

Thursday 27.10.16 English

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[0 : 0 0] We'll take up our reading at verse 13. For brethren, you have been called unto liberty, only use non-liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this. Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, but if you bite and devour one another, take heed, that you be not consumed one of another.

This I say then, walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.

And these are contrary the one to the other, so that you cannot do the things that you would. But if you be led of the Spirit, you are not under the law.

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these. Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies.

[1 : 0 9] Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.

Against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.

Amen. Well, we're going to continue singing to God's praise. It's item number 59 in Mission Praise.

[2 : 1 5] The words of Blessed Assurance. Blessed Assurance. Jesus is mine. Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine.

Air of salvation. Purchase of God. Born of his Spirit. Washed in his blood. And so on. To the praise of God. Now, our second reading is taken again from the New Testament.

The second epistle of Peter, chapter 1. Second Peter 1. And we'll take up a reading at verse 16.

So, 2 Peter 1. 16. For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from excellent glory. This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

[3 : 4 3] And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mound. We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto you do well that you take heed.

As unto a light that shineth in a dark place until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts. Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.

For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but by holy men of God. Speak as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

And to chapter 3, at verse 14. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that you look for such things, be diligent that you may be found of him in peace without spot and blameless.

And account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation, even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you.

[4 : 58] As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to be understood, which they, that are unlearned and unstable, rest as they do.

Also the other scriptures unto their own destruction. You therefore, beloved, seeing that you know these things before, beware, lest you also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.

But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory, both now and forever. Amen.

May the Lord add his blessing to the reading of his own holy and inspired word. Well, our third item of praise is Psalm 25.

And it's the short meter rendering. And we're going to sing verses 1 to 7. Psalm 25.

[6 : 11] To thee I lift my soul. O Lord, I trust in thee. My God, let me not be ashamed, nor force triumph over me.

Psalm 25. To the praise of God. To thee I lift my soul. To thee I lift my soul.

O Lord, I trust in thee. My God, let me not be ashamed, nor force my love to leave.

Let none that wait on thee. Be heard to shame at all.

But those that with the cross transgress, let shame upon them fall.

[7 : 30] Show me thy ways, O Lord. Thy path to teach the grief.

And do thou lead me in thy truth. Let it my teacher be.

For thou art for the cross. To me salvation sent.

And I upon thee your fuller day. Expecting to attend.

Thy tender mercies, Lord. I pray thee to remember.

[8 : 51] And loving kindnesses for thee. I have been alone forever.

my sins and wars of youth. Do thou, O Lord, forgive after thy mercy think on me and for thy goodness great.

Well, before we turn to God's word, shall we once again draw near to the Lord, our God, in prayer. Let us pray. We come before you the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We give thanks that in Christ you are our heavenly Father and we ask that you would lead us and guide us now into your word.

Again, we pray that you would still our hearts and that you would grant us to know your peace. The peace of God, it transcends all understanding.

[10 : 32] It safeguards the heart and the mind through Christ Jesus. We come in the name of the Prince of Peace and pray, O Lord God, that you would presence yourself with us as the one who tabernacles amongst his people.

We pray that you would be as a wall of fire around us. We pray the evil one from prowling around or from making his presence felt.

We ask that you would grant each and every one of us to look to you, our great God and great King.

For in Christ we are more than conquerors. And in the war, that is the Christian life, at times we give thanks.

that we too can have the confidence of the sweet psalmist of Israel. And we too can declare that the battle is the Lord's.

[11 : 48] For you are our light and our saving health. Be with us and go before us, even now, in Jesus' name and for his sake.

Amen. Well, turn with me, if you will, for a time this evening to 2 Peter. And we're going to focus in particular on the words of chapter 3.

The concluding words of this epistle, this letter. We'll read verses 17 and 18.

You therefore, beloved, seeing that you know these things before, beware that you also being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness or your own stability.

But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever. Amen.

[13 : 05] Well, I would like us to think about two things tonight in relation to this passage. Stability and growth.

Two words that we often associate with economics. But I can assure you tonight's message has nothing to do with the economy.

It has everything to do with spiritual growth and development. It's important to Peter and so it should be of importance to you and I.

Steadfastness or stability is our first focal point. Well, much has been made in recent weeks of the hawk and the trans-ocean winner oil rig now apparently birthed in Moffda.

but I witnessed from our home at back the process involved in bringing the oil rig onto the deck of the hawk.

