

2Peter 1:2-4 Divine Power Working In and Through Us

2 Peter 1:2-4 ² Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; ³ seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. ⁴ For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of *the* divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

Last week we noted how this epistle or letter was inspired of the Holy Spirit as He moved the apostle Peter to give us the very word of God. It appears that Peter was re-addressing those saints he wrote to in the first epistle.

And in a similar fashion he is going to encourage these saints in their walk with Christ. But in this particular letter he will spend a great deal of time warning them of the dangers of false teachers and the false teachings they will use to confuse and divide the body of Christ.

It seems these days in the Church that there does not appear to be enough of this warning and actual teaching concerning false teachers. As a result every wind of doctrine which is floating around the Church has a tendency to take up residence in many local bodies around the country as people are not willing to test everything according to the word of God.

A major part of the problem resides with the leadership in the Church. This doesn't exclude everyone who sits in the pew, because all of us are to be Bereans when it comes to the word of God, but the leadership are to be shepherds, which means that they are not only to feed but must also protect the flock of Christ as well.

Paul was a man who spent a great deal of time training Christians to be aware of teachings which did not align with the written word. In one case he calls the elders of Ephesus to meet him in the city of Miletus to encourage them and remind them of these false teachers.

ACT 20:27-32 "For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God. Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of

the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears. "Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified."

I've heard people say, we shouldn't be so critical of others in the Church simply because they believe differently than us. And I agree. There are many issues which don't deserve the kind of attention which would divide the body of Christ like: Should we immerse or sprinkle? Should we sing hymns alone or can we also sing contemporary worship songs? Can I read and study from a more modern translation of the bible as opposed to reading only from the KJV?

There are lots of things like this which are secondary issues. That doesn't mean we can't have convictions concerning such things, it just means there is liberty in such areas and we don't have to go to war over such things. But when it comes to the essentials of the faith like salvation, the person and work of Christ and the way in which He conforms us into His image, which is our sanctification, then we must teach the truth and expose those things which would undermine the foundation of Christ's church.

This does not mean that we personally attack people, but it does mean we denounce the false teachings that will affect the lives of God's people in Christ. And leaders must do it with purpose and resolve to make sure believers are aware of these false teachings, not assuming that they'll discover it on their own.

Again, Paul put it well when he said, "Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears." Does that sound like Paul was not concerned with false teachers and their teaching? Not at all. And so, the shepherds in Christ's church are the first line of defense as they warn the body of Christ, but then those in the local churches must take up the fight to make sure others are not ensnared.

As I've said on a variety of occasions, bad doctrine produces bad lives. You cannot have false teaching on something like the person and work of Christ and not have it affect your walk with Christ. I'll give you an example.

If Jesus Christ is not fully God and fully man then you and I do not have a true Savior, we are still in our sins. Those in the cults who teach falsely that Jesus Christ may have been a good man, a wonderful prophet or at best one of many gods, or a mere angel, are undermining the very foundation of our salvation.

In fact, this is the reason Peter begins this letter in the fashion he does. In the first verse he states that we have received a faith of the same kind as Peters, "by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ:..."

Make no mistake, this Jesus who is Savior is the same God who is spoken of all throughout the O.T. scriptures in places like 2SA 22:47 "The LORD lives! Praise be to my Rock! Exalted be God, the Rock, my Savior!"

The same Savior Samuel speaks of is the same Savior and Lord Peter speaks of in our letter before us. In fact, it's interesting to note that in his previous letter he writes, "But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened." (Isaiah 8:12). But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,..." (1PE 3:14-15)

The phrase "set apart Christ as Lord" is the O.T. equivalent of saying "set apart Christ as Yahweh or Jehovah." Jehovah's witnesses do not believe that Jesus Christ is God because they believe the only true God is Yahweh, inferring only one person instead of the three persons in the Godhead. And yet 1Pet.3:14-15 is a quote taken from Isaiah 8:12-13.

ISA 8:12 -14 "Do not call conspiracy everything that these people call conspiracy; do not fear what they fear, and do not dread it. The LORD Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy, he is the one you are to fear, he is the one you are to dread, and he will be a sanctuary;..."

The word Lord in Isa.8:13 is the Hebrew word for Jehovah or Yahweh. Peter is quoting that particular verse in his first letter to designate that this Savior is none other than Christ who is Lord or Jehovah.

