

Until Then (Part 5)

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Preacher: Fred Stone

- [0 : 0 0] Thank you, Michael. That is a great song. That'd be a good song for us to listen to when we get ready to sit down and read the Bible, wouldn't it? Asking God to let us hear His ancient words speak to us today.
- When you were a child, did you ever maybe lean against a door jam or maybe even a wall and let one of your parents measure how tall you were?
- If you didn't do that as a child, maybe your parents did that for you. Just out of curiosity, how many of you have ever done that with your child? Okay, a lot of people have. We did that with our boys.
- It's fun, isn't it? As children to see how you grow and as parents to look back at how they have grown over the years. But you know, once we get to be adults, some of us make the mistake of thinking that our growing years are over.
- Now, it's true. You reach a point where you do not grow taller. And we're certainly not going to spend any time on growing wider this morning. Because we don't want to think about that.
- [1 : 1 4] But in most other ways, shouldn't we throughout our lives want and really put forth the effort to grow mentally, emotionally?
- Some people just need to get mature. They're 50 years old and still haven't grown up. I was in a restaurant one time with people. And I tore off the end of that straw.
- And I hit them upside the head. And it made them so mad, they looked at me and said, grow up. And I said, no, I don't want to. Some things you don't want to just not have fun in life.
- But at the same time, we need to grow. We need to grow relationally, in our relationships, expand our relationships. Well, if we're Christians, our number one priority when it comes to growth should be our spiritual growth.
- And there are several reasons for saying that. Number one, spiritual growth is God's number one priority for us if we are His children. I want you to think.
- [2 : 2 3] God puts His Spirit in us when He saves us. And from that moment on, the Holy Spirit works in us to give us desires and the ability to please God.
- To grow and mature and please God and be able to do God's will. God works through all the events of our lives. Hard times and good times.
- To shape and mold our character. Making us more and more like His Son. We read about in Romans chapter 8 and verse 29. Well, if you think about it.
- Our spiritual growth will positively affect every aspect of our lives. If we grow spiritually. If we develop the right kind of character.
- Christ-like character. It'll affect every relationship we're involved in. It'll affect how we treat people. How we talk to people. How we talk about people. Spiritual growth will enhance every relationship.

- [3 : 28] It will make you a better, more godly human being. Now, the number one tool that God uses to help us to grow spiritually.
- You know. It's the Bible. The Bible contains everything that we need to know. In terms of our knowledge of God. God's world. Ourselves.
- How to live in a right relationship with God. How to be right with other people. The Bible really contains everything we need. In terms of what we should believe. And how we should live. In order to please God.
- Serve the people God's put in our lives. And if we do that. Really. If we as Christians. Have this desire. Put forth the effort. To please God.
- Serve other people. It will come back to us. As something that. Makes life worthwhile. It'll give us a sense of. Of meaning. And even. Purpose.
- [4 : 31] In our lives. Now. The Bible doesn't just provide. General instructions. About the way we live. The Bible. The Bible. Also addresses.
- Specific. Issues. That interfere. With our spiritual growth. For an example. Most of the New Testament letters. Were written to churches.
- Christians. That were having particular problems. Most of the New Testament letters. Were written. To correct problems. That were preventing Christians from growing.
- In some cases. Is that. The growth. Had just. Had gone backward. They not only ceased to grow. But they were falling back. Into some. Immoral lifestyles.
- Well for the past. Four weeks. We've been looking at one particular letter. Second Peter. And toward the end of chapter three. Go ahead and turn back there. If you would.
- [5 : 30] This letter was written. Primarily. To address problems. That were caused. By false teachers. False teachers. False teachers. Who were. Teaching some things. That were not true.
- About the second coming of Jesus. But also. Second Peter. Was written. To combat. The influence. Of false teachers. As we saw last week. Who were doing. Some immoral things.
- They were twisting scripture. To say things. That the Bible does not say. So Peter. Addresses this problem. In this second letter. He addressed the problems.
- Of the kind of people. These false teachers were. In chapter two. In particular. What we've been doing. Is we've been looking at. How Peter closed out. His letter.
- By calling Christians. To live faithfully. And grow spiritually. Until the day comes. When we see Jesus. Face to face. Let's read one more time. Second Peter chapter three.
- [6 : 28] Beginning in verse 13. He says. But according to his promise. We are waiting. For new heavens. And a new earth. In which righteousness.
- Dwells. Peter has spent. The most part. Of chapter three. Up to this point. Correcting. The false teaching. About. The return of Jesus. Well now.
- In verse 14. He's done that. He's corrected that. In verse 14. He's going to close out. The letter. By. Telling us some things. Commanding some things.
- That we ought to do. That will help us. To grow spiritually. To actually be prepared. To see Jesus. When he comes back. Look at it.
- Verse 14. Therefore beloved. Since you are waiting. For these things. Be diligent. To be found by him. Without spot or blemish. And at peace. And count the patience.
- [7 : 23] Of our Lord. As salvation. Just as our beloved. Brother Paul. Also wrote to you. According to the wisdom. God. As he does. In all his letters. When he speaks in them.
- Of these matters. There are some things. In them. That are hard to understand. Which the ignorant. And unstable. Twist. To their own destruction. As they do. The other scriptures.

