

LIVING ON EARTH WITH A DIVINE NATURE - Part two

Studies in 2 Peter - Sunday, January 27th, 2019 - Teaching #2104

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HOW THE PROMISES OF GOD ARE SUPPOSED TO WORK IN CREATING GODLINESS

2 Peter 1:1-4 - "Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ: [2] May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.[3] His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, [4] by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire."

Last week we studied two of four foundational truths. So important are they that Peter insists on reminding people of them even though they might complain they already know them. Believe me, it takes a fair amount of fortitude to proclaim truths you know people won't find exciting because they already know them. Preachers like to be innovative and exciting.

The first truth was ***the content of the Gospel is specific and measurable***. God had acted in human history. His decisive saving act centers around Jesus Christ and no one else. Peter says if ***my*** religious faith is to be saving, it must be that same as ***his***.

Do a quick ***Romans 12:1-2*** test. Test your conformity to the world. ***Does it subtly disturb your inner moral code to say these words to yourself - "My faith is true and those who contradict it are false."?*** That is a visible manifestation of having the populace mind-set squeezing you into its shape. ***It's not your creed that measures your devotion. It's your creed when confronted with options.***

The second truth was the power of my faith is meant to be constantly ***multiplying*** in my life. I couldn't ***initiate*** it myself. But I can ***starve*** it by lack of devotion and attention. The primary cause of this decline is a failure to grow in ***knowledge*** - "May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord"(2).

Now we continue with points three and four:

3) **GOD HAS MADE ADEQUATE PROVISION FOR EVERY CHRISTIAN TO GROW BEYOND HIS OR HER PRESENT LEVEL OF MATURITY AND WILLS ALL OF US TO DO SO**

2 Peter 1:3 - "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence...."

There is a call in this verse - "***who called us by His own glory.***" We see ***God's expectation*** for all who claim His Name in this world. We see immediately that it is totally wrong for any Christian to merely rejoice in forgiveness. We ***are*** forgiven. And that should bring great joy - perhaps our greatest joy. But forgiveness is the ***beginning*** of the process, not the ***conclusion***.

As a Christian, I am not merely one who has been forgiven for his wrongdoings. God didn't just come and wipe the record of all my wicked deeds clean. That is not the message of the Gospel in its complete form. That's a distortion of the Christian faith and message.

God ***did*** wipe the slate clean. But He also did something else. He gave me a new nature. Paul teaches that I am not just a ***forgiven*** person. I am a ***new*** person. Peter's going to say it clearly in the **fourth verse** - "***....so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature...."***

John teaches the same truth again - **1 John 3:9** - "***No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God.***"

So Peter's words in **verse three** teach all of us to hear the ***whole call of God***, rather than just a small part of it. And here's the important point. This is a call ***that comes with adequate provision for the fulfillment of that call.***

"Well, Pastor Don, you don't know my circumstances. I don't think I'm ever going to amount to much in my Christian life." That's the very attitude Peter is addressing in **verse 3**. You may not be adequate on your own, but that's really not the issue. ***God*** is adequate. And He has made full provision for your weakness and your need - "***His divine***

power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness...”

Peter then repeats the same thought in **verse 4** just in case we missed it the first time - “...he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature....”

Peter says God has **provided everything needed** for you to grow in grace, joy, peace, and holiness. So let's wrap this up with a look at the practical instruction from Peter on **how** God's provisions are to be utilized by people like you and I:

4) HOW TO LIVE IN THE POWER OF GOD'S PRECIOUS AND MAGNIFICENT PROMISES

2 Peter 1:4 - “...by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.”

We should listen carefully to these words from Peter. For every person who feels like he or she is too big a failure to ever be able to put into practice what I'm talking about this Sunday, remember for a minute who is writing these words in the first place.

Of all people, Peter knew what it was to fail the Lord. He quite literally deserted Jesus at the one time Jesus needed his faithfulness the most. He cursed Jesus. After everything Jesus had done for Peter he denied ever knowing Him. Think about what that means. He didn't just **forget** about Jesus. He actively **betrayed** Jesus. Judah wasn't the only one to betray Jesus.

Peter saw that Jesus was going to die. And he panicked. He refused to stay faithful to his Lord after seeing Him calm the seas with a command, feed five thousand people with the loaves and fishes, raise Lazarus from the dead, and make the blind man see.

Didn't God **know** Peter would fail so miserably when he called Him? Jesus prayed **all night** before choosing the twelve apostles. Why was Peter picked? And there's only one good answer to that question. Peter was chosen so we would all have his example from which to glean understanding.

So **why did Peter fail so badly?** I'll tell you why. He saw Jesus coming to what looked like the end of the road. And, for a brief moment, everything seemed hopeless. All the former glory was gone. The forces of darkness were winning. And Peter didn't want to go down with the ship. **That's why Peter cursed Jesus and denied ever knowing Him.**

But even that isn't the whole story. Peter didn't just **happen** to fail the Lord. Jesus **told** Peter several times that He was going to be betrayed, face trial and be killed. And Jesus also went to great pains to **promise** Peter that His (Jesus') death wasn't the end of the road but the beginning of the road. Jesus told Peter - Jesus **promised** Peter - that He would rise from the dead.

