessing – not giving into my flesh – I Believed that God accepted me

1) That God was happy with me

C) That mentality created two horrible attitudes in my heart – One – when I was performing well –

1) Pride – What's wrong with you?

D) But when I wasn't performing well – which was the majority of the time – CONDEMNATION

When I finally came to understand that God didn't accept me based on my performance

A) But on the performance of Jesus - He loved me regardless of how I was performing

B) Everything changed - I was able to jump off that performance treadmill and just enjoy God –

1) Enjoy his grace – Enjoy my relationship with God

C) That remarkably led to my behavior and practices changing –

D) I grew in consistency in my walk with Jesus - stopped trying to earn his favor.

1) Simply responding to the FACT – I was already in favor with God – because of Jesus

E) All a result of the Grace in which we stand

1) God's amazing Saving Grace and Sustaining Grace

But another thing I learned about Grace is this:
The Word Grace creates a great Acronym

A) G-God's

R-Riches or Resources

A-At

C-Christ's

E-Expense

B) The idea is that all the Resources and Riches that we need to live the Christian life – Serve God -

1) come through Jesus – Conduit of His Grace

C) And The place I have experienced this a lot has been in Ministry

See The Last thing I ever imagined myself doing for God was being a Pastor

A) I am an introvert by nature

B) And so the idea of standing up in front of people and talking –

1) the Last thing I could picture myself doing

C) Most of you know my story – how I was called... But for the 10 of you who don't hear it again

D) Growing up my dream and goal – Professional Baseball player

1) I experienced some success in High School –

Played on a scout team for the NY Mets –

MY Goal was making the Big Leagues

A) If my Dream to play in the pros didn't happen – I was hoping I could have a decent college career

B) And then Coach College Baseball.

C) I got a Scholarship to Vanguard U– everything was on track –

All Changed one night Went with a friend to the Believers meeting at CCCM – never been to that

A) The Lord called me out of a room of 800 people – Give up playing – calling into the Ministry

B) After that night I received many more confirmations –

1) God had a different plan - Different kind of Coach

C) Ministry and pointing people to Jesus

Dilemma – On a Baseball Scholarship –

A) Dad's advice – You are never going to be happy until you are doing what the Lord called you to do –

B)I Quit that week – never looked back

C)38 years later – Dads death bed.

D)Over the past 30 yrs I have experienced God's grace – resources equipping me to lead this church – Grown in becoming a teacher of the Word

A)Grown in Counseling – and Coaching others in ministry and the things of the Lord

B)Over the 30 yrs that I have been the pastor here –

1)I have seen God in his Grace do extraordinary things through this church Family

C)CV is not a small Church – but we are not a HUGE church either

C)HUGE IMPACT – Community around the world

In the 30 years that I have had the privilege of Serving and leading this church –

A)We have helped plant 19 other churches all over the USA / World – unheard of for a church our size

B)First to say: Not because of me – but in-spite of me

C)Other guys that God was raising up here

1)If God can use Pastor Rob like that – maybe he can use me ☺

D)I got to encourage them – send them out or come along side of them

1)Today one of my great Joys is to coach other pastors to dream big by depending on the Grace of God.

Over the years I have watched so many of you – follow God's leading and depend upon his grace

A)To do amazing things – Dream Big

B)When I hear that there that there were 900 kids served at the Merry Mall –

1)over 120 volunteers – Rejoice - Not my idea

B)OCC Child packing party – 2500 boxes -NMI-R

C)Seen whole groups of you going down to Mexico to build a house

1)or going to Africa to minister to needy kids – Rejoice

When I hear of the number of you who serve weekly at Solutions for change – Blessed to be a blessing

A)The 18 or so Volunteers who show up here every Wed morning to serve the 100 plus cars who show up

B)Weekly Food distribution – Helping feed 100's of Families in our community on a weekly basis – Rejoice – NM Idea

C)The beautiful Grandmas who make up the Go-Go grandmothers –

1)bring care to Grandmas and kids in Africa – Rejoice

When I think about the over 300 people who serve here at CV on a regular basis in various capacities –

A)Again – incredibly unusual – Serving Body

B)When I saw over 40 of you respond to the call to serve in our parking Lot on Sundays – Rejoice

C)All of you who are serving in these various ways are allowing God's Grace – to play out in your life –

1)I Rejoice – Partnership in the Gospel

D)Jesus using Ordinary people to do Extra-ordinary things – Fills my heart with Joy

E)All of that is through the Grace of God.

Thankful to have played a small part in encouraging you to make yourselves available to God. Dream Big

A)I love seeing ministry happen that I am not a part of but that I can support and inspire.

