

His Divine Power

2 Peter 1:1-4

¹ Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours: ² Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. ³ His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and (virtue). ⁴ Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. (2 Peter 1:1-4)

The study that we have been giving to these words here in verse 2 about the “knowledge of God” are precious in every way. To “know”, to truly “know” our wonderful God who really does love us and has saved us from our sins and who will preserve us throughout all eternity is truly a treasure beyond our imagination. And may I add that our having this special “knowledge” is also absolutely essential to our being able to do our part in our relationship and our response back to Him, and especially to be able to understand and to believe and to trust His promises such as these spoken about here in verses 3 and 4. Listen!

³ His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and (excellence)(virtue)(or goodness). ⁴ Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. (2 Peter 1:3-4)

Note these words in verse 3 carefully, that God’s “divine power” has given us everything that we need for “life and godliness”, everything that we will need for everything that we will ever need to be and to do. But as we continue further in this study, we find that unless we have an ever-increasing “knowledge of God” our ability to understand, our ability to have and to do and to live a life of godliness can be greatly hindered.

For that reason, may we emphasize again and again, as we have done over the past two messages, that this “knowledge of God” is like no other kind of “knowledge”. It is a deep and intimate understanding of who God really is, of His holiness, His righteousness and His trustworthiness. And the only way that we can gain this deep and intimate knowledge of God is through our study of these scriptures and through the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit ministering the meaning of these words to us.

How else will we ever be able to move out of the darkness that we were born into. How else will our blinded eyes be opened to the precious truths of God's all-powerful and eternal love for us. It can only come through the Holy Spirit ministering His truths to us.

Consider for a moment! It has been said that most all people on the earth seem to believe in a "god" of some sort, whether they be Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu or even the animists who believe in a whole host of demon gods. And all those people believe that their gods are powerful, at least more powerful than they are. That is why people fear them and obey them. And people do all sorts of things, foolish things, even heinous things in order to appease and to please those gods. The most evident example taking place today is with the Muslim terrorists who kill themselves and many innocent people, in the belief that their god wants them to do that and will reward them for their obedience.

Thankfully, our God does not guide us into that sort of evil behavior. But listen, though that be true, we still must be careful, because unless and until we really do surrender our hearts to Christ and begin to devote ourselves to getting to truly know Him, we ourselves can do all sorts of things wrong, believing that we are doing those things in His Name and for His sake. That is why we have all of the many denominations and all the many factions within each of our Christian denominations.

May I confess to you that I sincerely believe that there is much within the variations in the denominational beliefs that are not only foolish but are fed and fueled by the demonic forces that fill the darkness all around us. And that can only be possible when we "ordinary Christians" fail to take the time to reach deeply into these scriptures and to learn the real truths given within them.

So again, I implore each of us to make the reading and study of these scriptures an absolute requirement each and every day of our lives. And not only reading and study, but to also beseech the Holy Spirit to explain everything that we are reading.

Consider again, the matter that I mentioned a moment ago, about the reason why people worship and obey gods, that they perceive that their god has "power" beyond their own, and they want their god to use that "power" to give them something they want or need.

Most of the time, we Christians are much the same. That is why we pray. We perceive that God has "power" beyond our own and we go to Him to ask His favor. And that is not wrong. It is exactly what we are supposed to do. Philippians 4, verse 6,

⁶ do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.
(Philippians 4:6 (ESV))

We perceive God to be powerful and able to answer and provide the things we want. And again, that is the right thing to do. But unfortunately, too often, we go astray with our prayers. We are like little children in the isles of a toy store, crying out for all sorts of thing to be given to us, many of which are not good for us to have.

Thankfully, God most often does not answer those prayers. He is righteous and holy and He can't do anything that violates His own righteousness and holiness. And that can especially be seen when we are praying that God will give us things and opportunities that will lead us down wrong paths in our lives.

Praise be to God, beneath the fabric of all that takes place is a special plan for us, one that God set into place even before the foundations of the earth. Jeremiah 29, verse 11,

¹¹ 'For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope. (Jeremiah 29:11 (NASB))

And in Ephesians 1, we read about “when” He developed His plan for us,

³ Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, ⁴ just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love ⁵ He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will.
(Ephesians 1:3-5 (NASB))

It is God's desire and plan for you and me to be holy and to do holy things in this life. And He Himself will never lead us down pathways that will violate His own holy standards.