[14 : 13] It was an extremely delicate operation. Stability was everything and then the journey and one can only imagine what it must have felt like when the hawk entered choppy waters.

Again, stability is everything. Imagine it, a loss of stability would have spelt disaster. Well, stability from Peter's perspective implies all of that.

Steadiness, solidity, constancy, steadfastness. Think of the hill walker who is no stranger to the Kleshaman, to the other hills.

A firm footing is absolutely crucial. And Peter makes that point in his first letter as he commends the true grace of God in chapter 5, verse 12.

with respect to the grace of God, he says, stand firm in it. Now, everything he says revolves around one thing.

[15 : 42] You might refer to it as the Bible, the scriptures, the very word of God. Peter refers to it as the prophetic word.

Referred to in 2 Peter 1, 19, we read the passage to which the reader is to pay careful attention.

In other words, Peter wants the reader to cement himself or herself into the word of God.

God, in any construction site, if there's a building project, there is concrete involved, if there is a lack of concrete, there is a lack, that leads to instability.

And Peter is anxious to convey, here as he brings his second letter to a close, that stability in the Christian life, must not be compromised or watered down.

[16 : 51] What he says, essentially, is that a loss of stability equates to spiritual backsliding. A loss of stability equates to spiritual deterioration or spiritual decline.

Think of it in practical terms and apply this to yourself, as I must apply it to myself. When personal Bible reading is devalued, what happens?

It leads to a detachment from the Bible, from the Scriptures, and that takes us into instability in the Christian life.

The 19th century writer James Elder Cumming once wrote, there is no more certain forerunner of spiritual shipwreck than the neglect of the written word.

Perhaps some others have discovered that in our Christian lives, because the reality is that when you and I no longer engage with the Bible, we begin to drift away.

[18 : 11] Drift away from what? We drift away from active prayer, and we drift away from the fellowship of the gospel. The reformer, John Calvin, calls it slothfulness.

He says it gradually prevails over the Christian unless it is corrected. So what is there to be corrected in your own life this evening?

communion, particularly as we approach the sacrament of the Lord's Supper over a communion weekend, it's important to take stock of our lives, isn't it? Let a man examine himself.

If we are to review our Christian lives this evening, what is there that you and I would do well to revise and rectify and put right?

Peter says that we are to take care. He says beware.

[19 : 16] In other words, take care that you are not led away with the error of the wicked and fall from your own stability or steadfastness.

Now sometimes we'll use these words take care. you know how we sometimes use these words as a parting gesture of goodwill.

Sometimes these words are said very lightly. You know, we'll say, well, take care. And we've all said that and it's somewhat light-hearted.

Do we really mean it when we say it? Well, Peter means what he says. There is nothing casual about Peter urging the believer to take care.

Be on your guard, Peter says. Beware, lest you be led away, lest you be carried away with the error of lawless people who have no stability.

[20 : 19] Take care, beware, lest you become just like them. Now, who are they? Who is he referring to? We need to be a little bit forensic here.

But if we read both letters, then we begin to get the gist of where Peter is coming from. He's referring to the wicked. Sometimes, you know, when we read the word of God, we come across phrases like this, and we would do well to stop and ask, where is Peter coming from?

Who is he referring to? Who are they? What's the problem here? Well, these are unprincipled men, false teachers and their followers.

Their teaching is contrary to the teachings of Christ, to the teachings of the apostles.

The false teachers that Peter refers to here, they have their own particular code of conduct or practice, and their code of conduct very much condones lawlessness in the Christian life.

[21 : 41] And their teaching, it's infused, as is highlighted in verse 16, with destructive heresies.

That's the kind of language that Peter is using, a denial of the truth that leads to what we might call sensuality. Back to chapter 2, verse 2, Peter refers to the false teachers having a lack of self-constraint, where there's been an abandonment to immoral behavior.

Effectively, I do as you please Christianity without checkpoints, without walls. The false teacher that Peter is referring to here might say something like, look, you have a license, you have a warrant to dabble in sin.

Why? Because you are no longer under the law, you are under grace. And because you are under grace, and no longer under the law, the restrictions are removed, and you have opportunity to indulge.

God has wiped your stained slate, clean Calvary covers it all, grace is your warrant, off you go, do as you please.

