

2Peter 11-08-19a

This is Friday the 19th of August, 2011. We begin a new study tonight in the book of 2 Peter. We'll begin as we always do with a word of prayer and then dive into the text.

Shall we pray? Father, what a privilege it is for us to gather and spend time together in fellowship in the study of your word and seeing the ways that you are at work all over the world and within our own country to bring people to the Lord Jesus and to enable all of us to grow in grace and knowledge. We thank you for this letter that has been preserved for us for nearly 2,000 years and the message that it contains, the illumination that it provides on our path and on your greater plan and purpose in history and our place in it. We pray that you will bless us as we study this letter together in the coming weeks.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. It is customary when we start a new book to begin with introduction.

So the introduction is as follows. This is written by Peter and it's to the same audience we saw last time. That's the introduction.

So if you look at chapter 1, verse 1, let's read a portion of this first chapter together so we can get an idea. Keep in mind now that these people scattered through the Roman Empire who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ are greatly excited to receive a letter from the Apostle Peter. They couldn't be any more excited if they were Catholics.

This is like a letter from the source. Here is a man who walked with the Lord Jesus Christ. Here is a man who saw his glory on the Mount of Transfiguration.

This is a man who heard the voice from heaven saying, this is my beloved son and he has written a personal letter to them. This is as close as you can get to a visit from the Lord Jesus Christ himself as far as they're concerned. So they would have gathered in small groups such as this and the messenger most likely who brought the letter from Peter's location, people would have been alerted, the messenger has arrived, he's got a parchment, he's got a papyrus, he's got some sort of a copy of a letter from the Apostle Peter.

Meet at our house tonight and we're going to read it and hear what Peter has to say. And they would have gotten the letter in one go. We sort of take it for granted.

We've got Bibles that we can study, we can open, we can peruse, we can look up individual words, we can parse and we can categorize and we can take our time just going word by word, verse by verse. But these people didn't have a copy of the manuscript. They would assemble, there would be oil lamps lit to illuminate the room and probably an extra lamp up in the front for the man who would unroll this, most likely a piece of leather on which the manuscript was written, perhaps a parchment, perhaps a papyrus.

And he would read and they would get it just like you'd read a letter from somebody in another state or another country. And they would really have to concentrate. And I think people's concentration and memory was much better in those days because they knew, I've got to hang on to bits and pieces of this so that I can think about it later because I'm not going to be able to go back and read it again any time soon.

So if you can imagine yourself in that room in the evening time, might have been about now, might have been a little bit later. Other believers have gathered, everybody has a sense of anticipation and excitement. Here's the Apostle Peter, sent this thing.

It's traveled perhaps for weeks on shipboard and by foot and in caravans and however it may have gotten there. And it has finally arrived. And this is the first fresh scripture and fresh information about Christ and the Christian life that they've received in months.

And so they're all eagerly anticipating. And the messenger gets up there in the front and the room gets hushed and he begins to read this letter and he's reading it in Greek and we're reading it in English. But this is what it says.

Simon Peter, a bond servant and apostle of Jesus Christ. And you can imagine people saying, wow, we haven't gotten anything this authoritative in just forever. This is the apostle himself.

One of the big three apostles, Peter, James, and John. This is the guy. To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.

And right away there is this note of inclusiveness and equality. We'll talk about this Greek word. But where it says like precious faith, that's a word, *isotime*.

Remember Timothy's name comes from time. It looks like time if you transliterate it, T-I-M-E. But that's the word for honor or value.

And *iso*, that's like isosceles triangle, two sides are equal. *Isometrics*, two forces that are equal. If I'm going to get expansive, I'm going to have to get away from that table.

So *isotime*, same value, same honor, same worthiness. And he says, I'm writing to people who have got faith, a faith of equal value with ours. And he's sort of speaking for the apostles, speaking for the originators and the perpetrators of the Great Commission and the words of Christ.

As you go make disciples of all nations, teaching them, baptizing them. And so this is a part of that authoritative mission. And he says, I'm writing to you because the faith, this body of belief and your confidence in it is the same as ours.

