

Faith, Family, and Freedom

“Everything You Need - From Promise to Practice”

2 Peter 1:3-11 NIV

We're starting a new season with a new sense of change and movement, and it lets us know that God has set this world in motion and things are happening. Last week we talked about just being a good Christian, which means actually stepping in. But I want to help out with some practicals as we begin to lay the foundation for where we're going to go with this new series about the core values our nation was birthed upon and continues with and that we've got to call our nation back to.

Now, Peter wrote the letters we know as First and Second Peter from a Roman prison jail cell. He had been imprisoned for preaching the gospel but it didn't stop him. He continued to get messages from the outside, and he heard about the state of the Church and how there were some rough things going on in the churches of Asia Minor in Antioch, Tarsus, Iconium, Derby, Antioch, Listras, and Colasse. From those, we get the books of Colossians and Ephesians.

So, the lands that we read about in the Bible are inhabited by easterners today. For example, Iran, Afghanistan, Iraq, all biblical lands that are, for all practical intents and purposes, the Holy Land. That's really where it all started. There's a reason why the devil hates this region of the world. It's because this is where our Savior was brought to, from Israel on down. Paul ended up in a Roman jail cell and was running messages and writing letters through scribes. Why would he need to write letters to the people of Asia Minor? Because after Paul and his team - Luke, Timothy, and John Mark - had planted these churches, they had to step back and leave for a season, and until he could get back out there, the churches were on their own.

Paul was writing them letters, since they didn't have a Bible like you and I have. They couldn't just open a calfskin leather-bound Bible with Egyptian paper and beautiful red letters. They didn't have any of that. They had letters that were called “circular letters”. So when Paul and Peter would write letters, they would circulate these among the churches. Peter had now written two letters and he was bringing correction to the churches.

The churches had gotten off-base and were running off the rails. Most of the new Christians there were coming from pagan religions. They were pantheists who had multiple gods. And so Paul comes in and teaches, preaches, sets up a church and says there's only one true God - a *tri-unity*, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit that work together - that co-operate and co-labor together to execute God's will on the earth.

As that all happened, these new people with their pagan backgrounds had shrines and idols in their homes that they prayed, worshiped, and sacrificed to. All of a sudden they were told those are no longer legitimate. Now they had to walk with the One True God, and they were confused and were having a hard time. Because Paul couldn't stay there the whole time, they set up elders in those places and those churches began to grow and prosper, but many had run off the rails because of their pagan beliefs.

That's why the books of first and second Peter were written, to bring correction because the churches were mixing false teachings, old doctrines, and old views of worship with the new - and it wasn't working but was creating terrible division. Even today, we're confronted with A.I.-generated chat bots that Christians and churches are embracing, thinking how amazing it is because it can give "good godly counsel" to our people, so they sit at their computer and have conversations with an A.I.-generated agent. God forbid that any of us should mess with that. We have to be discerning as Christians in America right now!

Peter was writing to people he loved, yet he realized they were off so he was trying to bring them back to sound doctrine. He wrote to them about God and his divine power that has given us everything we need. And where does his divine power come through or come from? It comes from the person of the Holy Spirit, written about in the book of Acts when Jesus said his Holy Spirit would be poured out upon us and we would become witnesses right here where we live and in concentric circles outward to touch the entire world.

When I read that line just a few days ago, it just blew up. I thought, *"This is so true. His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life."* The scripture says that his words are written in our heart. Psalm 119:1 says, *"Your word you have written in my heart that I might not sin against you."* When the word is written on our heart, it's *imprinted* on us. It's *in* us. Did you know you now have access to the living word inside of you? Did you know in any given situation you can pause and ask the Holy Spirit, *"Is this true? Is what I'm thinking right? Lord, is this you?"*

God has given us power and everything we need to live a godly life and to look at it through our knowledge of him. The word *knowledge* is *ginōskō* which means *to know by intimate experience*, not just by face value, but to know our heart - our intent - our character - to know what drives and motivates us - what inspires and encourages us. God's divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life because we know him. It's amazing how many Christians struggle at that point because they say, *"What is that? I've never seen that before."*

And you know what I always think about when that happens? I have to ask an honest question. Have they really truly been born again? Have they truly received Christ into their life? Have they truly said Yes to God and said, *"I want your will over my will. I want your plan over my plan. I want your desires over my desires, and I yield my will to you."* That's what it means to be born again. We yield ourself. We yield our will. We allow God to supersede us. Remember the scripture says *"that he may increase that I may decrease."* That's what it means in saying that it's through the *knowledge* of him who called us.

Isaiah 6:8 NIV

"Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here am I. Send me!'"

That call continues to go out. *"Who will go for us? Whom shall I send?"* When we get up in the morning, we need to say out of our mouth. *"Good morning, Holy Spirit. Good morning, Lord Jesus. Good morning, Aba Father."* And the next thing we need to say is not, *"I need to go to the bathroom. I need a cup of coffee."* I know you're thinking it, but here's what we need to say, *"Yes, Lord. Yes, Lord. Now, what's the question?"* I know this sounds simplistic, almost sounds too easy, but, our day should start with an introduction and a re-introduction to Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and God. Secondly, it now sets the tone of our day that we have a responsibility now to do whatever he asks us to do because we've already said Yes.

