

The Sufficiency of Divine Power

2 Peter 1:3-4

Series: *Growing in the Knowledge of God – 2 Peter*

Introduction: Grab your copy of the Scriptures and join me in 2 Peter 1, 2 Peter chapter 1. The life of the Christian in this sin-cursed world is a hazardous existence. While we know we should hope in the God of our salvation, we see around us the devastation and despair. To the younger folks among us this morning, this may sound like a pessimistic and unrealistic view. You have your whole life in front of you and you think life is pretty great. But for the more seasoned among us, I'm guessing that my words are soft-pedaling the hardship of your own experience. I don't mean to drive us all to despair, in fact, as you will see, I intend to do the exact opposite.

So just think about our world for a minute. Evil rebellion against God abounds around us, and is even celebrated in the marketplace and protected in the government house, and is propagated in the schoolhouse. The only worldview that is not tolerated is the Christian worldview that is committed to absolute truth. The culture mocks Christian's commitment to this truth by telling us that we are on the wrong side of history and by calling us crazy fundamentalists who are dangerous to society as a whole. Nation rises against nation in war – and not just wars with planes and tanks and missiles, but war with money and trade and the power of words. Politicians bow to the loudest voice as they labor for the political glory they have always craved. And the story in the visible and professing church is not much better. Her loudest voices are often calling for the church to give in to the culture's demands. The up and coming generation of leaders is leaving the church in droves, and churches are closing faster in America than they are opening. In fact, most 18-25 year olds now identify as having no spiritual affiliation or identification and have become known as the spiritual none's – they're not Christian, they're not Atheist, they're not Muslim – they're just nothing. And none of this is to mention the reality of your own life. Your health gives way to another low. You lack motivation and desire to obey and follow our Lord. You struggle to get into the Word and to pray. Your best attempts at blessing someone else blows up in your face and becomes more of a hassle than it was worth. You have relationship strain and hurt abounds in your family. Your own children or grandchildren have turned and gone from the faith you have passed on to them. And sin is crouching at the door always looking to lure you away from God. Beloved – it is dangerous to be a Christian in world like this. All this decay and corruption and depravity are discouraging and depressing. And this is the IV into the bloodstream of our faith that brings in doubt and unbelief. Because things are so hard, it is easy for us to doubt God and disbelieve His Word. Is He really working? Is His Gospel really all that powerful? Are the promises of His Word actually true?

Well, this struggle is not unique to the 21st Century Church. Peter writes to address the churches who were facing similar struggles. Their world was full of corruption and decay as well. They were confronted with the constant danger of walking by sight and losing hope and trust and confidence in God. And false teachers were happy to help them change some of the

Gospel truth so that life wouldn't be so tough. As we will find out in chapter 2, these false teachers were happy to take away the morality of the Gospel while also removing the future promises of redemption with supposed new words of prophecy from God. And this was supposed to make this Christian life easier.

And so what is Peter's answer? How does he counter their false teaching and give the church hope and joy and purpose and growth again? Well, he rehearsed the Gospel truth in verse 1, and then he prayed in verse 2 that they would multiply in grace and peace in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. And now in verses 3-4 he is going to give us one of the most remarkable descriptions of the Christian life in all of Scripture. The answer to how we walk through this corrupt world is by faith. We must grow in our faith – not just in a faith that knows facts about God, but in a faith that actually and truly knows God through His saving grace. It is a precious faith, a faith that is on equal ground with the apostles, as we found out in verse 1. It is a faith that is actively increasing in knowledge of God and conformity to Christ. But before Peter gets to the point of telling us how to grow in our faith he grounds us in the truths which make us able to grow in faith. And so in verses 3-4 he says this . . .