You therefore beloved. Knowing this beforehand. Take care. That you are not. Carried away. With the error. Of lawless people. And lose your own stability.

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. The day is going to come. When we. Are going to stand. Before the Lord. And look him in the eye. It will be.

[8 : 20] Either the day. We die. Or if we're alive. When he returns. It will be that day. But what Peter is telling us here. Will help us. When we see him.

To have a smile on our face. And to see a smile. On his face. Instead of us being afraid. Let's take his instructions to heart.

Look at him. Number one. Get serious about your character. We saw that the first week. Number two. Make the most of God's patience. Number three. Stay on guard. Against false teachers.

Two things. About what we've seen. About that. Don't listen to teachers. Who twist the meaning of scripture. To change what the Bible. Clearly teaches. About right beliefs.

And behaviors. Don't listen to people. That. It's obvious. From you listening to them. And what you know about the Bible. They're not telling the truth. They are.

[9 : 17] Being deceptive. Don't even listen to them. Number two. Don't allow anyone or anything. To undermine your. Biblically based convictions. And cause you to fall away.

From a close relationship with God. If there's anyone or anything. In your life right now. That is tempting you. To compromise. What you know is right.

Get away from them. Don't listen. Don't be around them. Don't let anyone or anything. Tempt you even.

To compromise. What you know. Is the right way to live. Before God. The right way to live. With your spouse. With your children. Don't listen.

Don't be. Don't even allow. Such temptation in your life. Now the last thing. We find in this passage. Is a positive word. About the best way. To develop Christian character. And guard against false teachers.

[10 : 17] Let's look at it. Number four. Make your spiritual growth. A lifelong priority. Look at the first sentence. Of verse 18. But grow in the grace. And knowledge. Of our Lord and Savior.

Jesus Christ. The key to being spiritually healthy. Is to continue to grow. Someone said. That living a Christian life. Is like riding a bicycle.

Unless you keep moving. You fall off. Peter would have said that. If he had known. What a bicycle was. It makes the point.

To be a healthy Christian. To be a stable person. In what you believe. And how you live. You got to keep on growing. Because no one stands still. This last sentence.

We just read. Is really a summary statement. Of this whole letter. Peter is actually telling us. Here now. The best way for you. To guard against false teaching.

[11 : 15] The best way for you. To not have. Your convictions. Compromised. Is to stay focused. On listening to God. Walking with God.

Growing. In your relationship. With Jesus. Now. He tells us here. We need to grow. In the grace. And knowledge. Of the Lord. So let's. Let's think about.

What he's talking about. Number one. Grow in grace. You know. That grace is God's undeserved favor. His unearned favor. Well Peter uses this word here.

To describe. In a little bit more detail. The spiritual strength. That the Lord gives us. Which is unearned. Undeserved.

The way the Lord may give us. Spiritual strength. The way the Lord may grace us. Us. And one of the ways. He does grace us. Is he puts his spirit in us.

[12 : 14] And the Holy Spirit. Works in us. To give us. The. Character qualities. Called the fruit of the spirit. Things like. Love.