That turns our life into an adventure. We thought we were going to go do *this* today and then something pops up and, instead, we end up doing that. We thought we were going to sit at *this* table, but then something happens and we end up sitting at that table. We thought we were going to drive over *here*, but then something happens, and we end up driving over there. *"Something happens."* Why? Because now we've said Yes to the leadership of the Holy Spirit and Yes to this knowledge of God - this divine call that's on our life. *We are called by God.*

We've been called by God. We're called *by him*. He wants us to know him. He's not playing a game with us like hide-and-seek. He knows *us*, but he wants us to know him. That's this relationship he's talking about - this knowledge of him who called us by his own glorious goodness. Now, Peter goes on, and, right there, he's raised the bar.

2 Peter 1:3-4 NIV

"His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires."

Through these what? Through these promises that we're given - through his divine power - through the knowledge of him and these things he has given us - his very great and precious promises. Remember the song *Standing on the Promises of God*? Standing, standing, standing on the promises of God, my Savior. Now, what does it mean to stand on a promise? And what are the promises of God? He's already promised that we have everything - everything we need for a godly life. That means we don't need anyone telling us how to live.

We already have within us a God "consciousness" that's called the person of the Holy Spirit, where we know when we're stepping into something we *shouldn't* be stepping into, when the Holy Spirit throws a "red flag" - when we get a "check in our spirit" about something. We need to listen to that check. We need to pause when that happens and say, *"Wait a minute. Am I about to step into something that's not right?"* Why? Because God has written his word on our hearts. His Word is in us. His Spirit is in us. And the Holy Spirit will sometimes just say, *"Stop!"* Have you ever heard that? *"Stop. Stop!"*

You may not even know why, but just stop. And when we obey, things go well for us because he's called us through these things. He's given us his very great and precious promises so that through his promises we may participate in his divine nature. That means we go from just being a natural person who was born on this earth *physically*, to a super-natural person who contains the same Spirit that hovered over the waters in Genesis chapter one. That same power that raised Jesus from the dead - not just a *power* - a Person. That same Person dwells in us if we're a child of God. If we're born again and filled with the Spirit, then we have what we need. That means everything he has for us is already living and dwelling in us, and we spend the rest of our life walking it out.

That's called *sanctification*. It's that day-by-day journey, incrementally getting-to-know-him-better. How do we do that? We do that by knowing his Word, by getting in Scripture, spending time with it. It's good sometimes to just pause and check the amount of time we're spending doing other things to entertain ourselves as opposed to the time we spend in the Word. Because if we're spending more time with entertainment than we are with him, then something's going to be off because we leak *out* what we are full *of*. Like-seed produces like-fruit. Whatever we're sowing into our life, we always have to check to make sure that it's not what is dominating our time.

We are *co-operators* with God. We *co-labor* with God. That means we work *with* God. We don't just operate on our own and then invite him to bless it. We say, "*Lord, what are you doing?*" Then we adjust our life to *that* and join him in *his* work - whatever *he's* up to. We don't want to just do it *for* him. We want to do it *with* him. That's how we participate in the divine nature. Because when we begin to get in alignment with what *he's* up to, he *does* things. He puts his *super* on our *natural*. That means we become *supernatural*.

And it says this, "*participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.*" Do you think there's some evil desires out there in the world right now? Do you think there's some corruption in the world? But did you know we can live up in a down world? We can supersede that. We can live above the line. We can live at a different level than the world lives. In fact, that's the gift that God gives us as followers of Jesus - the ability to rise above the noise, to rise above the chatter, to live above the line so that we're not always swimming in a cesspool of corruption.

2 Peter 1:5 NIV

"Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge"

Does that sound serious to you? *Every* effort. He's saying do everything you *can*. Give it everything you've got to add these things to your life. Start with *Faith*, and then make every effort to add to your faith, *goodness* - a fruit of the Spirit - not a fruit of your flesh. It's not something you can just generate on your own. No, what he's talking about is the fruit that is *of*, *by*, and *through* the Spirit.

So we start with faith. How did we come to know Jesus? How did we do it? By faith. How are we supposed to live? By faith. We start with faith. Then he says, "Add goodness." That's the fruit of the Spirit. And then to goodness, we add knowledge. Again, that's that understanding. That's *knowing* in our knower, where no one can shake us - no one can move us off of it. No - we trust. We stand. We believe. And, because of that, we know in our knower, and we don't have to announce it. True spirit-filled, spirit-led confidence will emanate out of us wherever we walk in that because we carry the authority of Christ.

2 Peter 1:6 NIV

"and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness..."

