

All We Need
2 Peter 1:3-4

It was just an ordinary trip from home into town. I was probably about 6, and my mom was driving us down the highway in Colorado. Little did I know that this trip into town would be a little different than usual. Suddenly the engine sputtered and died, and my mom, staying as calm as she could, edged over to the shoulder as the car slowed to a stop. I asked what was going on. My mom realized in an instant what had happened. She looked at the gas gauge saw the needle on red. We ran out of gas. We had to walk what seemed like miles to the nearest gas station to fill up a gas can and make our way back to the car. Do you ever feel like you're running on empty? Do you ever get worn down and weary with life? Do you ever begin to wonder if you're actually going to make it through?

The Christian life can be viewed as a journey from this world to glory. From the outset, it's vital to know that we cannot provide the supplies needed for this journey. We could never build a tower to heaven. We can't get there. But there is someone who can, and the good news is that He already has. Tonight, we will examine the glorious way in which God has already supplied for every need in our journey from earth to glory. We can rest assured that He will never let those who trust in Him run out of gas.

Now, before diving into our text, just a brief note on the overall tone and tenor of 2 Peter. This letter is starkly different from 1 Peter. Peter is dealing with two very different problems in each letter. In the first, we saw how he dealt with the problems confronting a persecuted and suffering people in this world. He reminded us that when we suffer various trials we can still rejoice because they only serve to fortify our faith and will result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

But now, in 2 Peter he will address a whole different set of problems. What about when life begins to become comfortable and you start to feel like you can settle down and ease into the comforts and luxuries of this world? What about when you start to have desires that deep down you know are wrong. You know they don't come from God. You know they are leading you away from Him. What do you do when people start to tell you that you should follow those desires? How should you respond to all the voices clamoring to tell you that freedom means being completely unfettered from any and all moral restraints? What should you tell yourself when others tell you that your real problem is the rigid and unyielding morality of God's Word, and even go so far as to suggest that Jesus did not submit to the authority of God's Word? You know, there are people who are saying such things today. 2 Peter answers these questions. This letter is the antidote to the lie that freedom means the demolition of morality, so it is a much-needed medicine for our time. At the outset, it's important to note Peter addresses these very unique and different challenges with the same solution.

³ His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, ⁴ by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the

divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.
(2 Peter 1:3-4)

It's the same truth that Peter spoke to the suffering Christians in 1 Peter couched in slightly different terms. It's the same medicine being applied to different maladies. The truth is the same, but the emphasis is slightly different in order to address the truth to the specific need of the hour. Let's break it down.

First of all, we have the supply source: His divine power. Whose power? Jesus' power! The subject here at the start of verse 3 is the same subject as the end of verse 2. In the original Greek, there is no break at all in the flow of the thought. There is no new heading, no verse break even. It is our Lord Jesus' divine power that is the source and supply of our deepest needs. This is the gasoline for our journey. This is what fuels us.

Now, let's briefly touch upon the negative here because it is just as important as the positive. If it is His divine power that supplies our needs, it is obviously not our human power. It is the power of the Creator flowing down to the creature. What you need is not your hard work. It is not your zeal. It is not your grit. It is not your determination. It is not your ability to stiffen your upper lip and do hard things. It is not your toughness. It is not your intelligence. It is not your mental acuity. It is not your position or status in the world. It is not your wealth. It is not your possessions. It is not your wisdom. It is not your business acumen. It is not your wit. It is ultimately not anything in you at all. It is something entirely above and beyond you. It is something that comes to you from above, from the outside. God's divine power, Jesus' power, and His power alone, *that* can give you all that you need for life and godliness. Don't start with yourself. Don't start by looking within for this power. You don't work your way up to God. You can't. God has come down to you, and He has met you in your weakness, at your lowest point, when you were poor in spirit, even when you were dead in trespasses and sins. The fountain was opened at Calvary, and it keeps on flowing. Day by day, moment by moment, He pours out His grace and power upon all who trust in Him.

The extravagance of His gift is emphasized by the word *everything*. What exactly has God granted to us? Everything! All we need! Nothing is lacking in this gift. Have you ever gotten a gift that was lacking a component? Kids, surely, you've gotten a toy that didn't come with the batteries included. Isn't that the worst. You get this bright shiny new toy, take it out of the box and wrapping, and it's useless because you don't have batteries. That's not how God's gifts come to us. His gifts are so rich and so abundant that they overflow above and beyond what we need. The point is as clear as day here. The divine power of Jesus has given us everything we need! He is like an ever-flowing fountain of grace and power. The well never runs dry. We can always keep coming back to Him for more, and we'll never be turned away.

Second, we have the specific needs which His power is able to supply. What do we ultimately need? Life and godliness.

"All things that pertain to life and godliness."

Panta...pros zoe kai eusebia

A more literal rendering of the phrase would be “Everything toward life and godliness.” Everything He has given to us in His divine power is aimed at these targets. The power guarantees our arrival at these destinations. Life is eternal, spiritual, full and abundant life. Life in fellowship with God. This is the most basic, elemental need. We are all born without it.

Godliness is the quality of the life He gives. It is life lived in fellowship, contact, with God. It is a life filled full of all virtue and moral excellence since that is who God is. It is to be like Jesus. It is Christlikeness. It is the restoration of what was lost by Adam in the fall. Just for biblical context, let’s take a quick trip back to the beginning. We were originally created in the image of God. In his original state, Adam was perfect and innocent, without blemish or fault, and as a free moral and rational creature, he was therefore a pure reflection of the One who made Him. He was created to exercise dominion with Eve over the earth and everything in it as the representative of God on earth, while walking in unbroken fellowship with God. He communed with God. He walked with Him and talked with Him. That original condition was life and godliness. It was given to Adam as a gift. The condition in which he was made was a gift of His good and gracious Creator.

But the enemy sought to mar and deface the beautiful condition of life and godliness in which we were originally constituted by God. He lied and brought accusations against God. He deceived Adam and Eve into thinking that the one thing God was withholding from them was the very thing that would make them like God. They bought the lie, took the forbidden fruit, and died. With sin came death, the death of godliness. The death of God’s design. Man was now left in a condition of ruins. Like a castle, once glorious and seemingly impenetrable, now lying in a heap of rubble. That is how each and every one of us is born. We are born in sin, in ruins, in ungodliness.

It is to such people that Peter declares with full assurance and conviction, that Jesus has now given us all things that lead us on toward, and guarantee our safe arrival at, life and godliness. Can you see how precious and glorious all these things that God has given us are! I took the time to go back to the beginning and explain our fallen condition because it is the backdrop of the divine power of God. Just as the rainbow cannot be seen without the backdrop of the storm that brings destruction upon all ungodliness, so the preciousness of what God has given us cannot be accurately appreciated apart from an understanding of our fallen condition. Jesus is very clear with us. It is the truth that sets us free. You are a sinner. I am a sinner. Hear that very clearly tonight. The intensity with which you grieve over your own depravity, which is a fancy word for sin, will be the measure of the intensity of your love for God. Jesus explained this to the Pharisees when the woman they described as sinful came and wept at His feet. She came to Him weeping because she felt the depth of her need for Him. They looked upon that beautiful scene as something gross. They turned their nose up at it. It was a stench to their sanctimonious nostrils. Jesus told them, “He who is forgiven much, loves much. He who is forgiven little, loves little.” It was her knowledge of Jesus’ power to meet her deepest need that brought her to the feet of Jesus.

That is an illustration of how we all come to receive these gifts of His divine power. Now we come to the how. How is it possible that we can experience His power and receive the gifts of life and godliness. It is the same for all of us. "Through the knowledge of Him who called us to His own glory and excellence." (verse 3) He has called us to Himself. It is through coming to Him that we receive life and godliness. Matthew touched on this word knowledge last week because remember, Peter had already mentioned this knowledge in verse 2. It is *epignosis*, which means contact knowledge. Epi means on or upon, like our skin, or epidermis, is upon us. *Epignosis* means knowledge which comes through contact with Jesus. We touch Him, not physically obviously, but in a spiritual sense, there is a real communion with Jesus that comes through faith. We get to know Him in this personal, intimate relationship.

