

2 Peter

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2 Peter 1:2-7

Vs. 2

- God's grace and God's peace are to be found and multiplied "in the *knowledge* of God and Jesus our Lord". We need to clarify what Peter here means by knowledge. The Greek word he uses here for knowledge is *epignosis*, which can be translated 2 ways. First, it can mean "increasing knowledge"; a knowledge that is moving forward in a certain direction. From a Christian perspective one could say then that the more you know Jesus, the more you know His grace and peace. Second, the word may mean "full knowledge". In his sermons in Acts and here in 2 Peter, the disciple uses the common language of the people and puts a bit of a twist in to make words with pagan meanings be spoken with Christian meaning. To the pagans, "full knowledge" is attained either through deep philosophical study, meditation, and reasoning OR through some mystical experience prompted by a play or a book. Knowledge of Jesus Christ comes to us through our relationship with Him. Paul in 2 Timothy 1:12 did not say "I know WHAT I have believed" but rather "I know WHOM I have believed." So what Peter is saying here is that if you want to really know God's grace and peace and have it more and more, then you need to get to know his friend Jesus and make the effort to get to know him better and better every day.

Vss. 3-7

- God's grace and peace are not trophies to be earned or claimed. These and more are gifts given to us through God's divine power. More than that, God gives us EVERYTHING for life and for a quality of life whereby we live and look like Him more and more.

- When we speak of God’s power we typically think of great miracles: parting the Red Sea, feeding 5000 with food for only one, raising someone from the dead. But here we see that it is the power of God in our day to day lives that is the conduit God uses to give us what we need daily to be His people. Such power cannot be defeated. And what is especially unique about this power is its source – the heart and love of God.
- Here too we see God’s generosity. To take hold of God’s good gifts we do not have to lock ourselves away in a library or sit on top of a mountain in spiritual isolation. God’s good gifts for life are freely given to us out of His great love for us through His power so that we may live the life He created us for, the life He has called us out of our sin for, that we may accomplish His good purpose for our lives and find true fulfillment for our lives.
- And more even still, God similarly gives us “precious and magnificent promises”! The world, people, may make many promises to us, but few ever hold true. God always keeps His promises. Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 1:20, “For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are YES! Therefore, also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us.”
- The purpose of God’s grace and peace and all His good gifts and all His promises, is to lead us out of the corruption, the cesspool that sin has made of the world. As we mentioned last week, Peter in this letter is not really addressing the threats of outside persecution to the churches, but the inner threats of false teachers who have arrived, teaching that every manner of behavior is acceptable because when Christ died on the cross, sin was eliminated forever. Peter counters this by saying that the whole purpose of a life with God is to turn our backs on self-indulgent living, not embrace it. On the contrary we are to become “partakers of the divine nature” and become more and more Christ-like in our day to day lives. We are to live God-centered, not self-centered lives. Remember, *we are to be perfect as our Father in Heaven is perfect* (Matt. 5:48).
- Beginning with the last part of verse 5 through vs. 7 is a common ancient teaching tool known as a Ladder of Virtues. Paper and books were expensive, so most school children had to learn by memorizing what they

listened to. So good teachers would teach in almost a musical way to aid in the memorization. How many of us learned our ABC's by singing the ABC song? Here the idea of a ladder comes in because you have to reach the first rung to get to the second and the second to get to third and so on. Paul does something very similar in Galatians 5:22-23 and 1 Timothy 6:11. Here, this is a list of key Christian virtues, gifts to us from God, to live the life He created us to live.

- The first rung is faith. Everything starts there. Do we have faith enough to get out of the boat? To pick up our own cross?
- Faith then leads to what the NASB calls "moral excellence". The Greek word is **arete**. It may mean "excellent" relative to quality. A productive corn field is **arete**. A good friend is **arete**. But it may also mean "courage". So faith leads to the second rung where we find virtues of moral excellence/courageous. A life lived as a true reflection of Christ, regardless of the world's opinion or consequences.
- The third rung is knowledge. Unlike vs. 2, the word here for "knowledge" is **gnosis**, which is the Greek word for practical knowledge. Here are the things a person needs to know for daily living. This is practical wisdom so that a Christian knows how to live in such a way that Christ is honored in the simple things of life.
- Knowledge leads to self-control. The Greek word **egkrateia** literally means "to get a grip, a hold, on yourself". Such a person is not without passions but has those passions under control, passions that serve, not rule, a person's life.
- Self-control leads to perseverance/steadfastness. The word **hupomone** does not imply some kind of passive standing. Here is a person who will not be shaken, who will not be moved off the path Christ has set them on. One of the early church fathers called this the "Queen of all Virtues". He does so because there is a sense of joy attached to the word. Hebrews 12:2 says that Christ was the One who for JOY endured the cross. It was this quality that had Christians singing in the Roman Colosseum as the lions came for them.

- The next rung is godliness/piety. The word is ***eusebeia***. There is really no English word to get at its meaning. To say a person is ***eusebes*** is to say they cast their eyes toward Heaven and devoutly worship God, while at the same time cast their eyes around them towards people and make sure they are right with all. It has been often said that God chose the cross as a symbol because a Christian is to be in right relationship vertically with God as well as horizontally with people. ***Eusebeia*** is the closest Greek word to our word “religion” for it holds the balance of love for God and love for people (1 John 4:20-21).
- This is why the next rung is “brotherly kindness”. We love (others) because God first loved us (1 John 4:10). Indeed, did not Jesus say that there was no greater love than for a person to lay down one’s life for his friends (John 15:13).
- Not surprisingly, the highest rung of the Ladder is love. Merely liking people or just being tolerant is not enough. We are love as Christ loves, to love with His ***agape*** love. We are to love wide and deep. We are to love and bless wide as God blesses wide, just as He causes the sun to rise and the rain to fall on the just and the unjust (Matt. 5:45). We are to love deep enough to forgive even those who have crucified us. We are to be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect.