

Growing Together

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[0 : 0 0] Amen. Good. Why don't you stand up for a second, shake out the legs. You've been sitting for a wee bit. Good. I'm not asking you to do anything in particular, but just to stand.

You can dance if you want to, I don't really mind. And then when you feel like you've just got a bit of feeling back in your legs, why don't you have a wee seat and turn to 2 Peter chapter 1. 2 Peter chapter 1. We're going to read from verses 3 through to 11 in a wee second.

Well, we are looking for growth in every area of life, aren't we? Whether it's in the seeds we've planted in our gardens or children we brought home from the hospital, we want to see growth. My son will be 2 in a couple of months time and we've got a measuring chart in his room and, you know, he's grown one centimetre in one month. That pleases me. If we're looking to take Graham's trends from earlier, he'll probably be about 12 feet tall by the time he's 25. But we look for growth in every area of life. And not only do we look for growth, we play our part in helping to achieve it. So we pour water on our plants and we provide food for our kids and we have the joy of seeing the things even that we do produce results. And what I want to argue in this session is that the Christian life is no different. We are called as Christians to grow in Christlikeness. When God saves us, he targets Christlikeness in us. Romans chapter 8 tells us, for those he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his son. And that's not an immediate transformation. As 2 Corinthians 3 tells us that we who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory are being transformed into his likeness with ever increasing glory, which is bit by bit, which comes from the Lord. So it's his work as well. And who is the Lord? Well, it's his spirit in us. That's a wonderful thing to see. It's vital for us to remember that. And in a sense, what we're doing in this session and the next session is really boring down deeper into some of the things we've been looking at in the first session. Unfortunately, I think that many of us can feel a bit dejected when it comes to this thing called growing in Christlikeness. We can feel like actually we don't, as we look back on our lives, we don't really feel like we've made an awful lot of progress. Or maybe when the same sins just keep hammering us again and again and again, and we feel the same pangs of guilt and shame, it leaves us really feeling quite downhearted.

Now, it's important to recognize that there are two things that are vital. And one of those things, for sure, two things that are vital to help us grow in Christlikeness, one of the things we really don't need is an app.

When it comes to productivity, there are literally thousands of apps that you can download that can help you achieve the targets that you're setting for yourselves. Maybe you've got a Wanderlist or reminders on your phone or something like that that help you do what you ought to do. One that I find, even as I was thinking, what do we need to help us grow in Christlikeness as we set this target of supreme holiness? How do we press on? What do we need? Maybe we need an app like Carrot.

[3 : 55] Carrot is this app that's interactive with you, that when you set yourself a to-do list and an agenda for your life, it addresses you in whiteness and with all joy. Greetings, lazy human. Hi, Carrot. I'm your new taskmaster. In other words, I'm the thing that's going to help you do the things you ought to be doing in your life. But if you find yourself letting slip on your to-do list, it turns an angry black and red and it berates you. You know, and actually, if you log into this and use the full, the full scope of Carrot as an app, it publicly shames you on Twitter. Liam Garvey did not get through everything he did today. And then you can be berated by people you don't even know.

Now, is that what church life is all about? You know, are we to be like a carrot app to each other? You know, I don't see that you're grown in Christlikeness very much. Let me just stand up on a Sunday morning.

Hello, my name is Graham Shanks. Nice to see you. Welcome. And I'm just here to tell you that such and such a person has not been grown in Christlikeness. So I think we should all berate them and let's see if they can do better next week. That's not the way it's going to work at all. No, the way that a healthy local church fellowship works is not berating one another. It's loving one another and applying the very things that God has given us to grow in Christlikeness. According to God's word, there are two things that we need. Two things that we need that help us grow in Christlikeness. One, we need the power of God and two, we need the people of God. And that's what we're going to see in this passage.

So let's read together from 2 Peter chapter 1 verse 3. His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these, he has given us his very great and precious promises so that through them, you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. For this reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness and to goodness knowledge and to knowledge self-control and to self-control perseverance and to perseverance godliness and to godliness brotherly kindness and to brotherly kindness love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.

Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen. This is God's words.

[7 : 03] So, number one, there are two main points. We need the power of God and we need the people of God. God's power. The first thing we see in this passage is that the power to grow in godliness, the power to become Christ-like, is a power that's provided by God. Look with me again at verse 3.

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness. This is incredible. When it comes to growing in godliness, God is the ultimate energy provider. His power is ours in constant supply.