Peter is setting the foundation in the first part of this second letter for everything that is to follow. The false teachers are those who

are not submitting to Christ as Lord and Jehovah as He is revealed in the written word of God and are teaching things for their own gain that will tickle the ears of the saints .

Instead of depending on the objective word they will teach things that appeal to the senses and the emotions and it will lead people down a path that will have as its foundation sinking sand.

I remember back in the 60's and early 70's the battle cry was "if it feels good do it". Unfortunately, that same attitude has found its way into the Church-at-large today. If it feels good it must be of the Spirit. How can something which makes me feel so wonderful not be of God? And yet, that is never to be the measure of what is of the Spirit.

That which is of the Spirit is what the Spirit has revealed in the very word He inspired. And so we come to that word this morning as we continue in our text.

2PE 1:2 "Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord."

Where does grace and peace come from as it relates to eternal things? Well, obviously it comes from our eternal and Almighty God. Peter is greeting the church and reminding them of this as he encourages them to look to this One true God who loves them and who is the One who bestows such gifts and blessings.

But don't ever forget, this letter is for us as well. This grace and peace from God is ours in Christ and it's ours in abundance. The word for abundance in the Greek is plethuno and it means to increase, to multiply. The Greek root word pleth is also the root word in English for plethora, meaning super abundance.

This grace and peace from God in abundance is what Paul speaks of in the letter to the Ephesians.

EPH 1:3 "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ."

When we talk about the abundant life there's the tendency with some to relegate this abundance to mere temporal blessings or spiritual blessings which are simply meant to give us some sort of spiritual high.

The verse from which this idea of an abundant life comes is found in the gospel of John where Jesus Himself is speaking. The context

of that passage has to do with, interestingly enough, false shepherds and the one true Shepherd who gives life.

Joh.10:9-15 "I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal, and kill, and destroy; I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He who is a hireling, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, beholds the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep, and flees, and the wolf snatches them, and scatters them. He flees because he is a hireling, and is not concerned about the sheep. I am the good shepherd; and I know My own, and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep." (NASB)

This abundant life is a life of knowing the shepherd and walking after the shepherd, realizing that this shepherd loves us so much that he would give his life for us. How much more will he empower and build us up for his service? Paul fully understood this aspect of an abundant life with abundant grace from God.

1TI 1:14-16 "The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners - of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life."

Paul realized that this abundant grace was for the purpose of living for and serving the God of grace who gives life eternal through Christ. What is more abundant than that which is eternal?

ROM 5:17 "For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ."

Does this mean that there is no abundance in daily living as we're blessed both materially and spiritually? Not at all. But to limit an abundant life to the things of this world is to miss the point of what it means to be part of a kingdom which is not of this world. It's all balance.

And so when Peter says, "Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, he's saying that it is only through knowing this one true God through faith in Christ. But it's a promise that we actually do possess all the grace we need and continue to receive from our Lord to grow in this relationship with our Creator, God and Savior.

In keeping with the context of this abundant grace through Christ Peter then goes on in the next verse of our text.

2PE 1:3 "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."

This abundant grace from God includes His divine power. What kind of power is divine power? Well, Paul speaks of this in his letter to the Ephesians.

EPH 1:18-21 "I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come."

The same power of God which raised Christ from the dead is the same power working in our lives to the glory of God as we faithfully represent Him in this world. But ironically, this power is best seen throughout weakness or our inability to trust in our own strength but in the strength of God. And again, this power is associated with the grace of God.

2CO 12:9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me."

But as we come back to our text, notice what this power is for. "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."

Have you ever wondered what this Christian life that we have is really all about? Is it just to have an experience of God? Is it just

to be a better person? Is it to help us understand this world? No, "the supreme objective of the Christian is to know God." (DM Lloyd Jones)

JOH 17:3 "Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent."

If this is what eternal life is all about, to know God, and by that we mean to know Him intimately as in a relationship, then it stands to reason that we grow in this relationship with Him. And what God has done is to provide the means for that growth through His divine power, or the power of God which created the heavens and the earth.

The question then is, do we have the ability to grow in relation to our salvation? The answer is an unequivocal, yes. But, it is not according to our power but by the power which God provides and dispenses through His grace abundantly.

