

# Grow Up

by Lewis Gregory

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*Spiritual growth is about becoming mature in Christ, not just intellectually knowing God's Word.*

**Duration:** 40:46

**Scripture:** Psalm 119:11, Psalm 119:105, Matthew 6:33, 1 Corinthians 3:1-3, Hebrews 5:12-14, 1 Peter 2:1

**Topics:** "Growth"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the challenges of life and how our faith is tested during difficult times. He highlights the story of Baby Huey to illustrate the concept of growth, emphasizing that true growth happens on the inside. The preacher then delves into the importance of desiring the pure truth and life that comes from Jesus Christ, rather than seeking after personal preferences and creature comforts. He concludes by emphasizing that growth is ultimately produced by God, and it is through Him that we experience true growth in our faith.

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## Transcript

Oh, just grow up. Ever heard that? Maybe you heard, stop acting like a baby. Or, act your age.

Well, what are we talking about? Well, we know what we're talking about when we tell our kids that. But there's another aspect to growth. And I want to talk about, this morning, about spiritual growth.

About true growth. And I want to do so, I want to pass out a couple of pictures here. Now, if you know what this is, don't say it until everybody gets a chance to look at it.

And we'll see if you know what these are. Just kind of pass that, look at it and pass it around. See if you can figure out what that's about.

We're talking about growth. What is growth? How do you grow? Looking at our pictures here. These are pictures that go way back.

This would definitely date me, as if you couldn't tell by looking at me. But these pictures are an illustration of the way it sometimes is in our life. As you see the picture, I want you to think about what we're going to talk about in regard to growth.

Who's the youngest one here that knows what that's a picture of? Do you know what that is? Okay, tell us. Yeah, definitely that is correct. So, if they're sucking on a bottle, we can assume they're what? Yeah,

they're a baby.

Okay. We got that far. But this baby has a name.

And what's the baby's name? Baby Huey. Now, this is a cartoon that I didn't even notice when it came out. Probably in the 40s or 50s.

Way back there. Don't say 40s. Okay, we'll say the 50s.

That 50s is probably a fair number, yeah. That would date me a little too far back. But aren't you glad we have digital now? Because that's pretty crude drawings.

But that was the best they could do back then. But now the story of Baby Huey, you notice something about him. What do you notice about him in regard to, let's say in this one here, between him and his mama.

That's his mama behind there. At least the same. And if you looked at them side by side, Baby Huey is actually bigger than his mama.

Okay, now here's the thing about growth. You can grow on the outside and you can get pretty large. But the real growth is what happens on the inside.

That's the important part. And the thing about Baby Huey is he got big, but he was still really immature. And the humor of the cartoons was always about how this great big duck would act so dumb, like a little kid, so innocent and ignorant about most everything.

And so the irony of life is that we can be growing in a lot of ways, but not really be mature. So when we say grow up, we're talking about stop acting like a baby, that is stop being so immature and find your true maturity in the Lord. Because the only way we're going to be truly mature is in Christ.

And so there's such a misunderstanding about growth. The whole idea of how we grow in the Christian life is so distorted and thus most of us have stunted our growth. We've not really grown and we're not truly mature in Christ.

And that means we're not able to experience the fullness of the life that God has for us in Christ. It's all because we have not only misunderstood the way by which we grow, but much of what we've done has actually inhibited our growth. And with that in mind, that's what I want us to focus on this morning.

This whole idea of growth. Let's examine some things regarding what Paul said and what the writer of Hebrews, maybe Paul, maybe not, some have their doubts. But let's go first to the writer of Hebrews and then we'll go to some of Paul's other writings.

And in Hebrews chapter 5, he talks to us there about some things regarding growth, about being mature. Hebrews chapter 5, verse 12, we'll start with verse 12. Hebrews 5, 12, he says, For when for the time you ought to be teachers, you have need that one teach you again what be the first principles of the oracles of God, and are become such as have need of milk and not strong meat.