There is no risk of shortage. You don't need to look around for any other resource. The Christian life needs no dual fuel. We have everything we need from this one source. And think about how that power is described in verse 3. This is divine power. Divine power. And what happens when divine power is in operation? Things change. Things change. In the beginning, there was no light. What changed when God said, let there be light? There was light. Things changed. When the people of God were stuck by the Red Sea with a bloodthirsty army in pursuit, what changed? When God said to Moses, Moses, lift up your staff, stretch out your hand over the sea to divide it. Well, God's people crossed over on dry land.

God's power is divine power and it works to bring about change that we could never, ever achieve or see with our own strength. Now stop and think about the fact that this divine power is ours in constant supply. Even in the whole area of change, of heart transformation for us, for you.

The power to change what is affecting or even afflicting your marriage is divine power. And it's yours in constant supply. The power to subdue the anger that you feel when your kids are disobedient is divine power and it never runs out. The power to control the tongue that gossips people into disrepute in a church family is divine power and it's yours by the bucket loads.

[9 : 22] And the power to overcome timidity and boldly share your faith with others is divine power. And it's yours on tap. That's what 2 Peter 1 tells us. His divine power has given us everything we need for life. Godliness covers all. It's a joy, isn't it? How can we get to be plugged in to such a mighty power?

How can we get to be plugged in to such divine power? Is it because you're awesome and God thinks that you deserve it? No. We didn't make the mark. We didn't figure it out. Verse 3 tells us that the glory and the goodness belong to Jesus, not to us. It's because he is glorious. It's because he is good that he has called you by his love and is changing you into the likeness of his son. Isn't that beautiful to see? Look at verse 3 again.

This divine power is ours through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. It comes to us because he is glorious. It comes to us because he is good. And that's why we've been called.

Do you know him to be glorious and good for yourself? He is good. I'm not asking if we know that kind of just information about his glory or his goodness. That's not really the knowledge that gets you plugged into this source, as it were. I'm asking if you know him with your heart, with your mind, if you love him with your heart and long in your soul to be like him.

I can't assume that everybody here today is a Christian. So I would ask if you're here today and you would say you don't know him. You've not trusted in Jesus' blood for the forgiveness of your sins and for new life. Do you know that you have no power to change yourself whatsoever? In fact, you're in weakness. You have no power to change. Sin is something that is in you and it ruins you and rules you. And there's no way of dealing decisively with personal guilt and shame that you experience by your wrongdoing apart from Christ and his cross. We find no answer to the deepest longings of our hearts for something better than what this life is than Christ and the cross. There is no hope in death either except for Christ and the cross. So your heart might be beating this morning, but the

[12 : 08] Bible says you're not alive until you come to faith in Jesus Christ. And when you come to faith in Jesus Christ, that's how you come to be transformed by his glory, by his goodness into the likeness of his son and live life as it was meant to be lived. This is what God's amazing provision is. He is so gracious.

We don't deserve it. It is by grace that we are saved and it is by his grace that we are transformed. Don't believe me? Look at verse four. Not only is there power to grow in godliness, but the promise of godliness is actually something that is guaranteed by God.

Through these, that is his own glory and goodness, he has given us his very great and precious promises so that through them you may participate in the divine nature. Now what does that mean? What does it mean to participate in the divine nature? It's not that we become part of God. That would be a bit weird. It's that we become like God. In other words, it's sharing in the very character of God. That's what we've been promised. And stop and think about that for a second. That's a glorious thing.

How many times have you read that passage and actually you've never just stopped sentence after sentence to just pour over what's just been said? It's utterly profound. When you think about what a promise is, even you've made promises, I'm sure. It could be something small as promising a parent that you'll tidy your room. It could be something as significant as the vows you make on a wedding day. But when someone promises you something, they give you their word for the future, don't they? That's what a promise is. They don't give you the reality when they make the promise there and then, but they assure you that one day you will have it. And the power of a promise is that it makes you look forward to that day when you will actually receive it.

So you walk through life with a sense of anticipation and in a sense of trust that in the one who made the promise, that actually they're going to come good in the promise.