It's you're not diminished because you're far away. You're not diminished because you're off in the Roman Empire. It's not diminished because you're not an apostle or maybe you weren't an

eyewitness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Your faith and your belief and your understanding of the plan and purpose of God is just as valuable as ours. And that's really key. And it's why he puts it right up in the salutation of the letter, because this is a theme that is going to run through this letter.

If you look at a study Bible, if you've got study notes in your Bible, it'll say, well, the theme of this thing is false teachers. That's what a lot of them say. Well, let me right off the bat offer a slight emendation to that idea.

It's not so much false teachers that Peter is going to be talking about. It is the message that is brought by these teachers. It is the false message.

And we've talked about that, interestingly enough, in the past couple of weeks when we took our hiatus from exegesis and looked at the marketing of evil and looked at the ways that Christianity is being attacked in our culture. We have to have books now that talk about what's so great about Christianity, because our cultural memory is gone. We don't remember where our values of equality and family and equal treatment and the value of every human life, our society has forgotten where those came from.

They are all uniquely Christian values. You don't get that from Islam. You don't get it from Buddhism.

You don't get it from Confucius. You don't get it from the Hindus. You don't get it from Greco-Roman culture.

You don't get it from feudalism or the medieval days. Where is the idea that every life is valuable, whether you are a slave or you are a high governor? It's Christianity. It is because God has created every soul in his own image and after his likeness.

That's where it comes from. And when you start chopping away at the Christian roots, the Judeo-Christian values, those understandings will soon wither and you will be back to eugenics. You'll be back to slaughter of the young.

You'll be back to oppression, oligarchies, and loss of freedom, loss of opportunity, loss of freedom of worship, loss of freedom of religion. All of these things will wither and die when those values that have made this nation great in its past wither away. So what is that? It's a false message.

And obviously a false message is brought by false messengers. So this is a great letter. It shifts the emphasis.

What was 1 Peter about? The theme in there was the glory of God, the glory of Jesus Christ, and our opportunity to reflect it in our love for one another and in our love for God. Slaves, be

obedient to your masters, that idea of submissiveness, that idea of humility. Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asks you a reason for your hope.

We ought to be lights shining in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. What is it that shines? It's our hope. It's our love for God and love for one another that reflects that hope.

So he kind of took care of business in the first letter by saying, you've got to get your own house in order. Husbands and wives, you've got to have your relationship straight. Families, you've got to have your relationship straight.

Churches, you need to have your relationship straight. It needs to be a reflection of your love for God in your love for one another. This is what shines the glory of God.

It's the glory of God that has power, right? So now that Peter has written this first letter and is sort of, it's kind of like the injunction for a pastor or any teacher of the Word of God, you can't study to teach. You have to study to learn. I need to learn.

I need to have the Word of God do something to me first before I am in any position to share it with anyone else. I have to have metabolized it. It has to have done its work on me or I have no business trying to share it with anyone else.

And in the same way, in a larger sense, this is what needs to happen for believers. We need to be growing. We need to be healthy.

We need to have an understanding. And Peter is going to talk about that. He started in his first letter.

Now he's going to contrast what happens if you don't have that message, if you don't have that knowledge. So watch closely. I'm back in the smoky room now in the evening with these gathered believers listening to this fresh message that the messenger has brought.

And listen and watch for the expression of these themes in this first chapter. To those who have obtained isotime faith, it is equal in value, equal in honor, equal in worth to the faith that the apostles themselves received from the Lord Jesus. It's just as authoritative to hear it from Peter as it would be to hear it from Christ.

With us, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ. What is our biggest problem? What separates us from God? No righteousness. We have the opposite of righteousness.

We have sin. We have a deficit. What solves our problem? What is it that happens at salvation? Christ has made our righteousness and our peace and our sanctification.

So we enter into this precious faith, this faith equal to the apostles by the righteousness of Jesus Christ. And it sounds kind of theological. It's like, well, righteousness is sort of this conceptual

thing.

It is what qualifies us to stand in the presence of God. We cannot walk into His throne room. We can't pray a prayer.

We can't receive blessing. We can't anticipate a future with Him. That righteousness is our qualification.

It is the necessary possession that we must have to have any relationship with God. When Bob used to talk about this, and some of you all ever listened to theme tapes way back in the past, he talked about the grace pipe. God is up in heaven, and He wants to shower blessing on us.

