

## GROW • 2 Ptr 3:18

Read Luke 4:14-21

### Last Words

1. Next Sunday after service, I leave for Germany & Scotland for a week. Part of couple conferences.
2. As you know, I go out on trips like this occasionally. Went to Thailand last Nov.
3. Before I left, handed off some ltrs meant to be opened only if something happened to me while gone.
  - a. 1 to my Wife & Family.
  - b. 1 to the elders & another to you all.
  - c. As I write them, I'm conscious if they're being read, it means I'm gone.
  - d. So, they're my last words & I'm careful about what I say.
  - e. Their filled with urgent emotion & what I believe is most important to say.
4. Ptr knew his time was short & that is was likely these were the last words they'd read frm him.
5. So, his parting shot, what he wants to **linger** in their ears & hearts are vs. 17-18

<sup>17</sup> You therefore, beloved, since you know *this* beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; <sup>18</sup> but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him *be* the glory both now and forever. Amen.

### Half the Gospel

1. We left off at v. 17 last week because there's something here I want to spend more time on.
2. Ptr says "Grow!" He has some specific growth in mind which we'll dig into later.
3. But before we do, I want to share some things of concern w/you all this morning.
  - a. I'm not concerned for CCO. I believe we get this for the most part. I think we're doing well.
  - b. My concern is for the wider Body of Christ; what's called the Evangelical Church.
4. The term "evangelical" has become rather imprecise over the last 20 yrs or so.
  - a. Generally, Evangelicals believe the Bible is the inspired & inerrant Word of God.
  - b. They regard the Gospel as the only means of salvation.
  - c. **We're** considered Evangelicals here at Calvary.
5. My concern is this: That **only half the Gospel** is being preached.  
That the "salvation" being offered by many pulpits is **missing** something crucial.
6. Let me illustrate it this way . . .
  - a. Ask most Christians **WHY** Jesus came, & they will say **Jesus came to save us**.
    - 1) **From** what? Sin & Hell.
    - 2) **FOR** what? Heaven
  - b. Is that true? Yes; but it's only ½ true.
  - c. Did Jesus come to save us **JUST** for Heaven? No!
    - 1) He came to save us for LIFE = ETERNAL Life.
    - 2) When does that Life begin? The moment we're born-again.
7. In John 10:120 Jesus said, "I have come that you may have life, & that more abundantly."
  - a. However much Life Jesus has brought us into, there's always **MORE** of it.
  - b. Heaven is the ultimate reward of believing in Jesus;
  - c. But it's the great PS to THE LIFE Jesus came to bring us into NOW!
    - 1) Sin crushed the Life God created us for.
    - 2) We call Adam & Eve's sin The Fall because that's what happened . . .
      - a) They fell frm the Life God intended & took all humanity w/them.
      - b) They tumbled far frm the Life God created us for.
    - 3) Jesus came to get it back for us.
    - 4) Listen to the words of Luke 4 again . . . (vs. 18-19)

The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

- d. Sin **ensnares** us, **blinds** us; **rips**, **tears** & **rends** us. It **steals hope** & **crushes purpose**.
- e. And most damaging of all – it alienates us from God.
- f. Jesus came to undo all that for us. When?

g. When we get to Heaven? No **NOW!**

#### The Kingdom of God

1. In Mark 1:14-15 we read . . . Mark 1:14–15 (NKJV)

<sup>14</sup> Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, <sup>15</sup> and saying, **“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.”**

2. If you're familiar w/Matthew, Mark & Luke, you know this was Jesus' consistent msg

a. “Repent, for the Kingdom of God is close.” Really, it's ***breaking in, emerging!***

b. And **THAT** was the Gospel = Good News.

c. The question we need to ask is: What did the people who heard Him understand that to mean?

d. What **was** the Kingdom of God—**Heaven** ? Not at all!

e. When Jesus spoke of the Kingdom of God they understood Him to mean that The Messiah would ***undo the curse; Reverse*** The Fall!

f. He'd **Reclaim** the Life Adam forfeited & **Redeem** humanity from sin & death.

1) They understood salvation as a ***return to wholeness.***

2) It was a ***total restoration*** of what was lost.

