

2 Peter 1:1-4

All Things that Pertain Unto Life and Godliness

- 1 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:
- 2 Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,
- 3 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:
- 4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

Introduction:

Occasionally, in the study of God's Word and the effort to preach it and teach it, a passage of scripture will reach out and grab me. It is as if the thing is alive and is saying to me, "don't go yet, I am not done with you." Two weeks ago I mentioned this passage in our series, The Great Sayings in the Gospel, and then last week I felt compelled to speak further on the topic of Spiritual Blindness that is mentioned here in v.9. I thought that I might move back to our series after that little detour but I am finding that I cannot let this one go without further comment.

Verse 3 here contains one of the most momentous statements that is made in the Word of God.

***His Divine Power
has given to us
all things that pertain unto life and godliness
through the knowledge of Him
that has called us (by means of) His Own glory and virtue.***

I might rephrase it this way. "God's Divine Power, operating in and through glory and virtue, has given us spiritual understanding sufficient to have saving knowledge of Him and, together with and related to that knowledge of Him, has given us all of the critical and necessary elements of spiritual life and the godliness that is associated with it."

Peter follows this statement with the following admonition, also paraphrased. "Therefore, in a diligently faithful, earnest and disciplined way, use those things given to you to structure a life that is actually godly in every way. Assemble the elements of godliness in your person."

It is as if he has pointed us to a pile of building materials, assured us that they are our possession, and then instructed us to take them and assemble a life out of them. The construction materials are: faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity. These things assembled into the life will assure that we will be neither barren nor unfruitful. The absence of them will assure spiritual shipwreck.

I want to explore with you in this message the concept that Peter affirmed here almost as 'matter of fact,' that God has indeed given to every one of His children everything necessary for a

blessed and fruitful spiritual life.

On its' face this is an overwhelming concept because most of us, if not all of us, do not have the perception that this is really true about us. We have, rather, the sense and the experience of being profoundly weak, ill-equipped, sadly lacking in the resources that we need for godly living.

- We perceive weakness in ourselves when it comes to temptation;
- We feel serious inability concerning the internal drive that it takes to be daily diligent in prayer and Bible study.
- And, most of the time we are overwhelmed with the awareness that we are profoundly deficient in almost all of the Christian graces.

So, statements like these that Peter is making almost seem to mock us, describing as a certain reality things that are nowhere evident in us so far as we can tell.

I. But Peter affirmed that the Power of God has operated on our behalf.

And, there are elements of that which we have grasped to some degree in our coming to Christ.

We have accepted that the guilt of our sins was dealt with totally, completely, perfectly, and eternally by the Work of Christ on the Cross. That was certainly a massive operation of God's Omnipotence for us and to us.

We recognize that we were brought into this world, supervised, protected, and guided, without even our knowledge until that moment which God deemed proper.

Gal 1:15-16

- 15 But *when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb*, and called me by his grace,
- 16 To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: KJV

At that moment our eyes and ears were opened and we were brought from death to life, granted repentance and faith.

We were freed from the bondage of sin, the penalties of sin, and eternally delivered from the consequences of sin. Paul describes that moment as us having been translated out of the Kingdom of Darkness into the Kingdom of God's Dear Son.

All of this was an enormous display of the Power of God to us and for us.

And, it was done with a very large goal for each of us.

Eph 1:3-6

- 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:
- 4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

- 5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,
- 6 ***To the praise of the glory of his grace***, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.
- Eph 1:12
- 12 ***That we should be to the praise of his glory***, who first trusted in Christ. KJV

This huge outpouring of the Power of God was to the goal that we, ourselves, you and I, would bring praise to God for His gloriousness.

II. But, we were born into the Spiritual Kingdom as babies, little spiritual children.

1 Cor 3:1-2

- 1 And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.
- 2 I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.

Like a human baby, the spiritual baby has some amazing potential but, still similar to the human baby, the spiritual life needs to be managed well, according to God's Word, or it will not fare any better than a human child that is fed and cared for improperly. Neither of them will reach his potential under these circumstances.

However, Peter tells us, every spiritual child of God is born to enormous wealth and resources, with everything needed for spiritual growth and prosperity already given to him as a function of the operation that brought him to spiritual life. "All things that pertain to life and godliness" are his.

The goals are all in place and clearly communicated. Every resource that will be required for his full development is in place. The weak place in the chain is that he, himself, must make certain decisions and determinations, commitments and resolutions, in the matter and then give himself completely to the task. The process is short-circuited if he is led astray early on by bad teaching and/or examples.

In our text, Peter was concerned that this might happen to the people to whom he was writing.

III. Let us consider some of the things that have been given to us.

First, a thought about the idea of 'gift.'

"Now to make a gift perfect, three things are required. 1. That the gift which is given be made the receiver's (*be actually gifted*), or his, to whom it is said to be given; for otherwise it is not a

gift, or a thing actually given, but potentially (*given*) only. 2. That it be made his absolutely or irrevocable, not conditionally, that the gift itself should (*be made to*) depend upon a condition. 3. That the giver be moved for not other cause to give but to shew and exercise his bounty and liberality, the more perfectly and purely these conditons are found in any gift, the more perfect and pure is the gift. Now all these doe most exactly agree to those gifts of God, which ‘pertain unto life and godliness.’” William Ames, 2 Peter.

