

Title: Confirming Your Calling (Part 2)

Passage: 2 Peter 1:3-4

Theme Growing in the knowledge of grace demonstrates the reality of grace

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{{Read Passage}}

[i] One thing to keep in mind as it relates to 2 Peter are the false teachers that were threatening the health of the church

This is t/elephant in the room, if you will. Only it's an E. that P. is more than willing to talk about.

Peter dives in to them w/both feet in chapt. 2. But even here - we see that Peter is already taking aim at them. Like TAP, he uses concepts and words that they liked, only he correctly defines them w/i Xn orthodoxy.

From chapter 2 we learn that these false teachers

1) Denied Christ by their false doctrine (doctrine matters) (2:1); 2) they twisted the Scriptures, including Paul's writings (3:15-16); 3) they followed "cleverly devised tales" (1:16) of "destructive heresies" (2:1); 4) they mocked the second coming of Christ (3:4) and the coming judgment (3:5-7); 5) they practiced immorality (2:2,13-14,19); 6) they despised authority (2:10); 7) they were arrogant and vain (2:18); 8) they sought material gain (2:3,14).

Licentiousness is a key feature of their false teaching. BTIM - they held t/damning position that God's grace erased t/need to live a holy life. One could sin freely, even lavishly, and yet be saved. Why Peter focuses on virtues in keeping with God's sovereign call (and making one's calling/election certain) in this passage.

[ii] This is the first issue that Peter addresses in this letter

Entire passage resonates with t/admonition of verses 10 and 11 {read}

That admonition builds upon that virtues of vv. 5,6,7 which are grounded upon the reality of God's calling one to salvation in v. 3.

[iii] We said this last time: This text teaches us an essential yet often misunderstood truth: That no one will enter the kingdom of heaven apart from good works

It's often been phrased this way: *"While no one is saved by works, no one will be saved w/o them."*

That's where Peter lands in verse 11 {cite}

If there is no X-likeness in one's life, there is no X in that life.

Or to put it in the positive ==>

Growing in the knowledge of grace demonstrates the reality of grace.

IOW - If we are growing in t/knowledge of JC and demonstrating t/reality that we are in Him and He in us, it is a sure sign that we have a sure calling and election.

There are three main points in this passage that will carry us from v. 3 to v. 11.

I. Salvation's Sufficiency: The Believer's Inheritance (3-4)

II. Salvation's Service: The Believer's Fruitfulness (5-9)

II. Salvation's Surety: The Believer's Security (10-11)

Our goal is to finish what we began two weeks ago ==>

I. Salvation's Sufficiency: The Believer's Inheritance (3-4)

Again, I'm using the word "inheritance" to refer to all that is our salvation. All that is our life in Christ now, lived in t/flesh now, as well as t/consummation of our salvation in t/future (glorification). It's everything pertaining to life and godliness (3), and it's the entrance into the eternal KD (11).

A. An Inheritance Granted by Grace (3)

Just as His [Christ's] divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness through the knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.

Peter's words ==>

Just as . . .

bring us back to verse 2 ==>

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

What do we see in v. 2? We have grace and we have knowledge.

What do we see here in v. 3? We have grace (granted) and we have knowledge.

1. The word "granted" = δωρεομαι

a. Remember, our first of three main points is "Salvation's Sufficiency"

That's also bound up in this word. Perfect tense. Something that has happened in the past that continues to be relevant/applicable in the present. SUFFICIENCY.

The word itself also carries a sense of great generosity. It would not be inappropriate to say that

. . . His divine power has 'lavished upon us' everything pertaining to life and godliness . . .

Believers have been abundantly graced. God's not stingy when it comes to his blessings.

b. Wonderful picture of this comes out of Luke 15 (vv. 11-32)

c. Jesus compares salvation to a Jewish wedding feast

A fitting portrayal as the Jewish wedding feast was a time of lavish celebration.

MAT 22:2 "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king, who gave a wedding feast for his son."

