

*When Joey Barrow was a teenager, his schoolmates labeled him the class sissy. At 18, while the other guys were involved in more “masculine” activities, Joey was taking violin lessons. One day, he was called “sissy” one too many times, and Joey smashed the young man who made fun of him on the head with his violin. Well, that didn’t help Joey at all; instead, it only brought more ridicule and laughter from Joey’s classmates.*

*But one young man did not laugh. Big, strapping Thurston McKinney decided it was time that Joey got involved in something a little more manly. Thurston exercised regularly at a local gym and asked Joey to come along, and as always, Joey had his violin with him. Thurston said, “If you want to work out with me, you’ll have to rent a locker.” Locker rental was fifty cents, and the only money Joey had was what his mom had given him for that week’s violin lesson. So, Joey borrowed some gym trunks and some old tennis shoes from Thurston, rented the locker with his violin money, and put the violin inside.*

*Now, Thurston was the Detroit Golden Gloves Boxing Champion, so he invited Joey to step into the ring to spar with him a little bit. Well, Joey flattened Thurston, and once he recovered, Thurston said to Joey, “Boy, throw that violin away!” So, with the money his mother had intended to finance his weekly violin lessons, Joey paid for a permanent locker at the gym, and in five years, Joey Barrow would turn 23 and become the heavyweight boxing champion of the world!*

*Joey dropped his last name, Barrow, so his mother wouldn’t know the newspapers were talking about her son. The world knew for years, before she did, that her son Joey Barrow had become the unbeatable Joe Louis. He was transformed from what was considered a sissy violent player to the guy called the “Brown Bomber.”*

**That’s a great story isn’t it?** If you think about it, Peter had a great transformation story as well, but his transformation did not produce a fighter, rather just the opposite. Peter started as a rough and tough fisherman and he was transformed into an Apostle of Jesus Christ, and so dramatic was the change in his life, that he wrote a second letter to his readers to explain that followers of Christ will also experience transformation in their lives as they abide in Christ and grow in grace and knowledge.

So, we have moved from the first letter to this second letter by Peter, but before we dive into it, I need to provide you with some background information for the sake of context.

Like the first letter, it appears that Peter is still writing from Rome – most likely now imprisoned in Rome by Emperor Nero, and Peter knows he only has a short time left before he is put to death, so he writes one more letter to the churches in Asia Minor – the same churches he wrote to in his first letter.

Now if you recall from his first letter, suffering seemed to be a constant subject because these churches were in a season of persecution by the Roman Empire. In his first letter, Peter sought to encourage these suffering churches and to give guidance to them as they faced danger from this outside threat, but in his second letter, Peter is aware of an even greater threat, and it's not a threat from the outside – it's a threat from the inside. Peter is addressing churches about the danger of false teaching within their own ranks.

It seems that since the time of sending his first letter, Peter had become concerned about the report of false teachers who were making their way into the churches. This was a big problem in the early church, and if you recall in our study through **Galatians** some time ago, we saw the same problem with false teachers in the churches of Galatia. **Do you remember the Judaizers?** If you recall, they claimed to be from Jerusalem, from headquarters, and they essentially taught that Jesus was not enough – His work wasn't complete. They taught a *Jesus plus gospel* – claiming that true followers of God needed Jesus plus the Law, more specifically circumcision to gain God's favor, but the Apostle Paul wasn't having any of that because it was not the truth – it was fake news. Well, if you remember, Paul went after these false teachers like a pit bull, because if left unchecked and allowed to take root, their teaching could spread like wildfire amongst these new and impressionable believers, and it could have caused serious damage to the Christian movement.

