

POWER, PROMISES, PARTAKERS

2 Peter 1:1-4

Intro: How do we learn why any book of the Bible was written? The best way I know, is to read the book. The best way to know why Peter wrote this book, is by reading it. And personally I believe that Peter wrote it although there have probably been more questions raised about the writer of this book than of any other book in the Bible. As we read the three chapters of this book, it seems that the purpose of 2 Peter is very similar to the purpose of 1 Peter. Jerry Bridges, in the messages that he brought to us last Spring at our Bible Conference, left no doubt in our minds but that Peter's purpose in writing 1 Peter was to encourage the believers in the places mentioned in chapter 1, verse 1, *to pursue holiness*. And, as Jerry brought out so well, holiness is the main thing that we are to be concerned about through all the experiences of our lives, or, as he expressed it, *even when life hurts!*

In chapter 3 of 2 Peter he indicates that he was writing a second epistle to the same group to whom he wrote the first, with the same emphasis, but especially in the light of all of the difficult things that will take place, and are taking place, up to the time when the Lord returns. Look, for example, at chapter 3, verse 11. (Read.) And then look at verse 14. And then notice his final words in verse 18.

We find the same emphasis in chapter 1. See 1:3. And then look at the last part of verse 6 in chapter 1, and the beginning of verse 7. Peter underscores what the other writers of the NT epistles emphasize and that is the need for believers to continue growing in the Lord, increasing their knowledge of God and His ways, becoming more and more like our Savior. They all emphasize that the best way to keep from dropping back, is to be pressing ahead. This is what makes Peter's words in 2 Peter 1 so very important.

I am afraid that it has always been true that the majority of people who profess faith in Christ, never get beyond the starting point. When Paul (or whoever wrote the epistle to the Hebrews), he pointed out that Jewish believers had the same problem that Gentile believers do. He told them in chapter 5, verse 12, that for the length of time they had been saved, they should have been teachers. But, as it was, they needed to go back to "the first principles of the oracles of God," the ABC's of Scripture to get a fresh start. He wanted to feed them with meat, but they were only capable

of spiritual milk. Now there is nothing to be ashamed of if you are a babe in Christ, but if after several years of knowing the Lord, you are still a baby in the Christian life, it is not only something to be ashamed of, but it is something to be alarmed about.

This was the main problem in the Corinthian church: the believers there had failed to grow. They were walking as men of the world instead of manifesting in their lives that they were new creatures in Christ.

This has always been the problem in the church, as it was among the Lord's people in Israel and Judah in the OT. This is what Paul was concerned about. This is what the Apostle John was concerned about. James and Jude had the same concern. And it was a great burden to our Lord when He was here on earth. And there can be no true spiritual growth without the Word of God, reading it, seeking to understand it, and living according to its teaching. Only then can we be holy.

And when we talk about being holy, we are not talking about sinless perfection. The only person who ever lived who was sinlessly perfect, was our Lord Jesus Christ. But the Bible teaches that the person who is growing in holiness, is a person who will turning away more and more from sin in any and all of its forms. We all need to keep growing, and we need to keep growing until the Lord either comes for us, or calls us home.

Peter, like the other Apostles, put a strong emphasis upon what we know about God. Here in 2 Peter 1 look at the word "knowledge" in verse 2. And then notice it again in verse 3. And then notice it in verses 5 and 6. And then you find it again in verse 8. Begin with knowledge, the knowledge of God, and the knowledge of Christ, and the knowledge of all of the Word which is the only true source we have for the knowledge of God.

If you are reading Ezekiel now, have you noticed how many times the Lord said through Ezekiel, "that they may know that I am the Lord." And it is said about all the nations for which Ezekiel had a message. It is true of people in the world, it is true of us as Christians, what we know about the Members of the Godhead is going to affect the way we live.

I mentioned two Sunday nights ago when I spoke about the promises of God which are mentioned here in chapter 1 of 2 Peter, that generally speaking, God's Word falls into three categories. There is that which is

informational, truths, doctrines, which God wants us to know. Then there are many commandments in Scripture. Not all of them apply to us today, but they are given to guide the lives of the people of God in whatever age they might live. And finally there are the promises of God. These are statements telling us what God will do for us. Sometimes these are not stated like an ordinary promise, but may be given as a statement of what God will do in the future, but actually they are promises.

All of this is found in the Word of God, and all is backed, supported, confirmed by God's power. So my first point tonight is:

I. GOD'S "DIVINE POWER" (2 Pet. 1:2-3).

Now always in the study of the Word of God it is important for us to see who it is that the writer is speaking to. For this we go to verse 1. (Read.) Peter was not writing to everybody; he was writing "to them that have obtained like precious faith with us," he said, "through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ." This is the way Peter was describing those who were truly saved, those who had been born again, those who had trusted Christ, and were justified in the sight of God.

Today the word "Christian" has been stretched by many people to go far beyond what it, or the term, *believer*, or *saint*, means in the Bible. You ask many people if they are Christians, and they will say that there are. But if you ask them if Christ is their Savior, or if they are in Christ, and they won't know what you are talking about. *Peter was writing to people who really knew the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior.* There is no middle ground; we either are saved, or we are not. And we can only claim true salvation if we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Many people who don't understand this, try to take the teachings of Scripture to live by. But that is impossible. No person can live according to Scripture who does not have eternal life, and the only people who have eternal life are the people who are trusting Christ for their salvation. I probably don't have to make a big point about this with you dear people, but it really needs to be made clear to many people who regularly attend church.