[14:18] They're not going to wimp out on it. They're actually going to give it to you. Now, Peter reminds us in this passage that God has made plenty of promises to us that hold out the prospect of godliness. As I've mentioned from a couple of verses earlier, that we will one day be like the Lord Jesus in holiness. And that until that day when we see him face to face and are like him as he is, we are growing with ever increasing glory into his likeness. Now, let me ask you, do you have that reality right now? Are you a perfect reflection of the radiant sun of heaven? Why don't you ask the person next to you or your spouse? No, but you will have it one day. That promise, the promise that God has offered to you is that one day you will, if you put your faith and trust in Jesus, he will take you there by his goodness and grace to be like him as he is. And the good news for us is that God always keeps his promises. So the promise guarantees what is to come, but the way to glory is fraught with struggles against sin and temptation, isn't it? And Peter reminds us in verse four that we are those who have escaped the corruption of the world caused by evil desires. Now, here's where Peter, here's where Peter discloses the real problem, isn't it? It's our sinful nature. It's our sinful nature.

I don't know if you've ever thought about this, but the fact that in Galatians in particular, we are told that we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. He lives in us to help shape us into the likeness of Jesus, but we also have this fight that's going on in our hearts against the sinful nature. Now, the sinful nature is depicted in the Bible. If you were going to caricature it, you might you might show that this is, I didn't, did I do that? I didn't do that. That's magic. I just raised my hands and it does that. A little bit too quickly. Thanks. The sinful nature, works in us in such a way that we are tempted towards sin. We make choices where we deliberately defy God's word and his authority and rebel against his word to choose what we want to do.

We reject his kingdom. We do what we want to do for the benefit of our little kingdom. And the Bible calls that plain and simple sin. And the thing that we're taught to do in books like 2 Corinthians and Galatians and other parts of the Bible, which talks about this thing called mortification, put that thing to death, like kill it, don't entertain it. So what we, what we're called to do is this sinful flesh. I don't know. Imagine it is like some big ugly wrestler or something like that.

What we're called to do is we're called to put that thing to death. And one of the ways that we do it is we starve that sinful flesh so that it reduces in terms of its might and its power. It shrinks.

It's never completely gone, though its power is diminished through the cross. Never completely gone until that day when we see Christ face to face. But we are to work in this life by saying no to ungodliness, to put this thing to death and cause it to shrink. Here's the thing that we do, though. Very often. We don't fight it. We don't starve that flesh. No, we feed it. We give in to temptation.

[17 : 43] We entertain selfishness in our hearts or materialism in our lives. Whatever kind of ism you want to talk about, whatever is your particular struggle, we come to this kind of self-centered conclusion that, yeah, this is okay. I can justify this in my life. You know, I've made such progress in other areas of my life. You know, I can just keep a hold of this one. Oh, it's my besetting sin is what we call it.

No, it's just sin. And what we do is when we continue to commit that sin, your flesh that you're supposed to starve and shrink grows. We do not put it to death. We feed it. And when that grows, our commitment to growing in Christ's likeness and walking by the Spirit, as Paul puts it in Galatians, shrinks.

That's the fight that's called sanctification. And what we need to do is turn away from this flesh. That's to mortify it. Kill it. And to vivify. Mortification and vivification. I'm getting very intellectual here and theological. Mortification. Kill the flesh. Vivification. Turn to war as more glorious. That's what we're called to do. That's what Peter's calling us to do. Escape the corruption of this world. In other words, you have been delivered from this, the chains to this flesh. Those chains are broken. Its presence remains, but its dominion over you is broken through the cross.

But in the meantime, what ought we to do? We ought to turn away from that and leg it away from the sinful nature. A while ago, I watched an amazing video report of life inside an Austrian prisoner of war camp in the war. And the story of this daring escape from it. And there was a story of a French lieutenant who told how they had smuggled a camera into the camp by hiding it in a sausage of all things. There's all sorts of things in sausage, but I didn't think there's a real camera in it. But what they did was, amazingly, these guys were not just planning, right, we're going to break out of this place. They said, we're going to be so brash, we're going to film it. We're going to film it so the whole world can see that this power has no power over us.

We're going to escape it. And so they filmed it. They filmed them digging the hole. They kept the diary of what when they dug through outside the camp, popped their heads up and bolted. 132 guys escaped. And it's all caught on a grainy but a wonderful film. They'd broken free. It was amazing to see. Now tell me, what do you think they did when they popped their heads up outside the perimeter fence? Did they just think, well, let's break out a fire and cook the rest of these sausages, shall we? No, of course not. They absolutely bolted as far as they could away from this captor as best they could, taking every possible measure to avoid being recaptured by the very thing that they've escaped from. Here's what we do in the Christian life. We escape this captivity. Jesus Christ, by his blood, breaks the chains and we make a camp and cook some sausages close by. We do not leg it like we're supposed to.