Further described in verse 4 ==>

MAT 22:4 ". . . I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fattened livestock are all butchered and everything is ready; come to the wedding feast."

These wedding feasts could be expected to last 7 days & it wasn't uncommon for a king or t/wealthy to invite extremely large numbers – even an entire city.

This is the picture ==>

. . . His divine power has 'lavished upon us' everything pertaining to life and godliness . . .

ROM 8:32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

If you are a believer you have Christ. If you have Christ He has given you an abundant supply of all you need to live a life pleasing to Him.

No need to look for some second blessing or some experience or some secret to a "deeper life."

MacArthur writes:

The pursuit by Christians of ". . . mystical experiences, special Psychological insights, private revelations, . . . heightened emotions, demon bindings . . . [are a] vain attempt to attain what is supposedly missing from their spiritual resources. All manner of ignorance and Scripture twisting accompanies those foolish pursuits, which at their corrupt roots are failures to understand exactly what Peter says here. Christians have received everything in the form of divine power necessary to equip them for sanctification—they have no lack at all. In view of that reality, the Lord holds all believers responsible to obey all the commands of Scripture. Christians cannot claim that their sins and failures are the result of God's limited provision. There is no temptation and no assault of Satan and demons that is beyond their resources to overcome . . ." [MacArthur, 27]

A. An Inheritance Granted by Grace (3)

B. An Inheritance Gained Through a Knowledge of Christ (3)

1. "Through" is a key word here in verse 3

It is "through" a knowledge of JC that we have been given these things.

D.M. Lloyd-Jones:

"That is the basic definition always in the New Testament of the character and quality and nature of the Christian life. What is it that as

a Christian I should desire above everything else? It is not to have certain experiences; it is not that I may be better than I used to be; it is not that I am to hold certain views of life and the world and society and various other matters. The supreme objective of the Christian man is to know God. You remember how our Lord put it - 'This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou has sent.' What is the *summum bonum* of the Christian life? Our Lord put it in one of the Beatitudes, 'Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.' To know God! And you notice how Peter keeps repeating that here: 'Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue.' There is always this emphasis on knowledge." [Lloyd-Jones, 14]

a. And how did we come to know Christ?

Was it because we just happened to be born in the right place (America, not India)? // we were in the right place at t/right time, or born into t/right family? Maybe we were just wiser than t/others and saw a good deal – "Believe in Jesus and get eternal life."

Is that how we gained such a great & wonderful inheritance?

B. An Inheritance Grounded in God's Call (3)

. . . through the knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.

1. Remember - calling is the work of God by which He awakens a spiritually dead sinner unto eternal life

1 Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

a. I've used Lazarus as an illustration of this

(1) This takes a sovereign act from an omnipotent God

You had no inherent ability to bring forth light out of darkness! You're not deity; only God can do that! Don't claim t/ability to do something only God can do!

Only God has the power to separate the light from the darkness. True of creation. (Gen. 1:4 - G. saw t/light was good & he sep. t/L. from t/D.). What's true of creation is true of salvation.

All that is our salvation is granted by grace. The fact that it is grounded in God's call ALSO shows that it is by grace.

Works and Merit and Religiousity are stripped from t/equation. It is God who calls by His grace; it is God who gives by His grace. We cannot earn it, we didn't deserve it.

2 Tim. 1:9 who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity,

2. How did He call us?

. . . [He] called us **BY HIS OWN GLORY AND EXCELLENCE.**

Best understood as an Instrumental use of the Dative case. He called us by means of His glory and excellence. Translating it "by his own G & E." (NAS / NIV) is preferred over "to his own G. & E." (KJV / ESV).

I. Salvation's Sufficiency: The Believer's Inheritance (3-4)

A. An Inheritance Granted by Grace (3)

B. An Inheritance Gained Through a Knowledge of Christ (3)

C. An Inheritance Grounded in God's Call (3)

Our 4th point brings us to verse 4 ==>

D. An Inheritance Guaranteed to Sanctify (4)

We don't normally think in terms of our inheritance being sanctificational, but remember, I'm using the term "inheritance" in t/wider sense of all that is our salvation.

