
“Everything We Need”

2 Peter 1:1-4

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(2 Peter 1:1-4)

To those who through the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours:

² Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

³ His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. ⁴ Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

Today, we are beginning a new sermon series on 2 Peter. It's a short letter consisting of only three chapters and it's a letter that often times gets lost in the shuffle. We tend to focus on the more prominent letters like 1 Peter and don't spend nearly enough time in 2 Peter, though it is equally a part of the Scriptures. 2 Peter was written to primarily Gentile Christians scattered around Asia Minor, which included regions like Galatia. Similar to Paul's letter to 2 Timothy, where Paul is aware of his impending death, Peter in his second letter, is also aware that his time on this earth is coming to an end. One of the things that is interesting in 2 Peter, which we will look at later on, is his understanding of Scripture. This is important because his understanding of Scripture should be our understanding of Scripture. We'll see this especially in chapters 2 and 3.

In this letter Peter is addressing false teaching that has influenced the believers. More than being a false teaching that arose within the church, like some kind of doctrinal heresy, in this case, it was more like secular or worldly teachings that were negatively influencing the church. Scholars call it an Epicurean worldview. Briefly, this worldview believed the following.

(1) the world is made of chance occurrences of passing atoms, (2) thus it didn't believe in providence, because providence implies the existence of a divine being who is in control, so it prized individual freedoms, (3) since the world came about by chance and there is no providence, there can be no prophecy and whichever prophecies have been made remain unfulfilled, and finally (4) injustice in the world shows that there cannot be a provident deity. Doesn't that sound eerily similar to today's secular understanding of the world?

You can imagine, back in the day, when the church was just getting started, at that point, it was only around 35 years old, and it was this tiny minority portion of the population, in a very cosmopolitan, free thinking world. Not only was there Epicurean philosophy, but there was emperor worship, there was the Greek understanding of multiple deities, there was ascetic ideas where true religion is found in denying ourselves of earthly pleasures. There was the opposite worldview that believed that since it's the soul that lives forever, that what we do with our bodies has no impact whatsoever.

The world we live in today is not that different. We live in a society that's like the potato chip aisle of various religions and worldviews, just like it was in the Greco-Roman world 2000 years ago. It is true what Ecclesiastes says, that there is nothing new under the sun.

Well, that's some of the background. The focus of today's message is on verses 3 and 4, that God has given us everything we need to live a godly life. What could be more important than to find out what those things are? But before we dive into those verses, I want to spend some time looking at the first two verses. I think we have a tendency to gloss over these introductory words whenever we read the letters in the New Testament. But as we learned in 2 Timothy, "All Scripture is God-breathed" including these introductions. So let's look at a few things.

First, Peter calls himself a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ. We know what apostle means. Literally, it is a person who is sent, a messenger with a mission. But it means more than that. Peter is identifying himself. He's asserting his authority as one of the Twelve. He's one of the pillars and foundations of the church. He's one of the few who has seen the Lord with his own eyes. He has divine authority like an Old Testament prophet would have had. That's what apostle means, but what about servant? The word for servant is probably better translated as a slave. Is this a word that's used to offset the authority of his title as apostle? So, is he saying, Yes, I am an apostle that commands your respect, but I am also a lowly servant, a lowly slave? No, not really. When Peter, or Paul for that matter, uses the term servant or slave as an identifier of who he is, what he is doing is stating, the nature of the relationship between himself and his master. One commentator says it like this. "It's an expression for a person totally owned by and devoted to Jesus Christ, whose status is not his own but one derived from his master." So, Peter is not trying to show how lowly and humble he is here. Even in using the word servant or slave, he's saying, I'm coming as a servant of Jesus, under his command, under his authority. And I a servant of Christ, am also His apostle.