For everyone that uses milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness, he is a babe. So what the writer is saying there is he's saying now, most of you in this letter he was writing to have been exposed enough to the Lord and to the things of God and His word, and you've been around as a Christian long enough, you

ought to know what's going on and you ought to be acting like a mature, responsible Christian. But in fact, he says, that's not the case.

And so he said, in reality, you need to go back and get the first principles of the oracles of God. That is, you need to go back and get a grasp on the foundation truths. You've got to go back to milk.

Now, milk is what we feed babies. Babies start off with milk. And he's saying, what you really need is you need to go back and get a fresh dose of some milk to get you back on the right track.

And then he goes on to add that really, as long as you're using milk, it's indicative of the fact that you're still a babe. If you still need milk, it's because you're still a baby. When you become mature, you move beyond the milk, as he says there, and now you take what he calls the word of righteousness, the word of righteousness which he describes as strong meat.

That's the deep things of God. But he also talks about this same idea in 1 Corinthians chapter 3. Again, he's contrasting those that are babes in Christ but should be mature in Christ. And so in 1 Corinthians chapter 3, he says, And thy brethren could not speak to you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.

In verse 2, I have fed you with milk, and not with meat. For hitherto you were not able to bear it, neither yet now are you able. For you are yet carnal.

For whereas there is among you envying, strife, divisions, are you, not carnal, are you still walking as men? Carnality means after the flesh or according to the manner of the flesh. So what he's saying in reality there is, he says, You should be walking in the Spirit. You should be conducting your life according to the Spirit of God and His work in and through you.

But instead he says, you're still living as a mere man, as mere humans. You're still functioning based on your intellectual understanding. You're still being driven and motivated by your emotions or by your logic and not by the Spirit of God.

So he's saying you're missing life. Now, we again go back to the question I asked, what is growth? And how do we grow? So if we move down to verse 6, the Apostle Paul says, I have planted, Apollos watered, but God produced the growth. My translation says God gave the increase.

But other translations have their God gave the growth or God produced the growth. Verse 7, he says it again in a little different way. He says, So neither he that plants is anything, nor he that waters, but God that gives the growth or God that produces growth.

There's also a similar verse to that in the book of Colossians. And let's look at how he words it there in Colossians chapter 2, verse 19. In Colossians 2, 19, he's actually saying there what they had neglected to do, which in fact was causing them to miss out on their true spirits of growth.

He said they were not holding the head. The head is a reference to Christ who had been described as the head of the church. But not holding the head from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered and knit together increases with the increase of God or grows with the growth caused by God.

So again, we see here that he's referring to true growth. And so what he's telling us is growth is a result of God's work in us. Not what we're doing for him, but what he's doing in and through us.

So growth always is a result of God's work in and through us. And that's why if we go back to what he's saying there in 1 Corinthians 3 about being carnal, he's saying you've tried to go about this through fleshly means. And you thought if you, by your good works and good deeds and busy work and religious activity, you thought you could produce growth.

But you missed out on life. And as a result, all you did was grow intellectually. There's a scripture that I was taught early on.

It's a psalm, a beautiful word from the Lord. Psalm 119, so look there. Psalm 119, verse 11.

In Psalm 119, verse 11, it says, Thy word have I hid in my head, that I might not sin against thee. But of course, it doesn't say head, does it? It says heart. But we're prone to do what? We hide His word where? In our head.

That is, we settle for intellectual knowledge about God. We memorize His word, which means we're committed to our mind. And we, through our mind, have a knowledge of God's word.

Okay, so we have that information. And let me tell you, there is a vast number of people in this world who know the Bible. They have a knowledge of the words in this wonderful book, the Bible.

They have committed it to memory oftentimes. For example, my sister went to a Christian university. And the professor there became quite evident, although he was teaching the Bible, did not believe God.

That is, he claimed to believe there was a God, but he was teaching it more as like literature. And so she was asked to, in one of her assignments, to do a study and present about God. And so her presentation was about God's divine intervention in the lives of people throughout the Bible.

And he came back and said, well, those are just myths, and God doesn't do that. You see, he knew about the Bible, and he taught the words of the Bible. He just didn't know the God of the Bible, nor did he really know the life of Jesus Christ.