If we were to keep reading on into verses 5-11 we would see how the foundation is laid in our verses for the commands to follow. Peter is going to call us in verse 5 to make every effort to grow our faith. But if he launched into what we must do to grow in faith without the truth of verses 3-4 it would be like telling a quadriplegic to make every effort to swim the English Channel – it's just simply impossible and incredibly discouraging! But we are not called to action until we are told what we are given in Christ which allows us to make every effort to increase our faith. Christ's divine power has brought to us 2 glorious things – sufficiency and surety. And this is the remarkable reality of the Christian life in this age. Though we are surrounded by the corruption of sin and though we battle every moment with the lure of sin and though we walk every hour in the wake of sin's path, yet we are granted these glorious things by the saving power of Christ.

This word for granted is used in Mark 15:45 to describe how Pilate granted the dead body of Jesus to Joseph of Arimathea. He put it into his possession for his safe-keeping and care. And so, Christ, by his divine power, has put these things into our possession – sufficiency and surety. Before we jump into discovering the glories of these two gifts from Christ to his people, I must tell you that these two verses are fairly complex in their composition in both the Greek and the English. Peter must have been hanging around Paul a little bit as he wrote this letter, because the structure is as complex as some of Paul's sentences. So, I'll do my best to bring you through these complexities as we seek to unpack their life-changing truth.

The verse starts with the phrase "His divine power" and this is the subject of the sentence. We have been granted sufficiency in verse 3 and surety in verse 4 by "his divine power." This is speaking of Christ's saving power. This is the power Paul spoke of in Romans 1. He said that it was a power that Jesus possessed and displayed in verse 4 when he said, Jesus "was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead." It is this saving power that rescued Jesus from the corruption of death and which is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek – as

Paul says in verse 16. In other words, Peter is telling them that Christ's saving power has given them these two things to guarantee their full and final salvation – sufficiency and surety. Beloved, this is the remarkable truth we need as we stare down life in a corrupt world. We must know that in Christ we have sufficient power for life and godliness, and that we have the surety of the great and precious promises guaranteed for us.

Christ's Saving Power has given us:

I. Sufficiency – vs. 3

- a. The first thing we are granted by Christ's saving power is sufficiency in verse 3. In Christ we are given all things that pertain to life and godliness. Christ's saving power is unhindered in its ability to give us all that we need for life and godliness. It is divinely sufficient power.
- b. *For life & godliness*
 - i. Everything we need for life and godliness are given to us – meaning that we have all that we need for true life in this world filled with death and corruption. In Christ we are given eternal and supernatural and unending and abundant life. It is not just a life which lives forever because all who have ever lived will indeed live forever – some in everlasting punishment and some in everlasting joy in the presence of God. And it is not just life in this world because we do not need the saving power of Christ to have physical and natural life in this world – even the lost and unbelieving have that apart from Christ. So, what is meant here is that we have everything we need for true spiritual, vibrant, eternal, unending life – the kind of life that overcomes the corruption of sin and truly lives in this life and in the one to come.
 - ii. And in having this true life in Christ we are also given everything we need for godliness. So, the order is important here – as it was with grace and peace. We are given new and eternal and true life in Christ and in this life we are given the power to be godly – to be like Christ. It is not the other way around. We are not to be like Christ so as to somehow secure the life which is in Christ alone. No, we are given this life by grace through faith in Christ and then we are enabled to be godly. If we get that order wrong then we have a powerless religion that doesn't save – either from the corruption in this world, nor from the judgment to come. Just think of the scandal that was further unveiled this past week in the Roman Catholic Church. The report from the Attorney General of Pennsylvania detailed thousands of instances of abuse by catholic priests – and that is just in one state. But this is the by-product of a religion which tells you that you need godliness before life – that godliness earns you life with God. Well, we have no power to be godly if we do not possess life in Christ – so the call of religions around the world to tell us to be virtuous and good in order to gain life are like telling that quadriplegic to swim the English Channel – it can't be done! We must have life so that we can be godly.