And joy. And peace. And patience. And kindness. Goodness. Faithfulness. Gentleness. Self-control. Those are grace. Gifts from God. God. Now. The idea here may be.

The Lord gives us the ability. To demonstrate these qualities. Especially when we have to deal with. Difficult people. And difficult situations. That's where it becomes hard.

Isn't it? I've never had too many problems. Just being in general. A loving. And joyful. Person. When I'm alone. I mean.

I have good. I can ride down the road. And have great thoughts. I can sit down. In my house. When no one's around. And read the Bible. I'm a pretty. Pretty.

[13 : 13] Godly guy. And I'm going to guess. You are too. But it takes some effort. To love certain people.

It takes some effort. To really be able to experience. Joy. In life. In your relationship with the Lord. Around certain people. Doesn't it?

You know some of those people. You may be some of those people. We need help sometimes. There's a lot of times in my life.

Where I truly feel like I am a. Peaceful and patient person. But then I get in my truck. And I drive to Easley. On Highway 8.

And there's somebody in front of me. In the left lane. Doing 35 miles an hour. I am anything but. A peaceful. Patient. And peaceful person. At that time.

[14 : 08] I need help. If I've ever been behind you. I'm sorry. It's some of the things. I may have. Mouthed off. Or some of the signs. I may have shown. Not.

I didn't. I don't do that kind of stuff. You wouldn't see it. But you know what I mean. There's things.

There's people. Situations in your life. Where. You need. God. To help you to think. And act.

With self-control. With patience. Peter is writing here. And telling us. That while we are.

Always dependent. Upon God's. Grace. We can't make. We don't save ourselves. And we can't make ourselves. More like Jesus. We can't develop. Christ like character.

[15 : 06] On our own. Only God. Can truly do that work in us. But. God requires. That we cooperate. With him. As he works. God requires. That we obey him.

When he gives us. The desire. To do his will. To do the right thing. The point here. In verse 18. Is that. We are.

To grow. Peter is writing. To Christians. People like us. He says to you. But. Grow. In the grace. And knowledge. Of our Lord. We are commanded.

In various parts. Of the New Testament. To put forth. Real. Effort. Look at it. Here's some examples. From Hebrews. Strive. Strive.

Work at it. Put forth. Great effort. For peace. With everyone. Because some people. It's hard to do. And for the holiness. Without which.

[16 : 04] No one. Will see the Lord. Think about that. We are to strive. For peace. With everyone. And to develop. Holy character. Godly.

Character. Being different. From the world. Kind of character. And look at this. From James chapter 1. You know this. He said just real plainly. But be doers of the word.

And not hearers only. Deceiving yourself. You know. Coming to church. Being in Sunday school. If you were. Being in this service.

We're reading the Bible. We're listening to the Bible. Being read. Don't congratulate yourself.

What God is concerned is. Not just what we hear. Although that's important. But that we act.

[17 : 02] On what we hear. I don't want to discourage. Anyone from coming to church. But by you hearing this. You're sort of on the hook. Every time we come to church.

Every time we read the Bible. For ourselves. We are. Becoming more aware. Of our responsibility. Before God. And he's going to hold us. Accountable for it. So hear what James is saying.

Hear what. The writer of the Hebrews is saying. And then look at one more. Paul emphasized. The grace of God. More than. Because of the volume. Of what he wrote. In the New Testament.

Paul understood. That we are still. Responsible. To obey God. And put forth. Great effort. I want you to look at. What he said. At the end of. Second Corinthians nine.

He's using an athletic. Idea here. Picture for us. Look at it. Every athlete. Exercises self-control. In all things. They do it. To receive a perishable wreath.

[18 : 00] But we an imperishable. So I do not run. Aimlessly. I do not box. As one beating the air. But I discipline my body. And keep it under control.

Lest. After preaching to others. I myself. Should be disqualified. Paul. Paul. I exercise this great self-control.

I discipline myself. I'm very purposeful. He's saying. He understood how important it is. It's just part of living a Christian life. It's a part of living a Christian life.

