

November 2, 2008 by Steve Brandon



Ready to Grow

2 Peter 1:1-4

- 1. We have been given faith (verse 1).**
- 2. We will be given grace and peace (verse 2).**
- 3. We have been given everything (verse 3).**
- 4. We have been given promises (verse 4).**

Last week, we began our exposition of the book of 2 Peter. I believe that a good way to express the theme of 2 Peter can be summed up with the words, "Know and Grow." Throughout this entire letter, Peter is constantly urging the people to know the truth more and more deeply. He urges us to press on in the knowledge of our salvation (beginning of chapter 1). He urges us to press on in our understanding of the Scriptures (end of chapter 1). We need to know the truth, that we might avoid the false teachers (chapter 2). We need to know the realities of the second coming of Christ (chapter 3).

But, Peter presses us beyond the mere academic knowledge of God. He presses us to apply the knowledge in our Christian growth. Several times in this epistle, Peter calls us to "apply all diligence" (1:5) and to be "increasing" in our godliness (1:8). Peter calls us to "practice" godliness (1:10). In light of what we know, we are to conduct ourselves in "holy conduct and godliness" (3:10). We are to "be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless" (3:14). We are to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (3:18).

Thus, the theme, "Know and Grow."

In an effort to do something to help all of you remember this theme, I am giving all of you a house-plant this morning. I have enough plants for every family in the church. I want for you to pick one up after the service, take it home and put it in a public place in your home someplace. Perhaps this means in your kitchen, or on your dining room table or on a coffee table--wherever it might be seen by your entire family and by those who might come and visit you in your home.

Anyway, I want for you to take care of your plant by give the plant the simple things that it needs to grow: water, sunlight, and (if it grows large enough, a larger pot). As you watch this plant grow, I want you to be reminded of what we are learning in 2 Peter. In each plant, I have put a little card that says, "2 Peter, Know and Grow." Ultimately, this is my aim for Rock Valley Bible Church as we go through 2 Peter together as a church. I long that we all would grow in our knowledge of Christ. I long that we all would grow in our godliness.

As you watch your plant grow, I want for you to learn about your own spiritual growth. It needs the simple things to grow. There are many lessons to be learned in your plant. A plant needs only a few simple things to grow. It needs water. It doesn't need a lot of water. A flood of water will kill the plant. But, it needs a little water consistently over time. A little water every day will help your plant to grow. In this way, it's a bit like Bible reading. A ton of Bible reading today after church is good, but it won't help you nearly as much as a short, daily dose of God's word. Do you want to grow as a Christian? Then take in a daily dose of God's word.

A plant also needs light. With this, the more the better. If you put your plant in the basement, it probably won't last very long. But, put it by a southern-facing window and it will flourish. In this way, it's a bit like prayer. Paul tells us to pray always (1 Thess. 5:17). Be in constant communion with Jesus. Talk to Him throughout the day and be sensitive to His leading.

A plant also needs a good environment to grow. You put your plant on the porch, and it won't last very long. And you put a person in a poor environment, with none around to encourage him, he won't last very long. We need grace, mercy, kindness, encouragement, love and affection to grow.

We also know that, a plant grows slowly, and almost imperceptibly. But, over time, it's growth is obvious. So also is our own sanctification often slow and painful. But, this is the growth that I trust we will experience at Rock Valley Bible Church, slow, but obvious growth in our body.

Furthermore, if you neglect your houseplant, it will wither up and die. Likewise, if you neglect your soul, you too will wither up and die. May the plant in your home remind you of the critical importance of nurturing your soul.

As we get into our text this morning, we will be looking at the first four verses. Consider the following verses:

1 Peter 1:1-4

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

My message this morning is entitled, "Ready to Grow." I have given this text that title, because I believe that this is Peter's point with the first four verses of his letter. He's going to talk about how God has given us everything that we need to grow in godliness.