- iii. This word that Peter uses for godliness has the idea of having a Godward attitude, and of doing things that are well-pleasing to God. It is translated in the Old Testament as “fear of the Lord.” In the Pastoral Epistles we learn that this godliness lines up with sound teaching – that when the truth is taught then this godliness is what results in the life of the Christian. And when the teacher is absent of this godliness, then there is something wrong with their doctrine because sound doctrine accords with godliness.
 - iv. But the most intriguing text to help us know what Peter means here is found in Acts 3. You remember that Peter and John had just healed the lame man in the Temple and the people marveled as the lame man walked and praised God. And as the large crowd gathers Peter says – “why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we have made him walk?” Those are the words he uses here in verse 3 – power and godliness. In other words, it wasn’t Peter’s own power or his own godliness which gave him what he needed to heal the man. But it was Christ’s saving power at work through them. And that is what he is saying in 2 Peter 1. It is not our power or our godliness which enables us to live out this life we have in Christ. But rather, it is Christ’s saving power at work in us which gives us the ability to be godly.
- c. *Through the knowledge of Him*
- i. This all comes to us through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence. We have all that we need for life and godliness through the knowledge of Christ, who has called us to his own unique glory and excellence. The calling here is not the general call of invitation that we can hear and heed if we so choose. Rather, this is the calling that is the outworking of the predestination of God. This is the effectual and irresistible call of God upon the soul that He saves at the moment of regeneration and conversion. Like the creative word of God in Genesis 1 – He spoke and it happened – so too, this is God’s work of speaking new and spiritual life into the spiritually dead soul. This is Romans 8:30 – those whom he predestined he also called, and those he called he also justified, and those he justified he also glorified.
 - ii. This effectual calling of God happens through the preaching of the Gospel as the Spirit of God works internally to bring spiritual life to the spiritually dead. And this effectual call brings us to a knowledge of God – a saving knowledge of God. And this effectual call brings us to the glory of Christ and the excellence of Christ. This is the work of the Gospel in us. Before conversion we might see the glory of Christ in part, and we might admire the excellence of Christ in a small way. But when we are born again by the saving power of God we are awakened to the grand universe of the great glory of Christ. We are overcome by the moral excellence and virtue of Christ – which is what that word means. It is the same word used in verse 5 where it is translated as virtue. This is the moral excellence

of Christ that supersedes all other morality. This is the total moral perfection embodied in Jesus Christ alone. This is the perfection of his obedience to His Father which stands as the cornerstone of our own justification before God. We are morally destitute and deserve God's righteous wrath. But if we are in Christ then we are clothed with His moral perfection and we are justified before God. So, Peter says, we are called to his moral perfection and his glory.

- iii. This is granted to us by the divine saving power of Christ. We have everything we need for true life and for godliness. Notice that all that we need for this life and godliness comes to us through the knowledge of God. This is super important for Peter and for these churches – this true knowledge of God. He will make very clear to us at the end of this first chapter that this true knowledge comes through God's true Word – this prophetic word more fully confirmed. We do not need new words of prophecy from self-proclaimed spokesman for God. We do not need some new spiritual experience outside of our physical state – some mystical or meta-physical reality. No, we need to know God through His Word, and in His Word we are given all that we need to know Him.
- iv. This effectual calling comes through the Word – for faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ. And this calling brings us to the knowledge of Christ who has called us – and now we are empowered in Christ, by his divine power to know him more so that we can live this abundant life full of the godliness of Christ himself. This is an astounding gift of the grace of God to us.
- v. Beloved, our struggle against the despair in our world and the pull of our flesh and the attacks of Satan and the delay of God fulfilling His promises – this is not a powerless struggle. We are not lost to the corruption and the decay and the hopelessness it brings. No, we have everything we need. We have sufficiency in Christ to truly live and to really be godly. This means that the impediment to my spiritual progress is not on God's side, but on my side. God has granted to me everything that I need for life and godliness. My delay in being more like Christ and in knowing the abundant life of Christ is not a problem with God. I am not a contractor building a house who is waiting for the lumber yard to deliver the supplies. No, everything I need for the building of the house is already delivered and available.
- vi. I am so prone to subtly shift the blame to God in my spiritual struggle. When I lack progress, or when my faith is despairing – I am so prone to wonder where God is and to question His promises and His power. But this verse lets us know that God has given us everything we need for right now. In Christ, we have sufficiency to live and to be godly in the present evil age. So, where do you want more progress in your faith? Where do you wish your life looked more like Christ? Where are you tired of your constant battle against sin? Where are you more aware of the corruption