God works in us. Through his spirit. To give us the right kind of desires. He'll give us the ability. To put it into practice. But we've got to. Obey. We've got to strive.

We've got to exercise self-control. Sometimes we've got to close our mouths. Sometimes we've got to say something kind. Sometimes we've got to go out of our way.

[18 : 58] Inconvenience ourselves. To meet someone's need. Sometimes we've got to give money. Sometimes we've got to give time. It's a part of our responsibility.

Being obedient to what God's doing in us. Through his spirit. The question now is for us. Do you think. Am I growing in such grace? Am I cooperating with God?

As he gives me the right kind of desires. See all of us. We have good desires a lot of times. And good intentions. We're going to make that call.

To that person that we know. We need to say a good word to. We have the right desire. About saying something positive. Encouraging someone. Or not repeating the gossip.

But we don't follow through. We need to be growing in the grace. That God gives us. And the question is.

[20 : 05] Are you? Number two. We need to grow in knowledge. This refers to growing in our knowledge of Christ. In terms of our relationship with him. And. Growing in our knowledge about him.

We need to have a growing personal relationship. With the Lord. That touches our heart and soul. We need to have a heartfelt. Faith. A heartfelt relationship.

With him. That affects the way that we. Feel. And live our lives. But at the same time. We need to have a growing knowledge of the Lord.

Who he is. What he's done. How we can follow him. We need to have a relationship with him. That affects the way that we think. And what we think. You know.

Our knowledge of Jesus. Will include knowledge. Of all the. What all the Bible says. Is about. Living his. As his follower. Not just learning about. Not just having knowledge of Jesus.

[21 : 04] But. All about. Being like him. Following him. And if we'll do that. That will help us. To spot. False teaching.

And avoid being led astray. You know. It's impossible. For us to know everything. That all the cults. Around us today. Believe. It's impossible.

For us to be. Up to date. On all the different. Ways. People twist scripture. But we don't have to be. It's our responsibility. As Christians.

To know. What the Bible actually teaches. Know what the Bible teaches. About Jesus. What it means to. Trust Jesus. As your Savior and Lord.

What it means to follow him. To grow. In the development. Of Christ like character. And if we'll know the truth. Of God's word. In a general way. We'll have a. A solid.

[21 : 57] Basic. Christian. Doctrine. Teaching. We'll be able to spot. Those who teach error. We'll be able to spot.

Those who are twisting. The scripture. To say something. That it does not mean. We need to know the truth. So I want to ask you again. How well are you growing. In grace and knowledge.

Chuck Swindoll. Makes a helpful point. About keeping our growth. In grace and knowledge. Both. In balance. Look at what he says.

The trick is keeping these two in balance. For example. Grace will keep you tolerant. And strong. And loving. While knowledge will keep you strong. Grace will make you compassionate.

While knowledge will make you discerning. Grace will help you smile. Knowledge will help you think. And then he says. To monitor your progress.

[22 : 55] Ask yourselves these questions. Now listen. Look at it. Ask yourselves these questions. Have I come to the place. Where some of the things. That once through me. No longer do.

Am I stable. Where I once. Was not. Can I handle things. That I once. Could not. That you think about you.

What are some things in your past. That really. Threw you. Do they. No longer. Because you've grown. What about some ways.

That you used to think. Or feel. That really was unstable. Unhealthy. Have you worked through that. Have you grown.

Are you now. More. Stable. In certain. Ways. That you weren't. A few years ago.

[23 : 57] Were there things. That you just absolutely. Go to pieces about. You could not handle. Couldn't deal with. Certain people. Have you grown. To the point where. By God's grace.

With his help. You can. Now. It is very important. For us to think about. If we have grown. There should be evidence.

In our lives. People around us. People who know us. Should see. None of us have arrived. But there should be growth. Steve Brown. Says something along that line.

That I think is very helpful. I want you to look at what he says. God is not looking so much. At where. We are. Along the road. To spiritual maturity. Instead. He's looking at two things. First.

He wants to know. Where you have come from. And second. He wants to know. The direction. You are going. Then he says.

[24 : 53] You may not be as far down the road. Of spiritual maturity. As the person sitting next to you. But that's okay. As long as you are moving. Forward. Are you moving forward.

