

Sermon 25, Grow, or Fall, 2 Peter 3:17-18

Proposition: If you do not grow in knowing Christ, you will fall away.

- I. The Warning: Guard Against Threats to the Knowledge of Christ, v. 17
 - A. You Know the Truth
 - B. You Know it in advance
 - C. Lawless men want to take you with them
 - D. Your steadfastness is mutable
- II. The Command: Grow in Grace and Knowledge of Christ, v. 18
 - A. Seek God's Favor
 - B. Seek to Know Jesus
- III. The Point: Jesus Deserves All Worship

Introduction

Dearly beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, we come tonight to the final installment of our series on 1 Peter. We have spent the last twenty-four sermons looking at the beauties of this book, which has told us both how to grow in the knowledge of Christ and warned us against threats to the knowledge of Christ. Peter hits on both of those themes one last time as he draws his letter to a close, and he does it by telling us just how high the stakes are. If you do not grow in knowing Christ, you will fall away — and you don't want to do that, because Jesus deserves all worship and glory, now and in the day of eternity.

I. The Warning: Guard Against Threats to the Knowledge of Christ, v. 17

Well, first the negative, the warning: You need to guard yourself against any and all threats to the knowledge of Christ.

A. You Know the Truth

After all, you know the truth. You are aware that Jesus is returning to do a final inspection and judgment on the earth. You already have it from a reputable source that He is going to come back and judge, and that He's only waiting because He wants to give everyone on earth the maximum amount of time for repentance.

Peter, like the other Biblical writers, tells us these things not because we don't know the truth but because we know it. He writes to those who are not untaught and unstable, but to those who are taught and stable, who have some knowledge of Christ and aren't constantly falling away from the Christ they know. Brothers and sisters, in general, at an evening service, that's us. We know the truth. We have what we need already

B. You Know it in advance

Not only do you know the truth, but you know it now, when it's most advantageous. Don't we say things like this all the time? "You could have told me." Or "Wish I'd known that." Or "Oh.

That would have been really good to know.” But when judgment day comes, we won’t be saying “Why did nobody tell me that this was going to happen?” We already know what’s going to happen on judgment day. We have been forewarned. We have already had God’s criteria announced to us.

And since you know the truth and you know what’s coming for the world, Peter says, guard yourself. Look out for the false teachers who will arise within the church. That means beware of listening to them and beware of being them. Either or both can befall you. But forewarned is forearmed. The false teachers have lost the element of surprise; you will be ready when you hear one, when you feel the temptation to be one, because you already what false teachers look like, what they talk like, and what is attractive and deadly about their lifestyle.

C. Lawless men want to take you with them

Because make no mistake: Lawless men want to take you with them into lawlessness. Peter says that he’s writing so that you and I won’t be carried away by the error of lawless men. To be lawless is to live as though the law does not apply. Driving 80 mph in a school zone is an act of lawlessness. To do it is to act as though the statutes about speeding don’t even exist. To sodomize someone, or to justify sodomy, is to act as though God’s design for sexuality doesn’t even exist.

But lawless men will never be satisfied with being lawless for themselves while you behave in a very upright fashion. Not at all. They will always demand that you accompany them. They will always ask that you go along with them in their lawless activities. And when you say no, they will stop asking and start forcing. We have seen it in our own lifetime, as the homosexual lobby has gone from being the love that dare not speak its name to the love that will not shut up.

The error of lawless men is powerful. It’s something that can and will carry you away unless you actively stand against it.

D. Your steadfastness is mutable

You see, you can’t assume that you are not at risk. You are. You are in a safe position; you are steadfast if you are grounded in Christ. But that can change. The flood of error that lawless men pour out is more than capable of being the tsunami that sweeps you away from your firm foundation on Christ. So don’t bank on your steadfastness. Don’t make decisions based on a “nothing can touch me” attitude. Instead, in humility make your decisions based on the reality that the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. Yes, Christ is a firm foundation — but many a better Christian than you has been carried away by the error of lawless men and made shipwreck of his faith. Your steadfastness can crumble; only Christ is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.

So guard yourselves. You can lose your safe position. You can fall from grace. You’ve been warned. Don’t do it.

II. The Command: Grow in Grace and Knowledge of Christ, v. 18

Instead, Peter says, positively do two things: grow in grace, and grow in the knowledge of Christ. These are commands for the Christian, not suggestions.

A. Seek God's Favor

You need to seek God's favor. That's what grace is: God's unmerited favor. Seek to grow in it. How do you do that? By getting wiser, as we've talked about in our Proverbs sermons. In brief, pray and work. Worship and serve. Do the things that you know God loves, and you will gain more of His favor. Again, His favor is by definition undeserved — but the means of grace He has given us are the way in which He typically communicates His favor to us. We don't ever earn it in the sense of putting God in our debt — but we can nonetheless please Him and do what He loves and favors. So seek His favor. Grow in grace.

B. Seek to Know Jesus

And who does the Father favor above all others? Who but His Son! If you want the Father's favor, your number-one priority should be to please Christ. You please Him by knowing Him and being like Him. We have already seen over and over in this book that you get to know Jesus by standing in His presence in worship, encountering Him in His word, and checking yourself to be sure that you are not becoming a false teacher. You know Jesus by spending time with Him in prayer, and by growing closer to His people. So seek to know Him. Seek to be like Him.

That is the basic element of the Christian life: knowing Christ.

III. The Point: Jesus Deserves All Worship

Because if you know Him, you will worship Him. He deserves glory, now and forever. The day of eternity is the ongoing timeless reality that we call eternity. It's far longer than a day, of course — it's an eternity. But it is like one eternal unbroken divine day. And Jesus is glorified through all of it. So worship Him. Praise Him. Give Him the glory He deserves, now and forever. To do this is to show that really and truly have assimilated the knowledge of Christ. To Him be the glory, now and in the day of eternity. Amen.