

1. Learning to Understand the Promises God Has Given to Us

Today, we are beginning a new series of topics on the last days. Many times, both our physical children and our spiritual children will have questions about the future. The Lord wants every Christian to have a full understanding including an understanding of the things that are going to happen in the future. As a result, the Bible speaks about the future in many different books. In this series of topics, we will be looking at some of those books.

In 2 Peter 1:1-2 we read, “Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.” In this verse, we see that Peter begins this second letter with a somewhat different introduction than he did the book of 1 Peter. Here we see that Peter gives his original name. John 1:40-42 says, “One of the two who heard John *speak*, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus. Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, "You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas" (which is translated, A Stone).” Cephas (Peter) told what Simon was going to become as he followed Christ.

We also see a second difference from 1 Peter. We see that Peter described himself as a bondservant of Jesus Christ. The word that is translated “bondservant” was the word for a slave. One of the key characteristics of a good slave was his obedience to his master. Colossians 3:22-24 says, “Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.” Peter made it clear that he wanted to please the Lord in all that he said and did.

Peter also describes those to whom this letter is written. He calls other Christians “those who have obtained like precious faith by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ”. The word that is translated “who have obtained” means to receive by lot or by the appointment of God. Luke 1:9 says, “According to the custom of the priesthood, his lot fell to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord.” In this verse, Ananias was chosen to burn incense by the casting of lots. As a result, Peter makes it clear that we have received our faith by the will of God and not through our own efforts.

The word that is translated “like precious” means equal in value, honor or position. The first letter of Peter was originally written to Jews. From this word we see that this letter was originally written to Gentiles because this word points out the fact that as Gentiles we have received a faith that is equal to the faith that the Jews received. This phrase has the same thought that Paul shared with the Galatians when he wrote in Galatians 3:27-28 which says, “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” It is a joy to know that as Christians we have all received the same faith regardless of our background.

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Updated July 2023

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We have also received the same righteousness because the Father placed the righteousness of Christ on every Christian at the moment of salvation. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, “For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” Christ had our sin placed on Him so that the Father could place the righteousness of Christ on us at the moment of salvation. We are also reminded that Christ is both our God and our Savior.

The word that is translated “knowledge” means to know thoroughly or to come to a correct knowledge and understanding. Ephesians 4:12-13 says, “For the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” Here we see that we grow spiritually and come to spiritual maturity as we grow in our knowledge and understanding of Christ. Peter pointed out the fact that as we grow in that knowledge and understanding that we experience both the grace and peace of Christ in a greater and greater way in our lives.

We go on to see this more fully explained in 2 Peter 1:3-4 where we read, “As His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption *that is* in the world through lust.” Here, we are reminded of the fact that the power of Christ is what works in our lives. Paul used the word translated “power” here twice in 2 Corinthians 12:9 where we read, “And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” Here we see that the word speaks of the strength of Christ and the power of Christ.

It is that power of Christ that has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness. Here we see that the power of Christ has given us everlasting life. John 5:24 says, “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.” In addition, to the power of Christ giving us eternal life, the power of Christ also makes it possible for us to grow in godliness as we live here on this earth. In fact, 1 Timothy 6:6 says, “Now godliness with contentment is great gain.” We will learn much more in our next topic about growth in godliness.

Christ is the One that has called us to glory and virtue. All glory belongs to Christ. However, as we grow in grace and in the full knowledge of Christ we understand more about that glory. 2 Peter 3:18 says, “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him *be* the glory both now and forever. Amen.” As a result, we want to continue to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ. The word that is translated “virtue” means moral goodness. The Father was satisfied with the moral goodness of Christ and showed that satisfaction by raising Christ from the dead. The death and resurrection of Christ from the dead was the main focus of Peter when he preached beginning with his sermon on the Day of Pentecost. Acts 2:32 says, “This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses.” That is also the focus of all of his other

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sermons that are recorded in the book of Acts.

Peter reminded us of the fact that we have received exceedingly great and precious promises. The word translated “precious” means something of great value or price. 1 Peter 1:7 says, “That the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” Here we see that God says that our genuine faith is more precious than gold. In the same way the promises that we have been given in Christ are much more valuable than all of the gold in the world.

The promises of God make it possible for us to be partakers of the divine nature. The word that is translated “partakers” means a companion or one who shares in anything. Paul used this word in Philemon 1:17 to describe his relationship with Philemon as he wrote Philemon asking him to forgive Onesimus. That verse says, “If then you count me as a partner, receive him as *you would* me.” As Christians we become new creations with a new nature. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, “Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” This means that we now have a desire to please God.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 says, “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is* in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.” Here we see that we have been given the Holy Spirit which makes it possible for us to now glorify God with both our body and our human spirit. We also have a promise that in the future that we will be like Him. 1 John 3:2 says, “Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” The fact that we share the nature of God means that when we get to heaven that we will then be like Christ and will not sin any more.

In fact, we have already escaped the corruption (rottenness) that is in the world through lust. Our new nature means that at each moment that we are yielding our human spirit to the Holy Spirit that the Holy Spirit makes it possible for us to have victory over sin. We see in Romans 7 that we fail and sin when we depend on our own strength. Then in Romans 8 we are reminded that we are able to have victory at each moment that we are depending on the Holy Spirit. Romans 6:13 says, “And do not present your members *as* instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness to God.” We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that because of the promises that God has given us that they are able to please God at each moment that they are yielding to Him and allowing Him to work in and through their lives. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand the promises that God has given to us.