Point: God has given us everything we need to live the Christian life. Beyond that, we're also saying that sanctification (growth in t/Xn life) will always issue from justification.

This relates to something I said last time ==>

You can't separate the call of God to salvation from the call of God to holiness

Ephesians 1:3-4 **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,4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be (ἀγιος) holy and blameless before Him.**

Also Eph. 2:8-10 {cite}

1. This gift of our inheritance includes precious and great promises (4)

Through these [i.e. through his own glory and excellence] He has given to us precious and very great promises . . .

God has called you by His glory and excellence, and through his glory and excellence he has given you precious and very great promises.

HEB 6:12 that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

This is the Gospel. This is the inheritance. This is the promise of receiving all things related to life and godliness. When one receives the Gospel, he receives it all (down payment on future inheritance).

a. Again we have the verb δωρομαι (v. 3) - Idea of giving lavishly
God has lavished us with all things pertaining to life and godliness (v. 2).
He has lavished us with his precious and very great promises (v. 3).

b. This topic - "promises" is rich in the Old Testament
No surprise that it was a key feature in the early church's preaching and teaching.

Same writer, Peter, in Acts 2 referred to t/ "promise of the Holy Spirit".
Paul does the same in Galatians 3:14 when he says that "the blessing of Abraham" has come to the Gentiles, "so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."

John refers to the promise which God has made to us as "eternal life."
(1 John 2:25).

Peter's other uses in 2 Peter point to the eschatological /end-times promise of Christ's coming, something which the false teachers denied:
2 Peter 3:9,13.

But here the word is in the plural, so I take it that it is all-encompassing.

2CO 1:20 For as many as may be the promises of God, in Him they are yes; wherefore also by Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us.

All of our inheritance // eternal life // the gift of the Spirit // grace of sanctification ==> promises.

As the old saying goes, "Promises were meant to be broken." Cicero went to great lengths to discuss just when a promise was not binding.

But God keeps his promises.

They are described here as τιμιος (precious, valuable, priceless). Same word Peter used in his first letter of faith that has been tried and tested and found true – it's precious (1:7).

In 1:19 ==> of the "precious" blood of Christ.

God's promises are "precious."

The older we get, the more we grow in the knowledge of X, the more we endure suffering and persevere in the faith, the more we realize just how precious God's promises are.

In 1658, John Bunyan was indicted in England for preaching without a licence. He was finally arrested in Nov. 1660 while preaching.

The condition of his release was that he stop preaching.

That he could not do ==> Like Paul, his heart was aflame w/"woe is me if I do not preach the Gospel" ==> "If you release me today, I will preach tomorrow."

He spent 12 years in prison for the crime of abstaining from attending mandatory Anglican church services and preaching at unlawful meetings.

12 years in prison. He was married // he had children, one of them a dear daughter, Mary, blind from birth. He could see them – if only he would agree not to preach.

He couldn't // wouldn't do it.

Do you think he survived those times of suffering without an intense focus on the precious promises of God?!

He wrote that "The pathway of life is strewn so thickly with the promises of God that it is impossible to take one step without treading upon one of them."

C H Spurgeon comments on these precious & magnificent promises:
"If you would know experimentally the preciousness of the promises, and enjoy them in your own heart, meditate much upon them. There are promises which are like grapes in the wine-press; if you will tread them the juice will flow. Thinking over the hallowed words will often be the prelude to their fulfillment. While you are musing upon them, the boon which you are seeking will insensibly come to you. Many a Christian who has thirsted for the promise has found the favor which it ensured gently distilling into his soul even while he has been considering the divine record; and he has rejoiced that ever he was led to lay the promise near his heart. But besides meditating upon the promises, seek in thy soul to receive them as being the very words of God." [Morning & Evening July 27]

He goes on to say,

"If you go into the market and are likely to do a ready money business, you always take a check book with you; so carry precious promises with you, that may plead the word which suits your case. I have turned to promises for the sick, when I have been of that number, or to promises for the poor, the despondent, the weary, and such like, according to my own condition, and I have always found a Scripture fitted to my own case. I do not want a promise made to the sick when I am perfectly well; I do not want balm for a broken heart when my soul is rejoicing in the Lord; but it is very handy to know where to lay your hand upon suitable words of cheer when necessity arises. Thus the eternal comfort of the Christian is the Word of God."

