

# Everybody dies but not everyone lives...

“...the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me (Galatians 2:20b).

## **2 Peter 1:1-4**

**1 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, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.**

This morning I would like to take a brief break from our series in Colossians and bring to you some of the truths that were taught to the youth at their camp this past week. My purpose in doing this is twofold. First, I greatly desire to reinforce with the youth the things they learned and by working through some of these truths again, I hope to accomplish that. In addition to this, I hope to challenge you as well with some of the same truths presented to the youth. By this then you can be an encouragement to the youth and the youth an encouragement to you as these truths are worked out in our lives.

The theme of the camp was as follows, “*Everybody dies but not everyone lives.*” The idea here borrows from what I believe James Montgomery Boice referred to as walking zombies. According to Ephesians 2:1, before a person is saved, all are said to be dead in their trespasses and sins. Romans 3:10 reminds us that there is no one righteous, not even one. And so, while there is the appearance of live around, those who live apart from Christ are dead and will die in their sins. But for those who come to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, who experience the reality of His presence in their lives, these are the people who truly live. This is what the Lord Jesus taught in John 10:10 when He gave one of the purposes of His coming, saying, “***I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.***” And it is clearly taught in what was the camp’s theme passage, Galatians 2:20 which says,

***I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.***

And the question we asked of the youth at camp, and I ask you this morning is this, “What does it mean to live for Christ?” What does living for Christ look like and how is it lived at all? With such questions we also can quickly agree that living for Christ can often seem hard and so we asked another question, “Why do you think it is so hard to live for Christ?”

It is not take a degree in mechanical engineering to discover why it can seem too hard to live for Christ. The answer to the question is simply that we try to live the live of Christ so much our own. We forget Galatians 2:20 and start working on ways to “live for Christ” when in part Christ is simple to be living in and through us. And so we are constantly telling one another what a Christian is supposed to look like, and what a Christian is supposed to do. How many times are you told that you need read your Bible, or go to church, or pray, or witness, or memorize Scripture? Does knowing these things make it any easier? Not always, not usually. In fact, the success rate for truly living for the Lord can seem amazingly low. How many Christians do you know who are radically intense in their following of Jesus? Totally sold out in serving the Lord? It

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doesn't matter what standard you use, no matter where you go in the world, and no matter which church you look at, there are lots of “Christians”, but very few who are “living” intensely for Christ.

And the problem is not that we don't know what to do. That may be the excuse of some, but not very many. Most Christians know exactly what they are supposed to be doing, and they just don't do it. There are a lot of reasons why not, but I believe that at the heart of them all is that we have left something out of our living for Christ that was never meant to be left out. And what is often left out is so obvious in the Bible that we can actually overlook it. Yet every Biblical author knew about it, especially the writers of the New Testament, and all of them, without fail, included this item in their writings. But we, to our detriment, have ignored it and passed over it.

One of the many places we could see this is found in 2 Peter 1:1-11. In this passage of Scripture we have a clear and concise explanation of what is often missing in our living for Christ. If you look down in this passage, beginning in verse 5 and going through verse 7 is a list of character traits or qualities that every good Christian should be building into his or her life. Verse 5 tell us plainly that to our faith we are to add what? Moral excellence, then knowledge, then self-control, then perseverance, then godliness, then brotherly kindness and finally love. What a great list for us to strive for. Nearly any good book on discipleship or following Christ would include this list. But notice that Peter does not begin his letter with this list. He does not say, “Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, here are the things you must do if you are going to live for Christ.” No, he begins with something else entirely. He begins with what is often lacking in our thinking when it comes to following Jesus. He begins by explaining what precious gifts we have been given because of our relationship to Christ. Without these precious gifts in our lives or without availing ourselves to these gifts, our living for Christ will be diminished at best. So then, let us consider four precious gifts that are ours and are to be operative if we are to live intensely for Jesus. In the first four verses of our text, we are presented with such precious gifts that come from the great riches of God and are at our disposal as Christians.

