

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Our Position by Righteousness 2 Peter 1:1-4

If you'll turn to **2 Peter** we are going to look through the first four verses of the first chapter. I'll read **2 Peter 1:1-4** for you in the New American Standard. **“Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ: (2) Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; (3) seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. (4) For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.”**

So we will look at these verses, and the very beginning of it deals with the writer of the book. The writer of the book identifies himself, but his identity is in debate actually. Now I will go out on a limb, make a bold statement here, and say 2 Peter was written by Peter, but some people would disagree with that. In fact, as it turns out, most people that write books on all this stuff would disagree with that. It seems like a trick question, who wrote the book of 2 Peter? Like who's buried in Grant's tomb? Grant and Mrs. Grant. Well this is a straightforward answer. Peter wrote the book, but there are reasons why people will disagree with that, and this will kind of boil them down into two basic reasons.

One reason is the information that the book gives itself. There are references to the writings of Paul in the last chapter of the book as being Scripture. There are people who will think it would take time for that to be understood as being Scripture, so Peter would have passed away by then. Some make comparisons with 1 Peter and saying 1 Peter is different than 2 Peter, therefore, they couldn't have been written by the same person, and that someone just put Peter's name to it because that is what some people did back then.

Well, just because some people did that does not mean this is what happened here. Just because there are some dissimilarities doesn't mean there aren't a lot of great similarities, which there are. I'm sure if we looked at anything you wrote and compared it with anything else you wrote, we would find similarities and dissimilarities. One dissimilarity people will point to is that the writer identifies himself as Simon Peter here and just Peter in 1 Peter. Actually, in earlier manuscripts it's Simeon, which is an unusual name for himself. Now, if you were going to forge it, would you write something different to identify yourself as being Peter or would you say the exact same words as in 1 Peter? I would suggest that you would probably copy it exactly and not come up with something different.

You know there is another reason though, aside from what's in the book, why people will think it is different. They will look outside the book and at how long it took the church to come to a unanimous understanding that 2 Peter was part of the canon, an epistle actually written by Peter and apostolic. Well, it did take a while for an unanimous agreement. Just because some people disagreed in the early church, and they were certainly the minority by far, doesn't mean that they were right, does it? The fact is that the church did come to a unanimous understanding: 2 Peter was apostolic and Peter wrote it. So I think we can say with some confidence that Peter wrote it.

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But it is even more important why Peter wrote it. Some people will say that Peter didn't really write it, or somebody put his name in there, but it really doesn't matter because there's a lot of really great stuff in here, and let's just learn from it.

But here's the problem. Do you remember in our recent history when President Bush was running for office? There were some documents that came out purportedly about his National Guard service written by his commanding officer when he was in the National Guard. What was apparent was that he was getting preferential treatment because he was the son of a politician. Surprise! Sons of politicians may get preferential treatment. Here were some documents showing this to be true. Well, it came out very quickly that these documents were apparently written on a Microsoft Word program, on a modern processor, and they were forged. Well, what happened to the information contained in these documents? At that point no one paid any attention to the information found in the documents, because it was understood that this was a forgery. So, what before had become high publicity, now had disappeared.

Let me put it this way. If we cannot trust the writer, we cannot trust the writing. If the writer identifies himself and even give life stories, like at the end of chapter one when he speaks of the mount of transfiguration, we can trust the writing. If not, this person is just making this up. Well, how can we trust any of it? We can't. So it is important to say the writer is indeed Peter himself. I think the evidence strongly supports it, but I think there is Scriptural integrity as well.

Now he identifies himself and his ministry. He's a bondservant and an apostle of Jesus. It's kind of a humble way of putting it, a bondservant. He served the church. You need to think of this in the twenty-first century way of introducing a book. There are the biographical blurbs that might read something like, "The profound and inspirational author, Peter, is writing this influential document that has impacted countless lives." No, he doesn't do this sales job. He just says "a bondservant and an apostle of Jesus Christ," and then moves on humbly.

That's what he did; he served. He served from the beginning of his ministry when Christ called him as a disciple to feed the sheep. Remember, Jesus saying, "Do you love me? Feed my sheep." These were some of the last words that Christ said directly to Peter. From then on, he served the church, he taught the church, and he led the church as an apostle and as a leading apostle at that. His ministry was serving Christ, and he was sent by Christ to found the church, so he was a substantial figure. Peter was the rock on whom the church was founded as well as the other apostles.

That's the writer. Now, we'll look at the readers. The readers are described for us as having received faith. **"Those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours."** This reception of faith is something that came to them. I think we can make this comparison: our faith is initiated by God, it is not derived from ourselves. Just as their faith was received, our faith is received. We didn't create it. It was granted to us. It was given to us. **Ephesians 2:8-9** says, **"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast."**

If we understand our faith as coming from God's grace and not something we created ourselves, this should move us towards not being boastful or proud of it, but being grateful. And if we are grateful, that sets us up very well for responding to God as we ought to, because then we will have nothing to boast about.

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Our faith is initiated by God and we have to understand that. It is not something of our doing. It's been granted to us.

This faith is of the same kind as Peter's. Our faith is identical to Peter's. You know, there is only one faith. There's not first-rate faith, and second-rate faith, and you've got third-rate faith. There's one faith, and when we believe in Christ, this faith that has been granted to us is universal to all believers. You have the same quality of faith that the apostles had, and that faith enables you to obey. You have that ability based on the same faith that Peter and his readers had.

Next, our faith is from the imputed righteousness of Christ. It says this, **“who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ.”** The way that we receive the faith that's of the same kind is by the righteousness of Christ. This is an important theological concept here that Christ, when He lived on earth, lived a righteous, sinless life, didn't just do that as an example to us, though He did. He did that as a righteous person whose righteousness before God would be given to our account or reckoned to our account as if we were living a righteous life.

God looks at us and sees the righteousness of Christ imparted to us or imputed to our account when we believe. It's a rather deep concept. That's why we have books like Romans communicating these concepts in detail. But we are able to come before God cleansed and forgiven because God's righteousness in Christ has been given to us, imparted to us, and in that we have a great standing. By the righteousness of Christ we have faith. This has been granted to us by His righteousness.

Finally, the last phrase, **“the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ.”** This tells us something this last phrase, and what this tells us is that Christ is identified as God here, **“by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ.”**

Now how do I know this? How do we know that this isn't the righteousness of our God and of our Savior Jesus Christ, two different things? Well we know this because of this guy. This guy's name is Granville Sharp. That's his real name; he didn't make it up. He was a well-know abolitionist 200 years ago. He was a contemporary with the founding fathers of our country although he was English, and while many of our founding fathers were slave owners, Granville Sharp was a prominent figure opposed to slave trading.

But that's not why we remember him today. Why we remember him today is for the Granville Sharp rule, which is a Greek grammar rule. He made this observation in the Scriptures, and he noted that whenever you have a definite article in front of a noun, in this case we have that, and it's followed by another noun (and there's all kinds of stipulations here that I won't get into) but it's followed by another noun that doesn't have a definite article, then that is a way of combining the two together into one. I'll try to make this simple. You've got the God and Savior, which is a way of packaging these two things together. So Jesus Christ is described as being our God and Savior, which is evidence of the deity of Christ, which is another important teaching in terms of our faith. There are many, many teachings of Scripture that communicate the deity of Christ. This is just one of them, but it is an important one to know because it does teach that.

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As Peter is writing to the readers, he is trying to encourage them to live a godly life. And in doing this he is communicating of the resources that they have for faith. Their resources of faith were great and we will read these for you. First, he starts out in **verse two, “Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.”** This faith brings peace. We have the resource of peace. Now everyone that has faith has peace. We have peace with God. We are no longer in strife and the enemy of God. When we have faith, we are then in the position to be able to have peace multiplied to us, or to put it this way, God grants us peace through our faith in Him, and He multiplies our peace through our knowledge of Him.

So how do you become a more peaceful person, having the peace of God multiplied to you and able to live in peace? It's through the knowledge of God. The more we have a knowledge of God, and this knowledge of God is the intimate personal knowledge of God and Jesus Christ, as we have a deeper personal knowledge of God, the peace of God will be more infused into our lives, and we will be able to live more at peace and harmony with people around us, even if they are not very peaceful themselves. **“So far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men,”** we will be able to apply that. We have the resources of peace. We have an ability to live in peace by the grace of God through the knowledge of Jesus.

But we have more than that. We have the power of God, seeing that His divine power has granted something to us. This divine power that is granted to us is important because we are not living a godly life in our own power, but in the power of God that He has given to us. And the word “granted” is in the perfect tense. What that means is that it has been given to us, but what has been given to us has been given to us with continuing effects out into the future.