William Ames (English Protestant Theologian, 1576-1633, participant and advisor to the Synod of Dort) correctly gave assessment to the idea of ‘given.’ He said that there are three conditions to a pure and perfect gift:

The thing must actually be given. It must become the property of the one to whom it was given in reality. Otherwise, it is merely a ***potential gift*** and not a genuine gift at all.

It must be an absolute and irrevocable gift, not one with conditions for then it would become a reward or a wage instead of a ***gift***.

The giver must have no cause or motivation to give except for pure generosity. If he expects or demands something in return, again, it is not purely a gift. He further noted that the more perfectly and purely that these conditions are found in any gift, the more pure and perfect the gift and the whole process is.

This means that whatever is included in the phrase, “***all things that pertain to life and godliness,***” is, and has been, actually made the possession of every saint, without exception, and abides their complete and total possession as an act of the Free Grace of God.

And what are those things that are included in this gift? Let us consider the most fundamental of them all.

2 Tim 1:6-7

6 Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.

7 For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. KJV

There are those who believe that Timothy, due to having been put in prison (Heb 13:23), had become somewhat timid in his ministry and was being encouraged by Paul to take advantage of the gift that had been given him through Paul as well as three gifts that are given generally to all saints: power (*dunameos*), love (*agapeis*), and a sound mind (*sophronismo*). Notice, too, that these are actual ‘gifts’ as we previously described, the absolute possession by Sovereign Grace, of every child of God.

Now, again, I freely admit that almost no one ‘feels’ these gifts within himself most of the time. But they are not based on feeling, they are the work of God in our souls and in our lives. They are there when we have the sense that they are and they are there when we are at the bottom of the barrel. They are there when we ‘feel’ empowered by God and they are there when we seem to not have the power to take a breath or make the next step.

The part of this that I want to mention first is the ‘***sound mind.***’ This is the foundation of

everything that God has given us, practically, as means and instruments of living godly lives.

This must be considered both in a negative as well as a positive sense for in order for us to be positively in possession of soundness of mind we must be delivered from all that is unsound about our minds. I think that we can all agree that the unbelievers, as a group, do not have spiritually sound minds. They are, every one of them, on a suicidal course, heading toward total destruction and continually making choices and decisions which bring them further and further under the judgment of God. In every other category of life beside the spiritual they may be geniuses, making sound, rational and wise decisions concerning every other part of their lives. They may be good husbands and wives, good parents, excellent employees or employers, capable managers of their money and property, and even politically and socially very wise. But they will not believe the gospel nor order their lives according to God's Word. In spiritual terms they are deranged, blind, and suicidal.

2 Cor 4:3-4

3 But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:

4 In whom the god of this world hath *blinded the minds* of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. KJV

But God has delivered his people from that blindness and given them the capacity to make good and sound spiritual decisions. It was this ability, given to us by God's Grace, that enabled us to believe the gospel and repent of our sins.

But this is not where the ability ends. It is a permanent and lifelong gift, one that is not rescinded, even if the believer chooses to make really poor decisions. Moses made a horrible decision (Num 20:8) at Kadesh, the second time that Israel had come to a place without water, but God did not withdraw from him the capacity to make good decisions, neither David, nor Hezekiah, nor Jonah, nor Peter, or any of the others of God's children who, at some moment or other, chose to refuse the 'sound mind' that God had given them and make sinful choices and decisions from their own carnal nature.

This means that every true child of God really does have the ability to make sound spiritual decisions concerning his/her life. This covers the entire spectrum from turning from sin to obedience to practicing godliness in positive ways. Not one is without access to a sound mind. The problem is that each of us has another mind as well. We are true schizophrenics having two independent sets of motivations that drive us in opposite directions and both of those motivational sets have a mind that drives them.

On the one hand there is a desire to be godly and make all of the right choices but there is something else, something dark and selfish, which pushes us to make decisions contrary to God's Word.

Rom 7:15-24

15 For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.

- 16 If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good.
17 Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.
18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.
19 For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.
20 Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.
21 I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.
22 For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:
23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.
24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? KJV

This creates a miserable existence. Paul calls it ‘wretched.’ On the one hand there is a ‘delight in the law of God’ and on the other there is this sinister thing which brings us ‘into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.’

But lest we complain too loudly, let us remember two things. One: the unregenerate do not have this experience and, Two: there is deliverance available for those who would use their minds rightly. But, of course, the question is, “How do I make this ‘sound mind’ operate effectively in my life?”

Like everything else in the spiritual realm, a right working of our minds is tied to a right understanding of what Jesus Christ accomplished on the cross.

First of all, you must have complete confidence that Jesus Christ, by His Work on the Cross, completely removed all guilt from you by paying the total penalty for all of your sins in the most perfect and complete way possible.