So what he had done was, he had hid those words in his head. He had a great knowledge of this wonderful book, but he only saw it as a history book. He only saw it as a philosophy book.

Some teach biblical ethics. They teach the values of the Bible and the morals of the Bible. And so, based on those rules and laws, they say, okay, this is what God's Word is.

But that doesn't even scratch the surface and isn't even the beginning of the essence of the truth of God's Word. No, he's not saying to hide the Word in your head only. It's fine if you want to memorize Scripture.

I have learned more of the Word of God through prayerfully meditating on God's Word and letting God's Spirit teach me and reveal truth to me than I ever learned by memorizing. And certainly, when it comes to remembering, that is the work of the precious Holy Spirit who brings to our remembrance whatever he tells us. So we've got to see that spiritual growth entails far more than just intellectual knowledge of the Bible, Scripture memory, Bible reading.

I've counseled many leaders, even, that having such a vast knowledge of the Bible and of the great truths of God's Word would say, I know what God's Word says. My problem is doing. Well, you see, there's no growth in their life.

There's intellectual knowledge about God. There's spiritual giants in their knowledge of God and knowledge about God, rather. They know all these great things in terms of what God's Word says, and they can teach these Scriptures.

But where is that in their life? What about the way they live? And spiritual growth has to do with the way we live our life. Jesus wants us to understand that. He talks to us about the importance of spiritual growth.

And in John chapter 15, in verse 5, He says, I am the vine, and you are the branches. He that abides in Me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit. For without Me, you can do nothing.

The source of growth, in fact, the source of life, is Jesus Christ. And He says He is the vine. That is, He's the life source.

And we're the branches. And then He points out that where there is growth, there will be what? The bearing of much fruit. We, the branches, will have much fruit.

Now, that fruit comes in two different kinds. It's the fruit of reproduced lives, in which our lives are making a difference than other lives. But it also is indicative of what Paul referred to in Galatians 5, 22, as the fruit of the Spirit.

The fruit of the Spirit. So, let's look at Galatians and examine the fruit of the Spirit and what He's talking to us about there. What Paul is wanting us to see is that spiritual growth should be evident in the way we live or conduct our lives.

Galatians chapter 5, verse 22. He says there, but the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. And against such, he says, there is no law.

He's described the various qualities, the various characteristics of Jesus Christ Himself. This is the life Christ lived on earth. This was the evidence that He gave us of who God is and what God is like.

For, in fact, Jesus is God. And so, as He walked the earth, He simply showed us God by showing us the character and conduct of God as He walked this earth. And so, what He's saying is, if you're growing and if there is growth in your life and if you're mature as a Christian, these will be the characteristics that will be consistently evident in your life.

And if there's not growth, then what happens is, when you hit the wall, when you come up against opposition and obstacle, then you're going to stumble and fall and whimper and whine. I have a Facebook friend that he's waxing eloquent, shall I say, about all these things of this new stuff that's going on out there about different people talking about grace. And we're under grace.

We're not under law. And it's an extreme distorted emphasis on what they call grace, which is not, in fact, the grace of God's Word, but rather more of a form of license that says, well, we're not obligated to anything, don't have to do anything. And so, they're talking about all these wonderful things about how God loves everybody, and that's true.

And they're talking about God's grace, which means, under grace, we have freedom, and we do, in Christ. But it's not irresponsible freedom. It's responsible freedom.

Well, anyway, so he's saying all these things. And he's giving all these great phrases that he's come up with to describe what he thinks is God in the Bible, which, in fact, is inaccurate, but nonetheless. So then, suddenly, I see an email, a Facebook post, and now he's got difficulty.

He's lost his job in December. And now he's reporting to all of us on his Facebook friends about how he's so overwhelmed by it, and he's so defeated by it, and so discouraged by it, that already, here we are in February, and already he's crying and overwhelmed at what he's going to do and how he's going to support his family. Well, where's this great man of grace and this great man of faith, you see? And the challenge of life always is not how you're doing when things go good, but how you're doing when things go bad.

Where is God then? How is God expressing himself then, in the hard times, in the difficult times, in the challenges? Now, I sympathize, and I'm sad and concerned for anybody that loses their job, and I've lost mine. I know what it's like. But we don't have to wallow in our pain.

Of course it hurts. And yes, it's disappointing, and certainly it's frustrating. And maybe it's unfair and unjust, but we don't have to wallow and moan and groan in that.

Where is those who the Word of God says are more than conquerors in all things? Where is it that those of us are when it says, I can do all things through Christ? So where is it there? If we know what we say we know, and we're as mature as we think we are, then it's got to get beyond just the amount of knowledge we have about God, about Christ, about the Word, and how many scriptures we can quote, and how many hours we log in prayer. It's got to get down to a life lived out, a life manifesting the very life of Jesus Christ Himself. So let's look at some other things regarding this matter of growth.

Some would say, well, what about where Peter says that we are to desire the sincere milk of the Word, that we might grow thereby? Yes, he does. First Peter, chapter 2, verse 2. He says, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word that you may grow thereby. Okay, okay, sure, that's true.

But remember, the babe is immature. That's how we begin. And the sincere milk of the Word is a description of the pure and unadulterated Word, not the letter of the law, but the Spirit of the law, the living Word, the Christ who Himself is life and life more abundantly.

And he's saying, we must desire that which comes from Him and His Word, as newborn babes. And it has to do with desire. That is, we must desire to hear and know God, to hear and know who Christ is, and who I am in Him, and who He wants to be in me.

That's what he's talking about here. But be assured, at the time these words were given in a letter from Peter, there was not this wonderful book available. It wasn't just out there floating around.

Most homes have several Bibles, maybe a dozen. People didn't have that. They didn't have scrolls sitting around in every home.

They just weren't available. These letters written by Paul and Peter and the others in the New Testament, they weren't even in circulation, except occasionally in individual churches, and sometimes from church to church. But it wasn't like everybody was sitting around reading the Bible.

They didn't have that luxury. We have it, and we don't live it. They lived it, and they didn't have it.

What's wrong with this picture, friends? Somebody's missing something, and I have to say, I believe it's those of us today who, having this wonderful book in hand, have missed the living word it talks all about. And so often, we wonder why things aren't working out in our lives. It's because we've missed out on the source of life.

So, yes, as newborn babes. But, you see, we must look at the context of that particular verse, 1 Peter 2. Look at verse 1. What we're going to find Peter telling us here is he's going to tell us some growth inhibitors. He's going to tell us some things that are inhibiting us from true spiritual growth, such that would necessitate us having to go back as babes to get some milk, because we've not gone on to maturity.

So, first of all, in verse 1, he says, Wherefore, laying aside all malice, and all guile, and all hypocrisy, and envy, and all evil speaking, Wait a minute, that sounds a lot like what Paul was just saying to the Corinthian church. The same kind of thing. He's saying, you're caught up in a world of carnality.

You who know God, and you who have accepted Christ, and you who have access to having heard the teachings and preachings of God's word are still acting as if He doesn't exist, or certainly at least oblivious to Him, when it comes to the way you live and conduct your life. So, he's saying, you've got to lay aside all malice, guile, hypocrisy, envy, all evil speaking. He's saying, and this is just a small example that happened to be prevalent in those two churches, the one in Corinthians, where he describes similar things, and now here, as he writes in his letter there, Peter's writing.

And what he's telling us simply there is, sin quenches the spirit. Sin inhibits spiritual growth. And when we continue to dabble in sin, and we allow sin to run rampant in our lives, a gross disregard of God and His word, and God and His life in Christ, then those sins in our life will inhibit us from growing in the Lord.

And thus they will rob us of the presence and power of the Lord Jesus Christ in us to do His good, His perfect work through us. That is, they're going to prohibit us from experiencing God's provision for our life. That's what happens.

But it isn't just that. So, let's look down below verse 2, after he exhorts us to desire the sin-sealed milk of the word. He's saying, stop getting upset and desiring after and seeking after your creature comforts and your personal preferences.