How can we possibly speak of God's grace and power without using the adjective abundantly? Again, as I said earlier, what can be more abundant than an infinite almighty power coming from the infinite Almighty God? And everyone of us in Christ has been given such power and strength.

But it does not mean we shouldn't utilize the means the Holy Spirit has provided to walk in that strength. For example when we talk about growing in our faith in Christ we are essentially talking about our sanctification. How is this done?

Well, both Peter and Jesus give us the answer. In Peter's first letter he says this.

1PE 2:2 "Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation,³ now that you have tasted that the Lord is good."

The pure spiritual milk is the word of God we must be drinking like newborn babes so that we can grow and mature in our walk with Christ.

Jesus, when praying to the Father on our behalf said, "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth." (JOH 17:17)

The word sanctify is the Greek word *hagiazō* which means set apart for sacred use or make holy. We have been set apart by God because not only do we know God but He intimately knows us. Therefore, we have His divine power and we have everything we

need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

I've heard it so often. What else can we be doing to grow closer to the Lord? What program can we start to become mature in the Lord? If I take a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, will that bring me closer to Christ?

Maybe we can take a page from the mystics of old which has found its way into the modern church in the form of what is now known as the Contemplative and Emergent movements, which is nothing more than Christianized new age philosophies, neo-paganism. Dare I say doctrines of demons.

It seems everyone is trying to devise their own different plans to grow closer to Christ and have overlooked the only one that God prescribes. We have everything we need for life and everything we need for godliness.

When Peter speaks of everything we need for life he is talking about the quality of a spiritual life in communion with God. He's not necessarily talking about everything we need for life like a new car, or a house or food and clothing. Those things God does provide, but here in the context of 2Peter he's referring to this in reference to godliness.

Do you want to mature in your faith? Do you want to grow in relation to your salvation? Do you want to become more like Christ? Peter says, you don't need to make a trip anywhere other than to the throne of God as we seek Him diligently in prayer and in His word. And then in His divine power which is made available to us we love and obey Him as we submit to Him.

Christ's divine power has also called us by his own glory and goodness. What a call that is.

ROM 8:30-31 "And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?"

This call is for life, eternal life. And this call from God is a call which assures us that if we know Him by faith in Christ, He will also provide every spiritual blessing which comes from our heavenly Father so that we might grow in godliness in this life.

1CO 1:7-9 "Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful."

Let's go back to our text.

2PE 1:4 "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."

There's a rather strange phrase here in our text, not only in English but even in the Greek. It's the phrase, "that you may participate in the divine nature." This was a phrase pagan cultures of the day used to describe the way in which they strove to become god-like.

And in a sense Peter uses their own language to describe the truth of what it really means to be God-like. It starts, as we have said with knowing the true God, but unlike the pagan cultures who knew nothing of an assurance of knowing this one true God, Peter says, you can assuredly know Him and become like Him.

To become like Him is to participate in His divine nature. Does this mean we become absorbed into some god-force like Buddhism teaches? Do we become one with nature or the universe as New Age philosophy teaches? Do we actually become little gods? Is that what it means to participate in the divine nature? Not at all.

To participate in the divine nature is to participate in the divine life given freely in Christ who is divine and eternal God. The divine nature is who the true God is. And to know Him is to know eternal life as John pointed out in Joh.17:3.

Peter puts it another way in 1PE 5:1 "To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed:..."

What glory? The glory of God as we are ultimately transformed and glorified in our new resurrected bodies. Another way to describe participating in the divine nature is the way Paul puts it in the letter he wrote to the Galatians.

GAL 2:20 "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

What does this life in Christ produce? It produces the hope that I will not be found guilty before a holy God and because of the righteousness of Christ put to my account I will be declared not guilty. But it produces much more. It produces the hope that the power of sin no longer has mastery over me. And this is partly what it means to escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

1CO 15:56-58 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

ROM 7:5-6 "For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death. But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code."

This is where Peter is going with this letter and why he thinks it so important that our theology and doctrine be true to the word of God because false teachings will hamper our ability to understand and walk in a way that pleases the Lord.

If we have participated in the divine nature by knowing God through faith in Christ then it stands to reason that we must go forward in this relationship, growing and maturing as we rely on the divine power given to us to accomplish His will and to bring glory to His name.

We'll close with this from the apostle Paul regarding this divine nature and the new life given to us by our Divine Savior and the hope set before us.

ROM 8:23;29 "Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers."