

Roy's Sermon for February 20, 2022

2 Peter 1:2-4 'The Knowledge Of God; Multiplying Grace And Heirs Of The Promises!'

Last week we began our series in 2 Peter by looking at ch.1:1 in a sermon I entitled 'Simon Peter, Set Free To Be A Slave For Christ'. V1 "Simon Peter a slave and an apostle of Jesus Christ. To the ones who have obtained a faith as equally precious with us, in the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ." Matthew Henry explained that he calls himself Simon firstly to put at ease his Jewish brethren that he hadn't cast aside his Jewish heritage. But he also calls himself Peter, that name which had been given to him by Jesus! Yes, by both birth and circumcision he was Simon, but he is also Peter by Christ!

We saw next that he calls himself "a slave" and then "an apostle. Yet from David's words in Psalm 116:16 (the source of Peter's words Matthew Henry explains) we learned that he writes not as one who is still in bondage, but who has been set free! "O Lord, I am your servant, I am your servant, the son of your maid servant, you have freed me from my chains." Because as with us all, both David and Peter were born in the slavery of sin, but because of Jesus they had been set free from those chains of sin, death and hell! Yes both men speak as true believers who have been liberated from sins curse by Jesus. And both declare that their highest calling is to be the "slave," the bond servant of Jesus, the servant of God! Peter's apostleship was an external office and calling. But his servant hood was an inner work of God's grace.

We saw that our faith is "precious", but not only "precious": it is priceless. It comes at the cost of Christ's blood. We 'obtain' this faith, not of ourselves but through Jesus!

And finally, since the letter is a warning against the treachery and evil of false teachers from within, Peter declares clearly the divinity of that One whom he proclaimed. "The righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ." As at the transfiguration in Matthew 17, when Moses and Elijah appeared with Jesus, then the cloud enveloped them and Jesus left standing alone when God says, "this is my Beloved Son whom I love with him I am well pleased. Listen to him." Yes, Jesus is Lord. Jesus is God!

And so now we continue in the letter, 2 Peter 1:2-4: 'The Knowledge Of God; The Multiplying Of Grace; And Heirs Of The Promises!'

V2 "Grace to you and peace be multiplied by a full knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord." Brothers and sisters, five times in the first chapter, and then once more at the end of the letter Peter uses the word "knowledge," and with good reason as we will see. It has been said by some that knowledge is power. And I guess that certainly there is some truth in that statement. But may I suggest that for the Christian, truth, God's truth, is where our true power is found. And in the context of this letter of warning against falsehood and false teachers, infecting the brotherhood of believers with their poison, and this being Peter's farewell address to his beloved brethren, the "knowledge" that he speaks of here is the truth about God and about the Lord Jesus Christ!

The word "knowledge" in Greek is *gnosis*, and it literally means 'knowing or information'. And the word before us is *epignosis*, and it means 'to come to a full understanding of'. Which is all important for us to understand, because to state the obvious, who will ever have 'a full knowledge of God?' No one. But yes, we need to stand up against, and to stand firm in the face of falsehood and false teachers and to do this, we must have "a full knowledge," or a firm understanding, of what and of

whom we profess. This is Peter's meaning here, that we have a firm grasp of our profession. "A full knowledge of God" and of Jesus our Lord!

Beloved God's truth, the Bible, is the power that we have and wield under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is not called "the sword of the Spirit" for nothing. Ephesians 6:17 "Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." Yes God's Word is the power that we wield under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, as we journey through the scriptures! Yes Brothers and sisters, the Bible is our first and last line of defence against falsehood and the devil's schemes against us! "Grace to you and peace be multiplied by a full knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord."

But friends, since the moment we are saved, the Holy Spirit is poured into our hearts reviving our dead soul. So the question arises: How can God's "Grace be multiplied?" When we have already received full forgiveness and salvation? Well of course the answer lies within the explanation of the word "Grace" here. Although it is indeed the same word "*Xaris*," which is used in "for it is by grace you have been saved through faith," it is perhaps better understood here as meaning 'God's Favour which pours forth from His "Grace." Though our salvation cannot "be multiplied" certainly, the Favour of God as it is experienced in our life in each day's situations and difficulties, can be!

Even as Paul says in Philippians 4:12-13. "I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty, I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all things through him who strengthens me." But what is Paul saying? Well precisely what Peter is alluding to. The "multiplying" of God's Favour and peace to him pouring forth from His "Grace." As his understanding of God grows! And the reality Beloved for Paul, (as it is so often for us also) is that the "multiplying" of God's Favour; yes His "Grace and peace" is made manifest through hardship and trial!