[21 : 09] And what Peter is telling us here is that the divine power that's being given to you, as 2 Corinthians 3 remind us, is the power of the Holy Spirit who lives in you, who helps you. You're not doing this on your own strength. He lives in you to help you put this thing to death and to turn your heart and your affections towards Jesus. And that's the great power of it. That's what happens in Romeo and Juliet. You know Romeo and Juliet, I'm sure. You know, what do you find? That's how Romeo turns away from Rosalind. Now, some of you are thinking, who's Rosalind? I thought it was Romeo and Juliet, not Rosalind and Juliet. Well, at the start of Romeo and Juliet, Romeo's there and what's he doing? He's pining for Rosalind. He's like, oh, Rosalind. She just broke up with me.

You know, I'm so broken hearted. He was Scottish. I don't know how. I don't know how I'm going to cop without Rosalind. And his friends come along. I'm paraphrasing this. I don't speak Shakespearean.

I'm paraphrasing. He says, his friends come along and say, right, okay, you're pining this a little bit too much for this old flame. We're going to take you out and so on. And so they take him to a party. And who does he see there? Juliet. Juliet. And what does he do? It's a little bit creepy, but in the play, later on that night, he climbs over the wall of her compound and sneaks into her garden, you know, and looks up at the window and says, but soft, what light from yonder window breaks?

You know, and he just erupts into this new expression of his love. And automatically, you're just like, Rosalind who?

And that's what it's like when you're converted to Christ. You're like, oh, this money that I'm building up. I love this money. Oh, I'm going to make tons of it.

[22 : 59] I'm going to have a bath in it every night. I'm just going to enjoy this money. I'm going to buy all the things that I want to buy. I don't care if my kids have to walk around in Crocs all day. I'm going to buy everything. I'm going to have a Jaguar.

If I'm going to get an Aston Martin, you know, whatever it is. Actually, I'm just going to enjoy sex. I'm going to go make love to as many people as I can. I don't care about marriage or anything like that. Whatever. Whatever your sinful thing was, Jesus breaks the chains of that.

The worst thing you can do is stand around and pine for it. Oh, materialism, materialism. Oh, sexual. Oh, that nonsense. No. Jesus is the Juliet.

What a God we have who has poured out his love to turn from the something that we think is beautiful.

It's ugly. True beauty is only found in the Lord Jesus Christ. And what the Holy Spirit does by this divine power is to turn our affections away from the stuff that will only lead you to hell and turn you to the Son who will take you to heaven.

[24 : 11] Love him. Put these things to death. Turn your affections away from them and to the Lord God. Love him. Love him. That's what Peter's encouraging us to do.

We need the power of the Holy Spirit to help us grow in this godliness. And that's what makes it possible. He's the one who's at work in us to change us more into the likeness of Jesus.

But here's the deal. He does not do that with you except in biblical community. It's a long layup to say it, but I'm happy to say it.

If we could put the next slide up, please. I don't think this thing's working. That's all right. We need the people of God to grow. And the thing that's easy to miss in this whole passage is the pursuit of godliness requires dedicated effort from a community of God's people.

There are no such things as lone rangers when it comes to the Christian life. In verse 5, Peter says, okay, since we have this divine power, the Holy Spirit living in us, make every effort.

[25 : 15] So God supplies the power, you apply yourself. God supplies the power, you don't get to do nothing. God supplies the power that provides the energy for you to do the things that he's calling you to do.

That's how gracious he is. Make every effort, Peter says, to add to your faith, to grow. Plus, plus, plus, plus, grow. And in verse 10, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure.

Now, listen, this is what we miss. This, if you look at verses 4 and verse 5 and verse 8, this is instruction to the church family.

You have the word you, for example. It's really yours. Peter is Scottish. You know, this is really in the plural. This is all said to a community. He is addressing the saints in the churches.

And as he says in verse 10, therefore, my brothers or brothers and sisters. He's talking to a collective group. He's not writing to an individual. And we forget this.

[26 : 21] We forget the community aspect of this growth in Christlikeness. And the necessity of each other helping each other change into the likeness of Jesus.

Are you with me? Nod if you're with me. You're looking a bit sleepy. Good. Okay. Now, this is, so Peter is addressing the brothers and sisters. We do this in community.

As Paul Tripp said famously, change is a community project. Too true. Now, verses 5 and 10 contain the same Greek word that really encapsulates Peter's instructions to this church family.

And it's translated. Translated, it means forward or advance. Make progress. Now, that tells us even that the Christian life is no airport walkway.

You know those airport walkways? You know, where you just kind of, that's it. You're on. And it just kind of takes you to your gate. That's a marvelous thing. I always have the temptation to walk backwards on these things.

[27 : 18] But that shows a mark of my immaturity. But the Christian life is not an airport walkway like that. It's more like Tough Mudder. You know, it's more like a marathon.

You've got to put one foot in front of the other. You've got to put some effort in and press forwards. You know, we can't expect to float without effort to our departure gates. And some might say, oh, well, heaven is assured.

You've just told me about the promise that's already been made earlier on in verses 3 to 4. Well, that's true. But friend, the evidence of your calling and election is found in the heart that you have for Jesus and the progress you make in your faith.

I think we forget that sometimes. It's not just signed and sealed. I'm in. There is a certain fruit that the Spirit produces in us. And let's not forget that.

Don Carson says people don't drift towards Christ-likeness. People don't gravitate towards godliness. Actually, they drift the other way. Towards ungodliness.

[28 : 22] If they do not make every effort to add to their faith. So let's not think that we can be lazy bones and lax in our faith and no sweet assurance.

Well, with the power and the promises of God, we are to make every effort to add to our faith. Faith is where it begins, of course. Faith is a means by which we are justified.

So our salvation is signed and sealed. But we grow in faith more and more. And to grow in faith more and more is to take God at his word. It's to take what he has promised in a certain situation and apply it.

And I don't know about you. But even just doing that is the very thing that helps me to sever the root of the temptation that is there. Even in relation to something like anger. I can be an angry man at times.

And the thing that helps me to sever the root of that is in those moments where, you know, the blood starts to boil. You know, and it can be something so ridiculous. It can be like, you know, my kid's putting their shoes on.

[29 : 23] Hurry up. Why do I have to tell you five times to put your shoes on? Put your shoes on. No, the other foot. You know, such silly things that are just a mark of my ungodliness. But even in a moment like that, when I feel anger rise, I can say what James 1.19 says.

Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to become angry. But man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. And actually in my heart, I love the righteous life that God desires.

Jesus is my righteousness. But I want, I'm growing Christ's likeness towards that. I love that. I hate this. Lord, help me. I'm going to take you at your word. You've given me a way to stand up under this.

Sever the root of this sin. Help me kill it. This does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. Now, take whatever sinful struggle you experience on a day-to-day basis or a brand new one that just pops up into your life and take God at his word.

Add to your faith. Grow in your faith. And add to that faith goodness. This is some of the fruit in this, isn't it? This is the kind of fruit that we see in those who profess faith in Jesus Christ.

[30 : 33] Goodness. We do good to others and seek their happiness more than ours. Ours? Where did that come from? More than ours. Ours. More than ours is what I meant to say. And that's just what Jesus did for us.

He sought our goods first. Or we add to our goodness knowledge. So we make every effort to read our Bibles. To be like Christ, we must know what he is like.

And as 2 Peter 3, 18. The key to unlocking this whole book says, Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. That's what we're called to do.

Grow in self-control. May we make more effort to be strong in the face of temptation. Perseverance. Pressing on through times in the present in light of the promise of better times ahead.

Or godliness. Making every effort to be a truer reflection of Jesus, even in the mundane things of everyday life. Brotherly kindness. By doing more to make our membership of a local church family much more meaningful than it presently is.

[31 : 33] And love. Well, the supreme characteristic that marks the Lord Jesus' existence becomes the definitive characteristic that marks ours.

Love. Now, verse 8 says, If you possess all these qualities in increasing measure. In other words, growing in them. See the increase again? They will keep you from being.

Now, here's the hazard warning lights. Here's the little red triangle on the roads. Okay? This is the warning. If you don't do these things. If you possess these qualities in increasing measure.

They will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. There it is, brothers and sisters. It is possible for you to profess faith in Jesus Christ.

But be ineffective and unproductive as a Christian. That is scary. Think about that.

[32 : 32] What are you doing with the talents God has given you? It is possible to be ineffective and unproductive. If you do not take hold of this power that God has given you.

And apply yourself in endeavouring to grow. If you don't make the most of the Holy Spirit and His divine power in you. And the holy people of God, His church.

A community in which you can grow. Verse 9 says, There are two things that might be hindering you in that. Two things can cause that. One, spiritual blindness.

Whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind. So you're not seeing clearly. Or you're not seeing at all. Either you're not beholding the glory and goodness of Christ as you once did.

Or your eyes are looking to something else altogether. Or your problem might be spiritual amnesia. You have, verse 9, forgotten that you've been cleansed from past sins. You've forgotten the grace of God.