Now Peter tells us that those of us who know Jesus Christ as our Savior, have grace and peace, but he was praying here that our enjoyment of God's grace and God's peace will be "multiplied" in each believer's life

as he grows in “the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Savior.” And what do we learn through the “grace and peace” of God? We learn what Peter teaches us in verse 2. *Be sure to notice that verses 1 through 4 of 1 Peter 1 are all one sentence.* This means that these truths are all dependent upon each other.

When we were saved, each one of us were given “all things that pertain unto life and godliness . . .” And God’s “divine power” stands behind all that we have received.

This verse is similar to what the Apostle Paul said in Eph. 1:3:

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

Basically what both of these verses mean is that when we are saved and receive the gift of eternal life, we have everything in Christ that it will ever take to make us like Christ. Or, to state it another way, to make us a holy people. Or, to state it even a third way, to make it possible for us to live lives that are pleasing to God. And God’s enabling power, which far exceeds mere human power, stands behind and guarantees the effectiveness of these “all things” that both Peter and Paul wrote about. The Bible has all of the information that we will ever need to know what God wants us to be, and how we are to live.

You see, the Christian life is a supernatural life. It is a better life than you and I can live on our own. So it is important to learn that God’s power stands behind and guarantees the effectiveness of what God has given us in Christ to make us holy, to make us godly.

But now let us go on to verse 4 where we learn about:

II. GOD’S PROMISES (2 Pet. 1:4a).

Notice the word “given” in verse 3, and we have it again here in the first part of verse 4.

What has God given us? He has given us “exceeding great and precious promises.” “Exceeding great” is the translation of a Greek word which means *the very greatest promises*. The idea is that no promises that have ever been made can compare with these promises which God has given to us. And that is the reason they are “precious.” They are priceless in value

because they cannot be obtained anywhere else – just from God! And He has given them to us like the rest of our salvation, without our asking for them.

Let me take you back to verse 1 in our chapter for just a moment. I want to call your attention to the phrase, “like precious faith.” This means *a faith of equal value*. When God gave us faith, and the blessings of salvation that come by faith, what He has given to each one of us, is of equal value. You didn’t more than I did; I didn’t get more than you did. And we have received exactly what the Apostle Peter received.

Now the same applies to these promises. We all have all of them that relate to our salvation. And let me emphasize again that these promises are given to us; they are gifts from God! They are precious gifts, very precious.

But what is the purpose of the promises? “That by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” And so I come to my third point:

III. “PARTAKERS” (2 Pet. 1:4b).

This word in the Greek is κοινωνοὶ which you can tell is related to the word κοινωνία, which means *fellowship*. It would be closer to the NT Greek is our text read, “that ye might become partakers of the divine nature.” To bring all of these statements together, the Apostle Peter was saying here that as we trust the power of God to enable us to believe and claim the promises, the result will be that we will become like God is. We will never be Deity, but we will share with Him in His nature so that we will become and behave in a godly manner, which means a life that is pleasing to God.

Concl: How could Peter have possibly described the Christian life more clearly than he has here? It is not a life where we make ourselves pleasing to the Lord, but a life in which we recognize that we can only be what the Lord wants us to be by His power and by the fulfillment of the promises which He has so graciously given us. This is why it is so important for us to know what the promises are, and to remember that they are God’s promises, promises which He has pledged to fulfill in those of us who really know the Savior. Our salvation began with the grace of God, and it continues with the grace of God.

The promises that the Apostle Peter was talking about all have their roots in the Gospel of the grace of God.

Those of you who were at Bud Galloway's funeral last Friday will remember that I said that Bud Galloway was saved in 1954 when he was in his early forties. But that he, like all of the rest of us, learned more about the Gospel and salvation after we were saved than he knew before. He learned that he did not seek the Lord, but that the Lord sought him. He knew that it was not because of anything in him that the Lord saved him, but simply because the Lord loved him and had chosen him for salvation before the foundation of the world. He learned that he did not produce the faith that he had when he believed in the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior. He learned that faith was a gift. And so he gave all of the glory for his salvation to God to Whom the glory belongs. Bud loved to talk about what God had done for him, not what he had done for God.

We never get away from the Gospel. Remember that Jerry Bridges mentioned a friend of his, I believe it was, who said that we need to preach the Gospel to ourselves every day. It will humble us to be reminded of the truth that we have here at the beginning of this epistle, that salvation is God giving a priceless salvation which we did not deserve and which we could never have earned. In fact, we deserve nothing but His judgment. But that is where grace comes in.

Remember that these promises are only for believers. And so we need to make sure that we truly belong to the Lord. That is the first promise we need to know. Paul gave it to the Philippian jailor who asked him what he must do in order to be saved. Paul's response was, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31). "Thou shalt be saved" is God's promise, as is John 3:16. That is the first step to take if you want to live a life of "standing on the promises of God" so as to become like the Lord Jesus.