This is possible because He came down to us. He stooped down to us, as it were, and washed us with His power. He took on Himself the form of servant so that we might be made like Him once again. If He hadn't done that, we would not have anything that we need for life and godliness. If it weren't for the divine power of Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, we would all be dead and ungodly, which is exactly what we were when we were born into this world. We were all born dead. We were all born ungodly. But Jesus Christ was born alive, you see. He was born godly. He was conceived in the virgin's womb by a miraculous action of God Himself. Divine power! He was not born of Adam. He was the seed of the woman, you see, not the man. He was born of God. The Maker was made to die. He voluntarily assumed our nature. He took flesh and blood upon Himself. He touched us in this way. As such, He is an everlasting Father (Isaiah 9:6). Adam was a father who brought death. Jesus is a father who gives life. He offers all humanity a new nature.

¹² But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:12-13)

This gets us right to the heart of the how. How do we receive all we need for life and godliness through Jesus? He has made us partakers of the divine nature through the precious and very great promises He has granted to us. Many have tragically misunderstood this great statement and been led astray into error about what Peter is saying here. The devil has used such statements in Scripture to delude some into thinking Peter is saying that we can become gods ourselves. That is exactly the lie he told Adam and Eve at the start. He told them they would be like God if they are the fruit God had forbidden. He tempted them with the desire to be gods themselves. Wouldn't it be better, he whispers, to be god yourself than to be stuck in this state of humble dependence upon God? Wouldn't you rather reach out and grab hold of God's power for yourself than live in this condition of constant childlike trust in Him. Take it for yourself, he urges. Break free from God's unloving restrictions and become who you were meant to be, he lies. It's there for you to have if you just grab it. But it's always a lie. God has not given us an ability to be God. We were not designed to be God, nor is it even possible that we could be. We were designed to be humble creatures, loving our Creator and yielding our bodies to Him in quiet trust, desiring only His glory, and not our own. His glory is our only good.

So, what Peter is *not* saying is that we become gods ourselves. May it never be! Of course not! It's such a foolish suggestion and vain imagination. What he *is* saying is that we are made new creatures. We are given a new nature. The Greek word translated *nature* here is the word *physeos*. It's quite a word. It's meaning is deep. Here's what it means. It means the inner nature, or the underlying constitution or make-up of someone. It is connected deeply with our origin, how we came into being. In the physical realm, our *physeos* is connected with our parents. It is derived from our parents. We inherit our nature from our progenitors. As I've already indicated, we all have the *physeos* of Adam. We all came into being through him, and so we share in his nature. Our *physeos* is earthy, dusty, carnal, corrupted, depraved, governed by base desires. We are creatures of earth because Adam sinned. But Peter is declaring the most incredible truth in all the universe right here at the start of a letter aimed at correcting corruption that comes through sensual desires and pleasures. He is saying we've come into possession, fellowship, union, with a new-created nature. A nature that was born not of flesh or of human will, but of God. Whose nature, *physeos*, is this? This is Jesus' nature. I don't say all this on my own authority. This is not just my interpretation of these words. This is the Bible's interpretation of these words of Peter. Scripture interprets Scripture. Paul gives an even more detailed exposition of this radical change in our nature that comes to us through faith in Christ in two places: Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15. For time's sake, let me point us just to 1 Corinthians 15 tonight, but you can go home and look at Romans 5 on your own as well, and you'll see the same truth worked out in detail. Here's how Paul sums up the purpose of all that Jesus Christ has accomplished for us in His own death and resurrection at the end of that incredible chapter. The chapter began with a clear statement that Christ died and rose again in accordance with the Scriptures. In essence, all that happened to Christ happened just as God had planned it and foretold it. At the end of the chapter, Paul deals with the question of how the resurrection will actually work.