Next, you must know that He dealt such a death blow to your natural self, called your ‘old man,’ and ‘the flesh,’ that it now has no independent power to hold you captive or direct your life. But you must embrace this as being true and operate in the reality that it is true because, otherwise, you will lend this contrary mind power and enable it to operate when it should lie quiet and submissive at your feet.

This ‘sound mind’ that God has given us as a part of the ‘all things that pertain to life and godliness’ knows this and has the power to enable us to make those decisions which make the other mind inoperative and ineffective. But God, in His wisdom, has not made this an automatic process. His desire and plan is that we learn how to turn the one mind off and the other one on and that we do that in an effective and consistent way.

Your inclusion with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection accomplished far more than the remission of your guilt and the payment of the debt of your sins. His death caused you to die in some really important ways which work together to effect this gift of ‘all things that pertain to life and godliness.’ Your ‘old man’ was dealt a death blow and a new creature was created in Jesus’ resurrection that actually had a ‘sound mind.’

The way God's Word presents it, you actually died with Jesus and actually rose again with Him. This created the capacity within you to consistently choose holiness and reject wickedness. But God did not remove the old nature completely. He left it there together with all of its corruptions, just disempowered it so that it no longer has controlling authority. You have control and sort of stand between the two making conscious decisions as to which is in control at any moment.

Eph 4:21-24

- 21 If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus:
22 That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;
23 And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;
24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. KJV

Comment: You cannot 'put on' something that you do not have access to. When you get dressed in the morning, you cannot put clothes on that you do not have. Paul is envisioning the 'new man' as present and accessible to these people to whom he was writing. "Be renewed in the spirit of your mind," is an impossible order unless the believer has access to a 'new' mind.

Col 3:8-15

- 8 But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.
9 Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;
10 And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:
11 Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.
12 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;
13 Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.
14 And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.
15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. KJV

Comment: And we cannot 'let' something into our lives that is not truly present and available to us.

This is an amazing truth that, as I said earlier, is foundational to godliness.

Phil 2:5

- 5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: KJV

This tells us that there is a 'mind' that is present with us, a mind that is modeled after the mind of

Jesus Christ, that is hindered from operating only by us.

Let me repeat myself. I know that it does not 'seem' that this is true. You do not and, most of the time, cannot 'feel' it there.

The issue really boils down to this, "are you going to be ruled by feelings or facts?" Do you base your belief on Christ's death and resurrection on your feelings or on the revelation of God's Word?

Do you base your understanding of "right and wrong" on your feelings or on God's Word? Is your confidence in the inspiration of scripture based on how you feel or on what God's Word says?

Therefore, you must not base what Christ accomplished on your behalf on the cross on your feelings either. We must accept the revelation that we have been given and operate on the principle that it is true and let our feelings follow along after us. Once we have embraced this reality, there will come a day when our feelings will come into line with reality. There is also an element of revelation associated with it.

Watchman Nee quote: "I remember one morning -- that morning was a real morning and one I can never forget -- I was upstairs sitting at my desk reading the Word and praying, and I said, 'Lord, open my eyes!' And then in a flash I saw it. I saw my oneness with Christ. I saw that I was in Him, and that when He died I died. I saw that the question of my death was a matter of the past and not of the future, and that I was just as truly dead as He was because I was in Him when He died. The whole thing had dawned upon me. I was carried away with such joy at this great discovery that I jumped from my chair and cried, 'Praise the Lord, I am dead!' I ran downstairs and met one of the brothers helping in the kitchen and I laid hold of him. 'Brother', I said, 'do you know that I have died?' I must admit he looked puzzled. 'What do you mean?' he said, so I went on: 'Do you not know that Christ has died? Do you not know that I died with Him? Do you not know that my death is no less truly a fact than His?' Oh it was so real to me! I longed to go through the streets of Shanghai shouting the news of my discovery. From that day to this I have never for one moment doubted the finality of that word: "I have been crucified with Christ"."

God would have you accept this reality on the basis of the fact that He has revealed it and your trust that He would never reveal anything that is not true. You have been given, in Christ, all things that pertain to life and godliness. That includes power, love, and a sound mind. Therefore, His Word tells you to put away the old mind, its' thoughts, desires, and corruptions and put on the new mind that is created in righteousness and true holiness.

Eph 5:8-11

- 8 For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:
- 9 (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;)
- 10 Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.
- 11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. KJV

This is the way that Paul can say “now are *ye* light in the Lord.” You are light and have been made so by the Work which Jesus did on the cross.

Eph 2:19

19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; KJV

Conclusion:

Neither Paul nor Peter took the position that Christian maturity is some sort of automatic process that happens to people because they attend church. Both of them urged upon those to whom they ministered an earnest and diligent pursuit of growth and maturity.

This ‘spectator sport’ Christianity in which we have been brought up has not served us well. It is time to turn from it to a walking with God that really does have the prospect of making us spiritually mature and useful.

We begin by acquiring the ‘knowledge’ by which it works. Notice again our beginning text.

3 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 a sense in which the process is simply, but that does not mean that it is easy. We see what is revealed and we accept it as true, seeking the Lord’s help to truly believe it. Then, we simply act on what He shows us is true..... Far easier said than done.