Paul writes in Philippians some five years after he penned these famous words from 2 Corinthians 11:23c-28: "I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, being flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the 40 lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles, in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea, and in danger from false brothers. I have laboured and toiled and have gone often without sleep, I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone with food, I've been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I've had daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches."

Paul understood experiencing difficulties for Christ, perhaps better than anyone ever has. And yet he could write even years after those tremendous hardships, "I have learned the secret." Notice that he doesn't say I have *found* the secret, but "I have *learned* the secret." And that "secret," being, may I suggest, was his nearness to God! Yes his relationship with God. His understanding and his "knowledge of God." The greater the trial, the greater Paul's experience of God's Favour and peace.

But how did he know God? Only through Jesus! Matthew 11:27 "All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." Can you see? This is the epitome of God's Favour, that He has been revealed to us through His Son Jesus! Yes we know Him only through Jesus, God's most blessed Favour to us!

Brothers and sisters, why are both the personal study of the scriptures and also the collective study of the scriptures so important? Because although our own ideas and perceptions may seem all well

and good to us, we may well have constructed an idol in our hearts, which is not God at all. Why do I say this by way of the warning? Well, the most powerful example as you most likely all know is found in Acts 9:15: "Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting", he replied."

Like Saul before he became Paul by God's grace and mercy, when may think we know God and are even upon the road in His service, and yet in reality, we don't know Him at all! "Who are you Lord? I am Jesus whom you are persecuting." Yes, "Grace to you and peace be multiplied to you by a full knowledge (a firm grasp) of God and of Jesus our Lord." To know God is to know Jesus. We cannot know God without knowing Jesus, it is an eternal impossibility. "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except by me," He said!

V3 "through his divine power he has given us all things pertaining to life and piety through the full knowledge of the one having called us by his own glory and virtue," or moral excellence. John Calvin explains that in this verse Peter is asking his readers to reflect back upon God's favour, His mercies and blessings to them. "He has given us all things pertaining to life and piety." And simply put, this means life eternal and reverential living. The emphasis here being placed may I suggest, upon the "has given" or "having given us."

Brothers and sisters, I have said many times over the years that it is good to look back and reflect upon what God has done for us and to us through Jesus. To even look beyond that time, before He brought us into His presence through His Grace. To remember from whence and from what He has carried us. Through what weaknesses, trials and temptations He has delivered us. Yet not allowing Satan to destroy our assurance due to those things, no. But actually suring up our assurance because of those past mercies, and also remembering those victories by His Grace over sin and self! Yes because of His great love and mercy to us we have experienced such things, even again and again and again. So it is good to reflect back to where and who we were when God called us to Himself, and who we have been throughout that journey, as we have been carried by Him. And then to who we are today.

Dear friends, if we are truly in Christ, by His Grace we will be able to say that we are not that same person. As with Paul in Romans 7, we are still stumbling and messing up at times, but nonetheless by God's Grace through Jesus, we have journeyed far, and we are travelling still! Beloved, in the midst of present trials and difficulties whatever they may be, God's former mercies to us will always help us to press on! "Through his divine power," Peter writes. Yes through the saving grace of His power. Through His power as God through Jesus and the Holy Spirit, "He has given us all things pertaining to life and piety," again, meaning life eternal, and reverential living.

God has done this. He has given us those things once and for all, it is finished. Everything we need, to journey from this life to the next, and the ability to live that reverential life that He requires from us to live, he has "given us through his divine power." That power which is eternally inherent and only and always of and from God! Beloved, that is the only way that we can live for Christ in this life, and triumphantly journey to life eternal: by God's "divine power" through Jesus and the pouring into our hearts of the Holy Spirit. Yes that is what Peter means by "life and piety."

And how has God given us these things once and for all? Here again is that word “knowledge.” “Through the full knowledge of God and of Jesus our Saviour.” As I mentioned earlier, Peter keeps using this term “full knowledge” meaning ‘firm understanding, firm grasp’, to his readers because he is preparing them for the imperative of this letter. To beware of, to expose, and to stand firm against the falsehoods, the false teaching and the “false knowledge” that was permeating the churches! Peter had given his all and was now about to give his life for the truth. Christ's truth. And he is warning them and calling them, with his final words, to do the same!