1. Our inheritance includes precious and great promises (4)

What follows are two benefits that flow out of/ through these promises, one positive and one negative.

a. Positively: We become partakers of the divine nature (4)

. . . in order that [result] by them [the promises] you may become a partaker of the divine nature . . .

(1) What does that mean?

One commentator declared that if Peter had written this to a 20th c. audience they would have thought he'd gone new age!

What does it mean to partake (κοινωνος = a sharer; related to the word κοινωνία = "fellowship") in the divine nature?

It doesn't mean that we become gods // ultimate goal (was true in Greek thought) is to be absorbed into God. Lose our identity.

(a) The EO CH has drawn heavily from this verse (as have some of the early Eastern CH fathers) and they have a doctrine called "theosis"

Another word for "theosis" is "deification."

The Orthodox Study Bible contains a brief article defining deification. The article states that deification is *"the process by which a Christian becomes more like God."* This in itself is not bad (sounds like sanctification) and there are many texts that exhort us to be God-like, or Christlike.

However, the OSB goes on to say:

"Deification means we are to become more like God through His grace or divine energies. In creation, humans were made in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26) according to human nature. In other words, humanity by nature is an icon or image of deity: The divine image is in all humanity. Through sin, however, this image and likeness of God was marred, and we fell.

When the Son of God assumed our humanity in the womb of the blessed Virgin Mary, the process of our being renewed in God's image and likeness was begun. Thus, those who are joined to Christ through faith in Holy Baptism begin a recreation being renewed in God's image and likeness. We become, as St. Peter writes. 'Partakers of the divine nature' (2 Pet. 1:4).

Because of the Incarnation of the Son of God, because the fullness of God has inhabited human flesh, being joined to Christ means that it is again possible to experience *deification*, the fulfillment of our human destiny. That is, through union with Christ, we become by grace what God is by nature—we "become children of God" (John 1:12). His deity interpenetrates our humanity.

The historic example that is commonly given is putting a sword into a fire. It begins to glow red-hot. The energy of the fire interpenetrates the sword. The sword never becomes fire, but it picks up the properties of fire.

There is some truth in the EO concept, but I'm afraid it goes too far and becomes too mystical.

(b) Best to understand this as relating to the believer's Union with Christ which restores the corruption of the image of God in fallen men

Early writers often referred to man being unique among the creatures, a uniqueness attributed to man being god-like.

Dio Chrysostom, the 1st c. Greek philosopher ==>

humans have "this god-given superiority over the other animals of being able to reason and reflect about the gods" and have received from the divine "intelligence and the capacity for reason . . .")

He writes from a pagan perspective.

On the other hand, the Jewish historian, Josephus, writes about one man "whose wisdom and knowledge of the future were regarded as marks of divinity." (Ag. Ap. 1.26 §232).

Philo commented, "This is the practice, I think, of kings also, who imitate the divine nature" (Abraham 28 §144).

Neither Josephus, Philo, or Peter are contending that man becomes God.

What we do see is that man reflects the image and likeness of God.

And God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them. (Gen. 1:27)

BUT - that's not what Peter is saying here either. It may be part of it, but that's not his emphasis.

All men everywhere are created in God's image.

By that we mean men are unique. They stand far above the animals in their creativity; their ability to love, reason, think; act, and rule.

Sin has corrupted that image, but not erased it. The first Adam was created in God's image and was the one who corrupted that image. The 2nd Adam, JC, is the one who came to restore that which was lost.

How?

Through regeneration.

Look at the context ==> God calls to salvation // All by his grace. By His grace that we can know Him through the knowledge of JC. We receive the promises and are made partakers – those who share in His very nature.