The plant that I am giving each of you this morning is all set and "ready to grow." Each of these plants have sprouted. They have formed leaves and have been delicately placed in a nice little pot. They are all poised and ready to grow. You simply need to give them a bit of sunlight, a little bit of water and keep them warm in your house, and they will grow. Likewise, every Christian is ready to grow in godliness. Everything is all set. God has given to us everything that we need to grow in Him. We will see this in the text before us this morning.

By way of outline this morning, I want to look at the things that God has given to us (or has promised to give us). My first point is this, ...

1. We have been given faith (verse 1).

Faith is fundamental to our growth in godliness. Without faith, you will not grow. Look again at verse 1, "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."

In this verse, Peter identifies the recipients of the letter. He is writing to Christians. He is writing "to those who have received a faith." In fact, this is how much of the Bible is written. It is written to believers in Jesus Christ. It is written to encourage us. It is written to instruct us. It is written to help us.

Now, if you are here this morning and you are not a Christian, please know that you are welcome to be here. However, the points of my sermon are not applicable to you. If you do not believe in Christ, then you cannot say that you have received a faith, which, you have in fact, not received. The good news, however, is this: you can believe. Believe in Jesus and all of these things may be yours. So, don't merely sit back and say, "I'm not a Christian." Rather, I exhort you to repent from your sin and believe in Jesus.

So, Peter is writing "to those who have received a faith"--That is, to those who have believed. Now, some of your translations say, "to those who have **obtained** a faith" (ESV, KJV, NKJV). In some sense, this translation can be misleading, if you take the word, "obtain" in the wrong way. If it at all leads you to think that perhaps you have worked for and have earned this faith, then you have missed the sense of this word. The idea of the word is that you have been given something. It is often used of those who have received the lot that was cast. You can never earn anything you received by having the lot fall on you. So likewise, we have "received" our faith. We have "obtained" it, not because of anything that we earned, but by God's grace to give it to us.

Again, we see the Bible so often pointing to the grace of God in our salvation. God is the one who has given us faith. In Ephesians 2:8-9, we read of how our faith is not of ourselves. Rather, it is a gift of God to us.

Now, there are several characteristics of this faith that we have received. Peter says that our faith is "the same kind as ours." These words are great. Peter is here telling us that our faith is the same as Peter's faith. There is no fundamental difference between our faith and that of the apostles of Jesus Christ.

Some might think that Peter received a special faith. After all, he walked with Jesus in the flesh. He spoke with Jesus in the flesh. He saw Him and touched Him. But, Peter denies this. He says that your faith is the same as ours. Now, certainly, there is a difference in Peter's experience and our experience. But, though we haven't seen Jesus, we still love Him and believe in Him.

In the beginning of verse 1, Peter identifies himself as "a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ." These words remind us of Peter's unique position in the life of the church. He was one of the apostles, sent by Jesus, Himself, to be an ambassador for Christ. And Peter played an important role in the life of the early church. He was the one who first preached the gospel to the Jews on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). When the Samaritans first believed, Peter went to them and prayed for them. Peter was the one who first brought the gospel to the Gentiles in Caesarea and the home of Cornelius (Acts 10). He had the keys of the kingdom and was opening the door for all nations to believe. He received direct revelation from God to write these letters to the churches which we call "first and second Peter." Indeed, His apostolic position gave him a unique role in the life of the church.

And yet, Simon Peter is quick to point out that he is also a bond-servant of Jesus. He is a slave of Christ. His will is to do the will of the Master. In this sense, Peter is just like we are. We too, who have "received a faith" from God have become voluntary slaves in the service of our King.

As Peter mentions that our faith is "of the same kind as ours," his is saying that your faith is the same faith as the apostles had. The only difference is that you haven't see Jesus like the apostles did. But, you believe the same thing that they believe. In Peter's first epistle, he touched a bit on this difference when he said, "Though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls" (1 Peter 1:8-9). These scattered believers had never seen Jesus in the flesh as the apostles had, but they still loved him and believed in Him as the apostles did. And they lost no blessing because of not having seen Jesus.

