

“THE GREAT ESCAPE.”

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Scripture Texts: II Peter 1:3-4

II Peter 1:3-4 is a mouthful. This is one of the most dense passages in Scripture. One sentence, 69 words, five powerful propositions, one staggering reality, the power of God in us.

Remember, Peter is an uneducated, Galilean fisherman. How did he write something like this? Where did he get this level of spiritual insight?

John 16:13a When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth.

Two weeks ago, we said we have a faith of equal standing with the apostles themselves. We have the same Gospel is grounded in and rests on the foundation of Christ's righteousness.

Last week I said that having this faith, we are called to multiply it, grow it, or actually to look to God to multiply it, to give us greater grace and peace through knowledge of God.

So, the result of believing in the Gospel is greater grace and peace. Verses 3-8 explain how this happens, how our faith grows and increases. There are two parts. What God does for us and what we do in response.

Verses 3-4, what God does for us.

This is always the order in the Gospel. We are always reminded of what God has done and is doing, before there is any call to respond. God initiates, God loves first, God works first. God has been at work from before the foundation of the world and He still is.

We can't know God unless God chooses to make Himself known to us. God is the sole source of knowledge about God. We don't seek God unless God first seeks and calls us.

God makes a staggering promise in the OT:

Jeremiah 24:7 I will give them a heart to know that I am the Lord, and they shall be my people and I will be their God, for they shall return to me with their whole heart.

Five powerful propositions.

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness,

This is a humbling phrase. Why do I say that? Because it is saying everything we need for life and for godliness comes not from us but from God. The power to live like God, the power to have His life and godliness, His divine nature, this power is not in us, or in our ability.

There are two kinds of religion in the world, one built on the foundation of grace and the other built on the foundation of works or performance. In the first, God gets the all the glory and we get the blessings and benefits. In the second, all the glory goes to the sinner who has made himself god.

This doesn't mean that we are passive, just sitting around doing nothing. But it means that what we do, we do in reliance on God's power and not our own.

What is this *divine power* and how great is it? This is the same power that created the universe and formed the galaxies, that fashioned the earth out of nothing and breathed life into every living creature.

Do you believe that same power is in you? Paul answers this in Ephesians 1 when he prays that God would open the eyes of our hearts to know:

Ephesians 1:19-20 ... what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might 20 that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places.

The same power that raised Jesus from the dead, is ours giving us all we need for this life and for living this life in a God-honoring and God-glorifying way. We are never called to live the Christian life in our own strength and with our own resources.

Ours is a supernatural calling with supernatural powers. His power is inexhaustible and so is His desire to pour it out. We don't become Christians on our own, it is the work of the Holy Spirit in us. And we don't grow in our faith on our own, it is the work of the Holy Spirit.

There is nothing God can't and won't do for us that leads to life and godliness. You and I lack nothing for this path to godliness and life if we rely on God's power. What God commands or demands He also supplies. God commands godliness and then He makes it possible by His divine power.

Philippians 4:19 And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

Life. All we need for this life, all we need for every situation, all we need for every circumstance, all we need for meeting every need, answering every doubt, calm every fear, erase every anxiety. All that pertains to life means all, not just money or stuff, food and shelter, but even the way we think about all of that.

Godliness. Godliness is not some other worldly category for fanatics or Billy Graham type people. It is the life of a Christian, living a life pleasing to God. It is simply a love for the things that belong to God, the kind of divine power that reveals God's glory and excellence and makes us desire it, the kind of divine power that transforms your life and gives you grace and peace and hope.

through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence,

Through is the clue, this power for life and godliness comes through knowledge of God, the God who calls us. One day we will see His glory and excellency.

This knowledge is important. Last week we saw that grace is multiplied to us through knowledge of God. Now we also see that divine power comes to us through knowledge of God.

I said last week but I want to repeat what kind of knowledge this is. It is not just doctrine or theology, it isn't just knowing about Jesus. You know what the Bible says about the demons, they have knowledge, they know God, they believe in God, their theology is impeccable, they are no doubt Calvinist and Reformed. They shared heaven with God, with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, they are Trinitarian.

James 2:19 You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!