In your spiritual growth. Are you further along. Than you were. This time last year. Are you a lot further along. Than you were.

Five years ago. You know. You may look around. In this room. And you may see some people. That you think. They're just a. That's just a godly man.

That lady. She's just a saint. They are just so. Wise. And. Knowledgeable. About the things of God. And you. Look up to them.

That's good. Nothing wrong with them. Being ahead of you. You. But you should be living.

[25 : 51] Such a life. You should have made. Such progress. That there are some people. Who are looking at you. And they see how God's.

Has been. And is changing you. They see how you don't have. The temper you used to have. They see that you're more. Gracious than you used to be.

More generous than you used to be. So they're looking up to you. See in this room. In terms of spiritual growth.

Some people are over here. Some are here. Some are here. Some are here. Some are here. If we came back. Six months from now. According to what.

We're being taught here. All of us ought to be. A little bit further along. Than where we are now. So the question this morning is. Not are you a perfect Christian.

[26 : 46] We're really not talking about. How godly you are. We're talking this morning is. About. Are you growing. Are you maturing. Are you advancing.

As a Christian. In your knowledge. Of the Lord. Your love for him. Your service to him. Your commitment to him. You're becoming like him.

That's the point. Let me ask you this. What do you do. To move forward. How are you. Seeking to move forward. Are you using.

The means of grace. That God has given. To all of us. To grow spiritually. There are no secrets. You know. You might pick up a book. Somewhere. The secret to a.

Secret to a happy Christian life. Secret to this or that. There are no secrets. It's all in the Bible. God has given us. Certain. Spiritual. Disciplines.

[27 : 46] Certain. Means of grace. To help us grow spiritually. Here's what they are. Let me ask you. These. In the form of this question. Are you spending time. With God every day. Do you pray.

Your prayer life. Has something to do. With where you are. On this. Growth. Continuum. Prayer is talking to God.

Prayer is honoring God. Praising him. Thanking him. Confessing your sin to him. Seeking his will. Talking to him about. Whatever's going on in your life.

Talking to him on behalf. Of other people. It's also in listening to him. During such a time. Are you reading the Bible? The Bible is the primary way.

God speaks to us. The Bible is the most. Objective. Clear way. That God makes himself. And his will. Known. To you and me. Are you.

[28 : 48] Spending time with God. Every day. We all spend time. Every day. Doing something. I want you to think. Are you growing more.

Aware. More in your. Knowledge of. What's going on in the world. Sports. What's happening in the news. What the weather is going to be.

Are you growing more and more. In your knowledge of. What all your friends are doing. On Facebook. Nothing wrong with those things. But is that where you are growing.

That's what you're concentrating on. To the neglect. Of growing in your relationship with God. By spending time with him. You know.

If you're. Addicted to social media. You're addicted to that phone. Or iPad. Whatever. Get you a Bible app. There's a lot of good things you can read. You just got to read it electronically.

[29 : 46] What we need to understand is. God has given us. Given his people. Certain. What we'll call means of grace. Spiritual disciplines. That will help us. And nothing else will take their place.

Help us to grow. We all spend time doing things. That don't absolutely have to be done. I know. I know more about. What's going on in the sports world now. That I need to know. I know more about.

What's going on in the world today. By reading news. And I need to know. But at the same time. I do know a little bit about. What God's saying in his word. Because I am spending some time with him. In his word.

And talking to him. You don't have to just. Read the Bible all the time. I'm asking. Are you as a Christian. Seeking to grow. In your relationship with the Lord.

Seeking to know him better. Love him more. Know how you can. Please him. By spending time talking to him. And listening to him. Through prayer. And the Bible. That tells the tale.

[30 : 41] About how. And if we will grow spiritually. There's something else that's important. Are you involved with other Christians. In meaningful fellowship. Where you can talk about.

What God's doing. In your life. Or not doing. Where you can ask. Questions. Where you can give. And receive encouragement. Are you involved in.

Real relationships. With Christians. Who care about their relationship. With the Lord. And when you talk with them. You can be real. Nobody's. Nobody's.