When Thomas was able to see and touch the wounds of Jesus, he exclaimed, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28). And Jesus was quick to say, "[Thomas] because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed" (John 20:29). That's us. We have not see Jesus, but we have believed. And Jesus is careful to point out that we are blessed in our faith every bit as much as Thomas was in his.

There are no first-class Christians in the kingdom of God. As Gentiles, we are not under privileged members of the covenant. When the gospel first went to the Gentiles, the apostles gathered at Jerusalem to figure out exactly what took place. Their conclusion was that "God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life" (Acts 11:18). God gave it to the apostles. God gave it to the Jews. God gave it to the Samaritans. God gave it to the Gentiles. God gave it to us. The faith that we have received is exactly the same kind of faith that Peter possessed.

You ask, "What is this faith?" The next phrase describes what our faith is. Peter writes, "by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ." Literally, "in the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ." Peter here is talking about the great reality of the gospel. Though we are sinners, in Christ, we are righteous. That's the faith that we have. See, we don't have a faith this morning that trusts in our own righteousness. We don't have a faith that trusts in how God has changed us to be righteous. Rather, we have a faith in the righteousness of another, that is imputed to our account.

This is the central truth of the gospel. This is why Christ was crucified. He died as a sin-bearing substitute for our sin, so that He might give to us a righteousness that we need. The apostle Paul said it well when he described the longing of his heart, "[that I may] ... be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith" (Phil. 3:9).

This message is throughout the Bible. Abraham, the father of faith believed God and God reckoned that faith as righteousness (Gen. 15:6). In other words, as God looked down upon Abraham and saw his faith, He counted Abraham's faith as righteousness to him. What an incredible thing! When our faith is seen by God, He takes out his accounting ledger and apportions our faith into the column labeled, "righteousness." In other portions of the Scripture, we have an indication of the same thing taking place. David said, "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity" (Ps. 32:2). For some reason (by our faith), God doesn't impute our iniquity to us. Furthermore, Isaiah made the promise to Israel, "Though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool."

How can these things be, but by God giving to us a righteousness that is undeserved? That's the reality of our faith. We have a faith in the righteousness of Jesus, which God imputes to our account. The only way that these things can be is if God takes the righteousness of Jesus and credits it to our account.

How can Jesus do this? In reality, I'm not sure. But, He is God and He can do what He wants to do. In fact, this verse tells us that Jesus is God, "by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:1). We have been given faith (verse 1). Let's look now at verse 2 with my second point. We are ready to grow in godliness because, ...

2. We will be given grace and peace (verse 2).

"Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord" (verse 2).

Some may think that these are merely throw-away words, without much significance. They say, "Every epistle in the New Testament begins with some sort of greeting. That's what Peter is doing here. He's merely being polite and saying what's always said." I don't believe these to be throw-away words. I believe that his words have purpose, especially as he wrote them under the inspiration of God. I believe that Peter's point is this. You need God's grace and peace to live a life of godliness. Apart from them, your toil is in vain.

Every believer in Jesus Christ knows the grace of God. This is the principle upon which we stand. Apart from the grace of God, we have no standing before Him. We are dead in our sins and wiped out by his furious wrath. But, God's grace has overflowed to us in Christ. "For by grace you have been saved through faith" (Eph. 2:8). We know the grace of God that has come to us.

Every believer in Jesus Christ knows the peace of God. Fundamentally, this is what our salvation is about. Through Jesus Christ, we have peace with God. Before we knew Christ, we were at enmity with God. But, now, as Paul says in Romans 5:1, "having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

But, Peter's words here aren't about the past. His words here are about the future. Peter wants our grace and peace to be multiplied to us in the future. He wants us to experience more of the grace of God in our lives. He wants us to experience more of the peace of God in our lives. Further than that, Peter wants us to abound in the experience of God's grace in our lives. He wants us to abound in the experience of God's peace in our lives.