of our world than of the life you have in Christ? Beloved – you have everything you need in the knowledge of Christ and in the divine power of Christ to make progress in this area. The impediment is not God, it is you.

II. Surety – vs. 4

- a. Well, this sufficiency is coupled with surety in verse 4. This remarkable description of the Christian life continues as Peter says – 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. That is a complex mouthful of glorious truth, and it can all be summarized in this one word of *surety*. We are granted sufficiency in Christ, and here we are granted surety in Christ. Being called to the unique glory and excellence of Christ, we are now granted the precious and very great promises of Christ.
- b. *Precious & Great Promises*
 - i. Peter just used this word “precious” back in verse 1 to describe our faith. It is something that has a unique and privileged value – something of great worth. The Christian life is granted sufficient power for life and godliness as well as the surety of the precious and great promises of God. Peter is going to address these promises again in chapter 3 as he defends God’s Word against the false teachers who scoff because God hasn’t yet kept his promises in full. He lays the groundwork here at the beginning of the letter by letting us know that the Christian has been given the surety of those promises in Christ. And the content of those promises are then laid out for us by Peter. There is more to these promises than this, but this is their essence. We are granted the promise of becoming partakers of the divine nature, and of escaping from the corruption that is in the world.
 - ii. Partakers of the Divine Nature
 1. So, let’s take those one at a time, and logically, we are working backwards from experience here. In our conversion we know the corruption of our own sinful desires, and then we know the escape from that corruption as we come to Christ, and then we know something of this divine nature which we get to share in as we are in Christ. And these promises are being fulfilled in us in this life, but they will be completed in all their fullness in the eternal life to come. So, we are escaping the corruption of the flesh in part in this life, but not fully. And we are partaking of the divine nature in part in this life, but not fully. So, these promises are being brought to fulfillment even now, and they await the day of their completion.
 2. So, the first promise mentioned is that we may become partakers of the divine nature. That sounds kind of mystical and other-worldly doesn’t it? It sound like we are being promised that we will become God in some way or even in some part. This is what false religions have taught all throughout the ages. The false

teachers of Peter's day were teaching some form of this – that we could somehow attain to deity. And this human deification is still prominent in so many religions today. But is that what is promised here? That we will someday become gods in our own right?

3. Well, that is not what the text says. It says that we will be partakers, or fellowshippers – *koinonos* – someone who shares in something with someone else. We will not be possessors of all the unique realities of the divine nature, but we will be partakers, or sharers, of aspects of the divine nature. We will not become fully God, but rather, what is promised here is that we will share in elements of God's nature. Certainly this is the outworking of Colossians 1:27 – of Christ in us, the hope of glory. When we are born again by the Spirit of God we do not cease to be human and now become little gods. Rather, we are given the ability partake of aspects of the nature of God. We are given a new nature by which we can fellowship with God and become like God.
4. And in just these 2 verses we learn how we become like God – how we partake in his divine nature. So, we know from other Scriptures that there is more to this, but just limit yourself to these 2 verses and we see that to partake in the divine nature means that we have life instead of corruption. Our old nature, our human nature only knows corruption and death. But our new nature partakes with God in that we are given life – true, spiritual, abundant, everlasting – life in Christ. We are also given godliness instead of unbridled sinful desire. Our old nature is bound to its sinful desires – it is enslaved to sin. But our new nature, the one given us in our sufficient Christ – is enabled to walk in godliness rather than in those sinful desires. And we are given a knowledge of God. Our old nature was absent of a right understanding and knowledge of God. We had no fellowship and no communion and no true knowledge of God in our sinful state. But in Christ we are given a new nature which enables us to partake in the knowledge of God – communion and understanding and love and fellowship. In these three ways we are then partakers of the divine nature – we are given life instead of corruption, we are given godliness instead of sinful desires, and we are given a knowledge of God instead of enmity with God.
5. And this is just the beginning of those glorious things. What we know in part and taste in part in this life will give way to the fullness of this fellowship in the eternal life to come. No wonder Peter calls this a precious and very great promise!