[23 : 11] And Peter is having none of it. The false teachers who have cheapened, who have degraded, who have belittled the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And Peter takes exception to their disparaging theology. He refers to them in chapter 3, verse 3, as scoffers following their own sinful desires.

He doesn't mince his words, does he? And Peter, as he refers to Paul in the concluding paragraphs of his second letter, it's interesting how Peter and Paul are singing from the same song sheet of Christian theology.

Paul is saying precisely what Peter is saying, particularly as he writes to the church at Galatia. They are both saying that Christian liberty, it's so important in the Christian life, but it doesn't give us the right to do what we please, but to do what pleases God.

And they're both stressing that the cross is the instrument of our union with Christ, but is at the same time the symbol of our separation from the world.

[25 : 00] Paul is saying, do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh. flesh. In other words, freedom from sin, not liberty to engage in sin.

There is a difference, a distinction, and it matters. Paul says, I have been, the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

Conformity with Christ, they're both saying. Disconformity with the world. You see, the problem with the false teacher is that he will remove the DIS.

Paul and Peter are saying, you are in the world, but you are not of it. And have we not experienced that ourselves in the Christian life?

the Christian is not ruined by living in the world, but by the world living in him or her. Nonsense, say the false teachers that Peter is referring to.

[26 : 13] It's okay to push boundaries, the false teachers are saying. And much of what they are saying, it's not unlike the philosophy of the rich fool, the parable that Jesus shares in Luke chapter 12.

Relax, eat, drink, be merry, for tomorrow we die. That sums up the doctrine of the false teacher.

Some of you will remember the significance of the 26th of April 1986. I'm referring to the Chernobyl disaster.

and it was catastrophic, wasn't it? So let me take you to the Ukraine. It's interesting when you read the events that led up to the moment at which that reactor blew.

History has it that there was a somewhat unorthodox test being undertaken. in the engine room, in the mission control of the nuclear plant.

[27 : 39] There was a lack of attention to safety. Indeed, safety was being compromised, scaled down.

There were those who thought they knew better. and were taking great risks. The script was ignored.

What happened ultimately? There was a loss of stability in one of the main reactors. And the outcome really was catastrophic.

think of the reactor of your own soul tonight. How little it takes when there is a lack of attention to the scriptures.

When the Christian life is being compromised. When our scripture reading is being scaled down. when the script is being ignored.

[28 : 50] When we think we know better. What happens? A loss of stability. On that particular night at Chernobyl there were those who thought they knew better.

And isn't it interesting as we read Peter's analysis of the Christian life along with Paul it's as if Peter is saying choose your friends carefully.

Beware of those you associate with. Take care that you don't take on the false teachings of the false teacher.

beware that you don't adopt the errors of others so that your Christian biblical worldview is compromised.

Take care what you read, take care what you watch, take care what you participate in, where you socialize and so on. Stability matters.

[30 : 05] I remember as a somewhat unruly teenager a friend of mine we had access to a small rowing boat one day and the rowing boats were often acquired and off we went and we took very little notice of the fact that the boat was somewhat riddled with tiny little holes and we were taking in water and we ignored it initially until one of us moved slightly and the boat began to do this.

It was somewhat disconcerting when we experienced a loss of stability and we immediately began to bail out the water so that we could again retain some stability but it's not unlike the Christian life.

Is it necessary for some of us tonight to start bailing out the water? Is our scripture reading watertight?

what about prayer lives? It's important for us to take stop and over a communion weekend if there is water to be bailed out then let's see to it that we do precisely that with an open Bible.

Loss of stability is subtle and that's Peter's point as he brings his second letter to a close.

[32 : 00] Beware lest you too lose your own stability or steadfastness. Well so much for stability.

What about growth? Well we might ask the question what is Peter's remedy for a loss of stability?

well it's very simple. One word grace. And Peter has a very high view of grace and he is encouraging a greater exposure to grace.

Indeed he is urging the reader to immerse himself or herself in grace and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Immerse yourself in it engage with it. Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

[33 : 04] It's very important when we read this verse in verse 18. You know often we will quote these words and sometimes we do that by taking a verse out of context.

nothing wrong with that because the verse in and of itself of course can convey what we wish to communicate but sometimes we can miss the point by ignoring the context.

So in other words the conjunction here really is important there's little word but but growing grace. So in other words Peter wishes to continue from where he has left off.