These are important things when it comes to growing in Christ. Like water and sunshine help a houseplant grow, so also will grace and peace help us grow in Christ. When Paul was in difficulty, God told him, "My grace is sufficient for you" (2 Cor. 12:9). When anxieties come upon us, it is "the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension [that] will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:7). Just as God has given us His grace and peace in the past, I do believe that they will be given to us in our future hour of need. I think that this is Peter's point: May grace and peace abound to you in the future.

John Newton said it well, ...

Tis grace has brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.

This is the testimony of all of God's children. God saves us by His grace. God sustains us by His grace. With such assurance in our hearts, we are ready to grow in our godliness.

Now, before we move on, I do hope that you notice that God's grace and peace come to us in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

"Grace and peace be multiplied to you **by the knowledge** of God and of Jesus our Lord." You cannot know the grace and peace of God apart from a true, intimate knowledge of God.

I love the testimonies of the saints who have lived long and known God intimately. Their faith abounds and their godliness shines through. The story is told of George Müller, who was passing across the Atlantic Ocean from England to Canada to speak in Quebec. The trip across the Atlantic was being slowed up by the fog that was upon the ocean. Müller approached the captain and informed him of how he needed to be in Quebec by Saturday afternoon to speak. The captain said, "It is impossible. Do you know how dense this fog is?" George Müller replied, "No, ... my eye is not on the density of the fog, but on the living God who controls every circumstance of life. I have never broken an engagement in 57 years; let us go down into the chart room and pray."

When they arrived in the chart room, George Müller prayed a simple prayer. When the captain was about to pray, Müller put his hand on his shoulder and told him, "As you do not believe He will answer, and as I believe He has, there is no need for you to pray about it." Then, George Müller said, "Captain, I have known my Lord for 57 years and there has never been a single day when I have failed to get an audience with the King. Get up, Captain, and open the door and you will find that the fog has gone." The fog had lifted and George Müller was in Quebec on Saturday afternoon. [\[1\]](#)

What allowed such a faith? It was the intimate knowledge of walking with God for 57 years, cultivating and experiencing the abounding grace and peace of God in his life.

I love the story of Polycarp, who lived in the first century and was a disciple of the apostle John. As the persecution arose, Polycarp was placed before the authorities in Smyrna and called to curse Christ. Polycarp refused saying, "For eight-six years I have served him, and he has done me no evil. How could I curse my king who saved me?" When the judge threatened to burn him at the stake, Polycarp pointed out that the fire the judge ordered would last only a moment, but the eternal fire would never go out. When finally tied to the stake, he looked up to heaven and prayed, "Lord Sovereign God ... I thank you that you have deemed me worthy of this moment, so that, jointly with your martyrs, I may have a share in the cup of Christ. ... For this ... I bless and glorify you. Amen." [\[2\]](#)

What allowed Polycarp to die so heroically? It was the intimate knowledge of walking with God for 86 years, cultivating and experiencing the abounding grace and peace of God in his life.

God's grace and peace will be given to you in time of need to endure whatever comes upon you. David said, "I have been young and now I am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his descendants begging bread" (Ps. 37:25). The only way that this happens is if God gives grace and peace to those in need.

Let's look now to the third verse. And this is where things get really great. We are ready to grow in godliness because, ...

3. We have been given everything (verse 3).

Look there 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."

Peter's statement here is absolutely amazing. He says that God has given us everything that we need to live a godly life in this age. There is nothing more that we need. We have everything!

There are many who go about in their lives yearning for more of God in their lives. They will go from book to book, from teaching to teaching, from teacher to teacher, and from church to church, looking for just the right thing that is going to help them in this life. Maybe they think that it's the charismatic church that's going to help them, through some miraculous sign. Maybe they think that it's the rock band and high energy worship that is going to help them. Maybe they think that it's the liturgy that will help. Maybe they think that it's a large crowd that's going to help. Maybe they think that it's the Christian conference that might help. Maybe they think that it's the teacher from England who will help them.

Through all this, think that they need to find something "out there." They think that they simply haven't quite found yet that will be the key to their spiritual progress in this life. And, they miss it, not realizing that all the power they will ever need to live a godly life has been given to them in Christ Jesus. They have it already!