Now, here's how these titles apply to us. The term apostle could never be applied to us or to any other Christian as a title, but it can be applied to us a job description. All Christians are sent Christians. All Christians are on mission. Only in that sense are we apostles. As well, it's not only those of high rank like Peter who are servants, but again, ALL Christians are servants, slaves, of Jesus Christ, are we not? In fact, that's one of the identifiers of all Christians. Just ask yourself: All you totally owned by Christ? Paul says that we are not our own, we were bought at a price. Christ own us because he is our creator, but doubly so, because he is our redeemer. As well, doesn't being a Christian mean that we are devoted to Christ? The very word Christian means Christ-ian, Christ-follower. That's what we are. We are slaves of Christ, and we are on mission for Christ.

The next thing I want you to notice in this introduction are the names for Jesus. There's 'Jesus Christ', 'Our God and Saviour Jesus Christ' and 'Jesus our Lord.' What can we learn from these titles? Let me just mention a couple things, though there are more. First, from these titles we understand that Jesus is divine. Look with me, in particular to the second sentence in verse one. It says, "To those who through the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours." Do we read that sentence as referring to two persons or to the same person? If Peter is referring to two persons, then the first is God the Father, the first person of the Trinity, and the second is the Saviour Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity. OR, is he referring to just one person, that is Jesus?

In the original language it is more likely that Peter is referring to only one person. If he was referring to two persons he would have written, Our God and Our Saviour. And then when we combine that with the last title, 'Jesus our Lord,' it is clear that Peter, in no uncertain terms, is referring to Jesus as God, as divine. So, what does that mean? It means that the one who is God, who is the all supreme being, the creator, the one with all power and wisdom and knowledge is Jesus, and this God is also our Saviour. He is both God and Saviour. That's our confession too, isn't it? In the songs that we sing, in the creeds that we confess, in the way that we pray, we understand and believe that Jesus is both God and the Saviour of our souls.

Let's look at one final thing in regard to the titles. "Jesus our Lord." What is that meant to imply? Just like we say "Jesus Christ" without fully taking in the meaning of that title, we might do the same with the title, "Jesus, our Lord." If you remember, when Thomas encountered the risen Jesus at the end of the gospel of John; when Jesus invited him to touch his scarred hands and side; when Jesus told him to stop doubting and believe, what was Thomas's confession? "My Lord and My God!" If you search the words Lord and Jesus, and look in the book of Acts, which is the record of the early church, the phrase appears over and over and over again. It becomes the standardized way of referring to Jesus.

To be a Christians is to declare that Jesus is Lord. In fact, Paul is so adamant on this, that he says,

If you declare with your mouth, "**Jesus is Lord,**" and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. (**Romans 10:9**)

And,

Therefore I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "**Jesus is Lord,**" except by the Holy Spirit. What does it mean that Jesus is Lord as a confession? Well, it's the corporate confession of His church. The church is the gathering of those who confess Jesus as Lord. And similar to the word servant/slave that we just talked about, Lord, is the other half of that equation. Wife/husband; child/parent; employee/boss; servant/Lord. It's the answer to the question, Servant to whom? Slave to whom? To the Lord Jesus. Are you a Christian? Then you are a slave and Jesus is your Lord. (**1Corinthians 12:3**)

There's something else I want you to see in the introduction. It's the phrase, "You've received a faith as precious as ours". Peter looks at the faith that he has, the Gospel, the Christian faith, his relationship with Jesus, and he sees it as precious. Literally, it means of equal value. The NASB translates it as "the same kind." The ESV says, "of equal standing." In ancient times the word was used to refer to the equally of citizens under law. It's like the phrase in the US constitution, "all men are created equal." You get the picture. Here's what Peter is getting at. He's saying, just because I'm an apostle, a slave of Christ, my faith is not different from your faith. My faith is not of a higher caliber than your faith. My faith and your faith are of equal standing, they're equally precious, they're the same. Why? Because there is only one Gospel. Have you ever heard this saying, "The ground is level at the foot of the cross"? For whatever reason, we like to place people on pedestals. We think pastors are on one level, and then there's the rest of us and that is not true.