In other words this is the remedy. How are we to avoid the perils of instability by growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

And of course grace is associated directly with Jesus Christ. It is linked to him. In other words Peter is saying if you are serious about retaining about safeguarding about preserving your spiritual stability then you must be serious about spiritual growth and development and if you are it revolves around grace.

[34 : 37] Jesus is full of grace and full of truth and Peter here urges his readers to grow in grace and to dig deeper into this grace to aspire to grow in the knowledge of him who Jesus Christ so that the Christian can know Jesus better in a more personal capacity to enjoy and experience a living personal real daily relationship and walk with Jesus Christ this Peter says will cultivate stability in the Christian life and will encourage further growth in his grace grace the writer Michael Green has said that the Christian life is a developing life and so it is it consists

Michael Green says in getting to know at even greater depth an inexhaustible Lord and Saviour so I'd like us to just ask the question how are we to grow in grace sometimes we we we ask that question we we ask is it is it is it possible for me to know that I'm growing in grace I look at others around me and I can see that he and they're growing in grace but I'm not sure if I'm growing how can I know that I'm growing in grace when I believe that we can and I believe that Peter makes it very very clear that we can engage in a measure of self-assessment so let's ask the question how am I how are we to grow in grace well I've said it before

Peter has referred to it more than once back to chapter 1 verse 19 spiritual growth revolves around an open Bible that is fundamental to growing in the grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ the prophetic word to which you will do well to pay attention why is that well the moment you and I open the scriptures there we will meet the Lord Jesus Christ as we engage with God's word there we will get to know Jesus personally as you turn the pages of the scriptures prayerfully seeking the Lord's leading and guidance believe me on the authority of his word you will discover more and more of his majesty of his magnificence of his splendor of his beauty and there on the pages of the word of God the path of discipleship is made known it is spelt out

Jesus Christ the way the truth and the life how are we to grow in grace well think of this from a practical perspective grace is administered via what we refer to as the means of grace so God has given us specific avenues routes through which grace is channeled directly to the soul the avenue of active Bible reading again is foundational it is essential it matters more than anything else in your life this evening your relationship with the word of God why is that because every other aspect of your life is built upon it it's crucial because it's food for the stomach of your soul your

Bible is full of nutrition and nourishment and all of the essential vitamins required for you and I to grow and develop in grace so the word of God in your hands it's to be taken it's to be processed and it's to be digested I often when I'm doing my hospital rounds I meet people post surgery and they really don't feel like eating they've lost their appetite and as the days go by they are given every encouragement to eat and they'll often say I don't feel like it but they get very little sympathy they're told you must eat you have to eat it's absolutely crucial that you continue to eat and from a spiritual perspective how often we're just like that perhaps some of us tonight didn't really feel like coming to church was that the case maybe a bad day at the office maybe your day went a little pear shaped you were tired you just didn't really feel like coming here tonight but you're here because you recognize that even although sometimes you don't feel like reading the bible you don't feel like engaging in prayer you don't feel like coming to church nonetheless you recognize that faith is to be exercised and you come because you know that God has furnished a table and there you will be fed and you will be given what is good for your soul you will be given the essential vitamins so that you can grow in the grace and in the knowledge of our

[41 : 13] Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and how often it is the case that when we are exhorted to come to the word of God to engage with the scriptures so that we can grow we are often we are often we digress we deviate there are sometimes stumbling blocks and we touched on this this morning times when perhaps we are led elsewhere because something comes up and we fail to engage and sometimes we have to question whether our lives are perhaps lacking disciplined Bible reading a time set aside to engage in reading and reflecting on God's word it was

John Bunyan who once said that he said whatever whatever it is whatever contradicts the word of God should be instantly resisted as diabolical strong word careful how you use this word because the word diabolical is linked to the word diabolos which is the Greek for the devil how incredibly discerning John Bunyan was in other words he's saying whatever contradicts the word of God should be instantly resisted as of the devil and that's really what Peter is saying he's stressing this point and we live in a world in a day where so many out there so many causes and systems contradict the word of God and there are those who are saying it's not really all that important for us to engage with the

Bible even some churches within schools of theology theology it's not really theology we're dealing with it's mythology that is diabolical as far as Peter is concerned and Paul as far as you and I are concerned we are given every encouragement this evening to engage with God's word and to embrace it and to live by it let God's word fill your memory rule your heart and guide your life words I picked up as I often do a footnote from our daily bread and you know sometimes such as life it can be chaotic at breakfast time if you have children if you have other responsibilities on the croft it's lambing time you have so little time but let's make the most of the time