They sing, "More love, More power, More of You in my life." But, the reality is that by faith, God is in our life and has given to us everything that we need. We don't need "more love." We have God's love in our life. We don't need "more power." We have God's power in our life. We don't need "more of You in my life." We have everything that we need.

Maybe you grew up with the rich kid on your street, who had everything. He had the latest gadgets. He had the nicest clothes. He wore the nicest shoes. He had the biggest television. Their family had a pool in the back yard. His parents let him drive their Porsche when he was able to drive. He had everything!

Catch this: In Christ, we are the rich kid! Our problem is that we simply don't realize the treasure that we have in Christ! In Ephesians 3:8, Paul spoke of the ministry that was given to him "to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ." In Ephesians 1, Paul prayed that the believers in Ephesus would know that they have in their salvation. He prayed, ...

Ephesians 1:17-19a

[I pray] ... that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His

calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe.

See, our problem isn't that we don't have enough to live a godly life. Rather, our problem is that we don't fully grasp the riches of what we do have as believers in Christ.

I read this week of what has taken place in the past few years in a little town in North Dakota. Stanley is the name of this little town of less than 2,000 people. It is a seemingly insignificant little town, about 50 miles south of the Canadian border in the northwest region of the state. However, in recent days, Stanley, North Dakota has been put on the map. People have known for years that there was oil beneath the farmland surrounding this little town, but, due to the location of the oil in the ground and the drilling technology, it was difficult to drill. However, in recent years, technological advances have been made in horizontal drilling techniques, which has made some of this oil more accessible. Couple this with the rising price of oil recently, some oil companies have begun to drill near Stanley. And they have struck oil--black gold as it is said.

The mayor of Stanley, Michael Hynek, indicates the region is so flush with oil that it is nearly impossible to drill a well and come up dry. Prospects for the future look promising. Kevin Frederick, a geologist said, "the continual amount of oil in North Dakota is three times as much as Texas. We're doing as much as we can to try and get it out."

This discovery has made many in the region instant millionaires. Mark Nesheim said, "My grandfather broke this land with oxen" in 1894. In 2007, his land sprouted Durum wheat. After the harvest an oil company came in and began to drill on his land. In August of 2008 (three months ago), Nesheim and his wife received their first royalty check, which represented six months of drilling in four wells on his property. He said, "It was quite large. It was three times what I make farming in a year." His check was only a portion of the profit. The rest of it was shared with his siblings who are living in others states.

Larry Lystad is another example of those in Stanley, whose family has farmed for generations said, "These people have been farming rocks for generations. ... It's like winning the lottery." It is a real-life Jed Clampett Story. [\[3\]](#)

In many ways, this is the story of our text. Our salvation in Christ is rich and abundant. It has been graciously given to us by the hand of God. It's more valuable to us than any acreage in North Dakota will ever be. The oil riches in North Dakota will eventually dry up. But, the blessings that we have been given in our salvation will continue forever and ever and ever.

Sadly, we often live like those in Stanley did a few years ago. Those in Stanley were eaking out an existence farming rocks, while they had a goldmine beneath them. We live life on the surface, not realizing the treasures that have been given to us in Christ. Many of the children of the farmers in Stanley left the small community to see a better life elsewhere. Too often, we are looking for spiritual help in other places, not realizing that everything that we need to live a life of godliness is ours already in Christ. We merely need to look at what Christ has given to us. But, in Christ Jesus, we have everything that we need.

Paul wrote in Ephesians 1:3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." That means that there is not a single spiritual blessing floating out there, somewhere that we don't have. In Christ Jesus, we have "every spiritual blessing" that there is to have! God isn't in heaven withholding from us a spiritual blessing that we desperately need. No, He has given us "everything pertaining to life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3).

