

2 Peter 1:3-11 Genuinely Knowing God 6/25/17

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, ⁴ 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. ⁵ For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, ⁶ and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, ⁷ and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. ⁸ For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. ¹⁰ Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. ¹¹ For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

(Pastor prays)

The Bible tells us that God has put eternity into the heart of man. There is a built-in and innate desire or drive to know God... Not to know about God, but to know Him. Millions of people have gathered in buildings just like ours this very moment because something is compelling them to find out about this God. Peter has written this little book in an effort to answer the questions, “How do we know God?” and more importantly, “How do we know that we actually do know God?”

That’s what Christianity is about. Christianity is not merely a set of doctrines to be accepted. It is a power to be experienced. Just believing things about Jesus will save no one. Satan and his devils are the most orthodox believers under Heaven so it must be more than just information. Over and over in this little book, Peter uses the word “knowledge.” He means so much more than having the right information. He means belonging to the right person, Jesus Christ. When you belong to Jesus, then and only then can you know what the prophet Jeremiah meant in Jeremiah 9:23-24 when he

wrote, *Thus says the LORD: "Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, ²⁴ but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD."*

So, the question I want to pose and you have to wrestle with is, "How do you know that you actually do know God?" That's what this passage is about. It's what Peter meant in verse 10 when he said *Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election*. This is about God's grace that saves us in Christ and how our lives must reflect that.

Knowing God Means Loving God and Loving God Means Living for God

I have just two points this morning. One has to do with what God does in saving us and the other has to do with how we can be sure we are saved. What is our responsibility?

We Know God Through His Power

Power, it's right there in verse 3. His divine power. It's the simple word "*dunamis*." It is used more than 100 times in the New Testament. Paul used it to talk about the Gospel in Romans 1:16, *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek*. It's God's divine power that is the ground of our salvation. It's not your special ability or secret knowledge or lists of virtues. There's a whole list of virtues in verses 5-7 but they don't save. It's God's power. Verse 3 says, *His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence*. He granted it to us. He, God, is the initiator, the giver or granter. All things that have to do with life, eternal life and godliness, living for Christ, he gave us the ability.

Stop here and see. It's the divine power that saves. If the power of God does not flow into your life and change you, you don't belong to Him. So, if that's the case, how does the power become real? How do I get it? Let's go back to verse 3. *His divine power has*

granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence. Through the knowledge of Him who called us. Keep looking at it. The knowledge of Him, that's Christ, who called us. So, here's what Peter is saying: The power of salvation comes through knowing Christ because of His call. Knowledge, it's a genuine giving over, an intense acquaintance, a thorough relational grasp of who He is and what He has done.

Since it's not just information, then the question is "How?" How do I know him? Let's read verse 3 again, *His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence.* Who called us? I am afraid we sometimes have a shallow and paper-thin view of God's call. We liken it to the way we might call someone or maybe a pet. We have a beagle at our house named Spurgeon. He was bred to hunt. If we let him out, and he strikes a trail on a rabbit or squirrel or deer, when I call him, nothing. When he has struck a trail, my call has no power. That is *not* how God's call is in the New Testament. *God's* call has the power. When you read verses 3 and 4, you see that the one who calls is the one who enables. Those whom God saves are called by Christ and this calling is accomplished through the knowledge of Christ's glory and goodness. God calls and it is so.

Last week I used the story of Lazarus and Christ's call that brought him back from the dead. But this week I want you to think back to Genesis and how God created. God said, "let there be light." In our passage, Christ has taken the initiative in calling men and women to Himself. And the one who calls, then enables, he gives us *all* we need. In verse 3 it says *all* things that pertain to life and godliness. These gifts are in Christ. In verse 4, we have been given great promises. We have the divine nature (Holy Spirit) in Christ. We have escaped all that goes with a life of sin. All of that is given to us in Christ. Grace. All of this reminds us that we know God through His power. That power is the Gospel of Grace. If you don't get grace right, then Christianity remains a dead religion of trying to be good enough. Christianity is grace. It's the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus...All in the place of sinners. But don't forget, Peter is writing this so you can know that you are saved. It's what he said in verse 10. Confirm your calling and election. If God's power makes you know Him, what is our part?

Our Lives Confirm that We Know Him

Our security is in the promises of God as they are seen in the everyday practice of life. We don't strive to *earn* God's grace. We strive *because* of God's grace. You'll see it in verse 5. "For this very reason." What reason? It's back in verse 3 and 4. It's because of what God has done in us. It's because He has saved us in Christ. It's because of this that you make every effort to supplement your faith.

Let's stop there and think a minute. Verses 3 and 4 told us we have been given all things that pertain to life and godliness. We are saved through the divine nature of Christ and we receive the promises. So, we have the ability. Here it is. God is sovereign in salvation. We are responsible to live it. Verses 5-7 is a "golden chain" of qualities that starts with faith and ends with love (agape). It's Peter's vision of discipleship. This is how you know that you are a Christian. It's what he says after the list. Let's read verses 8 and 9. *For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.*

That makes this list pretty important and a fairly good diagnostic test to ask yourself. Are you making every effort to grow? Are these qualities yours and are you increasing in them? Let's look at the list in verses 5-7 and do so in the form of questions.

The first foundational trait is *faith*. It's a transforming faith...A faith that has focused your life on the truths of the Gospel. Have you believed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus? And as a part of that faith, have you repented of your former sins and committed your life to Him? And have you done so at all costs? Because without faith, it's impossible to please God.

Virtue is a rare word in the New Testament. It is sometimes translated as "excellence." It's the proper fulfillment of what you were designed to do. You're created for a purpose. Are you fulfilling that purpose? Are you doing the right thing regardless of the outcome? Is your life worth imitating? Can I tell kids to be like you in every regard?

Notice that knowledge is *not* first on the list. Knowledge doesn't always lead to virtue. It has to be practical and real knowledge that corrects the course of your life. Do you know the Gospel of Jesus Christ? Can you share it? Do you demonstrate it? Does your knowledge of God affect how you live? What are you doing to grow in your knowledge of God and the Bible?

Self-control means controlling your desires instead of them controlling you. It's one of the fruits of the Spirit. Are you able to resist temptation? Can you say no to stuff? Are

you growing up? Remember, God has given us everything to get the job done. Are you lazy spiritually?

Steadfastness is perseverance, longevity, and strength. Are you loyal to what you are committed to? Are you loyal to your home, work, marriage, friends, church? When you get derailed by your own sin, do you wallow in it or do you repent and start a new day? The mature Christian doesn't give up. Are you easily upset?

Godliness is another uncommon word in the New Testament. This is not an outward false piety. This is a practical awareness of God in every aspect of life. It's not just a good day that you enjoy, but every part of your life. Do you see God in all of your life? Do you trust His direction even when it is unpleasant? Are you hoping to be more like Christ as you are on your way to meet Him?

Brotherly affection. The true mark of discipleship is your love for other people. Do you pray for your friends? Do you pray for people you don't normally like? Do you pursue a relationship with people in this church that are not like you?

And finally, love. The word is "agape,"; a deliberate and selfless desire for the highest good for someone else, a love that makes you more like Jesus Christ.

Peter's list of self-examining words gives us the test of our election and calling, an assurance of our salvation. His divine power gives us what we need in salvation. It's our responsibility to work out our salvation in lives that actually show it. Because to know God is to love God and to love God is to live for God. This is only possible through the transforming power of the Gospel.

(Pastor shares the Gospel and prays)