B)I have never been to Merry Mall – always a commitment –

C)Never been on the trip to Mexico – to build a house – Believe me you don't need me

D)Never served at Solutions for Change – Never been to the Wednesday food Distribution

MY point is The work of ministry here has never revolved around me –

A)I just played my part as the teacher / coach

B)You as a Church have learned to Depend upon the Grace of God to empower you to do the impossible

1)That fills my heart with GREAT JOY

C)And I want to say to you today church – Don't lose that – Grow in Grace

1)Grow in your Knowledge of who Jesus is

D)So God can do more IN US – WITH US AND THROUGH US – AMEN ?

E)So we need to grow in grace because need it we personally -To walk with Jesus and serve Jesus

#2 We need to grow in Grace because our church family needs it Collectively

A)One of the things I have repeatedly told you is this: None of us has arrived – all broken people..... loving redeemer

B)We all are in different places in our walks with Jesus – Some 40 years others 40 days

C)All growing – need to remember that – Show Grace!

One of the things that the Lord has shown me in my 30 years here is this:

A)Everyone comes into this place with Baggage

B)We all have hurts that we have experienced in life – disappointments that has happened to us

C)All of that affects the way that we think about God and approach God

D)Also affects the way that we interact with others.

Because of that Baggage we all carry – we need to show each other a lot of Grace.

A)There was a time in my Christian experience where I was around a group that was Legalistic

B)They seemed to present a certain IDEAL about the Christian life –

1)if you lived up to that ideal – accepted –

C)If you didn't you weren't accepted – you were labeled – 2nd class – a less than -

D)I am thankful that CV is not that type of Place

We are becoming a place that gives people room to grow.

A)We are becoming a place that realizes – We are all a work in progress

B)Justification (justified declared righteous because of Jesus) is the miracle of a moment –

C)Sanctification (becoming like Jesus) is the process of a lifetime.

D)I am thankful that this is a place where we believe in 2nd and 3rd and 4th chances

Church family – You love each other Well – Not a lot of Drama – not a lot of schisms

A)I became Pastor here when I was 32 years old. –

B)Although I had pastored another church for 4.5 yrs - I had a lot to learn

C)You were gracious with me –You allowed me to grow as a Pastor and leader

Believe it or not in the 30 years that I have been here serving as the Lead pastor –

A)I have made some mistakes ☺

B)I have Never felt like you held those against me – thankful

C)Can I just say -As pastor Jason assumes the role of Lead Pastor – in this next season

D)He is also going to make some mistakes as well

E)You need to SHOW even more GRACE to him and Christy as you did to Denise AND I

If there is a Leadership decision that is made that you are wrestling with –

A)Don't go and talk to your friends –

B)what do you think about that? - That just breeds gossip – Discord

Remind You Proverbs 6 – Six things the Lord hates – 7 are an abomination to him

A)Strong language: Not many things the Lord hates – Many things that are an abomination to him

B)The last thing in that list: He/she that SOWS discord among the brethren

C)Don't do that family: Show Grace –

D) Pray for Jason and His wife Christy and our leaders.

E) Don't complain to me ... I made that decision ☺

I LOVE that Paul the APOSTLE

A) Told his young protégé Timothy

You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. 2 Timothy 2:1

B) Let me give you some ways we as a Family can be strong in Grace and Continue to Grow in Grace

C) We can be strong in Grace and Grow in Grace
➤ **With our Words – in our conversations**

Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone." Colossians 4:6 NIV

D) We can extend God's grace w/ our words

E) Gracious words are life giving. They point to Jesus.

1) They are seasoned with truth and kindness.

The opposite of Gracious talk is unwholesome talk "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen," (Ephesians 4.29 NIV).

The term *unwholesome talk* can be translated "abusive, corrupt" —

A) It literally means "rotten or worthless."

B) Worthless words inflict pain; gracious words bring healing.

C) Worthless words are abusive; gracious words are gentle.

1) Worthless words tear down; gracious words build up.

D) Worthless words injure; gracious words benefit those who hear them.

So we can be Strong in Grace with our Words

A) We can also be strong in Grace – by using our gifts to help others

"In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well," (Romans 12.6 NLT).

B) You can extend God's grace by serving people with the talents and gifts God has given you.

C) God instilled in each of us certain aptitudes and abilities as part of the fabric of our unique design.

D) And the Holy Spirit also gifted you with certain spiritual gifts,

1) Energizing you with His power to serve others and glorify God.

E) When you serve other people using the talents and gifts God has given you,

1) you are extending grace to them.

Peter wrote, "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms." (1 Peter 4.10 NIV).

A) Peter is telling us - we all are stewards of God's grace in the gifts- he has given us

B) They are ours on loan from God.

