

HIS DIVINE POWER—THE SOURCE OF GODLY LIVING

2 Peter 1:1-11

Key Verse: 1:3

“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.”

1 Peter warns God’s people about dangers of enemies from without. 2 Peter warns of a more dangerous enemy from within. That enemy is false teaching, which comes from deceivers and scoffers who had crept into the church and were teaching lies. False teachers claimed that if someone has special knowledge they are saved, even though they live by their sinful desires without restraint. Those who hear this kind of false teaching, compromise with the world, yield to their sinful desires, and stop growing. Though they claim to be Christians, their lifestyle exactly mirrors worldly people. They ignore morality and ethics with no sense of shame.

The times we live in are marked by immorality. The opportunity to sin, by means of modern media, is unprecedented. False ideas and temptations surround us on all sides. We are even deceived by people who don’t know they are deceiving us. Now, more than ever, it is not easy to live a godly life. There is a temptation to compromise with corrupted culture. Many church leaders tolerate immorality; their messages soothe guilty consciences but do not lead to real repentance and forgiveness. When we live a godly life we feel like aliens. But we must not compromise. We must please God by living a godly life, and encourage others to do the same. In this passage let’s learn what God has done to enable us to live a godly life, how to live a godly life, in what respect we should grow, and the results of spiritual growth.

First, he has given us everything we need for a godly life (1-4). In verse 1a Peter identifies himself as a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ. As a servant, Peter belonged to his master Jesus. He took Jesus’ word seriously, as a command to be obeyed. As an apostle, Peter was appointed by Jesus Christ to be his representative and ambassador. For this reason Peter’s words are not merely human; they are God’s words. Peter wrote to **“those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours”** (1b). Saving faith comes through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ, and it is a gift of God. Those who have received

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this gift are all equal, be they Jew or Gentile. There is no hierarchy between apostles and other believers—they have an equal standing in regard to saving faith. Jesus alone is the center and foundation of our faith, and we are all equal in the sight of God.

In verse 1, Peter calls Jesus **“our God and Savior,”** in verse 2, **“Jesus our Lord,”** in verses 8,14 and 16, **“our Lord Jesus Christ,”** in 1:11, 2:20 and 3:18, **“our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,”** and in 3:2, **“our Lord and Savior.”** He emphasized Jesus’ deity. Why does he proclaim Jesus’ deity throughout the entire letter? It was to refute the false teachers’ denial of Jesus’ sovereignty (2:1). These days also, many false teachers deny Jesus’ deity. They emphasize his humanity and example, but deny that he is God who must be obeyed. They hope to have saving faith without a real relationship with Christ that involves obedience. For example, Jesus said, **“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me”** (Mk 8:34b). False teachers dismiss these words as relative, claiming that the person of Jesus is merely human. They like Jesus’ teaching about being his friend, but not teachings that require painful obedience to the world mission command, the call to sacrifice, and holy living. To acknowledge Jesus’ deity means that we must obey his teachings absolutely. Our democratic society emphasizes individual rights and freedom. When we don’t like the president, we complain and vote against him. Christians should not treat Jesus in this way. Jesus is God, who made the heavens, the earth, and each of our lives. Jesus is the only way of salvation God has given us. When Jesus speaks to us, we need to take his words very seriously, whether we like them or not.

In verse 2 Peter blesses the recipients with grace and peace in abundance through the knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord. Here the word “knowledge” is translated from the Greek word “epignosis.” This refers to correct knowledge, or true knowledge about someone. It is to know God and Christ as they truly are. This knowledge is relational, uniting us to Christ as true believers. The result is abundant grace and peace for all who believe.