My faith is as precious as your faith which is as precious as your faith. Because it's the same Lord of all, and the same Gospel that saves us all.

Here's what's so amazing about this. Many people think that they'll go to God after they clean up their lives, after they've made themselves better. But this truth tells us that's not how it works. Listen to the lyrics of this old hymn that gets across the same message. I just love the words to this hymn:

Come, ye sinners, poor and needy
Weak and wounded, sick and sore
Jesus ready, stands to save you
Full of pity, love and power

Come, ye thirsty, come and welcome
God's free bounty glorify
True belief and true repentance
Every grace that brings you nigh

Come, ye weary, heavy-laden
Lost and ruined by the fall
If you tarry 'til you're better
You will never come at all

Chorus:

I will arise and go to Jesus
He will embrace me in His arms
In the arms of my dear Saviour
Oh, there are ten thousand charms

Are you a sinner? You know you are. Do you think you're good enough? You know you're not. So, come to Jesus. There's room for every sinner, even one like you or one like me. In Jesus there is a precious faith, that is the same for all. He is the God to whom you owe everything. He's the Saviour that came to die. He's the one who is the Lord, and you are his servant.

There's more to say from the introduction, but we must move on. Let's look to verse 3 and 4. It says,

His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. ⁴ Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. **(2 Peter 1:3)**

Many Christians are looking for a magic bullet for their spiritual lives. They're looking for that one thing that'll put them over the hump. That one trick, that one encounter, that one experience, that'll make them pray more, obey more, serve more and sin less. What Peter tells us here is that what we are looking for has already been given to us. In other words, we don't need to look for it. We don't need some extra something. It's already ours. Everything we need to live godly lives has been given to us already.

What is a godly life? A godly life is a life that God approves of. It's a life that's lived in accordance with God's laws and commands. It's a life that's lived according to God's perfect will. It's a moral life. It's a life of obedience to God, of devotion to God. It's a pious life. So, just consider again, the culture in which these Christians first lived. It was an immoral culture, a sinful culture, an idolatrous culture, a self-centered culture; which is the same as our culture. Within that background, God calls us to godliness. So how do we live this godly life?

Let's first look to the source of this godly life. It comes from divine power. Power from above. Power from God, more specifically from Jesus. In other words, if we are to live a godly life, it must be from Christ and through Christ and in Christ. Apart from Him, we cannot succeed in living this kind of life. Jesus is the one who supplies for all Christians this divine power. That means we must tap into a divine source; we must receive this power from God. It also means that we must avoid trying to be godly on our own strength and our own wisdom. That method is destined to fail, as we all know well. When we try to be godly by our own effort, we will never succeed, but in Christ, this divine power to be godly has already been given to us. So that's the source of the power.

Next, how do we access this divine power? It's "through our knowledge of Christ, who called us by his own glory and goodness." This means that the only way we have access to divine power to live a godly life is through the Gospel. It's through knowledge of Jesus Christ. Paul says something similar in the letter to the Colossians. In Colossians there was a false teaching that said that the ascetic life, that is, the life of denying myself of any pleasure, was the way to God and Paul says, that this fails to accomplish what it sets out to do. Here's what he says in his own words:

2:23 Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.

What does Paul offer as the solution? Being rooted in Christ. Whether Paul or Peter, it's only in Christ and through Christ that we can be godly and holy. That's the only means by which we have access to divine power.

This knowledge of Christ, that all Christians possess, how did it come about? How did we come across this knowledge? Peter says, we were called by Christ's goodness and glory. He's the one who sought us out. He's the one who called out to us. He's the one who changed our hearts. He's the one that revealed to us our sin and our need of a Saviour. It was all through Christ.