## I. We must have ***precious Faith*** (2 Peter 2:1)

*To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ.*

The first of the four gifts given to us as believers in Christ is a precious faith. If we are to live for Christ, we must have a precious faith. As believers, we are thankful and grateful for the salvation we have in Jesus Christ, and as great as this gift is, it is in one sense, just the tip of the iceberg. There is so much more that we have in Christ. And the more we come to understand that we don't make ourselves like Christ by our own power or doing but instead we rely on the power of Christ within us, the rest of living for Christ becomes so much easier. To say this another way, we so often want to make the list of verses 5-7 the cause of our faith rather than seeing them as the working out of our faith in Christ.

And so, beginning here in verse one, we find the first gift as we read that we have received a faith of the same kind, or as the KJV puts it a precious faith that comes by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ. We read, ***“To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ.”*** Peter is telling his readers that the faith he has is the same faith they have. Beloved, faith is not just something that simply grants us eternal life. No, in addition, it is faith that also develops the Christ life within us. *We believe in Jesus to receive eternal life, and we continue to believe in Jesus to receive the abundant life.*

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“...the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me (Galatians 2:20b).

And what is faith? We have said it before? Faith is what you believe about yourself, about God and about Jesus Christ as revealed in the word of God. Faith is believing yourself to be a sinner, deserving of God’s wrath and also seeing the God sent Jesus Christ into the world to bear your deserved wrath so that rather than dying, you might live for God. Through faith in Christ, we are declared righteous – right with God, and through faith in Christ, we become practically righteous. Elsewhere in the Bible, this is called living by faith, or walking in the Spirit. Faith is resting on and in Jesus. And living by faith, in this trust that Jesus came to save you from sin and make you like Him means that you will progressively become more and more like Jesus, because He makes us and molds us into His righteousness; into His perfection. The path of living for Jesus is not one in which we “make it happen” but one that begins when we trust that Jesus is making it happen, by faith.

Peter says in verse one that we have a faith of the same kind, or to say it another way, as equally precious as his own faith. That phrase “of the same kind” means just as valuable, just as precious and just as powerful.” We are reminded to never underestimate the power of faith, of trusting Jesus for life. For the same faith that enabled Peter to walk on the water; and enabled Peter and John to boldly speak before hostile religious leaders; and enabled Paul to stand before governors and kings; and enabled Daniel’s three companions, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah not to cower before the fierce King of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar but to speak of the greatness of God; and the same faith that enabled Abraham to leave the land of his youth and to believe in God – this is the same faith, made of the same substance; the same precious, valuable and powerful faith that is the precious possession of everyone who is a believer in Christ. This is the same faith that enable us to add to our faith things like moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and love. It is a faith that is “received” from God, not merited, not earned. We must never think that we are believers, that we have faith just because our parents are Christians, or because we believe that God exists, or because we attend church or youth meetings or camps, or because we sing hymns and worship songs. Faith is a matter of your heart, not your parent’s heart, not your pastor’s heart; not of a friend’s heart. Romans 10:9 says that you must “*believe in your heart Jesus is Lord.*” You must believe that you need Jesus to save you, to change you, to give you this precious faith. Have you believed?

Such a faith means that when the trials come; when the bad news falls; when the sickness incapacitates you, you must know that your faith, your trust in Jesus is just as valuable, just as powerful as the faith of Peter and the Apostles. Let us see our faith so precious, so valuable and so useful to our everyday lives. That you can say, “I make this decision because of my faith, my trust in Jesus and His word.” It is a precious faith because it is faith received, it is faith granted to us, it is faith given as a gift to encourage our hearts and sustain our souls. It is received not by my doing; not by my efforts but by or according to the righteousness of both God the Father and God the Son. O beloved, what can conquer such a faith? What can our faith lack if it is based upon the very righteousness of God? Do you have a faith of this same kind? What areas of your life need to be subdued by sovereign love and surrendered to His sovereign will? Precious faith looks to trust no one else and nothing else but Jesus.

## II. We must have **precious Peace** (2 Peter 1:2)

*Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord;*

But, if we would live for Jesus we must not only see our faith as precious but must also understand the precious peace of God. The next blessing for the one living for Christ is the grace and peace of God. Peter writes, “**Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of**

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**God and of Jesus our Lord.”** Here we have been given grace and peace. Not just some, but it has been multiplied to us. Grace is one of the richest blessings God has ever poured out upon us, and yet most Christians don't have the first inkling what grace is about, or how God's grace affects us, or how we should live a life of grace toward others.