iii. Escape from Corruption

1. The other promise mentioned is the escape from corruption. So, in progression, we are able to be partakers of the divine nature

because we have been saved from the corruption brought into the world by sinful desire. This is where we start in our understanding of the Gospel – that we live in a corrupted and cursed world, and that we need rescued from it. This corruption is a corruption in the moral sense. It is the decay and destruction that is brought in when depravity enters the heart. It is the death that entered into the world through one man’s sin and that has now spread to all men because all have sinned. It is the exact opposite of the life that is granted to us by the divine power of Christ in verse 3.

2. And the promise that we are given in Christ is that we will escape from this corruption which enters in through sinful desire. If you think about it, this is what so much of the world is after – an escape from the corruption. So, promises are made by the world apart from Christ to give us an escape from the corruption. The politician promises that if we will elect him and trust his policies that this or that element of corruption in our world will be finally dealt with. The mega star actor or actress appeals to us in a TV commercial that if we try their product we will push back the corruption that has come upon our body. The philosopher promises that if we saw the world through their worldview then we would not have as much corruption in the world. The pharmaceutical company promises that if we use their drug we will escape this or that element of corruption that has invaded our bodies. The health food guru tells us that if we eat according to their plan then we will avoid the corruption of a decaying body. And on down the list it goes. Everyone is promising some form of escape from the corruption within us and around us. As humans we inherently know that we are corrupted and we are living in a corrupted world – and we need escape!
3. In fact, the false teachers are also promising an escape from the corruption. So look down at 2:18-19. . . .
 - a. These false teachers are promising them freedom by enticing them with sensual passions. In other words, they are calling them to some form of supposed liberty in Christ which allows them to pursue the passions of their flesh – most likely their sexual desires. And they say that this is true freedom – that they can live how they want and be free. But the truth is that they are not free at all. In fact, they are enslaved by these sinful desires and they become slaves of corruption because corruption enters in through sinful desire.
- iv. But we have the precious and great promise of Christ that we can escape from this corruption. This escape will happen fully and completely in the Final Judgment when the current heavens and earth will be burned up

with the fires of judgment on the Day of the Lord, and then God will create new heavens and a new earth which will be free of this corruption which sinful desires produce. But that full and final escape carries with it the power of freedom now. So, in a very real sense, we can escape from this corruption in this life as we grow in Christ. This is the power of this promise now. We can overcome the sinful desires through the knowledge of Christ as we increase in life and godliness. In other words, in knowing Christ by His saving power in verse 3, we can now be like Christ as we become partakers of his divine nature and escape from the corruption of sin. This happens in progression in this life as we go from one degree of holiness to another. But it will happen in perfection in the life to come.

Conclusion: So, beloved, do you know God and are you becoming more and more like God? Does this description of the Christian life resonate with your heart? Do you know this sufficiency in Christ and this surety of his precious and very great promises? The great need of our day is not for the world to change – for it never will. The great need of our day is for the church to live out these glorious realities of her standing in Christ – our sufficiency and our surety. This will propel us – as we will see next week – to make every effort to grow in godliness and in true life. And this is what is most needed in this corrupt world – a vibrant and godly church! The only hindrance to that reality is us. Christ has given us all that we need for life and godliness. He has given us the surety of his promises to propel us along in this pursuit of Him. May God help us in the week ahead to walk in light of this sufficiency and this surety. Let's pray.