[33 : 31] You've forgotten the cross. You've let the zeal you had at your baptism fritter away. And Peter says the main reason for that will be forgetting the gospel.

Forgetting that you've been cleansed from past sins. And because you've forgotten, you'll just go back to them. And as Peter will say in chapter 2, You're like a dog that returns to its vomit.

It's a stark image. It's a stark image, isn't it? Well, what happens though? Having had those warnings.

What happens when we give ourselves to this? As people in community and unite our hearts and love in this endeavor to apply ourselves to grow in Christlikeness.

Well, it says that you can go forward not carrying guilt and shame because the gospel gets rid of that. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

[34 : 24] The guilt and shame and conviction that we feel is used by God to bring us to a point of confession and repentance on an ongoing basis.

But we're not called to live in that guilt and shame. And I think sometimes we do that. I find myself, you know, I can be driving along the road.

And let's just say someone cuts in on me. And I can hoop my horn and say, Oh, you idiot. This is not a habit of mine. I'm giving you an example, okay?

But I could say that just to be sure. Just watch out when we're driving home, okay? I can say in that moment, I can feel conviction, okay? I've just acted in a way that is not Christlike.

I've expressed anger and I've vented it. Maybe in a way that the person even saw it, you know, quickly getting out of the car and scraping the fish off the back of it. But I can say in those moments, under conviction, I'm so sorry, Lord.

[35 : 24] That is not the way you've called me to act. Please forgive me. Now, what does God's word say to us about that? When we've confessed our sin, what is God? He is faithful and just to do what?

Forgive us our sins and cleanse us and purify us from all. All unrighteousness. And what does it say when we confess our sins to him like that?

Hebrews. There are sins and lawless acts I will remember no more. Now, God doesn't forget them. God is omniscient. He knows everything. But he chooses not to bring them back.

Now, in that moment when I offer a word of prayer asking for forgiveness of sins, I know according to God's word as I take him at it that I'm forgiven. It's not held against me.

I'm walking in grace. I'm a happy chappy. But a mile down the road, imagine I start to feel guilt and shame again. Is there any place for that guilt or shame? What am I doing if I allow that guilt and shame to just bubble to the surface again and then start to crush my spirit?

[36 : 34] I'll be ineffective and unproductive in my Christian life. And I will, more importantly, I will not have applied the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in my heart. I'll say, no, your blood, Jesus, is not quite as efficient as you're making out to be.

I need to just punish myself for this a little bit more by carrying this guilt and shame. What an abomination to the cross of Christ. Brothers and sisters, we are not called to carry our guilt and shame.

We're called to confess our sins. Take God at his word. And press forward, as Peter says, in expectancy. Forward in expectancy. And when we do that, what can we achieve as we take this divine power that God has given us by his grace, by allowing us to be indwelt by his Holy Spirit, and placing us in a people of God together, where together we can make every effort to add and increase.

We can go forward expecting to finish the race and enjoy a rich welcome. You see that in the text. If you do these things, two things will be true. You'll never fall. Now, that's not saying you'll never sin.

It's saying that you will never apostatize. Never fall away completely. Now, remember who's writing this letter. It's Peter. Peter could say, I fell. I denied Jesus three times, but he restored me.

[37 : 50] I fell, but I'm going to finish well. And we can too. And what happens at the end for those who know God's amazing provision and are together, our commitment together to active participation in one another's lives, we can expect a rich welcome.

You will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I have a little boy who's just younger than two.

And one of the highlights of my day without fail is when I open up that door. We've got an alarm system, so it beeps. It's mainly to make sure that the children aren't escaping. And as soon as the door opens and I walk in, the first little body that runs out there is my soon-to-be two-year-old son.

Daddy, daddy, daddy, daddy. It's just the richest welcome. And it just makes me want to cry every time it happens. It's just beautiful. Here's this little thing who's so delighted to see me. And then the other two come out and my wife comes out.

It's so lovely. Actually, I'm going to go home now. I'm just going to. It's just beautiful to see. That for me is a rich welcome, but nothing compared to the rich welcome that we will receive when we cross that finish line as we close our eyes in death and open them in glory.

[39 : 07] Well done, good and faithful servants. Come and share my joy. That's the rich welcome you can expect. Now, what does it require? Remember, his divine power has given you everything you need.

Don't be crushed by sin. Don't feed it and let it crush you. Kill it and help one another do it. Help each other. Add to your faith.

Goodness, knowledge, self-control. All the rest. Increase. Grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus, becoming like him. As he is. Amen.