When we talk about knowledge we are talking about a knowledge that involves experiencing divine power, the kind of power that changes you, that makes you godly.

Slaves have one kind of knowledge of the master, the master's son has a far different knowledge. The first is based on fear, the second is based on love and intimacy, and shares in the glory and goodness.

by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises,

By which, by what? By His glory and excellence and divine power, and because our God is a God of great glory and great excellence, He is a God of great promises.

What are these promises? Where are they found? Scripture is filled with them.

The great promise of the OT was the Messiah, the promised seed of woman who would crush the head of the serpent.

The great promise of the NT is God so loved the world that He sent His Son that whoever believes in Him will have eternal life.

The promises are innumerable. Do you know them?

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, ...

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your understanding. ...

Come to me all you who are weary and burdened ...

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just ...

God will bring to completion ...

In all things God works for the good of those who love him ...

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation ... and the peace of God ...

I can do all things ...

God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

He promises to give us wisdom if we ask (James 1:5).

He promises to provide a way out of temptation (1 Cor. 10:13).

He promises to never leave us nor forsake us (Heb. 13:5).

There is no more condemnation for those in Christ Jesus.

Being justified by faith we are made righteous by the blood of Jesus.

We are blessed with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places.

All the riches of His grace and peace multiplied and lavished upon us.

We are granted all things that pertain to life and godliness by His divine power.

Take hold of these promises in your battle with temptation and sin, take hold of a couple of promises to bring healing to a relationship, take hold of a couple of promises to give you hope or courage in a challenging circumstance, to help you walk by faith, to give you peace about your finances or future.

The promises of God are your armor, your shield, your sword. If you know and trust God's promises you will know God's divine power over sin and share in His divine nature and godliness that leads to life.

As you read your Bible pause on one or two of them and meditate on them and pray over them and take them to heart and ask God to show you how they apply to you this day.

Last week I asked us to pray for God's promise of grace and peace to be multiplied to us as a congregation. What promises are you knowing and praying for your work, your marriage, your kids, grandkids, church?

Give your kids confidence in God's Word, that if they have this they have enough for life. Not just for the next forty years of life but for the next forty thousand years of life.

so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature,

Through God's promises and divine power in us we partake of His divine nature. This is not us becoming God, this is us becoming godly. It doesn't say we have a divine nature, but that we share in the divine nature.

This is what Jesus was talking about when He spoke of the vine and the branches, of being grafted into Christ. We are the branches, we are in Christ, we are made one with Christ, but we are not the vine, we are not Christ.

This is what Paul was talking about when He spoke of us being temples of the Holy Spirit, having the Spirit of God take up residence in us, the divine nature of God in us, but we are not the Holy Spirit or God.

Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

As a baby shares the nature of his parents, so we share the divine nature when we are born again.

II Corinthians 3:18 We all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

II Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

This great escape is possible only by the divine power at work in us showing us the glory and excellence of God.

And when we consider what we once were and how bad we were, that God would do this for us is cause for us to run fleeing from every aspect of our past life and old nature, from every hint of the worthless deeds and desires that kept us from God.

If you were raised in a *ghetto* and someone rescued you and gave you a place on Mercer Island, why would you want to go back to the ghetto? If someone offers you a banquet of the finest and richest of foods, why would you go McDonalds? If someone offers you an all-expenses paid vacation to Hawaii, why would you want to spend the weekend in Acme?

Notice the passage begins with divine power and ends with sinful desires. Both have power depending on which one you feed or rely on or give attention to. If we feed our sinful desires and passions they will pull us down.

Romans 8:5-6 Those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. 6 For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.

Implications and application.

I Peter 1:3-5 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, 5 who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Our comfort in this life is that God is completely for us, He is all in. He has exerted His power for us and has given us His Son and His Spirit and has given us His promises that He will guard and keep us, that He will keep our inheritance, that He will bring us to glory when we will be finally free from all our corruption.

Philippians 1:6 I am sure of this [with absolute confidence], that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

We have incredible spiritual power in us and at our disposal, far more than we think about or use. Next week we are going to be called on and challenged to use this spiritual power to grow in our faith and in our Christ-likeness.