That's what he's really saying about those human sins he described in verse 1. He's saying, now look, get off of that baby stuff, that human plane of the things you want and this touchy-feely mentality of what feels good to you. And he says, move on and get back to the real thing that matters, which is the sin-sealed milk, the pure truth and life that comes from the living word, Jesus Christ. And that's the means by which you're going to grow.

Verse 3, he says, if so be you have tasted that the Lord is gracious. In other words, have you really, truly tapped into God's grace and experienced God's goodness. If you've tasted of Him being gracious, that means you've tasted or you have partaken or received Jesus Christ.

But then he goes on down there and he mentions some other growth inhibitors. He says in verse 7, unto you therefore which believe, Christ is precious. But unto them which be disobedient, now he tells us something else, see.

Then that's, then the stone is, the builder is disallowed and it's, and such like that. So there's a disregarding of Christ. And then verse 8, he goes on and says, and a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, even to them which stumble at the word being disobedient.

Now let's remember, in the beginning was the word, John chapter 1. So we're talking about the living word, the very person of Jesus Christ. And he's saying now, you through, he says there through disobedience, and he uses that twice. And so we see that one of the other growth inhibitors is to walk in disobedience to the Lord.

In disobedience to His leading, in disobedience to His clear instruction from His word. And to just disregard what the Spirit of God would have you to do and be. And so he says this disobedience is going to cause you to stumble.

That is it's going to cause you to fall and fail and fall short of God's glory and miss out on God's life. The life in Christ, the life available to you. But he says the other part of that is that he believes not.

But if you believe on Him, he says if you believe. So another element that's a growth inhibitor is unbelief. See a lack of willingness to simply trust Him as your life and with your life.

So it's this whole matter that inhibits growth. Well let's go back and just look at what our Lord Jesus says about growth. In Matthew chapter 6. In Matthew chapter 6, known in part as the Sermon on the Mount.

And Jesus is talking to us here about our human concerns for daily living. And our human concerns, and more so back then, had to do with the basic essentials. Food, clothing, shelter.

So Jesus addresses the two most fundamental. Food and clothing. And just about your life in general.

So in Matthew 6 verse 25, Jesus says, Therefore I say unto you, take no thought for your life. Take no thought for your life. What he's saying here is this.

You've got two ways of going about it as a human. Humans naturally, the way they start their life and the way most people live their life, is they're constantly taking thought for their life. In other words, what do I want today? What do I need today? What can I get today? And so everything is about me and what I get and what I want and all that.

So we're constantly taking thought for our life. And we're busy trying to accumulate stuff. So we're constantly trying to get things.

And more things and more things. And so this whole passage here, Jesus is talking about, the thing about laying up treasures on earth. He's talking about all of that business about pursuing things, living for things, valuing things, devaluing people.

See? That's everything Jesus is talking about here. It basically is summed up about that. So he says, take no thought for your life.

Now then he talks in regard to what you're going to eat or drink. And then he talks about what you're going to wear, as in clothing. But look at what he says when it comes down to this matter of what we wear.

He goes on to move on into something about, very subtly, but he brings up what it means to grow. So in verse 28, and why do you take thought for your clothing? And now he tells us, what does it mean to grow?

How do you grow? What does he say there? Look what he says. Consider the lilies of the field.

How do they grow? Okay. He's saying, do you want to know about growth? He says, look at the lilies of the field. Look at the plants.

Look at the trees. Look at creation. How does creation grow? Are they out there working to figure out how they can grow bigger and stronger and better? Are they? Absolutely not.

Jesus says, how do they grow? How do these beautiful flowers in the field, these lilies, how do they grow? And then he says, well I'll tell you, he says, they do not toil and they do not spin. That is, they're not working to make themselves beautiful. They're not working to keep themselves alive.

Here's a simple, here's a simple biblical truth. Life produces growth. Where there's life, there will be growth.

Where there's life, there will be growth. The source of growth comes from the source of life, which is Christ. So, when Christ is in us, growth is inevitable, unless we do something to inhibit growth.

That's why I pointed out these growth inhibitors. Growth inhibitors are coming from when we try to, like he says here about the lily. If you and I go out here and we try to grow by toiling and spinning, by taking thought for how we're going to get what we get and how we're going to do what we do, and how we're going to become a better, stronger Christian, if we start trying to figure it out and work it out and make it happen, all of this carnal effort, all of this fleshly effort, all of our human energies that we impart to all these things, whether it be scripture memory or Bible prayer or church attendance or any of the other activities we do that we think are going to somehow make us better and pleasing to God, are going to keep us from knowing Him and growing in Him.

Because we're trying to work at it and we're trying to make it happen. But what God wants us to see is His way is not our way. The way of growth in the realm of this world in terms of our society, our society has made it clear that if you want to succeed, it will be by the way of education.

And that's fine on the human plane if you want to be a great scientist and you want to build a spaceship to go to Mars. But when it comes to living life, it's not going to be about you figuring it out or understanding it and then trying to somehow implement it and apply it so that it works. That won't happen because you are not God, you're not Christ, and only Christ can live the Christian life.

So it will require Christ in you to make His life work through you. And for that, let's go to another one, back to Peter, because Peter tells us a lot about growth. So let's look at the last chapter of 2 Peter, chapter 3, verse 18.

2 Peter 3.18, and look what he says here. But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and forever.

Amen. Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. He doesn't say the knowledge about Christ.

He says the knowledge of Christ. He says grow in grace. Grace means God does the work.

Grace means God makes it happen. Grace is God's divine enablement and empowering. And he's saying we must grow in grace.

Remember the other two verses I read to you there in Colossians and over there in 1 Corinthians 3? Grace is God causing it to happen. This is the work of God. We grow in grace.

See, there was a day and a time when people tried to grow by works. There was even a time and a place where many thought you could be saved by works. So we would do all these works thinking this would bring about our salvation.

And then finally we realized, wait a minute. None of us can save ourselves. This is the work of God through Christ and thus we have to allow Him to do His work in us and we have to accept what He's done for us and then receive the gift of salvation.

Well, we must likewise receive the gift of life. We can't begin it. We can't live it.

Growing in grace means God does it from start to finish. The Christian life is by grace through faith. From the moment it begins to the time we leave this earth.

It's continuously grace through faith. Grace means God does the work and faith means I let Him. So He says, grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

So growing in grace is where we're allowing Him to enable us and empower us and equip us for our daily life. He's the one that's producing the fruit. That's why it's called the fruit of the Spirit.

It's His fruit. He alone can produce it. So as we allow Him, He will produce that fruit.

Now as we grow in the knowledge of Christ, now we're moving into another dimension and for that we go to Philippians, to the apostle Paul in chapter 3 in which he talks there about knowing Christ. Philippians 3.10. And there he says that I may know Him. Growing in the grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

So Paul is saying, yes, and my desire is to know Him. He says, oh that I may know Him. Now we would think, wait a minute Paul, but you're the one that's writing all these letters to us.

You're the one that the main story of the book of Acts is about. All these things that happened in your life. Surely you know Him.

He says, yes I do, but there's a different kind of knowing. I know Him, but I want to know Him experientially. So growing in the knowledge of Christ is a knowing of Christ as your life.

It is to know Him in your daily experience. The word knowledge there has to do with experiential knowledge. He's saying you must experience Christ as your life in every moment of every day of your life.

So what Paul is saying is, look, I want to know Christ in the power of His resurrection presence. He says the same power that raised Jesus from the dead. He says that's the kind of power that I know I need for my daily living.

The power that will enable me to deal with adversity. The power that will enable me to face heartache and injustice and disappointment and loss and suffering and pain. It's the resurrection power that raised Jesus from the dead that will empower me to deal with life circumstances.

That's what he's saying. And the fellowship of His suffering so that as He went through these human agonies that I can enter in and share with Him. And more importantly, He who is in me will share with me, you know, the Christ in you feels your pain.

And if you'll let Him, He will enable you to endure hardness as a good soldier of Christ. To endure the pain, to endure the suffering, to endure the injustice because of the Christ in you and the fellowship of His sufferings. To know Him experientially as you walk through the hurts and heartaches of life.