3) Salvation meant ***harmony & peace:*** It meant ***beauty.***

3. The Gospel IS Good News precisely because it put history & humanity back on track.

4. Yes! Jesus died to save us from sin, but ***not just*** so we could go to Heaven 1 day.

5. He **removed** the obstacle & **reconciled** us to God so we can have an intimate relationship w/Him Not just in the sweet by & by in the sky w/the Big Guy.

6. He died to reconcile us NOW!

7. And it's IN that reconciled relationship w/God that we can LIVE! From that Life FLOWS!

#### Abraham

1. This is the way it's always been. // This is Bible. Both NT & Old.

2. In Gen. 15 we read that Abraham believed God and he accounted it to him for righteousness.

3. It's based on that truth the great Evangelical doctrine of ***salvation by grace thru faith*** rests.

4. But I encourage you to go back and read the story later today.

5. WHAT was it Abe believed God for? It wasn't heaven.

a. God had just renewed His promise to give Abraham a son,

b. And thru that son, many generations.

c. Abe knew God had something special for him.

d. That had been made clear back in ch12.

e. But yrs passed & there was a problem – No child was born.

f. All the promises God made Abraham hinged on his having many descendants.

g. So when Abe's faith began to waver, God renewed the promise of a son.

h. Abraham believed THAT PROMISE & God declared him righteous, based on THAT faith.

1) Faith, ***not*** that he'd go to heaven 1 day

2) But that God keeps His promises,

3) Including the ones He makes abt what He wants to do in and thru us ***IN THIS LIFE!***

#### In This Life

1. Xians – Do you believe God for Heaven? Great.

2. Do you believe Him for NOW; for this life?

3. The Gospel is the Good News that Jesus saves us from sin

a. Not just its ***penalty***; but its ***power*** as well.

b. Hallelujah—the day will come when we'll be lifted from sin's ***presence*** into Heaven.

c. But we mustn't think of the Gospel just as ***spiritual Fire Insurance;***

1) A message that saves us frm hell.

2) The Gospel is more than ***information*** about how to get us into Heaven.

3) It's ***truth*** that gets Heaven into us.

4. The main reason why the modern American Church is weak & ineffective in transforming our culture is because too many Xians understand the Gospel only as a msg that gets them into Heaven.

5. Between the time they come to faith in Christ & go to Heaven, the best they hope for is a life of ***sin-management.***

- a. They treat their **spiritual** life like they do dieting.
  - b. They do good for a while, then call off –
  - c. And resign themselves to being out of shape.
  - d. Going to Church & reading their Bible are just p[ro]ps to help them muddle thru till Jesus comes.
6. THAT IS NOT THE GOSPEL! It is NOT the msg of Jesus, or Peter, or Paul.

#### Keep Growing

1. Look at what Peter says here; his last words . . .

<sup>18</sup> but grow

2. Literally **Keep growing!**

in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

- 3. This is how you & I are to live as we follow Jesus.
- 4. This is how we can enter into & participate in that Abundant Life Jesus said He came for, for us.
- 5. We must keep growing in grace.
  - a. Into greater & greater dependence on God.
  - b. We must learn to STOP giving God reasons to love & bless us
  - c. & learn instead to simply enjoy His love & blessing.
  - d. We aren't just **saved** by grace, then ushered into a **life of works** to **KEEP** our salvation.
    - 1) It's grace frn start to finish.
    - 2) Jesus is the **Alpha & Omega**, the **Author & Finisher** of our Faith.
    - 3) We **enter** by grace, **stand** in grace, & will be **completed** by grace.

6. We're also to keep growing in our knowledge, that is our **experience** of Jesus **AS Lord & Savior**.

- a. Let's make it our chief ambition to know Jesus as our gloriously good Master.
  - 1) Making obedience to Him, not reluctant & marked by procrastination,
  - 2) But eager & joyous.
  - 3) Let's ask the Spirit to show us how obedience to Jesus **IS** Life & that we are never MORE ALIVE than when we're following Him.
- b. And let's open to Jesus as Savior like never before.
  - 1) Let's invite Him into our heart, our soul to **heal** our brokenness.
  - 2) Because Jesus IS the Savior, we don't need to be
    - a) bitter, petty, & unforgiving
    - b) filled w/ & driven by envy
    - c) so angry
    - d) consumed by lust
    - e) needy for attention
    - f) so bored

7. Keep Growing!

To Him *be* the glory both now & forever. Amen.