In verses 3-4 Peter tells us what God has given us for a godly life. Let’s read verse 3. **“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.”** Jesus’ divine power is a source of salvation and

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transformation that can make any person a child of God, and enable them to live a godly life. Last year Chuck Colson passed away. He was an intelligent and shrewd politician. Merciless and ruthless, he was known as President Nixon's "hatchet man." No one could imagine that he would become a Christian. But he became a sincere, devout Christian whose influence reached the whole world. Michael W. Smith heard God's call as a young teen, but ignored it. Later, he used his singing talent to make money in bars and became addicted to drugs. He was full of guilt, but could not escape, no matter how hard he tried. After three years of this, he had a bad experience in which he nearly died. But Jesus' divine power delivered him and changed him. Now he is a man of godly integrity and an influential Christian musician. This is the experience of all believers, including me. We were hopeless, powerless and objects of God's wrath (Eph 2:3,12). We were dead in our sins (Ro 5:6,8; Eph 2:1). But God gave us his life through Jesus. It was not because of anything we have done. It was totally by God's divine power. This divine power not only changes us, but enables us to live a godly life.

How did this divine power come to work in us? Jesus called us by his own glory and goodness. Jesus revealed himself to us, so that we could know him. This knowledge of Jesus is not informational, but personal. Why did Peter emphasize this knowledge of Jesus? It was to distinguish knowledge of Jesus from false teaching of Gnostics. They claimed that secret knowledge saves people, but only certain special people have this knowledge. However, Jesus invites anyone and everyone to believe in him. Jesus taught the way of salvation openly and plainly so that everyone can understand. Whoever responds enters into a relationship with Jesus and receives salvation. The phrase "godly life" in verse 3 may better be translated "life and godliness," as it was in the older NIV. This emphasizes that we have eternal life and that we can live as children of God. We can grow to become like God. Through Jesus, God forgives all of our sins, and he also sends his Holy Spirit to enable us to live a godly life. In a word, God has given us all we need in Jesus. In order to live a godly life, we don't need to spend our money on some kind of guru, or on books that give secular wisdom. Everything we need for life and godliness comes from Jesus. Jesus is ready to bless us abundantly with whatever we need, free of charge every day (Isa 55:1-2). The problem is that people do not come to Jesus and instead seek help somewhere else, like from friends, or Google. These may provide temporary help, but do not solve our deepest

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problems. When we truly come to Jesus, we find a real solution and everything we need. Let's come to Jesus!

Verse 3 ends with the phrase, **“...who called us by his own glory and goodness.”** This work of salvation was initiated by God for his own glory. As his power works in the lives of people to save and transform lowly sinners, God's own glory is revealed. God is almighty God, loving God, holy God, compassionate God, and God who saves. God is good and he does good things for people who don't deserve it at all. Because he wants to express his love and kindness, he pours out his blessings upon us.

We find further blessing in verse 4: **“Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.”** God has given us promises that fill the Bible from beginning to end. Someone counted 365 specific Messianic promises which Jesus fulfilled in detail when he came the first time.¹ Many promises remain to be fulfilled, especially in regard to Jesus' second coming. God has also given many specific promises to enable his people to live godly lives in this world. Anyone who has accepted Jesus Christ as their God and Savior can claim these promises as their own. This is how we can access his divine power practically. For example, many worries arise as we live in this world, such as what to eat and what to wear and who to marry. Jesus promises, **“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well”** (Mt 6:33). Again, many anxieties arise in our hearts as we live in this world. We wonder how we will survive. Philippians 4:6-7 say, **“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”** Sometimes, we are tempted to give up doing good because we don't see visible fruit. Galatians 6:9 says, **“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.”** Sometimes we feel overwhelmed by the power of sin and do not know how to get free from guilt feelings. 1 John 1:9 says, **“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”** Living in this world, we need

¹ <http://www.bibleprobe.com/365messianicprophecies.htm>

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money to survive. Sometimes we begin to calculate and become stingy in offering to God. Malachi 3:10 says, **“Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,”** says the Lord Almighty, **‘and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.’**” Car accidents, robberies, and other tragedies happen while we live in this world. But Jesus promises, **“Surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age”** (Mt 28:20b). When we hold on to these promises, we can live a vibrant and victorious life in this world. Why does Peter call these **“very great and precious promises”**? It is because God never lies, but keeps his promises. And through these promises we can have a tremendous blessing.

What blessings can we enjoy through these promises? **In the first place, we can participate in the divine nature.** In the past, we wanted to live a godly life. Yet our sinful desires hindered us. But God has redeemed us by the precious blood of Christ and made us his children. Now, we can come to God, calling, **“Abba, Father.”** As we do, he shares his mind with us. He pours his joy and peace and strength into our hearts. We receive the wisdom and power to imitate him and participate in the divine nature. Now we are able to live a godly life.