Full stop. This is the time in the sermon to think. Peter was weak because he **forgot a very precious and magnificent promise**. And he didn't forget it the way I forget where I put my keys. Peter turned from the promise because of fear and because of pressure. The promise didn't feel as powerful as his circumstances - **Is that where you are?** - And when the power of the promise is gone, the strength for holiness goes with it.

If you're careful, you will see a passion that lives very close to Peter's heart in these verses. Peter **knows** what he's writing about. In **verse two** he writes about the **“knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ, our Lord.”** In **verse three** he writes about the power given for life and godliness **“through the knowledge of Him who called us...”** In **verse four** he writes about the **“precious and magnificent promises”** that provide fuel for powerful living.

So we come to see Peter's heart here. He's stressing the importance of **knowledge and knowing**. But the knowledge isn't just some abstract theological understanding. The knowledge is a living and practical and consuming application of the precious promises of God to all of life.

Perhaps we could come at the issue this way. **Why** does Peter say we need to remember God's promises? Look at **verse 4** - “...he [God] has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world

because of sinful desire.”

This is really quite striking. It's not what I would have expected. I would think God gives promises so we can know what He tells us is actually true - like the way we back up our claims and intentions - ***“I'll be here to pick you up at 4. I promise!”***

So the promise means this will really happen. But Peter doesn't say God's promises are to reinforce that fact that God isn't lying. God doesn't need to back up His intentions and plans in any way. No. The purpose of the promises isn't geared toward making His Word more certain. It's to change the way we ***aim our lives*** at what God has said. The promises need to be remembered so we can escape the corruption that is brought into our lives ***“because of sinful desire”***(4b).

We need to dig down into this concept for a moment. We can look into God's Word to see exactly how this is to work. As long as I live in a physical, temporal body, Peter says there are inward inclinations - ***reflex responses to life*** - that ***feel right because they're my own desires, but will only bring “corruption.”***

That means if I put my faith in my own inclinations and reactions rather than in some counter-acting promise from God's Word, my life will become more and more ***corrupt***. And corrupt doesn't just mean ***bad*** or ***immoral***. Corruption means ***decaying***. It's the opposite of forces that ***create***. Corruption is ***anti-creation***.

There are dozens of ways the promises of God must be applied if they are to fuel holiness and grace in our lives: I will never be free to live without bitterness and vengeance until I really believe a specific and precious promise from God - **Romans 12:19** - ***“Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.”*** So, if I develop a life style of anger and bitterness toward my enemies, I'll tell you what my real spiritual problem is - ***unbelief!*** I don't believe God's promises. And that will cripple me spiritually.

Every sin has God's full attention. It is either punished in the body of Jesus on the cross or it will be punished eternally in hell.

Here's another example. I will never be free to give to the Lord and support His work faithfully with my tithes and offerings unless I take seriously a specific, precious promise from God - **2 Corinthians 9:8-11** - ***“And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. [9] As it is written, “He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.”[10] He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. [11] You will be enriched in every way for all your generosity, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God.”***

Giving always throws you back upon the promises of God. Any fool can create such a consuming life-style that tithing feels like a financial impossibility. You will be freed to ***begin*** your budget with honoring God only when you come to terms with the precious promise of God.

Let me close with another very specific example right from the book we are studying. Peter is writing to a group of Christians - or more accurately, groups of scattered Christians - who are facing hardship and persecution. They're being plagued with false teachers as well. Peter wants to give them something that will keep their lives from coming unglued. We know he wants them to stay on message with the gospel. We know he wants them to stay meek and patient - not to return evil for evil. He wants to give them something that will keep them strong, encouraged and on track in holiness and growth.

What would you give them in one letter? True to form, Peter gives them a promise: **2 Peter 3:9-11** - ***“The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. [10] But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. [11] Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness....”***

Don't miss what is happening here. Peter is saying, ***“Here's the best thing you can do for yourself in your hour of trial. Ignore all the other voices. Refuse to listen to the mocking world around you - remember that Jesus is coming again!”***

Peter can't visit these people. He's going to be dead and gone soon. There are no seminars. There are no Podcasts. No blogs. No internet. What can Peter give them? He says, ***"Hook your heart up to a precious, magnificent promise! Never let go of it. Tell yourself everyday that Jesus is coming again!"***

And Peter holds to that same promise as he's facing his own execution for his counter-cultural devotion to Jesus.

Now, just knowing that this promise exists isn't enough. That's not what Peter is talking about. If I give more space in my mind to the movies of the day than the promises of God, I'll never make it spiritually. If I dwell more on my wealth than the promises of God, all bets are off. If I immerse myself in church work, but forget the promises of the coming of Jesus and His reward for faithfulness, I'll become mean spirited and weary in well doing.

But the knowledge of God - the knowledge of God and our Lord Jesus Christ - as a ***promise giver*** and a ***promise keeper*** will keep your heart pure and growing and singing through whatever comes in this earthly life.

How many promises of God do you even know? And how many of those do you think about at least once a day? And how many of those do you actually believe God will keep for you? If you want grace and peace to be multiplied in your life, start right there.