

## EXPOSITION OF II PETER

### Message #3

### II Peter 1:3-4

W. A. Criswell once told the story of a hunter in Canada who came to a frozen river he needed to cross. He wasn't sure that the ice would hold him so he got down on all fours and began to creep across. He heard a noise behind him and turned and saw a man coming with four large horses and a wagon loaded with logs and he went straight across the ice and right by the guy crawling on all fours. The guy felt stupid. He should be marching across the river and he is crawling. There are many believers who are fearfully crawling through this world hoping they will get out of it and end up in heaven, when they should be marching along in a victory parade. The Apostle Peter wants us to know you will make it; God will see to it.

There is a word that shows up in **verse 4** that really sets the stage for where this book is going. It is the word "lusts" (επιθυμια). Peter uses this word four times (1:4; 2:10; 2:18; 3:3). It is a word that describes a passionate longing or desire for things forbidden by God. It is a word that describes one who sets his heart and desire on something fleshly, sinful, and sensual (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 170). This text assumes one may live a life of great victory or defeat.

Let me ask you a personal and practical question. How do you escape lusts? How do you stop the depraved cycle of giving in to fleshly sensual things so that you may have an abundant entrance into heaven? How do you keep yourself from becoming a lust-crazed, sensual maniac in a lust-crazed, sensual world?

The Apostle Peter had at one time been a man driven by his flesh and lusts (I Peter 4:2-3). He had not been some ivory tower monk who lived in a monastery meditating on philosophical issues of life. He had been a rugged man of the world who was given to lustful and sensual things. No one out-sinned the Apostle Peter. He drank, he caroused, he partied, and he pursued and fulfilled his lusts. **But Jesus Christ changed his life!** Peter became a man who learned the secret of living a godly life in a lust-crazed, sensual, sinful world. In II Peter he shares it with us. He starts this epistle by saying:

**GOD'S PEOPLE NEED TO KNOW THAT GOD HAS GIVEN US EVERYTHING WE NEED FOR LIVING A GODLY LIFE BEFORE WE LEAVE THIS UNGODLY, LUSTFUL WORLD.**

The main focus of this section is that God has given every believer everything we need to blossom in grace and knowledge and have a lifestyle that is godly.

**II Peter 1:3-4** are grammatically strange verses because they begin with a subordinate clause that should connect to some previous verse or a later verse. It is possible that Peter is developing the formula for God granting us His grace and peace. I must admit, this is one odd pattern of grammar; but there does appear to be a definite change of thought here, because we may observe that there is a change of pronouns from "you" in **verse 2** to "us" in **verse 3**, which would seem to indicate Peter is presenting and developing a new thought.

The main focus of this section is on what God has given to us as believers to live life in this ungodly world in such a way that we have an abundant entrance into heaven.

**Now in these two verses you will observe that the verb “granted” shows up two times.** The word “granted” (δωρεομαι) comes from a word family that means to present or to bestow or to give a gift to someone (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 125).

Both verbals are perfect passive. What Peter is stressing here is that God has given this to us from a point of time in the past, which is the point of our salvation; and it continues to exist in the present and on into the future, and we were simply the recipients of the action. The moment you and I believed on Jesus Christ, God gave us everything we need for victory in living our lives in a victorious God-honoring way.

No believer will have any excuse or will be able to blame God, because God has given everything a believer needs to the believer to have victory over the flesh.

Now there are two main grants that God has given us that enable any believer to live a godly life in the midst of a lust-crazed world:

**GRANT #1** – God has granted us everything we need for a life that is godly. **1:3**

Peter begins by stating this theological point, which almost seems, as one commentator said, “too good to be true.” When you are a Christian who struggles and fails and often does what is impulsive and emotional, Peter knew it was good to take a look at concrete truth. The truth is, God has given us everything we need for victory over our flesh. God has given us every spiritual provision we need to make our Christian experience one that heads toward an abundant entrance into heaven. God has given us every possible thing we need to live godly. Dr. J. H. Jowett, the Oxford scholar of the late 1800s, said there is a lot of wealth in this bank of God that He has lavishly given out to His people (*II Peter*, p. 213). There are **four main facts** Peter reveals about what God has granted to us:

**Fact #1** - God’s grant is a grant of His Divine power. **1:3a**

This is critical to see and this is the place every believer needs to start. **The source for living a godly life in a godless world is the Divine power of God.** Any victory we may have over our flesh and lusts of it will be due to the Divine power of God and not to us. There is nothing that a false teacher and prophet may offer anyone that will give him the Divine power of God. No false teacher has divine power and no false teacher can give Divine power. This is a grant and gift from God. Victory over lusts will be wrought by God’s power, not our power.

**Fact #2** - God’s grant is a grant of all things that pertain to life. **1:3b**

God has granted us everything we need for life eternal and life practical. Peter Davids said this is the kind of life of which God would approve (*II Peter*, p. 168). God has granted us everything we need to live life in a way that He approves, in a way that does not get caught up in this depraved world and its lusts. No false teacher has this life or this power. God does not want us living a life that is dead before Him; He wants us alive in our relationship with Him.

**Fact #3** - God's grant is a grant of all things that pertain to godliness . **1:3c**

This point of being godly and living a godly life is one stressed often by the Apostle Peter in this Epistle. He uses this very word several times (**1:3**, 6-7; 2:9; 3:11). The actual word "godliness" (ευσεβεια) is one that refers to a godly, reverent piety (Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 189). God wants us to be people who have an abundant entrance into heaven, and in order to get that, we need to have a godly reverent piety toward God and His Word in our lives. God has given us the potential of having this and everything we need to have it.

Years ago Dr. S. Lewis Johnson said that he believed that all believers should get down by their beds and ask God to manifest Himself through their lives. There ought to be a reverence and piety to our lives and we need to ask God to manifest that in us (*II Peter 1:1-4*, p. 8).

What we don't want is to manifest a lust-crazed person who can't seem to have victory over sensual things.

**Fact #4** - God's grant is a grant of true knowledge that is based on our calling. **1:3d**

The knowledge that enables us to live in such a way that God approves us is a specific knowledge that is not based on a textbook but a calling. The path to godliness and divine power is a path of knowledge.

The actual word "knowledge" is that which refers to deep knowledge or knowledge upon knowledge. The preposition "through" (δια) is a preposition of means . In other words, **the means by which we may have victory over lusts is through or by means of a deep knowledge concerning the One who called us**. This calling is not some general invitation; it is an effective calling that brings people into a relationship with Him. God called us to salvation by His own glory and excellence. He did not call us because we were glorious or excellent. But He has called us and so we may become a reflection of His glory and His excellence. That noun "excellence" (αρετη) means that God wants us to live at a preminent level that is morally good (Smith, p. 58). We should stand out in manifesting the power of God before others. We should manifest a level of excellence before others for the glory of God. We should do this on our jobs, in our schools, and in our neighborhoods. We should pursue excellence and moral integrity.

Deep knowledge is a critical key to all of this. Deep knowledge is a critical key to an excellent character that has victory over lusts. The only possible way we can live down here in this evil world and grow to become godlier is through the Word of God. When you meet Christians not interested in deep knowledge of God's Word, you may be certain there are plenty of fleshly failures.

If we never get more serious about God's Word than we are now, then we are where we are likely to be when we get before God. If we have been failing lately, we need to take a serious look at our calling and our commitment to knowing God's Word.

A person could study all kinds of religious things and attend all kinds of religious institutions; but if they have not been called by God to salvation, they will not ever gain a deep knowledge of Jesus Christ and God, and they will not ever have a life that is approved by God.

God's salvation starts the process of being able to grasp sound doctrine which ultimately produces sound lives. Sound doctrine produces spiritual lives. The more we know, the more we will grow. But in order to know and grow we must be in the family of God.

**GRANT #2** – God has granted us promises we need for a life that is godly. **1:4**

Years ago I was riding my horse Solomon alone in the Targhee National Forest in Idaho hunting elk. I was riding through this meadow in the dark one morning and walked him into a bog. I immediately jumped off him and took a rope and that rope became the lifeline that got him out of the muck. Now some of God's people wallow around in a bog of lustful activity. There is a lifeline that will get them out of the muck and it is the Word of God. More and more as God's people grab on to God's promises, they will rise up out of the filth of this dirty world. That is exactly what Peter is saying right here. God has given us promises that can cause us to live godly lives.

Just exactly what promises is Peter referring? Well he doesn't say. What we do know is that later in this chapter he will mention the Scripture (II Peter 1:19), so we may assume that he is referring to all of the promises in Scripture that God has given to one redeemed. In **verse 9** Peter mentions the promise of the forgiveness of sins. In **verse 11** Peter mentions the future promise of abundantly entering God's eternal Kingdom.

God has given us wonderful promises: "... whoever believes in Jesus Christ will not perish, but will have eternal life" (John 3:16); "... the one who comes to Me, I will certainly not cast out" (John 6:37); "... everyone who believes is freed from all things" (Acts 13:39); "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28); "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5). These are amazing promises, and as we think about these things it motivates us to live a godly life.

**Fact #1** - Our God-granted promises are precious. **1:4a**

The word "precious" (τιμιος) is one that means God's promises to us are costly, highly valued, esteemed at the highest worth level. This word was often used to describe a very costly money value (Smith, p. 446).

What Peter is saying here is the most valuable thing we have are the promises of God. Those promises mean we have the potential of having an abundant entrance into God's eternal Kingdom.

Now how does this work in helping us have victory in a lust-crazed, flesh-crazed world? By thinking about the promises of God and the future, we focus right. I don't want to botch this up. I don't want to mess up my opportunity for an abundant entrance into God's eternal Kingdom. I don't want to leave this world having lived like a lust-crazed dog that returns to his vomit. I don't want to be a religious pretender, like false teachers.

**Fact #2** - Our God-granted promises are magnificent . 1:4b

The adjective “magnificent” (μεγιστα) is in a superlative form and it refers to something that is at the greatest level of measurement and rank (Smith, p. 281). God’s promises should be the highest ranked object of our lives. Nothing should be ranked higher to us than the Word of God and the promises of God. Those who have an abundant entrance into God’s eternal Kingdom will have this focus. The Word of God will hold the highest value and the greatest level of rank to the believer who will be approved by God.

Now why does Peter bring this up in this context? Because lust-crazed people have lust-crazed things as their number one focus.

**Fact #3** - Our God-granted promises are purposeful . 1:4c

There are two stated purposes or benefits or results of the promises of God:

**(Purpose #1)** - We have become partakers of a Divine nature.

The word “partaker” (κοινωνος) is one that means we are a partner, an associate and a companion of a Divine nature (Smith, p. 251). What I understand this to mean is that we have a Divine nature when we believe on Jesus Christ, and through the Word of God we can develop to the point that we reflect the Divine nature. It is God’s nature and He shares it with us.

God has given us a Divine nature. We share a Divine nature imparted to us by God. What an amazing thought that God has made us a partaker of a Divine nature. At the moment we believe on Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit takes up residency in us, and we have a new nature and it is a divine nature.

Dr. McGee said don’t let anyone deceive you into thinking that the Christian life is a series of dos and don’ts. If you do this or don’t do that you are really living the Christian life. Peter says living the Christian life is about us partaking of a Divine nature, which is the nature of God.

We actually share a nature from God. Let me ask you a question. Knowing that you have a Divine nature of God, do you want to plunge yourself into lust-crazed, immoral things? Is that how you want to utilize the Divine nature you have?

**(Purpose #2)** - We have escaped the lust corruption that is in this world.

I want you to notice what is stated here, “we have escaped,” not “we might escape.” When one has this Divine nature, one will realize we live in a corrupt, lust-crazed world and we have a corrupt, lust-crazed nature. What the believer needs to realize is that our Divine nature guarantees that we will escape this lust-crazed corrupt world. **Later in this Epistle, Peter will refer to phony make-believers who “escape the defilements of the world” (2:20), but here it refers to true believers who have actually already escaped the lust corruption in this world.**

This corruption is in every one of us. We are all sinners with a depraved nature. God has given us a wonderful promise - you will one day escape this world; you are guaranteed this reality.

You can try to clean up the environment all you want, but it won't work. This is a sin-cursed world and there is a lust corruption in it and in us, and if we are going to escape it we must have a new nature. It must be God's doing, not our doing.

In Greek, the participle "escaped" (αποφευγω) is aorist tense. This is a definite act, a definite moment in time when, according to God, a believer had fled from and escaped the corruption of this polluted world.

**This moment and point of time was the moment we believed. At that very moment, God gave us a guarantee that one day the believer will get out of this corrupt, sensual, sin-cursed world.**

What this should ultimately do for the believer is cause us to want to live a godly and holy life. We should be people who more and more reflect our godly nature and more and more pursue excellence.

God basically says - you are My priest, now act like it.

One of the most tragic endings to the life of a believer would be for the believer to go into the presence of God having been a lust-crazed man or woman until the day he/she met the Lord. As a believer we don't want to be known by God as one who continually sat down in front of a TV or continually got on the internet or continually went to bookstores or other places to feed some sensual lust addiction. We want to be known by God as one who had moral integrity. There are eternal things on the line if you are a dirty old man or a dirty old woman. There are eternal things on the line if you are a dirty young man or dirty young woman. There are some people who go after lustful things like a dog returns to his own vomit (II Pet.2:22).

What the Apostle Peter knew is that God has given us everything we need to finish clean. May God help us all to reflect the character of God to this depraved world.