In the second place, through these promises we can escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. Corruption is rooted in sinful desires that reside within our hearts. People try to root out corruption by making laws, and through education or social reforms. These efforts may seem to work for a while. But they do not solve the root problem. So the problem resurfaces. However, when we hold on to God’s promises, they enable us to escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. In the classic, “Pilgrim’s Progress,” John Bunyan illustrates this. Whenever the main character, Christian, was tempted to go astray, Evangelist or Shepherd reminded him of God’s promises. As Christian held on to God’s promises he could escape the corruption in the world and enter the heavenly city. When we see this world, it seems to have many good things which are glittering and attractive. But Apostle John described this world as **“the cravings of sinful man, the lust of the eyes, and the boasting of what he has and does”** (1 Jn 2:16, 1984 NIV). **“The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever”** (1 Jn 2:17). Let’s hold on to God’s promises and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

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Second, make every effort (5-11). In the first part, we learned what God has done for us. In this part, we learn how we should respond. Verses 5 and 10 both contain the phrase, “...**make every effort**...” These words seem to contradict the gospel truth that we are saved by grace alone, not by anything that we do. But in fact, they are written in the context of that truth to address an error that Christians can fall into. Some people misuse God’s sovereign bestowal of grace as an excuse to avoid human responsibility. In the time of William Carey (1761-1834), many church leaders, under the influence of Calvin’s predestination, misunderstood that God would carry out the world mission command by himself while they did nothing. When Carey emphasized that to “**go and make disciples of all nations**” was all Christians’ responsibility, he was told, “Sit down, young man. If God wants to convert the heathen, he will do so without help from you or me.” Nevertheless, Carey believed God wanted him to obey the world mission command. While working as a shoemaker, he memorized a foreign language word by word. After fixing one shoe, he memorized one word. Later he went to India as a missionary. Though he suffered much, God’s blessing on his obedience was evident to all. In this way he became a father of modern missions. He said, “Expect great things from God, attempt great things for God.” God does not use people who sit down under a tree waiting for the apple to drop into their mouths. God uses people who climb the tree and pick the apple. God wants us to cooperate with what he is doing.

What should we do in order to live a godly life? Let’s read verses 5-7, **“For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love.”** Faith is the foundation of all of these virtues. The ultimate result of faith is love. “Goodness” depicts moral excellence expressed in deeds—virtue in action. “Knowledge” comes from “gnosis” which is the practical wisdom to deal with life. “Self-control” means to do what we should do instead of what we like to do. “Perseverance” is not just passive endurance; it is the voluntary, daily suffering of hard and difficult things in order to serve God. “Godliness” is an awareness of God and reverence for him in all things. “Mutual affection” means to share our warm and tender hearts with all those in the family of faith. “Love” is the kind of outgoing, selfless attitude that leads one to

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sacrifice for the good of others. When we possess these qualities in increasing measure, we can live an effective and productive life (8). But anyone who does not have them, is near-sighted and blind. They forgot the grace of God who forgave their sins (9). These people were influenced by false teachers and remained in their sin. They were not conscious of God and what he was doing in the world. They were easily upset by petty things and complained all the time. For example, in the time of Noah, though judgment was coming rapidly, most people were unaware of it. They only thought about eating and drinking and marrying. They were spiritually blind. This can happen to anyone who is influenced by false teachers. In order to live an effective and productive life we need to make every effort to climb the ladder of Christian virtues based on our faith. When we grow in these qualities, we can be happy and a blessing to others. In verse 10, Peter urges us to make every effort to confirm our calling and election. This means to always remember God's saving grace. When we do so, we will never stumble, that is, fall away from Jesus. Rather, we will be richly provided with eternal life and a pathway into the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (11).

Let's remember that God has given us everything we need for a godly life. He has given us his very great and precious promises so that we may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. Let's make every effort to add virtue to our faith until we possess the love of God in increasing measure and live productive lives. Then we will surely be welcomed into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.