Then, as we move on to verse 4, it's through his goodness and glory that he has given us his great and precious promises. We can't say with 100% absolute certainty what promises he is referring to, because he doesn't say. He might be doing this intentionally, to speak of God's promises in general, that is, he means all of his promises. The Bible can be seen as a book of promises. From the very earliest chapters to the final chapters, and all of what's in between is filled with God's promises. God made a promise with Noah. God made a promise with Abraham. God made a promise through Moses. God made a promise through David and God made all his promises come true, he made them good and valid and applicable, and he made them ours in Christ Jesus.

In fact, the Gospel is a promise given in the Old Testament, and it becomes a promise fulfilled in the coming of Christ, and then a promise to be completed when Jesus returns. That's what the Bible is.

Okay, so let's try to tie all this together. Peter says that everything we need to live godly lives has already been given to us. The source is the divine power of Christ. The means is through knowledge of Christ, which is knowledge of the Gospel. That means we only have access to this power by trusting in Jesus as our Lord and Saviour and then the application of this power is by living according to the promises of God, found in his Word.

Let's get really practical. Let's see how this works. God wants me to be holy. And I also want to be holy. Both God and I want me to live a godly life. So, God gives us his promises, scattered throughout the Scriptures. As I read the Bible, I discover these promises. Then, I try my best, by the Holy Spirit's illumination, to understand what the promise means. What's the next step? I believe this promise is true. I believe it still applies to me. And then I act upon the promise that I've just read. That's the provision given to us to be godly. That's the everything that is needed to be godly.

Here's an example from a book I read recently on preaching. Hopefully from this example you can see the relationship to living a godly life. The author was writing about how to preach in the power of the Spirit. He gave five steps:

- Step 1. Admit your need of God, your dependence upon God.
- Step 2. Pray for help. Ask God for help.
- Step 3. Trust in God's provision. This is where we quote Scripture promises.
- Step 4. Act. Go and preach.
- Step 5. Thank God for helping you.

So, let's look at how this applies to sin and godliness.

Step 1. Admit your need of God, your dependence upon God. We say to God, "God, I cannot be godly without you. Without you, I will keep falling into sin. Without your divine power, I will be ungodly."

Step 2. Pray for help. Ask God for help. "God help me in this area or that area of sin. Help me to be holy."

Step 3. Trust in God's provision. This is where we quote Scripture promises. "Lord, it says in your word, in 2 Peter 1:3, that everything thing we need to be godly has been provided for us from your divine power. Knowledge of Christ has provided for me everything I need for a godly life." Trust in the promise, trust that God will help us, guide us, keep us from sin, and help us to live godly lives.

Step 4. Act. Now we act. We walk by the Spirit. We memorize Scripture. And in complete dependence upon God, when the moment temptation or sin rears its ugly head, or when an opportunity to live in obedience to God comes, we act. We walk in the truth of that promise.

Step 5. And then after we obey, we thank God for helping us. Does that make sense?

So, is the secret to your godly living going to be found in some magic pill, or some ecstatic experience? No, it is found in daily living in the power of God, as we trust in his promises.

What then will be the result of this godly living? Look at the last phrase in verse 4. This is really important.

“so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.”

Peter says that through the keeping of these promises, by living according to these great promises, we will participate in the divine nature, having escaped corruption in the world caused by evil desires. So, two things will happen. One is the achievement of a positive and the other is the avoidance of a negative. The positive is that we will become like God. We will share in God’s divine nature. We will take on God’s characteristics. The Apostle John said the same thing, that we will be like Christ. This is the heart’s cry of every Christian, to be like Christ, and at the same time, to be freed from sin, to be freed from the corruption in the world.

During this COVID isolation, it’s so easy to let our guards down, to not take sin seriously, to even allow ourselves to become enslaved to it. As well, we might have used COVID as an excuse not to serve God or others, to take a break from living out the mission of Christ. You and I are called to live godly lives. We have the power available to us. That power comes from God. We have the means, through our knowledge of Christ. And then the way, by trusting in God’s promises. God help us.

Let’s pray.