But what about our own flesh, that thing that was born into each one of us at birth, that nature that has at it core sinful desires and behaviors. What are we supposed to do with that? And God answers that question right here, beginning in verse 3.

³ His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and (virtue). ⁴ Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. (2 Peter 1:3-4)

This special “divine power” that is spoken about here is the “power” that everyone wants their god to have. But only our God really does have it. And it is by and through His divine power that the desires of our flesh are kept under control and we can have “life and godliness”, verse 3,

³ His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and (virtue). (2 Peter 1:3)

May we pause here a few moments and consider this special word that’s given here to describe God’s power, the word “divine”. It is a word that sets our God apart and above all those other “would-be” gods of this earth.

What does it mean, for our God to be “divine”? The bible dictionary, and even the secular dictionaries, tell us that the word “divine” is a word that relates specifically and directly to God Himself and to His “deity”. And yes, the secular world has tried to commandeer the word and use it to refer to their own “false deities”. But for us as devoted Christians, the word “divine” speaks about God, the One True God, and about His “divinity”. And that “divinity”, that “deity” includes all three Persons of God, God the Father, God the Son and God The Holy Spirit.

And so, as we read these words,

³ His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and (virtue). (2 Peter 1:3)

We know from whom the power comes that enables us to have “life and godliness”.

But may I repeat myself and remind us that according to these words you and I also have a part that we must fulfill in this whole matter. Yes, it is God’s divine power that makes it all possible. And it is Him who has “called us by His own glory and virtue”, but we also have a responsibility in all that takes place, beginning with “knowing Him”, truly “knowing Him”. We must read and learn the depth of who God is, His nature, His character, His ways. And we must beseech the Holy Spirit to explain it all to us, else we will not be able to recognize God’s will and God’s hand in the matters of daily life as they take place.

What do I mean? Why is it that we will sometimes, perhaps often, not recognize the “divine” hand of God as He exerts His “divine power” in some of the circumstances that take place in our lives? Note the last words in verse 3, “who called us by His own glory and virtue.” This last word “virtue” is the Greek word “arête” which is translated as “goodness”, or “excellence”, or “virtue”. It means the “highest degree of moral goodness and excellence”.

But in God's "working out" of this word "goodness" in the practical matters of our daily lives, though He always is "good", He will sometimes, perhaps often, be "good" in ways that will not fit our minds as being "good". In Psalm 119:68, we read the simple words,
⁶⁸ You are good, and you do good; teach me your decrees. (Psalm 119:68)

These simple words about God being "good" are at the foundational core of all that He is. God is "good" and "He does good". All that He is and does is "good". But again, too often, God's definition of "good" will not fit our minds. We have our own personal way of defining what "good" is. And if God's definition of good in a matter or circumstance involves "suffering", we immediately reject His kind of "goodness". We think it strange that we should suffer. And so, we quickly cry out to God to remove it from us, to "deliver" us out of our suffering. But He cannot when the suffering was by His own intentional design.

"Suffering" is often a very needful process, helping us and helping others. Jesus suffered so that others, you and I, could gain eternal life. His suffering then was a "good" thing, a "very good" thing. And because we are called to be His disciples and our discipleship requires a similar suffering, then our suffering is also "good".

I recall a passage from C. S. Lewis' book series, the "Chronicles of Narnia", when Susan asked Mr. Beaver about Aslan, the great lion who represents the personage of Christ in the story. Mr. Beaver responded saying . . .

"Aslan is a lion- the Lion, the great Lion." "Ooh" said Susan. "I'd thought he was a man. Is he quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion". . . ."Safe?" said Mr. Beaver . . . "Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he is good."

As the old servant Job came to understand, there really is nothing "safe" about God, at least as we understand the word "safe". Just as Job suffered, you and I will suffer often in this life. But because God is always "good", if and as, we love Him and remain called according to His purposes, He will surely always work everything together for "our" "good".

We'll need to stop here and continue next week. But one last thought before we close . . . We need to be careful to not allow our times of suffering to cause us to doubt God or to question His "goodness". As we said a moment ago, sometimes God's form of "goodness" will simply not fit our minds. It is in those moments that you and I will need to grab hold of and hang onto the faith and the trust that the Holy Spirit has put within us.

God truly is “good”. And though we may not understand His goodness at the moment, with patience and trust, He will eventually reveal His plans and His purposes to us, and we will be able to say, “yea Lord, you truly are good!”

³ His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and (goodness)(virtue).
(2 Peter 1:3)