Now in this letter, Peter does not specifically identify who was teaching false doctrine in these churches. It is possible that some Judaizers or another group had wiggled their way into these churches and taught false doctrine, but to make matters worse, we also have to consider the hodge-podge of believers who attended these churches and brought their own religious baggage with them. For example, there were converted Jews who still had very deep roots in legalism, believing they had to earn God's favor despite the grace of God that had been shown to them, and on the other extreme, there were Jews who were more than happy to renounce legalism because they thought the grace of God was a license to live like the devil. Then there were the Gentiles who came to Christ from various pagan religions – believing and doing only God knows what. These churches were filled with a diverse group of people with various religious backgrounds and baggage all

converging together; therefore, it's not too surprising that these early churches were facing this serious problem – sorting out true doctrine from false teaching.

So, that's a little bit of the backstory to get us started, now let's get into this second letter from Peter. Turn in your Bible to **2 Peter 1:1**. Peter says,

**Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ:**

Well, we should be somewhat familiar with Peter by now having spent several months in his first letter. In his first letter, he identified himself only as Peter, but this time he refers to himself as **Simon Peter** – Simon was his name before he became a follower of Christ, and Peter was the name later given to him by Jesus. We also know that Peter was an apostle – a leader among apostles, but here in this verse we see that Peter mentions his relationship to Christ before he mentions his rank, and he describes himself as a **bond-servant**.

That word “bond-servant” comes from the Greek word *doulos*, which means *slave*, and just as a slave belongs to his master – is the possession of his master, just as a slave is under the power and the authority and the control of his master, Peter is saying he is a slave to Christ – that's how Peter understood his relationship to the Lord. Peter recognized that he was redeemed from sin at the cross, he was purchased by God, and therefore, he belongs to Christ and is duty bound to submit his will to the Lord and to go and to do whatever the Lord desires. That's how Peter saw it. It was true for Peter and it's just as true for anyone who calls Jesus – Lord.

I read a comment about this verse from a pastor named Steven Cole. He said that when it comes to serving the Lord; we often see ourselves as *volunteers* – as if we have some choice in whether we serve the Lord or not. In other words, we will serve if it is convenient to us. We will serve if it's not too burdensome or too costly. We will serve the Lord, if we feel like it – which is a contradictory statement if you think about it and it prompts a really important question:

**When you say “Jesus is the Lord of my life” what do you mean by that?** Lord means master, and if someone claims that “Jesus is their Lord” – Jesus is their Master, and yet, does not submit to His power and His authority and His control over their life – then their claim to call Him “Lord” is meaningless. Listen to what Jesus said in **Matthew 7:21**.

***“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.”***

If Jesus is your Master – and He’s a great Master by the way, then you are His slave, and if you are His slave, then you are not a volunteer, and serving isn’t an option or a choice. It’s our obligation to submit and serve the Lord because you and I have been bought and paid for, in full, with His precious blood. Like Peter, we are bond-servants – slaves of Christ.

Then Peter, goes on to describe the recipients of his letter as **“those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours.”** Keep in mind that these believers were second generation Christians. They had never seen Jesus. They had never heard Him speak. They had never physically walked with Jesus nor witnessed His death or His resurrection, and yet, Peter knew the faith of the apostles was no different from the faith of any other believer. He knew they had a shared faith and a shared salvation – for in the same way, all are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. They also had a shared righteousness – a righteousness received from Christ in this great exchange where we gave Christ our sin and He gave us His righteousness, and as a result, God did not count our sin against us, instead He counted our sin against His Son.

Peter knew that all Christians, great and small, had a shared faith in Christ, a shared salvation in Christ, a shared righteousness in Christ, and these believers needed to know the truth about Christ – their God and Savior, and they needed to know His message – the gospel, so that they might clearly recognize teaching that is true and teaching that is false, and that brings us to **verse 2**. Peter says,

**Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord;**

In this verse, we read Peter's greeting to the churches – stating that his desire for them is that they may grow in **grace** and **peace**. Now some of us might think that God has to do something so we can experience this grace and peace, but here we are told by Peter that grace and peace is multiplied to us simply as we come to know God – and the more we come to know Him, the closer we are to Him – and the closer we are to Him, the more we experience this grace and peace. It all hinges on our **knowledge** of God.