Grace is God's unmerited favor toward sinners. The grace of God is His give to us that which we do not deserve. It is the grace of God that reminds us that while we were nothing but sinners in God's sight (Romans 3:23) we have now been made saints and children. It is the grace of God that reminds us that in the place of death, we have been given life (Romans 6:23). It is the grace of God that reminds us that those who have received the precious faith of verse one, also receive something they do not deserve, that is peace with God.

Because our faith is built upon the righteousness of God and of Jesus Christ, we also have a precious peace with God. Peace, as it is used here, is being in a right, harmonious relationship with God. We are reminded that without grace and without faith, we cannot be right with God. The peace of God...can you imagine? To be perfectly right with God; being absolutely comfortable with God. To be in God's presence and to come to Him as “Daddy”. One of the children was speaking to my wife of her daddy who is so strong he holds her with one hand and puts her on his shoulder. How beautiful. How intimate! How is our comfort with our heavenly Father?

But notice that it is not just some grace. And it is not just some peace. According to verse 2, it is grace and peace multiplied. It is increasing. WE can never come to a place in our relationship to Christ where we have come to end of grace or end of peace. Beloved, we will never exhaust these blessings. And how do we come to experience grace and peace and hold these as precious and valuable gifts from God. Our text tells us. It is **“in [or by] the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.”** Remember Jesus said that the ones who really live, who have eternal life, know the one true God and know Jesus Christ whom God has sent (John 17:3). Even in our text here notice how many times Peter mentions our need to know, to grow in the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ.

## **2 Peter 1:2**

**Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord;**

## **2 Peter 1:3**

**...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.**

## **2 Peter 1:5-6**

**5 Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, 6 and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness,**

## **2 Peter 3:17-18**

**17 You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, 18 but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.**

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If we are to live for Christ, we need grace and peace to be multiplied to us. On the cross Jesus provided for all who believe peace with God. But even day by day we can get out of step with God, right? So we need to experience grace and peace daily. How do we do that? Again, according to our verse we need to be **“in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.”** We need grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. How do we do that? We need to read His Word, pray continually for knowledge, and be with other believers who are living for the Lord. This is what it means to live.

And how do we know if we really know God and Jesus? We will see Him working His fruit in us. We know that God’s grace and peace are alive in us when we see the characteristics of verses 5-7 in us. This is how we know God and know that we have His grace and peace. Is this knowledge and peace precious and valuable to you?

### III. We must have **precious Power** (2 Peter 1:3)

*...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.*

The next thing needed to truly live for God is by living by God’s great power rather than depending on our own. We need to see God’s power as precious power.

What does verse 3 say, we read, **“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.”** What is missing in this verse? What else is needed? If we could just remember this one verse, it would make a difference in how we lived our lives. His divine power has given us all things necessary for life and godliness. You do not have to muster up strength from within yourself to live a godly life. You do not have to pull yourself up by your bootstraps. God has given you everything you need for life and godliness. Not some things, but all things. There is nothing He wants you to do that He has not given you the power and resources to do it. Our lives are to be lived by His power. As much as God’s power is able to accomplish, it is by this same power that we are now to live for Christ. Again, notice that it is a power granted, it is given. We have been blessed with everything, with all things needful for both life and godliness. In Psalm 145:16 we read, **“You open Your hand And satisfy the desire of every living thing.”** There is everything for life. In Colossians 2:2-3 we read of Paul’s concern for the church when he wrote,

***2 that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.***

That is to say, everything needful for godliness is hidden in Christ and in Colossians 1:27 we read of “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” Every power needed. Indeed everything needed to live for Jesus is found in Jesus. So, when we start looking at all the characteristics that God wants us to see Him working in our lives, it will sometimes be overwhelming. I mean “self-control” – can we really be self-controlled? Yes, if we come to God with our precious faith, knowing that we have precious peace with Him and that He has granted us His precious power to work in us.

And while it is indeed God’s power at work in us, such power does not render us without responsibility. We are to trust and labor and strive with God in seeing His power at work in us.