⁴²So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. (He's answering a question here. Some Corinthians were denying the literal physical resurrection of Jesus, and Paul is at pains to remind them that Jesus was in fact raised in the body. If not, we have no hope and our faith is in vain. He says that Jesus' resurrection was a firstfruits. There remains a future day of resurrection for all who believe in Him. The Corinthians were wondering what the resurrection body would actually look like. What type of body will we have when we are raised from the dead? He is telling them it is ultimately a mystery, but he gives them some very important distinctions between our current bodies and the bodies that await us in the resurrection.) **⁴³It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. ⁴⁴It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.** (See the distinctions. It's night and day. The sowing is our death, which means that sin is behind all that takes place in our current body. We are sown because of sin. Dust to dust. Now, Paul will explain that what takes place in our current bodies is all the result of Adam.) **⁴⁵Thus it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit.** (The first Adam is the first man, the man in whose loins we all existed, in a very real sense, at the very beginning. Our lives were hidden in Adam at the start. He was the fountain, so to speak, from which we all have sprung. That's bad news! What have we inherited from Adam? A perishable, dishonored, weak, and natural

physeos. But, thanks be to God, Paul says there is a last Adam. Who is this person? This is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul lays emphasis on the different natures that flow through these two different Adams. The life the last Adam gives to us is *pneuma*, God's Spirit. Jesus offers spiritual, heavenly life that is set free from the limitations and consequences of sin. Adam gave us earthly life under the condemnation of sin, corrupted by sin and destined for death. Jesus gave us heavenly life free from the condemnation of sin, a life as holy as the Spirit whom He sends to us is holy, a life unblemished and uncorrupted and incorruptible and destined for glory.)⁴⁶ But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. (There is an order here. This is God's plan.)⁴⁷ The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven.⁴⁸ As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven.⁴⁹ Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven. (That's what Peter is talking about when He says Jesus has given us everything that will bring us toward the end of life and godliness. We will bear the image of Jesus, the man of heaven. How can we be sure? Because, as Peter says, God has granted us all that we need for it, and we've already been made partakers of the divine nature.)

⁵⁰ I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.⁵¹ Behold! I tell you a mystery. (Now he provides us with the glorious revelation of the rapture, which is the future, imminent moment when the resurrection of the body will occur.) We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.⁵³ For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.⁵⁴ When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:

"Death is swallowed up in victory."

⁵⁵ "O death, where is your victory?

O death, where is your sting?"

⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 15:42-57)

Wow! Praise God from whom all blessings flow! What glorious truth, what precious promises! Yes, that's right. Precious promises. Getting back to 2 Peter, it is through the precious promises of God that we have already become partakers of this new, heavenly, Holy Spirit-born nature. We are *already* children of God. We don't yet know what we will be like when He appears, John says, but we know that we will be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is. No eye has seen, no mind has imagined, the glory that awaits the sons of God, but it is certain because Jesus has already given us all we need. Creation is groaning for the day, as in the pains of childbirth. We, too, groan inwardly, as we await the fulfillment of God's precious promises.

Through these promises, through the One in whom all the promises find their yes and amen, Jesus, we have escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. We have fled from the corruption that is in the world. Corruption means decay or decomposition. It is putrefaction. It's ugly, but picture a rotting corpse. It is odorous and odious.

That is the process that is unfolding in the world, and Peter says it is because of sinful desire. The Greek word there is *epithumia*, and it means strong desire on something. Picture Gollum with the ring in the Lord of the Rings. "My precious!" That is the perfect parable of a misplaced *epithumia*. The problem with our desires is not that they are strong, but that, like Gollum, they are strongly misplaced. They are inordinate. We place our desires on the wrong things. The same word is used at times in a positive way when describing a right desire. Sin disorders our affections. The gospel of Jesus Christ reorders them. It puts our aims back on target. The telos of our faith is Jesus Christ. He is the one we fix our gaze upon. He is the one we consider. He is the object of our *epithumia*, and to have Him as the object of your deepest desire is to be healthy, it is to be given a new nature. He is precious, which is why our faith is precious as Peter said in verse 2 ("like-precious faith") and the promises are precious in verse 4. What is your precious? Where is your treasure? Where is your heart? God has given you all you need to escape corruption and to press on to perfection in Christ.