That's what Paul is referring to. That He then says, and being made conformable unto His death. So that what he's saying there is that we enter into the same death.

You see, the way you grow up is by first growing down. You've got to die in order to live. You've got to accept your death with Christ and be willing to endure the hardness.

To be willing to go through the fire. You know, I was invited once to go to China, many years ago, into communist China and smuggle Bibles. And I said, you know, I travel all over Asia, but I'm not going to do that.

And the implication that I was hearing from those who invited me was basically I was afraid, I was a coward, I wasn't willing to suffer for Christ, I wasn't willing to be a martyr for Christ. I said, no, you've got it all wrong. I've been behind the Iron Curtain in the USSR in communist, when it was a communist place.

When it was against the law to go. But I went. Not to smuggle Bibles, but to train pastors, to disciple leaders.

I went. I faced the communist guard in the Philippines. I was surrounded by Muslims in Indonesia.

I'm not unwilling to go where pain and suffering is. Where they're present. But I said, what it is, is this.

Where God's grace leads, God will provide. And His grace will sustain me. But if He's not leading me, I'm not going.

And I said, I don't have it leading to go to China. So what I'm saying about this is, we don't want to be presumptuous on God. But if we go as God leads, then He will always have His grace there to sustain us.

And His power to undergird us and enable us. And that's all Paul's talking about here in his life. And as he regards these verses.

Made conformable to His death and by any means to attain to the resurrection of the dead. He's saying, I want to walk in resurrection life. He says, I want to not only experience the resurrection power.

But I want to walk in the resurrection life. But that means we've got to be willing to endure some hardness. As a good soldier of Christ.

And when we do, we've got to know. That as He was with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace. So He is also going to be with us.

And whatever it means, He'll get us through it. Or take us home in the process. And that'd be good too.

Because Paul says, to die is gain. To die is gain. But right now, we're going to talk about living.

And that's what this is all about. So let's pray. Lord, thank You for Your wonderful life in Christ.

Thank You, Lord, that You have made available to us the Word of God, the Scriptures. That we can read and study and see that it's not about knowing words. It's about knowing the Living Word, Jesus Christ.

It's about letting the Word go down deep into us and grow up out of us. It's about our roots going down deep into Christ, the Living Word. So that Your life, Lord Jesus, can grow up out of us.

And be manifest in and through us. So, Lord, that we would, in fact, grow in the grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. And Father, I pray that You would cause each of us to pull back and re-examine.

And stop trying to make it happen, Lord. As You said, just consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. Lord, would we do likewise? Would we just remain in You, as You said, abide in You, as You abide in us.

And we will bring forth much fruit. Growth will happen. Growth will come.

And fruit will be evident. Because where there's life, there will be growth. And so, Lord, if we're not experiencing the full growth and the maturity of Christ, I pray You'd just show us, Lord, where we have engaged in things that would prohibit growth, inhibit growth.

And, Lord, if there's sin present in our lives, that we would acknowledge it, confess it, reject it. Because, Lord, You've already taken care of that. You provided for that when You died on the cross.

We don't have to live under the burden of sin and be bogged down in the dregs of degradation. We receive Your forgiveness, Lord. But also, if we've been engaged in disobedience and not walking as Your Spirit leads and doing as You've shown us and directed us and living according to the truth of Your Word, then, Lord, we confess disobedience.

But, Lord, if it's been a simple matter of unbelief, just a willingness to trust You and believe, then, Lord, we acknowledge unbelief. In fact, we say, as the one man said, I believe, help my unbelief, Lord, because there's a part of us that does believe and wants to believe, and there's a part of us that's reluctant to really trust You totally with our lives. But, Lord, we acknowledge that growth as life is all about Your grace and about our faith, to just trust You.

That just as Jesus died for our sins, Lord, so You have come to be our resurrection life in us, and Your power through us will enable us to live. And as we go on to maturity, it will be You that enables us, by Your grace, to go on. In Jesus' name, amen.

All right, my friends, have a wonderful day.

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