Guess where self-control is found? Galatians chapter 5: *"But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control [the ability to control, monitor, and govern yourself]. And to self-control, you add perseverance. That's resilience - that's the ability to *press through*. Remember this? *"When the going gets tough, the tough get..." what?"* It's that ability to press through when others would stop short. And to perseverance, we add *"godliness."* That's actually the word for *holiness*. That idea of being set-apart, being cleansed by God, being prepared by God, and walking holy, which means to be separate.*

In other words, we don't *look* like everybody else. We don't sound like everybody else. We don't *talk* like everybody else. And while everybody in the world's trying to look like each other, Christians should stand out and stand *above* simply because they are walking in cooperation with, and are partakers *of*, the divine nature. What we add to perseverance is godliness.

2 Peter 1:7 NIV

"and to godliness, mutual affection [brotherly love - a love that goes beyond just being acquaintances]."

There's something that's *affectionate* there, that reaches out to people - something that happens from the core. That's *mutual affection*. And, look what he bookends this list with. He started with faith. In Corinthians, it says "now there still remains Faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is..." what? He ends this list with love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, the sense of motion and growth. We call it sanctification. We're growing and growing - from level to level We call it leveling up.

And when you're doing that - when you're *participating* in that, he says, *"if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge, your understanding, your knowing him, your relationship, the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

2 Peter 1:9 NIV

"But whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins."

Remember, he's bringing correction to this church. He gives a warning to these churches. *"But whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind."* They're not seeing right. They're not seeing *accurately*. Remember the scripture says, *"for now we see through a glass dimly."* They're living their *life* that way. In other words, because they're not submitted to God and to this divine nature, partaking of Holy Spirit living, they're not seeing clearly. They're not seeing things as they really are. They're nearsighted. They're blind. That's if we don't have these things - if we're not *growing* in these things, by forgetting that we've been cleansed from our past sins.

What a horrible way to live as a Christian - thinking that we were never actually *free*, thinking that we were never actually *forgiven* - thinking that God might extend his grace to *them*, but he's *not* going to extend it to *me*. Can you imagine living that way? And yet, we know that there are Christians that never feel like they're good enough. They never feel like they measure up or perform at the level God expects. After all, the Bible says, *"Be holy as he is holy."* In fact, one translation says, *"Be perfect as he is perfect."* That doesn't mean perfect like we think it means. It actually means *"complete."*

The Bible says that in Christ we are *complete*. We've been made *whole*. The very nature of *shalom* is integration, wholeness, true peace, *"and the peace of God that passes all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."* - the kind of peace that only God can give, where we walk in wholeness, complete. But people who don't believe that or have never received God's free gift of grace and mercy, live like they're always falling short. *"God must be terribly disappointed in me. I'm disappointed in myself, therefore, God's disappointed in me."* But God sees us as his *beloved*. He sees us as his son or as his daughter. He sees us as we were designed and created to be, and he sees what we are becoming before we get there because he sees the end from the beginning. He understands that we're a work in progress. He understands that we're not quite there, but he can still see it. He can envision it. He has a vision for your life and he loves you radically.

When Jesus comes into our life and we finally get the revelation and the understanding that we're fully loved, wholly loved, truly loved, and that on our worst day ever, and in the middle of our worst mistake and dumbest move, God never loved us any less than he loves us on our greatest day ever. When that becomes true for us, our whole life changes - everything. Our lens changes. Our view looks different because now we see through the lens of *love*. And because we know we're loved, it's easier to love others. Why? Because of God's love. This is what he's talking about. We know we've been cleansed from our past sins. That makes us able to wake up in the morning and say, *"Man, I hit the lottery again. I get another day to do this. Let's do this. We get to do this."*

We should be so excited about being a Christian that when we show up at a restaurant we say, *"Man, who can I talk to today?" I'm going to tell somebody about Jesus today."* Maybe we share our two-minute miracle. *"This is who I am. Let me tell you how good God is."* When we live that way, opportunities open up all the time, and it may just be with a clerk at HEB or in line somewhere, but the opportunity is open. So make every effort to confirm your calling. You should be saying, *"I'm affirming and confirming my call as one of the elect children of God."* You'll never fall if you will do these things.

2 Peter 1:11 NIV

"And you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

He's saying to *live* like this. There's going to be a welcome wagon. The second it goes black, we're in the presence of God and the most joy and the most love that we could ever imagine. It's beyond our imagination and we never have to be afraid again because it's a win-win deal. We win because we get to live on this earth and propagate the gospel and advance the kingdom. And we win the moment our body gives out. It may be tragic on this side for us, but on the other side, it's like you just step over. No pain, no sorrow, no regrets. There's so much love in heaven in that moment, there's no space for regret. I say we start practicing that right now.

Prayer - *Father, thank You for Your Word which generates such life and hope, and it challenges us to adjust ourselves. We want to line up to this. We want to add to these things. We're in this thing together. Lord, we want to add to these qualities, knowing that if we possess these in increasing measure, they'll keep us from being ineffective and unproductive as we get to know You, Lord. That's our heart. Lord, we pray that our buckets are full. We pray they're overflowing and that we'll go out this week and spill out our leaky buckets and make beautiful messes everywhere we go for Your honor and for Your glory.*