Psalms 84:11 says, "The LORD gives grace and glory; No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly." The promise of the Scripture is the "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory!" (Phil. 4:19). Paul asks in Romans 8:32, "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?" This is a rhetorical question. If God gave us the best that He could give us--His own Son, He will never withhold anything from us. The father who has the resources to give his son a brand new Cadillac, won't withhold from him power windows, will he? The father who has the resources to take his son to Colorado on a special skiing vacation, won't withhold lift tickets from his son, will he? Obviously not. If God gave us His Son, of course, he will give us everything that we need.

John MacArthur has said it well, "To possess the Lord Jesus Christ is to have every spiritual resource. All strength, wisdom, comfort, joy, peace, meaning, value, purpose, hope, and fulfillment in life now and forever is bound up in Him. Christianity is an all-sufficient relationship with an all-sufficient Christ." [\[4\]](#)

Notice that we haven't received these things by our own power. Rather, it's by God's power. Peter tells us that it is **by His divine power** that we have everything pertaining to life and godliness. We know that nothing is impossible with God. He can create the heavens and earth with a word (Jer. 32:17). He can bring forth a child from a virgin (Luke 1:37). He can raise the dead (Acts 26:8). And He can give to us everything that we need to live a godly life. But, not only can He do this, but Peter assures us that He has done it.

See, when it comes to life and godliness, we have everything that we need. When we fail in our godliness, it isn't because we don't have the resources. Rather, we fail because we don't use the resources that we have. There is a saying that goes around, "We only use 10% of our brain." (Now, I'm not sure that this is really true. I have read some things which make me doubt it. I would guess that we would use much more than this.) But, when it comes to living a godly life, we may be using only 10% of what God has given to us. Any lack in spiritual growth comes not because you aren't using what God has given you.

Every time you sin, it's not because you don't have the ability to stay away from the sin. Rather, it's that you have failed to use what God has given to you to live a godly life. In 1 Corinthians 10:13, we read that "No temptation has overtaken you, but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it." When the temptation comes, know that God has been regulating how strong the temptation is.

Furthermore, God will provide you with the way of escape. And that way of escape is through applying what God has already given you in Christ, through the cross.

When tempted to sin, I encourage you to think of the cross. See His agony. See His pain. See His love. Think of what Jesus had done for you! He was poured out to die, so that we might live. In Him there is forgiveness and power to overcome our temptations. In some ways, He is our example. Think of what Jesus endured. He endured the pain and shame of the cross. Thus, He can sympathize with us in our weakness. In fact, He is our high priest praying for us in our temptation. Jesus came for us. He loves us. When we were sinners, Christ died for us. When we are being tempted, Christ cares for us. So, think on these things the next time you are tempted. It is the way out of our temptation.

Again, I hope that you notice the way in which God gives us "everything pertaining to life and godliness." It is through the true knowledge of Christ. Look again at 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."

This is one of the places where I have sensed Peter's theme, "know and grow." It is through the knowledge of Christ that we receive everything that we need. It's not knowledge about Jesus. It's knowledge of Jesus, Himself. This is 2 Peter. We need to know Him, that we might grow in Him.

Finally, there is one last phrase in verse 3 that is worthy of our attention. It's that last phrase in verse 3, "who called us by His own glory and excellence." These words talk about the way in which we have been called unto salvation. It's a summons to a life devoted to Him.

In his first letter, Peter made several references to our calling. He said in 1 Peter 1:15, "like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior." He said in 1 Peter 2:21, "You have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to following in His steps." He said in 1 Peter 5:10, "After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself, perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you."

Now, when Christ calls us, he calls us in an attractive way. He calls us by His glory and excellence. He doesn't draft us, like the military, in which we must come, whether we like it or not. He doesn't call us to come in and work some overtime hours this weekend, like a boss. He doesn't call us like an overbearing father who forces his children to do something against their will. Rather, he calls us like the president of the United States would call us. "This is the president, would you like to come and visit me in the White House? I want for you to join with me for dinner before I give my speech tonight." Should we get a phone call like this, we would probably jump at the chance, because of the pomp and majesty of the president. That's how Christ calls us. He calls us "by His own glory and excellence."