But again, how can we do this? As I keep reiterating, by having “a full knowledge,” that firm understanding that firm grasp, of the One, of Jesus, having “called us by his own glory and virtue.” Christ’s majesty and moral excellence. The purity of His life and intention! Yes Beloved, everything we need and have for the living of this life and for the preparing of us for the next, we have had given to us once and for all in and through our illuminated knowledge, yes our Holy Spirit firm understanding, of who Jesus was and is! As the creed says, ‘God from God, light from light; true God from true God; begotten not made; of one being with the Father. Through him all things were made’!

V4: “Through these things he has given to us the precious and very great promises, in order that through these you might become sharers of a divine nature escaping from the corruption that is in the world by lust.” Now Matthew Henry explains, that when Peter says, “through these things,” he is not only speaking about God's “glory and virtue” of verse 3, but actually all those proceeding things with which he encourages the believers. To pursue “God's grace and peace being multiplied” to them. Specifically, our “knowledge” or understanding of him. Yes through all of “those things,” through our understanding of His Word, he has given to us the precious and very great promises of the Bible.

Genesis 3:15 Speaking to Satan of Jesus’ victory over him and sin, God says, “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers, he will crush your head and you will bruise his heel.”

Genesis 9:11-13 “I will establish my covenant with you. Never again will all life be cut off by the waters of a flood. Never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth. And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come. I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth.”

Genesis 12:1-3 “The Lord had said to Abraham, “Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you, I will make your name great and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse, and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”

Exodus 3:11-12 “But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?” And God said, “I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you. When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain.”

Malachi 3:17 “They will be mine says the Lord almighty when I make up my treasured possession.”

Malachi 4-2 “But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings.”

John 2:18-19 “Then the Jews demanded of him, “What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?” Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.”

Matthew 28:5 “The Angel said, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus who is called Christ. He is not here; he is risen just as he said.”

Acts 1:6-11 “So when they met together, they asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the Kingdom of Israel?” He said to them, “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid them from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. “Men of Galilee”, they said, “Why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him going to heaven.”

Acts 2:1-4 “When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Holy Spirit enabled them.”

Revelation 1:7 “Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all the peoples on earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be. Amen.”

And finally, Revelation 22:20 “He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming soon. Amen. Come Lord Jesus, come!”

And Beloved, these are but a fraction of the blessed, “precious” promises of God that he has given to us, through which God speaks of Jesus and His mission of grace to redeem His people. And He has sealed the success of that mission with the sign of His promised Holy Spirit! Yes through Jesus we partake in God's “divine nature” as it were, as we are washed by Christ's Blood and His Spirit is poured into our souls, even breathing life eternal into us! Beloved, that is the only way that we can possibly “escape the corruption that is in the world.”

The old hymn writer captured it well: “When I survey the wondrous cross, on which the Prince of glory died, my richest gain, I count but loss, and poor content on all my pride.” Yes we “share in of the divine nature escaping from the corruption that is in the world.” The word which Peter uses here for corruption is *ftaros*. And it can mean both ‘spiritually and morally perverse.’ This is in direct contrast to those attributes of Jesus of which Peter has spoken. His piety and virtue. Yes His life of reverence and moral excellence.

Friends, the world at large is both spiritually and morally broken, polluted, “Corrupt.” Listen closely to how the word corrupt is defined: ‘To make rotten. To change to a putrid state. To defile, to contaminate, to make evil. Tainted with vice or sin. Altered for the worse!’ Brothers and sisters, that inbuilt perverse idea that we have humanistically speaking, that we can somehow please God of ourselves is not only ludicrous, it is both a spiritual and biblical impossibility, because who we are by nature is opposed to God. God dwells in unapproachable light. And we are creatures blackened by sin that are destined for hell. That is why it was imperative for Jesus to come and also imperative for us to come to Him!

Finally notice how this “corruption,” this evil, this contamination has come into the world: “Through lust.” In 1 John 2:15-16 John puts it this way: “Love ye not the things of the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. Because all that which is in the world the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the Vainglory of life, is not of the Father but of the world.”

Yes the wretched state of fallen humanity has come about by man going beyond that which God has given them licence to go. “Did God really say?” “The woman looked and she saw.” Oh dear friends, what a privileged position it is in which we live, we have had bestowed upon us. That “full knowledge,” that firm understanding of the Father Son and Holy Spirit. God has opened the eyes of our heart and soul, to understand and now we own “the promises of God” throughout the entire Bible. And He has sealed those things with the promised Holy Spirit in us, so that we know light from darkness, purity from corruption and sin. And He has given us the desire to walk in that light, even as He Himself is in the light. Yes to seek after what is upright and true. Which is opposed to what is false!

So now Beloved, let us seek to do it in both word and deed.

Let's pray!