1) and we are accountable to Him for how you use what He gave you to BLESS and serve others.

C) I am sure it is a beautiful picture to God -to see His people receiving His grace through special gifts

1) and then sharing them with others.

D) The result is that grace is multiplied and Joy grows exponentially.

E) Dad- Never going to be truly happy and fulfilled until doing what God has called you to do

1) And using the Gifts and abilities he has given you TO USE for his Glory

A 3rd way we can be strong in Grace is to come alongside each other when we are struggling

A) Joe at the Cohort – The other guys leaned in.

B) Joe later joked – invite 6 guys who are doing well- and one train wreck

C) Galatians 6:1-2 paints a picture of a Spirit-led grace-giver.

“Dear brothers and sisters, if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself. Share each other’s burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ.” Galatians 6:1-2 NLT

D)NKJV - Bear one another’s burdens

May this Continue to be a place where hurting people can come

A)When we see others who are hurting going through stuff

B)We as a church family lean in – not run away

So We need to Grow in Grace because We need it personally –

A)#2 Our church family needs it collectively

B)#3 Because the World outside of here needs to experience God’s Grace practically

C)We live in this world that is so divisive – Cancel Culture is A major problem

D)People are divided politically – socially –

Now I am not suggesting that we don’t take a stand for Righteousness and or Call out sin –

A)And what is wrong in our culture

B)We are called to do that as Christ Followers

C)But the way that we do that - matters. –

D)And I think many in the BIG C -Church have been doing it the wrong Way - for a long time

Because of that The Church of Jesus has become MORE known for what it is against

A)Instead of what it is for. –

B)That is really Sad.

Think about this: Jesus lived at a time that was one of the most politically and socially charged in History

A)Politically – The Jewish people were living under Roman oppression

B)Living under Rulers that they didn’t agree with politically or morally

1)Rulers who were oppressive – Taxes were high

C)There was nothing that the Jewish people liked about the Govt they were living under.

And it was also a Socially Charged time

A)Jews hated non-Jews or Gentiles and Vice versa

B)There were class wars – the Rich oppressed the poor

C)Sexual Immorality was rampant in the Roman Empire –

1)Homosexuality was almost as rampant

D)BUT Remember what the Apostle John said about Jesus during that time

How He described Jesus and his conduct in such times – John 1:14 We beheld his glory the glory of the only begotten of the father – full of Grace and truth

A)Grace: God’s undeserved favor

B)Truth: GOD’S Righteousness and Justice –

C)The Life of Jesus was the perfect blending of the two –

1)not ½ and ½ - Full of Grace and Full of truth

That is why this is what was said about him.

A)He was called the friend of sinners, tax collectors. Luke 7:13

B)Sinners – the worst of the worst were drawn to Jesus

C)Prostitutes sought to be in his presence

D)Lepers broke social customs seeking an audience with him

Why? – He extended them Grace –

A)He touches the Leper – I see you – you are human

B)Forgave the Prostitute –

C)To the woman caught in adultery – Neither do I condemn you – go and sin no more

He had Compassion on people –

A)Realized the reason for their poor and sinful behavior - - sheep without a shepherd

B)And that is why the gospels say this about Jesus – the Common people heard him gladly

C)Friends here me on this: There are a lot of common people in the world today –

1)not listening to the message of the church – gladly

We can forget that many people around us are suffering from the same problem as people were in Jesus day–

A)They don't have a shepherd.

B)So why do We expect things of them that Jesus didn't

C)Listen Jesus always spoke truth – never shied away from speaking truth –

D)Jesus was SOFT or milk toast in his approach

E)But the way that He spoke truth was showered with Grace and compassion

It is interesting to me that the only people Jesus didn't seem to have a lot of Grace for –

A)Were the religious leaders in Israel

B)The Ones who knew the Bible – but didn't live the Bible

C)The Ones who themselves had experienced so much of the grace and compassion

D)They experienced so much of God's love and patience in their own lives – Toward their nation

E)But in their pride – failed to show that same love grace and compassion to the people around them

Calvary Vista – Let's make sure we are not guilty of doing the same thing!

A)Because Jesus had no patience for those religious leaders

B)He often rebuked them – saying of all the people – You should Know better

God resist the proud but give Grace to the Humble

A)So As we humble ourselves – don't think too highly of ourselves

B)As we remember what it was like to be lost and foolish – rebellious

1)and how Gracious God was with us

C)We will continue to be a family that is growing in Grace

As that happens – may it be said of us –

A)The family at CV reminds me a lot of Jesus –

B)The Family there is Full of Grace and Truth

C)So the Word I leave you with today – Family –

D)Grow in the Grace and Knowledge of Jesus – Amen?