

Introduction to 2 Peter

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[0 : 00] So I'll read the first four verses of 2 Peter, 2 Peter chapter 1 verses 1 to 4. Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ.

To those who through the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours. Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of our God and of Jesus our Lord.

His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life. Through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises.

So that through them you may participate in the divine nature. Having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

What's your most precious possession? What's so precious to you that you would hate it if you lost it?

[1 : 12] What possession would you guard the most? What possession are you going to make sure you have insurance cover on in case you lose it?

What's precious to you? When Becky and I were preparing to get married we bought wedding rings. And that's a precious item to me.

Not because it makes us more married but it is a clear sign that we are. And I'm very glad that we got some insurance cover on it.

There was a crack found in it just a month or so ago. And I've been without it these last few weeks until yesterday. I was reunited with it.

It's a precious item.

[2 : 16] How about your faith in God? Do you see that as precious? A precious thing that is worth looking after.

Peter worth investing in. Worth making every effort to grow and protect. Well Peter describes our faith in God as precious.

In verse 1. Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ. To those who through the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Have received a faith as precious as ours. We've received a faith and it's precious. And notice Peter says it's as precious as ours.

Peter is an apostle. He could maybe if he was thinking particularly proud thoughts one day say, Oh I'm an apostle.

[3 : 18] I'm an elite category in the Christian life. But actually he says, no, your faith is just as precious as ours, as his.

He's not in some elite class of Christianity. He's received a faith by grace just as we have too.

All of us by nature, don't we, deserve the wrath of God. But thanks be to God that by his grace we are saved. And that includes Peter and the apostles and even us in the room here who believe.

And to the believers that he's writing to, he says two things. Two big things in these verses. Firstly, we've been transformed.

We've been transformed. So verse one again, Simon Peter, he's a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ. We know Peter well from the Gospels, don't we?

[4 : 25] That bold disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. Although he wasn't so bold at times. We know very sadly and famously he denied the Lord Jesus three times.

But Jesus graciously restored him and commissioned him to feed his sheep. And Peter here describes himself first, not as an apostle, but as a servant.

First as a servant. He's one of few people that can say he's an apostle, but he first sees himself as a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus who said to his disciples that he came not to be served, but to serve.

Who said no servant is greater than his master. He calls people to serve. And Peter knows that. And he is first and foremost a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. But he's also an apostle. He's one of those few that can say that.

[5 : 36] And so his letter has authority. It has weight, the things that he says. And it's helpful for us to remember that. It's worth listening to.

This is scripture come through the apostle Peter. And he's become a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And as a servant, as a Christian, he knows that he is saved by the grace of God. He says in verse 1, to those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ, have received a faith as precious as ours.

He talks about through the righteousness of the Lord Jesus. None of us have a righteousness of our own, have we, that could save us.

This righteousness that we have belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ. He is completely righteous. And he himself is God.

[6 : 46] Peter makes us so clear here of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ. Jesus is God. It's not come from another man, but from God himself, who has come down to live a perfectly righteous life in a way that we could not.

His righteousness, as we know, it's imputed to us. It's given us a gift of his grace, not by our own works. And so we can, as we will sing in a moment, my hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness.

And one day we'll get to stand before the throne of God. He'll say, welcome into my kingdom. And we'll be there because we're clothed in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And those are things that we know. We're good Calvary Christians. But just think, that's a complete transformation that we can be so thankful for.

It's a precious thing that we have received. It's not something everybody in this world knows. There was a lady at the cafe, thanking God for that on Friday.

[8 : 08] But one lady, she convinced atheists, you can't persuade me. She studied theology. She studied the word of God. And it's so sad that she doesn't share in this faith that we share in that is so precious.

Such a wonderful transformation. So we don't take it for granted. It's a precious, precious thing that we have.

And Peter goes on and uses the expression, grace and peace. Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ.

May you know grace and peace in abundance. What a wonderful thing to say at the start of a letter. This grace and peace that you know is not from you.

It's from through your saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. If we say we know someone, we will know facts about them.

[9 : 20] So you say we know someone called Gary, who's 57 and a doctor and has a wife and three children, two boys and one girl.

Those are facts that we know about Gary. They're facts that lots of people may know about Gary. But if we know Gary as in he's our friend, we'll know what he's passionate about.

And we'll know that Gary loves us as a dear friend. And we know that we love him as a dear friend. We know him in that sense. Not just knowing facts about them, but knowing them intimately.

We know that if we're in some sort of trouble, Gary will be there for us. Far, far more than just knowing simple facts about Gary.

We know him with our head and with our hearts. And so with this knowledge of God, we know just not facts about God, not just intellectual facts.

[10 : 26] It's important for us to know what we believe about God, what we believe to be true. We know he's three in one. We know he's created the world. We know those facts about God, but we also know him as a friend.

We have a relationship with him. We love him and we know that he loves us so deeply. We see that in the Lord Jesus Christ. We know him with our head and hearts.

That's the sort of knowledge that Peter is talking about there in verse 2. It's a precious thing, a precious thing that we have come to know the Lord Jesus in this way. And we know that it's not come about through gold or gem. Many precious items, maybe you've paid for them. But with this faith that we have that is so precious, it's not been bought with money. Jerome opened that wonderful passage in Isaiah 55, come without money. But it's been bought with the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ that he has shed for us.

[11 : 42] That's a precious thing. And so because of that, because of that, our lives have been transformed by the Lord Jesus Christ. Thinking about Peter again, the very first time he saw Jesus as a fisherman.

He told him to let the nets down and catch this miraculous fish. Peter bowed down before him and said, go away from me, Lord. But Jesus kept him following him all the way through. Wonderful transformation in that hardened fisherman, Peter. And then on that day of Pentecost, we know how wonderfully and amazingly and powerfully God used him to preach boldly to those people there.

Such a transformation in his life. Something only God can do. The same with all of us who know a saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so do you see that as precious? The transformation that God has brought about in you. So we're transformed. And then secondly and finally, we're equipped.

[13 : 00] We're equipped. Equipped. So we've been transformed by the Lord. We know his saving work in our lives. But that doesn't stay there.

We don't sit and put our feet up. We're equipped to be growing in our faith. We're to live like the Olympian.

Living. Not in light of the gold medal, but in light of that prize that we're looking forward to. The prize of being with Christ forever. And so we don't sit around lazily drinking cups of tea as Christians. But we must be working. Making every effort to be growing in godliness. Sin is still a present reality in our lives.

We thought about the temptations we faced this morning. We need to be on our guard, don't we? We need to be living a life that is seeking to grow in godliness.

[14 : 08] Looking more and more about the Lord Jesus Christ. We'll think about growth as a Christian a lot more next week.

But be encouraged this evening by verses 3 and 4 that we are equipped to grow. So let's read verses 3 and 4.

His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life. Through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises. So that through them you may participate in the divine nature. Having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evildoers.

And Peter says because of his divine power. Which is at work in you. We're equipped. We're given everything we need to live that godly life. The spirit of God, doesn't he?

[15 : 14] Comes to live in us as Christians. God is living within us. We're equipped with his divine power. None of us, that doesn't make any of us superman or superwoman.

It's a god coming to work in us. But we're still in these sinful bodies. But he has given us that power. It is at work in us. And so we can confidently make every effort to confirm our calling and election.

To be growing in godliness. We can be confident in the power that he has given us.

And verse 3 goes on to say, It's through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

We have this saving knowledge in him. We have this wonderful relationship with God. Head and heart. We can be growing in that knowledge of him.

[16 : 27] Are you seeking to be growing in knowing God? Do you delight to know God? We cannot, we'd never get to the depths of knowing everything and understanding everything about God.

But do you delight in trying to get to know this God who has saved you, who has transformed you? Jesus himself said, This is eternal life that they know you.

The only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. We know God. We can grow in knowing God. Is that a priority in your life?

But not only that. We also, verse 4, have very precious and great promises.

Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, he says. So he's given us a knowledge of God.

[17 : 29] With that knowledge of God, that saving knowledge of God, we can be confident in growing in a godly life. But we also have his precious promises.

Precious promises of God to hold on to, to rest in, to believe. So when we sin, we can rest in the promises of God's forgiveness. When we feel alone, we can rest secure in the one who will never leave us nor forsake us.

When we feel abandoned by someone, we can rest in that promise. When we despair at the pain and brokenness of this life, we can look forward to the coming of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. And know that in him we have the hope of a perfect world to come. If we're mourning the loss of a Christian brother or sister who dies, we can rest in the promise that the Lord Jesus makes, that he is the resurrection and the life.

Through our knowledge of God and through these precious promises that we have from him, Peter says that we can grow in godliness.

[18 : 53] And he says in verse 4, he continues to say that, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

He says we participate in the divine nature. He's not saying that we become gods or we become gods, but he is saying that as we grow, as we Christians have this precious faith, we have God living within us by his spirit, we're united to Christ, we participate in the divine nature in that way. It's a precious thing. Hard to get our minds around, but such a precious privilege that we do participate in this way, in the divine nature.

We have him within us. We're united to Christ. And because of that, we get to grow, to become like God, to become holy like God.

We get to share in his immortality. We get to live forever. We get to share in that wonderful life. We get to share in that wonderful life. And he says, Peter says, towards the end of here, we've escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

[20 : 39] We've escaped corruption, he says. What on earth is he saying? We still live in the world around us, which will still have effects on us.

But in this wonderful life that we have found in God's, he is restoring us, isn't he, into his image. He is making us new. And we're heading towards receiving a rich welcome in the Lord Jesus Christ. I was thinking about it a little bit like this.

I've been introduced to the great British pottery throwdown of recent times. It's amazing how people can take a lump of muddy clay and transform it into something beautiful.

A beautiful plate, a jug, a bowl. And what God is doing in us, through his divine power, which is at work in us, giving everything we need to live a godly life, he is taking us, muddy, dirty sinners, and transforming us into the likeness of Christ.

[22 : 02] Until that day when we receive that rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Big, big things in those few verses, packed into those few verses.

And perhaps the time that we've had hasn't done them justice. But, big things to go away and think about and rejoice in.

We can rejoice in our great salvation and in our great Saviour. And so let's do that as we sing our final hymn.