And so there's this pipe coming from God's grace. Well, what anchors the other end of the pipe? What keeps it from pointing off in some other direction? What anchors that pipe on me? It is righteousness. Righteousness is the target for God's grace.

God can only bless righteousness. He can't bless sin. He can't bless failure.

He can't bless vacuity or emptiness. He can't even bless good intentions. He can only bless righteousness.

We must have the righteousness of Christ as a possession. We get a sort of a forensic inoculation of righteousness at salvation, but we lay hold of righteousness by faith as we live our lives. So, by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.

And by the way, this is one of your strongest passages in the Bible for the deity of Christ. Did you notice that? By the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ. How many of you have heard of the Granville Sharp Rule? Even if you don't know what it is, have you ever heard of it? Granville Sharp.

Granville Sharp was a great biblical scholar from days gone by. And to cut to the chase, what he figured out is, in Greek, if you have a certain kind of construction, it means that you're talking about one person. This is that construction.

You don't even have to know. I don't even want to try to explain in Greek what it is. Suffice it to say that God and Savior both apply to Jesus Christ.

You're talking about one person. It has to do with the conjunction chi. It has to do with the way the noun and these other things are arranged in the sentence.

It is a rule of Greek. We're going to see Granville Sharp a couple more times in this letter. But this means that Jesus Christ is God and is Savior both.

No doubt. No question. The Greek nails it down tight.

This passage says Jesus Christ is God. So if anybody says, oh, there's no place in the Bible where it says, you know, Jesus, he was a nice rabbi and a well-intentioned man, but he never claimed to be God. Nobody else ever said he was God.

This is your passage. God and Savior Jesus Christ. Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Grace and peace be multiplied. Now remember, people listening to this letter being read in Greek are going to pay attention to it in ways that we don't. We're lazy because we know we can go back and check it again later.

Our mind will wander. These people were practiced in paying attention to speeches and things because they weren't going to be able to read it later. No speech.

No politician. Nobody in the agora holding forth on a topic. Grandpa telling a story, telling their genealogy, their history.

They had to remember these things. And so they had great concentration. So they would pay attention.

And the reason we slow down a little bit is we've got to try to replicate their level of concentration. Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge. This is epi gnosis.

Epi gnosis. Gnosis is the standard word for knowledge. Epi intensifies that.

This is full knowledge. In some cases, it seems to be experiential knowledge. You haven't just been told this.

It's not just an academic fact. It is something you've got a grip on. Danny was telling us about some of his experiences overseas.

You go to Africa and you spend a year on a campus over there. Somebody could tell you what it's like. Danny can tell us what it's like.

But it isn't the same as if we could go there and replicate his experience and actually be there. He has told it about us, told us about it, and we have gnosis. He's got epi gnosis because he's been there.

He has seen it. It's seared into his mind. He'll never forget it, I suspect.

That's epi gnosis. So this letter says, Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the experiential knowledge as you are living out the truths that you are taught. You don't just come to church and hear about it and then wait a week and come to church and hear about it again.

You're going to get multiplied grace and peace as these things become a part of your real

experience. Epi gnosis is just experiential knowledge of it. In the knowledge of God and of Jesus, our Lord.

Now here, Peter has done a very clever thing. He's just got through saying, our God and Savior, Jesus Christ. And now he says, your grace and peace are going to be multiplied in experiential knowledge of God.

This is God, the Father, and Jesus, our Lord. So he's playing with the Trinity here very subtly. Because you've got Jesus Christ is God in the previous verse.

Now you've got your experiential knowledge of God. Remember what Jesus said in 14.6 of John. I am the way, the truth, and the life.

No man comes to the Father, but by me. Our experiential knowledge of Christ is going to ultimately bring us to the Father. To God in heaven.

To God on the throne of glory. The architect. The planner.

The originator of everything that comes to us through Christ is God the Father. And we will come to know him through Christ. And Jesus, our Lord.

As his divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness. Now, in Greek, the way this falls out, who is the his referring back to? His power. His divine power.

I looked this up. There's actually a decree that was put out. It's the, if I can remember this.

I believe it's the, is it the Proto-Nicene Decree? They've got an inscription somewhere where this exact phrase is used. That is translated divine power. And it's basically almost a synonym for God.

The divine power. It's kind of like when we talk about providence. We say, wasn't that providential? Well, we spell that with a capital P. Providence is God in heaven.

Well, this phrase divine power was used in the ancient Greek world to talk about a God or God doing a thing. And so it resonates with these people who are very much a part of the Roman world. As God's power.

And we're back to referring to Jesus Christ as deity. Jesus Christ's divine power. Has given to us all things related to life and godliness.

Now, godliness is another one of these theological terms. You think, well, godly, they're over in a corner with their hands folded, looking like a pilgrim. Or, you know, some little holy glow around their head.

Godliness, you know. And we think, well, I don't really think of godliness when I'm just trucking

through my day. Trying to get stuff done and trying to not get in trouble.

And, you know, godliness, it just sounds like an abstract. Jesus Christ has given to us by divine fiat, by the power of God. This is a supernatural thing.

It is a supernatural component of our life that we have been given everything related to our life and godliness. Why would he mention godliness here? Because it is in contrast to what the world has. What the Roman neighbor has on each side of that house that they're meeting in.

What the guy down at the marketplace has. What the person in business has. What the unbelievers have.

We've not only got provision for life, but for a life of meaning. A life that partakes of the divine. A life that points to the eternal.

And it's difficult for us. We're in such an immersion situation here in the world. We see things.

We hear things. We feel and touch. We've got our senses going.

Godliness is this sort of abstract. But Jesus Christ, through his supernatural divine power, has given us things that connect life here with godliness. It's back to that pipe that comes from heaven to earth.

We've got that righteousness. And so this divine power flows through it. This is the picture that Peter paints.

And it's a real thing. It's not an abstract. It's not pie in the sky.

This is daily. Your daily, rubber-on-the-road life is enabled and empowered by this divine conduit that Jesus Christ has established for us. It's spoken of in another way in Hebrews when he says he has made a new and living way for us through the veil that used to separate God and the Holy of Holies.

People were two or three doors and gates and veils outside of that. Only the high priest once a year could ever go in. Jesus Christ opened all the doors and parted the curtains and rent the veil.

And now we have access right into the very presence of God that would melt and kill anybody in the Old Testament day. We just wander in like God's own children. Like the king's child.

We just toddle right in. All the courtiers and everybody bowing and scraping. We just stumble right into the very throne of glory.

Jesus Christ gave us that. This is what Peter is referring to. And how do we obtain these things? He says once again, through the knowledge of him who called us.

If you're not afraid to mark in your Bible, you can start circling these things. Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the epinosis of God and of Jesus our Lord. He has given us all these things pertaining to life and godliness through what? Through epinosios, epinosis, experiential knowledge of him who called us.

And now here you have a real interesting switch from the King James. In the King James it says calls us to glory and virtue. In your New King James, in your New American Standard, in your NIV, it says calls us by glory and virtue.

And so I immediately think, well, you know, we need to look at the Greek here. And it is the preposition dia. What's the diameter of a circle? A meter is a measurement, right? And dia means through.

If you draw a line through the middle of a circle from side to side, that's your diameter. It's your meter that goes dia, goes through the circle. Well, this is dia, it is through.

He calls us through glory and virtue. Now, what's the element of this that would discriminate between people? Not everybody is drawn to glory. Not everybody is attracted by heavenly things.

There are creatures, both angelic and human, that are in revolt against heavenly things. I don't like this all-powerful, omnipotent God. I chafe under His suzerainty and His power, and it's His way or the highway.

I don't like that. I've got an independent streak. I don't want to be dependent upon God for grace or peace or happiness or everything pertaining to life and godliness.

Why can't I just go my own way? Why does everything have to be His way? Why does He demand worship? Why does He demand submission? And there are those of us, in both the angelic and the human world, that this is anathema. This is repelling instead of compelling. So, Jesus Christ draws us through glory and virtue, and immediately.

Remember what Jesus said? He said, I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. And it's going to divide households. Did Jesus intentionally say, I'm just going to sort you at the end of my sword here.

Here's a pile of wheat. I'm just going to flip this over into the hell side. I'm going to flip this over into the heaven side.

It's just going to be arbitrary. It's going to be inscrutable. It's just God's sovereignty.

I'm going to sovereignly divide. It isn't that at all. Jesus Christ is the fullness of deity in bodily form.

He reflects God's godliness. He reflects God's glory. He reflects God's virtue.

And that, there is a reaction. You know, some things, when you put them in the sun, they harden. You take an adobe brick, it's all sloppy and muddy and gooey, set it in the sun, it hardens.

You take something made out of wax, set it in the sun, it melts. The nature of a thing is revealed by exposure to the sun in many cases. Well, exposure to the S.O.N. reveals the nature of human beings, reveals the nature of angels.

Some are drawn. Some are that we're helpless to move. We can be drawn, but we've got no energy.

Everything has to, it is all of grace. Everything pertaining to our salvation and to life and godliness comes from God. But we can still assent.

We can want. We can desire. We just can't do anything.

It's like standing in a room that's got no furniture and saying, boy, I sure wish I had a chair. I can really want a chair. My wishing isn't going to create a chair.

But I can stand there and want it. And this is the nature of our response. So we are called to God.

We are called to salvation. We are called to growth in grace. We are called to righteousness by God's glory and by His virtue.

Some of us respond strongly. Some of us respond weakly. Some people don't respond at all.

And some people are just repelled by it. I run the other way. But the calling through this knowledge of Him, and sometimes remember when Jesus said, to him who has, more will be given.

To him that has not, even what he has will be taken away. When we get a taste of heavenly things and eternal things, if we are healthy and if we are positive and motivated, it makes us hungry for more. I want more and more.

I'm treading on the upward way, new heights I'm gaining every day, still praying as I onward bound. Lord, plant my feet on higher ground. I want more.

That's the calling to glory and virtue, by which has been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises. Those great precious promises come to us through this knowledge. Those promises become real to us.

They're not just words on paper. They're not pie by and by. It's I can get this today.

I can enter into the things of God. I can make my life count. I can redeem the time.

The days are evil, but I can change the time into something good. I'm called to this by God's glory

and by his virtue. It attracts me.

It draws me. And through it, we are given these exceedingly great and precious promises that through these, what? You may be partakers of the divine nature. You've got this conduit from heaven that the Lord Jesus Christ put in place for us.

He gave us his righteousness so that that pipe could come down and be aimed at us. And through this, by divine power, his divine power, he put the thing in place, and divine power flows through it to us and enables us to partake of things divine. It's a two-way thing.

We were talking about some sort of a software lash-up earlier today, and we can take these two different pieces of software, and when you put data in one piece, the data can flow this way, and it will update this other piece of software. But it costs a lot more if you want it to flow both ways. I can put an update either place, and they'll each update the other.

That's a much more difficult thing to do. It's pretty easy to get a piece to go in one direction. It's kind of like a radio broadcast.

You can get a shortwave radio, and you can hear China right now. You can hear Havana, Cuba right now. You can hear all over the world right now with a little shortwave radio, no bigger than this thing in my lap.

But if you want to talk back to China, if you want to talk back to Cuba, that's a lot more. Now you need a big antenna, you need a lot of power, you need a big radio, you need some expertise, you need a license, you need all kinds of things. Jesus Christ has established this pipe through which epinosis flows, through which knowledge of God and his glory and his virtue flows, and not only that, but he has given us the power to reach back through and partake.

We can go back the other way. We can pray to God. We can partake of the divine nature.

Through these, you are partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. We tend to have all of our desires and all of our compulsions and all of our attractions in the horizontal realm. Jesus Christ has given us a vertical component to life, and we can escape the mundane.

We can escape the ordinary. We can escape the temporal. All of this is in these first few verses of 2 Peter, and we haven't even really exegeted yet.

We're just listening to the words. But people who were concentrating and paying attention in that culture and in that time with their knowledge of Greek and their knowledge from their pastor and what they had previously received from Peter would have gotten all of this freight just listening. But we're going to pause here and take our break.

When we come back, we're going to look at the rest of this first chapter. We're just getting an

overview. Where is Peter going? What is he really saying? What is he trying to tell us? And we're going to see that there are several repeated words just in this first chapter that really tell us what this letter is all about, tells us what to watch for as we go through it in more detail in the coming few weeks.

But let's pause here and take our break.