JOH 14:23 Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode with him.

1JO 2:24 As for you, let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father.

GAL 2:20 "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the {life} which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me.

It's to be a new creation in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17).

Phil. 1:21 For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

When does this happen? When Peter writes that ==>

... He has given to us precious and very great promises, in order that by them you may become a partaker of the divine nature . . .

Is he saying that we share in the divine nature now, or is it in the future?

Answer? Yes!

Here again we have that "already not yet" tension.

We see that this starts in the here and now in the next point

1. Our inheritance includes precious and great promises (4)

a. Positively: We become partakers of the divine nature (4)

b. Negatively: We escape the world's corruption (4)

... having escaped the corruption which is in the world by lust.

Note the progression from v. 3 (out of the fulness of God's glory and excellence he has called us and given us the promises and by the promises we become partakers of the divine nature and escape the world's corruption.

That's the connection to our Union with Christ (being a partaker of the divine nature). This is why we have ==>

D. An Inheritance Guaranteed to Sanctify (4)

Where grace is imputed, grace is imparted.

ROM 6:1-2,6 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? 2 May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? 6 knowing this, that our old self was crucified with {Him,} that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin;

That doesn't mean we don't pursue holiness. This is why we are exhorted to the virtues of vv. 5-7 {cite}.

Connection to making one's calling and election sure

Connection to entering the K.D.

And the other side of the coin in 2:20

For if after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first.

Believers have already escaped the corruption of the world, but the completion of that process will occur on the day of the Lord.

One commentator pulls vv. 3-4 together by noting ==>

"These two verses abound in rare and daring words. Peter is very subtly using language uncommon in the New Testament but full of meaning in the pagan world, as we know from Jewish literature and the Carian inscription. The false teachers laid emphasis on knowledge; so Peter stresses that the object of knowledge in the Christian life is the Lord who calls men. They thought that knowledge dispensed with the need for morality. So Peter emphasizes two words common in pagan circles for ethical endeavour, eusebeia (godliness) and areti (goodness). They appear to have thought that holiness of living was impossible (see 2:19-20), so Peter speaks to them of the divine power, a Hebrew periphrasis for God. Rival pagan schoolmen asserted that you escaped from the toils of corruption (phthora) by becoming participants in the divine nature either by means of nomos (law keeping) or phusis ('nature'). Peter takes up their language, and replies that it is by sheer grace. Did the false teachers. Gnosticwise, suggest that their adherents became more godlike as they 'escaped the trammels of the material world?' Far from it, says Peter. Participation in the divine nature is the starting- point, not the goal, of Christian living. He writes to those who have escaped from the seductive allegiance to society at odds with God." [Green, 73-74]

I. Salvation's Sufficiency: The Believer's Inheritance (3-4)

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C. An Inheritance Grounded in God's Call (3)

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1. The inheritance includes precious and great promises (4)

a. Positively: We become partakers of the divine nature (4)

b. Negatively: We escape the world's corruption (4)

But that escape isn't complete. We are engaged in a battle.

John Piper sums up this section with some practical thoughts...

"Notice that corruption comes by lust which means that the battle against corruption is fought on the field of our desires or passions. Sin makes its attack by holding out promises to us for our happiness: if you lie on your income tax return, you will have more money and be happier; if you divorce your spouse, you will be happier; if you brag about winning the game, you will be happier; if you don't upset your relationship with your neighbor by sharing Christ, you will be happier, etc. And sin will always win the battle unless we have the luscious carrot of God's promises hanging clearly in front of our noses. Unless we enter our day armed with one or two precious and very great promises we will be utterly vulnerable to temptation. But if we hold before our eyes the astonishing things God has promised us now and in the life to come, his divine power will be present and we will escape corruption and be conformed to the image of his Son. Therefore I urge you: search this book for the promises of God and hang them like a carrot in front of your eyes so that they lure you away from sin and toward the likeness of God." (Liberating Promises)