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Let us look at two passages that remind us of God's power at work. The first is found in Jeremiah 9:23-24 where we read:

**23 Thus says the Lord, "Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; 24 but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things," declares the Lord.**

Do we boast in the Lord? Do we praise the Lord for His exercising of love and justice and righteousness on the earth? The next passage is in the New Testament, Philippians 2:12-13 where we read:

**12 So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.**

We work out our salvation as God works His salvation in us. This is the precious power of God that He works in us for our good and His glory.

#### **IV. We must have precious Promises**

*For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.*

The final precious item we need to know and consider is found in verse 4. We need the precious promises of God. We read in verse 4, **"For by these [His glory and excellence] He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.**

The promise here is most importantly that God will do in us what we cannot do for ourselves. Look what Peter says! These are not just some small, piddly little promises to give us happiness in life and help us cope when our dog dies. Though He will help in the small areas of life, Peter says that God has also given us to exceedingly great and precious promises.

How great can these promises be? How about this - God promises that you will become a partaker of the divine nature! What exactly this means I can't tell you in its fullness. I don't know all that this entails. I know that we will not become God, nor will we become gods, but somehow, we will become like Him. What a promise! Notice that we have the word "precious" again. The promises are precious, exceedingly valuable. There is nothing like the promises of God, a reference to the very word of God. They are magnificent, that is great beyond degree. Oh, if we really held the word as so precious and so magnificent, how hard would it be to read and study and know God through them?

And I believe that this is the point concerning these precious promises, founded upon God's precious power, in which we have ever increasing precious peace all as a result of our precious faith. Peter is about to write about how to live the Christian life and how to know we are living it. The rest of the text lays out some of the markers that show us to be believers in Jesus. But before he lays them out, He wants us to know what we have already been given. *In the Bible,*

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before we are told what we must do, we are always reminded of what we have been given - the promises, the power, the peace, the precious faith. Before we can look for the things of verses 5-7, we must know these things to be true in us and for us. The reason why following Christ can be so hard is because we can look at what is supposed to be evident in our lives without looking to the precious faith, peace, power and promises that guarantees these things to be true in our lives. The Bible always begins with what we have been given; with what resources we own; with what God has already done for us. The Bible begins with grace. The Bible reminds us of our power. The Bible shares with us secrets and promises that spur us on toward love and good deeds. Such truths ought to cause our heart to race with excitement as we come to see ourselves no longer as simple sinners, but as sinners made righteous in Christ. And then we start to pursue ourselves what God has already begun in us; moral excellence – “God’s glory and excellence revealed in our lives – v. 3); knowledge – the true and life changing knowledge of God, of Jesus and of His promises; self-control – living by precious faith rather than insatiable flesh; perseverance – living in grace and peace multiplied (v. 2) rather than in the shortcomings of the flesh; godliness – that is escaping the corruptions of this world as mentioned in verse 4 – this is one of the benefits of living in light of the promises of God, they keep you from evil; brotherly kindness – that is a seeking of what is best for the community of faith, showing preference to one another; of going out of your way to benefit the church; and finally, of love – the seeking of what is best for communion or highest intimacy with God. Beloved, this is what the precious faith, peace, power and promises accomplish.

And remember, that even where we fail, grace picks up. We know that there are promises of God never to leave us or forsake us. There are promises that we will be like Him, that He hears us when we pray, and that He works all things for our good.

And as these precious gift are known and practiced, they keep us keep us from evil. Such blessings are what keep us from saying its okay if I’m angry; it’s okay to be sad and gloomy; it’s okay to be mad at my spouse, or my parents or at a friend; it’s okay to smoke this, or drink that, or date this person who has no interest in the things of God. Rather such practices come with the promise of verse 8 which says, **“For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”** Are you being useful and fruitful for Jesus? Are these qualities lived by the precious gifts of faith, peace, power and promises yours and increasing? I pray that it be so, for it is also by these that verse 10 tells us we can be certain of God’s calling and choosing of us. By these we know that we are living for Christ. By these we know that while it is true that everybody dies, we are also those who truly live, in Christ and for Christ to the glory of God.

*Soli Deo Gloria*

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