God has given us and thank the Lord for resources like our daily bread how good it is for us to take a little with us a little from the word of God how we need God's leading and guidance in our lives so that we will redeem the time and find more time so that we will re-engage I like to go fishing but I don't get to fish the Gress River as often as I would like and when I go across to my former parish and I meet the gamekeeper and he asks me I haven't seen you fishing and I say I haven't had the time and the gamekeeper looks me in the eye and he says you didn't make time and it's so true the word of God as Peter highlights is the most important thing in our lives this evening do we take it seriously how are we to grow in grace by petitioning

God for grace again and again you remember how Oliver Twist was scolded because he asked for more and Peter reminds us that our heavenly father encourages you and I to ask and keep asking through Jesus Christ so that as we avail ourselves of the throne of grace so we too receive grace for grace that we might receive mercy and grace in time of need why to resist temptation to be strong to be stable to be steadfast in Jesus Christ how else can we grow in grace by taking the fellowship of the church seriously in our lives if we're serious about growth about cementing our walk with Jesus Christ then we will come under the word at every given opportunity on the

[46 : 56] Lord's day midweek we will not belittle the sacrament of the Lord's supper perhaps some of us here tonight are contemplating we wish to grow and develop in the faith and perhaps for some time we have been at a crossroads there hasn't been a great deal of movement well perhaps the Lord is speaking to some of us tonight and urging us to take this next step to see the sacrament of the Lord's supper as a means of grace so that we will continue to grow in this grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ what is the sacrament of the

Lord's supper all about it's about getting to know the word made flesh better and better it's about an ever deepening experience of Christ if we are serious about growing we need to go to grow go and what as we mull over the gospel the first two letters of that word gospel G O grace restores grace revitalizes grace repairs remember Asaph in psalm 73 perhaps you might like to read the psalm when you get home tonight read of this backsliders experience of how he lost his way lost his stability but got back on a firm footing where the moment he entered the temple the moment he came under the word and

Simon Peter the writer of this letter he lost his stability and found it again in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ by the Sea of Galilee and so can you and I because the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ brings the prodigals home Thomas Spurgeon as we close we don't hear much about the writings of Thomas Spurgeon the son of the great Charles Haddon Spurgeon but he left an excellent legacy of some writings this is just a little gem of what he has left us and I quote grace for grace grace sufficient grace abounding grace that reigns grace the guarantee of glory grace not law how sweet the strains in a moment we're going to sing the very familiar words of amazing grace written by

John Newton let me share with you and I want to close with this John Newton shortly before he died his eyesight had failed considerably and a friend and colleague of John Newton would often call and have breakfast with him and their custom was to read the scriptures together after which Newton would make a few discerning remarks about the passage read one day there was a felt sense of silence after the words of scripture from 1st Corinthians read by the grace of God I am what I am several minutes passed and the silence was broken when John Newton uttered these words gentlemen he said

I'm not what I ought to be how imperfect and deficient I am gentlemen I'm not what I wish to be although I loathe that which is evil and would cleave to that which is good I'm not what I hope to be soon I shall put off mortality and with it all sin and imperfection and he concluded by saying though I am not what I ought to be nor what I wish to be nor yet what I hope to be I can truly say that I am not what I once was a slave to sin and Satan I can heartily join with the apostle and say that by the grace of God I am what I am amazing grace how sweet the sound it saved a wretch like me and as we experience this grace so we long to grow in it and to discover more and more of its beauty and splendor and it is ours in

[52 : 27] Christ well what of your spiritual stability this evening and are you longing to grow in this grace well over this weekend as we dovetail word and sacrament so there is a means of grace set aside for us prepared for us in Christ Jesus will you come will you come and partake of the Lord's supper will you come and proclaim the Lord's death until he comes will you come so that your longing to grow can be further satisfied will you come into the body of the kirk and know so that you will know more and more and more of this grace grace what is grace

Christ's riches God's riches rather at Christ's expense and that's what the communion weekend is all about the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ God's riches at Christ's expense on Calvary's cross Amen we close and pray grant us O Lord we pray your grace and mercy and peace part us with your blessing in Jesus name Amen We're going to conclude with the words of Amazing Grace it's number 31 Amazing Grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me I once was lost but now I'm found was blind but now

I see the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit remain with us all Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Zombies famine Playstation 9 Is by