Nobody's. Nobody's. Got it all together. Nobody's life is all together. Nobody's life is perfect. Nobody has a perfect job. Perfect health. Perfect children. Perfect parents. Do you have friends.

In your life. Who are Christians. Who have a Christian world view. They look at life. Through the lens of scripture. And you can talk about. Things that are.

[31 : 41] That are. Problems. Issues. Struggles. Pains. For you. That's important. It's important. To be able to talk to God. But it's important. Also. To be able to look somebody. In the eye.

That loves God. Like you do. And will listen to you. And sometimes. Do nothing more. Than just listen. Maybe encourage you.

Maybe pray. With you. But there's some people. That can. Can really help you. They're wiser. Have more experience.

Been there. Done that. We need that kind of Christian fellowship. And I'm talking here now. About. Just having Christian friends. Wherever. Inside or outside the church. But we all need to be.

Involved in the life. Of a church. We all need to be involved. In the life of a church. Where we. Come together. To worship. To evangelize.

[32 : 35] Share the gospel. To learn. To love. Together. We need to be a part of a church. That is truly a. Spiritual. Wellness.

Center. Are you involved? Are you helping our church. To be that? You know. All the things. Peter's called us. To be and do. Over the past few weeks.

What he's telling us. Right here. This morning. All of this. Will help us to do. The last thing we see. In verse 18. Give glory. To the Lord Jesus. Look at it. To him be the glory.

Both now. And to the day. Of eternity. Amen. When we are living the. Kind of life. That we're reading about. The kind of life.

That Peter describes. Our greatest concern. Will not be about. Just pleasing ourselves. It'll be about. Pleasing the Lord. When we're.

[33 : 35] Zeroed in. Seeking to live. The Christian life. That he is calling us. To live. The idea. Of knowing the Lord better. Loving him. And serving him. More faithfully. Will be something. That we desire.

Is it something. That you desire. You know. All of us. In this room. We're involved. In all kinds. Of things. Monday. Through Saturday. As we should.

We're. We're. We're in homes. With families. We're. We're. Places where you work. You're in school. With people. You're doing things. With friends. In the afternoons. And evenings. What we're talking about here.

Is living like a Christian. Seeking to grow. And develop Christian character. In the midst. Of all that we do. And wherever we are. Whatever we're doing.

We are. A Christian. We're living like the Lord's people. There. And if we can't do that there. We don't need to be there. Sometimes. When it's hard. To do it there.

[34 : 33] We can be the best witnesses. The most powerful influence. When it's hard. I want to close. Out this message. In this series.

By encouraging you. To do three things. Number one. Be confident. That you will see the Lord. One day. With a smile. On your face. And a smile.

On his face. Because you have. A real. And right. Relationship. With him. Do you have that now?

If you don't. It can all change. This moment. If you're not. A Christian. With a real relationship. With him. And you want to be. Maybe you've. Made people think you are.

Just admit it. To God. And everyone else. It has not been real. Repent of your sin. Humble yourself. Before God. Put your trust.

[35 : 32] In Jesus. For real. That he died. For you. That through faith in him. You can be forgiven by God. And made a child of God. Call upon him.

To save you now. This moment. If you know. You are a Christian. But right now. You're not close to him. Admit. Whatever it is.

Admit the sin. That's. Cause this barrier. Between you and him. Make some. Changes in your life. That he's showing you. You need to make. Maybe some changes. In relationships.

Come back to him. Right now. With. A total commitment. To seeking to know. Love and follow Jesus. With all your heart. Number two.

Until. The Lord returns. Returns. Don't. Be misled. By false teaching. From now. Till the day you die. Line up.

[36 : 30] Measure. Evaluate. Everything. By what you know. The truth of God's word. Really says. And don't listen to. Be led astray. Don't have your convictions. Undermined.

By anything. That is contrary to. The clear meaning of the Bible. And then number three. Make it your daily goal. To grow. In the grace.

And knowledge. Of your Lord and Savior. Jesus Christ. God will give you. The ability. If you're a Christian. With the Spirit of God. Living within you.

God will give you. The desire. We've just got to obey. Will you? Let's pray. Let's pray.