



HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

Growing in 2020

January 5, 2020

2 Peter 3:17-19

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¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ 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.

(Pastor prays)

By God's providence, we get to start the first full week of 2020 on a Sunday. The Lord's Day. We have the opportunity to be clear eyed and full hearted as we go into a new decade. And I'm thankful to spend this time with you, a church and people that I have loved most of my life. I was baptized here, disciplined here, grew in Christ here, strengthened for life and ministry here and now I have been serving as Pastor for almost 10 years here. And by God's grace, I have seen so many of you grow in your love for God and the Gospel, to catch hold of what it means to love Jesus as Lord and be covered by God's grace and to want more of that grace, and to be able to live in a hostile world without dread in your soul and fear in your heart. It's why I've decided to start this year with a challenge from 2 Peter. We've landed here at the end of Peter's last letter. In fact, these two verses are the last known words of correspondence from the great man Peter. And he was a great man, but he was also a man that knew how to fall and fall hard. And to do it in a way that everyone knew about and yet God picked him up, took him to the cross and gave him grace. Grace is how we live and grace is what we need and I'm praying that this year will be a year of you growing in the knowledge of the Lord and Jesus Christ and in his grace. I want you to be stable, strong, informed and confident in God's overwhelming love for you in Jesus. You don't need to be burdened down with more unattainable goals. You need to be lifted up by the grace of God found in the cross of Jesus. I think this passage helps us. I want to approach this sermon a little differently today. I want to

show you the two commands in the passage and there are just two. And then, after the two commands, I want to give you 4 broad pathways of growing this year and by God's grace, if you'll step into these old pathways, you will grow in the Lord.

Being a Christian Means Growing in Christ

Let's look at the two commands.

Be on guard

To see where I get this let's read the whole verse 17 and understand that in context, he is talking about false teachers, but the broad application goes for how you spend 2020 and who you spend it with. *17 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.* The command in this verse is the phrase "take care". It means to be on guard, watch out with vigilance, be aware of your surroundings. Now, what are we watching out for? Let's go back, there are two things to watch out for this year.

Take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people. Carried away is the idea of a flash flood coming through and sweeping away those who have not built themselves on the true Gospel. I see it happen when a young girl comes through our ministry, makes a profession of faith, works through the student ministry and maybe even goes through Christian school but something happens when the tidal wave of the real world hits and she gets carried away because she never did anchor herself in the true Gospel; and I don't want that to happen to you this year. We live in a mob society. It happens at frat parties and on football teams. It happens in political movements, and cultural currents slam into you and if you aren't moored to the rock that is Christ, the riptide pulls you in and before you know it, you are miles from safety. In crowds its easy to get swept away. It's why Peter, a man that knew all about falling, its why in this passage he says, you are loved by God and Christ is the proof. You are created for the glory of God. I want you to hear it and say it to yourself until you start believing it to be true. You are loved by God with an everlasting love. That love is displayed at the cross of Jesus where grace flows out into a life-giving source for any that will come and drink. What has threatened to carry you away this year? Loneliness? Sin? Pain? Loss? Money – too little or too much? Hurt? Worry? All those things rage like a river, but Christ is a rescuer. Be on guard not to get carried away.

Be on guard for something else too. Let's go back and read it again. ¹⁷ *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.* Don't lose your stability. I love this. Peter knew a little bit about losing stability. It's worth pausing here to discuss this word "stability". It's the translation of a Greek word that's used only twice in the new testament. And both times are connected with Peter. Remember in Luke at the end when Peter says he would never deny Jesus and Jesus tells him, "Simon, Simon, Satan has demanded to sift you like wheat but I have prayed for you to return to you brothers strengthened – stabilized. And its as if Peter here is saying, I know what its like to fall off in the river and almost lose it all. And I also know what its like to be rescued and redeemed and made strong. And brothers and sisters, I want you to be strengthened in the Lord this year. We've got to be on guard.

Let's look at the second command.

Strive for Growth

Do you see it there in verse 18? It's the first phrase and I'd normally split it up into its beautiful parts but today I want you to see the captivating whole of it. Look with me at verse 18.

¹⁸ *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.* There are two things in here. See the first one? Its grace. Grow in grace. What does it mean to grow in grace? First we need to understand what grace is. Grace is the foundation of our lives and is entirely a gift from God. And besides the name of Jesus, there is no better word in the Bible than grace.

Grace is:

The wealth of God's kindness,

the riches of his mercy.

The soothing ointment of his forgiveness,

and the free hope of eternal life that is found at the cross of Jesus.

Grace is what we need to stand before God. Grace is what we need to make it this year. Grace is what we crave when its time to die. Grace is what we hunger for when hope is lost. Grace is the cross of Jesus where sin is punished, and sinners are forgiven and the higher you view grace, the freer your soul becomes. And according to verse 18, that growth in grace comes when we grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Its to want to have a

better knowledge of Jesus and a fuller grasp on Christ. It's a better appreciation of his deity and a clearer picture of his majesty. It's a more thorough view of his sovereignty and that all things were made through him. And it is a deeper view of his blood shed on the cross for sinners. The blood of Jesus is of infinite value and when he bled and died on the cross there was full satisfaction of divine justice made and the penalty for sinners was paid. And that's what we need more of. How do we grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ? Your pastors have been working on developing biblical pathways and I've borrowed some categories from David Mathis' book "Habits of Grace".

Four pathways for growth this year are:

Hear God's voice. To have direction, comfort, clarity and to know Christ and God, you will need to hear his voice. That voice speaks through the bible. That's why I preach expositionally. It's how we read the bible and take notes as we go. We have a bible reading plan that will guide you through the bible in a year. There is also a scripture memory verse included that will help you meditate on a passage. Read it slowly, think about it, make it your screen saver. By the end of the year you would have meditated on 12 great passages. And read Christ honoring works. There is also a book recommendation for each month to help you cherish Christ.

Have God's ear. There are two primary disciplines – word and prayer. Start your day in the word. Read Acts and Psalms and have prayer prompts. Write down your prayers. Text someone and tell them what you are praying for them. Start in concentric circles and work your way out - yourself, family, church, work, neighbors, the lost.

Gather with God's people. There are 6 expectations of members of Hickory Grove Baptist Church. And this one is a necessary spiritual discipline. A growing Christian is one who gathers with God's people on the Lord's day. Worship on Sunday morning becomes a selfless act as we gather with people we wouldn't have otherwise been around. But we have been brought together by the cross of Jesus. The Gospel of Jesus is the best killer of racism and classism. We gather to worship, pray, sing, and fellowship. It gives us encouragement, strength, contact and love. Small groups are for accountability and biblical support. It is strengthening for your soul. Gathering teaches us humility, submission to Christ and a genuine love for Christ and his people. Commit to being with God's people on Sunday. It's vital to hear God's voice, have God's ear and gather with God's people.

Share God's message. The message is of hope and joy and forgiveness at the cross of Jesus. It's that our God is a God of infinite love and grace and that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. And this year there are a thousand different ways to share; through missions and serving and going and settling in on one person you can pray for and share the Gospel with. It's the Gospel of grace that I want to grow in this year and I'm asking you to join me. Hear God's voice and have his ear. Gather with God's people and share God's message. The message of grace is found at the Gospel of Jesus. That while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

(Pastor prays)