Let’s talk about that word “knowledge” because it is a key word in this verse and in this letter, in fact, the word “*know*” or “*knowledge*” is mentioned 16 times in

this short letter. It is a key word because of the threat of false teaching, but more importantly, our faith, our lives are built on knowing the truth and knowing the source of truth. Jesus mentioned this in His prayer for His followers when He said in **John 17:3**,

*This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.*

Yes, for a believer, eternal life describes an endless existence, and yes, it includes a heavenly home and a heavenly inheritance, but from the mouth of Jesus, eternal life is knowing God personally. It's about a *Who* rather than a *what* or a *where*. It's about knowing Him, and that involves more than just head knowledge or knowing the right things about God. The knowledge talked about here is a knowledge that's grounded in a personal intimate relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ. It's a knowledge that comes through personal experience.

The other day I was watching Kylie skateboarding on the sidewalk in front of the church. She's young, she indestructible – so she blasts up and down the sidewalk seemingly without any concern. Kylie makes it look fun – maybe I should become a skateboarder. Now, I can read a book on skateboarding, I can even watch videos about skateboarding, but it's not the same as actually skateboarding. I won't have the full appreciation and knowledge of skateboarding until I first lose my mind, make sure no one is watching, and plunge myself down the sidewalk to my certain death. The point is, it's the experience of skateboarding that really ties it all together and helps me to truly know what skateboarding is all about.

It's the same thing for us spiritually. For example, you can read about forgiveness and you can be taught about forgiveness, but to experience forgiveness – either by receiving it or even better yet, by giving it is a completely different thing altogether, and that's what I am talking about when it comes to knowing God.

Sure, knowing God requires time in His Word. There is no replacement for His Word. We got to be in it – but there is also knowledge that's gained by our personal experience of dealing with God, being committed to His will and His interests and His concerns, by identifying with God, and by putting His Word into practice in our lives. This is all part of having a knowledge that is grounded in a personal intimate relationship with God, which begins the moment we first believed, but deepens over time and experience, and it's this kind of knowledge that brings growth and transformation, and without this knowledge, you are missing out, and quite frankly, you may not know what you think you know.

Then Peter continues and says in **verse 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.**

Okay, there's a lot in this verse, but before I attempt to explain it, let me remind you from the first letter by Peter that we live in a fallen, and broken, and hostile world. And as we make our way through this world, we will experience difficulty and hardship, and trouble, and suffering. In fact, Peter said we should not be surprised when it comes upon us. Life can be hard, even for a follower of Christ, and I wanted to say that upfront before someone assumes that this verse claims something different and life should be a bed of roses.

This verse speaks about God's power and God's provision that's already been graciously given to His people. Peter tells us that God's divine power – the same power that brought the universe into existence, the same power that raised Jesus from the dead – that power, has given us everything we need to live out the Christian life, and according to Peter, it's all grounded in our personal intimate knowledge of Christ. Knowing Him is the key to all things that pertain to **life and godliness**. In other words, the more we come to know Jesus, the more we come to know who He really is and what He has done for us, the more we abide in Him and live out what we know by following Him – the more we begin to understand that we are truly complete in Christ, and that God has already given us everything we need pertaining to life and godliness.

Just as a normal baby is born with all the “equipment” he or she needs for life – and only needs to grow, so the Christian has all that is needed and only needs to grow through the **true knowledge** of Christ that comes from a personal and trusting and abiding relationship with Him. The truth is, when we got Jesus – we got absolutely everything.