We are ready to grow because, ...

4. We have been given promises (verse 4).

Verse 4 reads, "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."

The Bible is full of promises. When Mark Dever wrote a book surveying the entire Old Testament, he entitled the book, "Promises Made." When he wrote a book on the New Testament, it was entitled, "Promises Kept." This is what the Bible is about. It's about God making promises and then, keeping His promises. In our day and age, we are rejoicing in the promises that God has kept. He promised the Jews that He would bring a Messiah. The kingdom of the Messiah is so vast that it even includes Gentiles.

This is the promise of which Peter spoke when preaching to the Jews on the day of Pentecost. On that day, he called his listeners to repent and be baptized, saying, "The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself" (Acts 2:39). In other words, the Messiah has come and we are now the recipients of this promise.

And so also, have we been recipients of the promises of God. Peter calls them "precious and magnificent." Indeed, there is nothing more precious to us than the promises fulfilled in Christ. And, there is nothing more magnificent than the promises fulfilled in Christ.

Back in Peter's first epistle, he wrote of how "the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow" (1 Peter 1:10-11). They were looking to know when it was that the Messiah would come. Well, now we know. He came some 2,000 years ago born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2) of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14) according to God's promises. He came to save His people from their sins (Matt. 1:21).

These are the promises that are now ours in Christ! By these promises, "you may become partakes of the divine nature." These are difficult words to fully understand, but I believe them to describe the change that God works in us when He saves us. When Peter described our salvation in his first epistle, he word, "blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again" (1 Peter 1:3).

As you think about that terminology, you can easily see where it is linked to his words here in 2 Peter. God has done a work in our soul to change us and transform us. Our blind eyes have now been opened through Christ (2 Cor. 4:4; John 9). Our darkened minds have now been enlightened (Eph. 4:18; Rom. 8:6). Our hard hearts have been made soft (Ezek. 36:26). Our dead spirits have come alive through Christ (Eph. 2:1-5). In short, we have become new creatures in Christ, "the old things have passed away; ... new things have come" (2 Cor. 5:17). His spirit has come to live in us (1 Cor. 6:19). We have been changed by the power of God, having Christ in us, the hope of glory (Col. 1:27). As Paul said in Romans 8:29, we are being "conformed to the image of His Son." This is what it means to be partakers of the divine nature. God transforms us to be like Him.

In this sense, you can easily see how it is that "we have escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust" (verse 4). God has so changed us and transformed us that we are no longer slaves of sin, but are now slaves of righteousness (Rom. 6:17-18). We become partakers of the divine nature, not that we become God, but rather that God is in us changing us to be like Him. And there will be a day when we become "like Him, because we will see Him just as He is" (1 John 3:2).

There are promises that still remain for us in the future. Peter alludes to this promise that is ours in chapter 3, verse 13, "according to His promise, we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells." Since we look for His promise to come, we are to "conduct ourselves in holy conduct and godliness" (2 Peter 3:11). We are to "be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless" (2 Pet. 3:14). And coming next week in verse 5, we will see what a growing Christian life looks like. But, it is predicated first upon our knowledge of Christ (1:1-4), as we have seen this morning.

With the knowledge of the incredible blessings of God in our lives, we are ready to grow. That's the thrust of these verses. It is all about God giving us everything to make us ready to grow. He gives us a faith to believe. He gives us grace and peace to help us. He gives us everything. He gives us promises for us to embrace.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on November 2, 2008 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] This story can be found all over the internet.

[2] The Story of Christianity, Justo González, volume 1, p. 44.

[3] Here are some websites that I used as sources. There are many more on the internet:

<http://www.bittenandbound.com/2008/08/06/stanley-north-dakota-is-newest-oil-mecca-and-boom-town-photos/>

http://www.usatoday.com/money/industries/energy/2008-09-09-dakota-drilling_N.htm

<http://peakoilpetroleumandpreciousmetals.yuku.com/topic/470>