So that divine power is with us and has been granted to us to do something. And that something continues to this day and will continue outward into the future from here on. The power of God is strong, so when we know that we have divine power, I think we can conclude that this power is able to accomplish what it has been intended to accomplish because it is from God, not from ourselves. In other words, our ability to live godly lives comes from God. It's not coming from our selves. It's not from our intensity, our determination, but from God's grace infusing us with the power to accomplish what He desires in our lives.

So what has He provided us with? Next is the provision of God, **“Seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness.”** He has granted everything that pertains to living life, spiritual life, in the way that He would have us to live life in a godly fashion. This says a lot. This says that God has empowered us to live godly lives. He's given us the resources and provided us with what is necessary for us to do it. Not just for us to do it, but for the people that it was being written to two thousand years ago to do it.

There are some implications to this. The implication is that whatever was given to the reader of this book originally was sufficient for them to accomplish godliness, and it is sufficient for us as well. In other words, there is no innovations, methods, techniques, whatever that has been adopted or created or evolved today that is anyway more necessary or more essential for us to live godly lives than two thousand years ago.

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We have what we need, everything pertaining to live in godliness, and so did they. So whatever new fangled creations or new approaches that are trying to be sold to you about how to live a better life you can know that however God wants you to live, which is godly, was the same way that God wanted people to live two thousand years ago and everything, all of the resources pertaining to that, were available to them and are available to you by God's power and His gracious granting of these provisions.

Now what is it that He has provided for us? God has fully equipped us for everything He wants us to do. There are parallel verses that teach this. **2 Timothy 3:16-17** teaches it in terms of the Scripture being inspired by God, but it does more than tell us that Scripture is inspired by God. It also is used for teaching, reproof, correction, training in righteous, for a purpose, and the purpose is in **verse 17**. **“That the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”** We are able to be equipped for the good works that God has desired us to do based on the Scripture and that's why you have the rest of this here.

How does God persuade us to live? He **“has granted us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.”** He has persuaded us through the personal knowledge of God to walk in a manner pleasing to the Lord. How do we get this knowledge of God? How can we know about this knowledge? We know about this knowledge through His revelation through the Scripture. This is why this has been written to us and why Peter is writing. Through the Scripture we gain the true knowledge of God. As we gain the true knowledge of God, we move to walk in manner pleasing to the Lord.

Now, that knowledge of God is given to us, we are able to receive it by faith. When we have faith, the Holy Spirit comes into our lives. The Holy Spirit in our lives enables us to see God's Word for what it really is, the Word of God, and to see how it works and applies to our lives. So we won't just be reading this as words on a page. We will be reading this as how it affects our lives and what needs to be changed, what needs to be understood and taken seriously, and we will become encompassed with wanting to know God more and to be more like Him. But it is the Holy Spirit enlightening us, giving us the insight to see the Word of God and its application. That is what He has given to us. That is the means to godliness. If you are trying other means to godliness, it's not going to accomplish the means that God has given to us, the path that God has given us is His revelation through the power of His Spirit working in our lives.

For this purpose, He called us to His own glory and excellence. His purpose in all of this is for His glory. So it makes sense why He would grant us this, give us this to our lives so that He could be glorified, and the way that He is glorified is not only that we say nice things about Him, or we sing nice songs about Him, but we live lives that are pleasing to Him in obedience. As you know God better, personally, and intimately, that will move you to be pleasing to God. It will, if you have faith. If you don't it will be words on the page that will go in one ear and out the other, and you will find yourself rather bored by the whole thing. I trust you are able to see God, in faith, having a heart convicted by the truthfulness of this and desire to respond. If you do you will be seeking the knowledge of Him found in the Scriptures.

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The last thing He's given to us is in **verse 4**. **“For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises,”** and that's the same granted as we said with the divine power. It has been given to us, it has a lasting effect. Where are these precious and magnificent promises? They are in the Scripture.

God has promised us things and these promises are the resources that we have to live for the Lord. In other words, to say it this way, the more we embrace God's promises in His Word the more we can employ God's power in our walk and the application of God's Word in our lives as we understand the promises, because we will see them as being great things we can put our hope and trust in. As we learn what God has given to us and promised us we will then be having the confidence to live accordingly to those promises.

I will just point one out for you and that's one of the promises found in this very epistle. In the middle of **chapter 3** Peter promises, **“But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.”** That is a promise we are looking forward to. That whatever is now is going to be replaced by something even better and that should encourage us with hope for the future. This isn't a loss; this is a gain. The promises of God are powerful and God's spirit will help us to embrace those and walk according to those.

There is a last part of **verse 4** and that deals with the result of faith. The reason we have been given faith, we have received faith, and have the resources for faith is for this: **“in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.”**

There is a purpose for faith. The purpose for faith is that we can be a partaker in the divine nature. That's why God has granted us faith. Partaking in the divine nature, that sounds rather weighty. What is it to be a partaker in the divine nature? Does that mean we become somewhat like God?

Theologians will divide God's character into two categories. There are the communicable attributes of God and the incommunicable attributes of God, or in other words, the character of God that He imparts to us and the character of God that He doesn't impart to us. Well certainly there are some things that God does not impart to us like omnipresent. God is everywhere; we are not and we never will be. There are other things He does impart to us to degrees. None of this is complete at least in this lifetime, but some things He does impart to us, and the most notable thing is His godliness, His character, His holiness, His purity.

Being a partaker in the divine nature is a synonym for becoming more godly, becoming more like God in our character, to change from being more sinful to being more holy. In that we become partakers in the divine nature, his character. We don't become God like, we become more holy, and this is the path we are on. All of us, I trust, through faith, are on this path if we are believers.

Now another observation in this is that we don't only partake of the divine nature but we escape the corruption of the world, **“having escaped the corruption of the world by lust.”**

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There is something to be noted between being a partaker in the divine nature and escaping the corruption that is in the world by lust and that is partaking in the divine nature is something that is continuing to happen.

That “**you might become partakers,**” there is the potential for us partaking in godliness, but “**having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust**” is an event. It is even communicated in English for us this way, as “having escaped.” It's something that has occurred. I think this helps us in our pursuit of godliness. I think it helps us in this way, to recognize that we have the position of escaping the corruption of the world. We are not stuck in the corruption of the world. We have the position, if we have faith in God, to escape the corruption. That's where we are.

So where do we focus our attention now? We focus our attention on the partaking of God's nature, not in the escaping of the corruption of the world. There are techniques that people will try to employ in order to get to be a better person, and one of those techniques is that if we talk about all of our problems enough then we can avoid them. So, if we get together on a weekly basis, or twice a week, or something like that, we will make sure that we just don't sin. We don't do this sin or that sin and then we will become better. Well, God's desire for us is godliness, and godliness is not just stopping doing certain things. It's far more than that. It is becoming God's person that He has designed us to be. If we are to follow Him as He's called us to, this doesn't just mean stop doing this sin and stop doing that sin. It's embracing and encompassing our lives with all of what He would like us to be like. So if you are looking to be godly, and I hope you are, look more to partaking of God's nature than escaping the corruption of the world.

Let me put it to you this way. Godliness comes from focusing on our pursuit of God, not from focusing on our prevention of sin. That's why **Colossians 3:1-2** says, “**If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.**”

If we focus ourselves on the Lord, and the knowledge of Him, and the grace of Him, and the goodness of Him, and all of what He has granted to us, we are then setting ourselves up for living godly lives, and as that song puts it, the things of this world will be fading away. If we are focusing on the sin that we have, just stopping sin is not the same as living godly lives. We are looking to put on godliness, not just put off ungodliness, and the way we do this is by giving our focus and our attention to God, to the knowledge of God, to the words of God and following Him. If we do that, we will be the kind of person that God would have us to be. Fortunately, Peter has a lot more to say about this subject throughout the rest of this book, and so we will get to learn that together.

Let's bow in prayer that we can become what God would have us to be like. Lord, we thank You for Your goodness, for Your grace in our life that has granted to us the resources of faith, the godliness that enables us to live as You would have us to. We thank You for Your grace. We thank You for the faith that You have given to us. We thank You for the resources of Your Word and the Spirit that gives Your Word power in our life that brings about change. We pray that though we continue to overcome sin and the world that presses against us, that we could see victory, that we could see change no matter how old we are, how long we have been in the faith that we could continue to see growth and maturity, so that each one of us here can say with sincerity that we are following You and not looking to live for ourselves. Lord, we thank You for this in Jesus name. Amen.