There's one more thing I want to point out and it's kind of subtle. **Do you see the word “us”?** It's mentioned twice in the verse. Our goal, our aim in this life is to know God. There should be no question about that, but that little word tells me something else – God knows me. God says to us from **Isaiah 49:16**,

*“Behold, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands; Your walls are continually before Me.”*

He is the God who sees us and we are never out of His mind, and using His own description – our names are written on the palm His hands. In coming to know God, we learn that God knows us and shockingly He still loves us. God knows us, He sees every twisted thing about us, things others do not see, and yet, He is loving and gracious and forgiving. He's a great Master.

But there is more Peter has to tell us. Look at **verse 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.**

We are told that not only has God given us all that we need to live the Christian life, but He has also given us **precious and magnificent promises** in His Word. It is estimated that there are over 7000 promises found in the Bible, and Peter says these promises are precious and magnificent, and this is because of the One who made them – for a promise is only as good as the person who makes the promise. All of God's promises are true and sure because all of His promises rest completely upon His character.

Peter then tells us these promises are given to us so that by them we might become **partakers of the divine nature**. In context, God gives us promises because He wants us to know His character since His promises rest upon His character. God is loving and gracious and forgiving, faithful and true, patient and kind, and so are His promises. God gives promises to us so that we will know Him and understand His nature, with the idea of growing in grace and becoming more Christ-like – living for God in the power of the Holy Spirit, moving closer in fellowship with Him and further away from the sinful culture in this world.

I will be honest with you this morning. I struggled with this message because I had mixed emotions about these verses, especially **verses 3 and 4**. On one hand, it was encouraging to read that every believer already has everything they need to live the Christian life – divine power, divine provision and divine promises. We have everything we need to live an abiding life in Christ and that's encouraging, but for me it is also very frustrating because like most average Christians, I read this and realize that sometimes, my life does not measure up. Instead of living like I have everything I need to live the Christian life, sometimes I feel like I'm living in spiritual poverty – not experiencing the abundant grace and peace and life that God desires for me. Obviously, God is faithful and trustworthy, so without any doubt, the problem is on my end and apparently – I still have a lot more to learn.



*During the depression years, Mr. Yates owned a lot of undeveloped land in West Texas. He raised sheep to earn a living, and like most people during the depression, Mr. Yates lived in extreme poverty, struggling just to feed and clothe his family, and like so many others, he had to rely on government subsidy. Day after day, Mr. Yates would watch his sheep as they grazed over those rolling West Texas hills, racking his brain trying to figure out some way just to make ends meet.*

*His situation worsened to the point that he couldn't pay even the small amount of taxes due on the land. He was in danger of losing his ranch and property altogether. As Mr. Yates was facing inevitable bankruptcy, an oil company approached him. "We think there may be oil on your property. **Will you allow us to test drill?**" Reasoning that he had little to lose, Mr. Yates gave them permission.*

*The oil company began drilling immediately, and at 1,115 ft, the drillers struck a huge oil reserve. The first well came in at 80,000 barrels a day. But that was only the beginning. Many more wells came in, some much more productive as the first.*

*In the 60's, after oil had been pumped for more than 30 years, a government test of just one of the wells showed that it still had a potential flow of 125,000 barrels of oil a day. In the year 2000, Yates Field was still one of the top 10 producers of oil in the United States. And to think, the one-time sheep rancher Yates, owned it all!*

*When Yates purchased the ranch, he was more interested in grazing land for his sheep than he was in the oil and mineral rights. There he was, living on government subsidy, struggling to make ends meet, while all along sitting on a mammoth underground lake of incredibly valuable oil.*

If you think about it, Mr. Yates had been a billionaire ever since he first bought the land. The oil had always been there, but Mr. Yates just didn't know it.

There are many believers who are living this way spiritually. Peter said that God's **divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness;** however, like Mr. Yates, many of us are still unaware of the incredible power and provision and promises that we already have in Christ.

In Christ we have riches far greater than those of Mr. Yates. The day we came to Christ in faith, God gave us everything we would ever need to live the Christian life, and if we truly want to be *growing* Christians, then according to Peter, we need to be *knowing* Christians.



Source Material:

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