

Precious and Very Great Promises

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 13 September 2020

Preacher: Matthew Capone

[0 : 0 0] Good morning. My name is Matthew Capone, and I'm the pastor here at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church, and it's my joy to bring God's word to you today.

Special welcome if you are new or visiting with us. We're glad that you're here, and we're glad that you're here not because we're trying to fill seats, but because we're following Jesus together as one community.

And as we follow Jesus together, we've become convinced that there's no one so good, they don't need God's grace, and no one so bad they can't have it, which is why we come back to God and his word week after week.

You'll remember that we just started the book of 2 Peter, which I invite you to turn to either in your Bible or your worship guide or your phone. And you'll remember that the book of 2 Peter is a letter written by a man named Peter, and he writes it to a church in the 60s AD somewhere in the Roman Empire, and he writes it with one desire.

Peter wants these people to grow. And his desire for their growth has two components. He wants them to grow in grace, and he wants them to grow in knowledge.

[1 : 0 7] That's how he both begins and ends the letter. Remember, we saw last week at the very beginning, he wants them to grow in grace and peace through knowledge, and then he ends the letter, the very last verse, chapter 3, verse 18.

He commands them to grow in the grace and knowledge of their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. And so last week, we looked at the question of knowledge. What is it worth? What does it do? And we saw a few things.

First of all, we know what it doesn't do. It doesn't earn us anything from God because we rest on the righteousness of Jesus Christ. But it does do something, which it's involved in God's growing us in grace and peace.

And so knowledge leads to grace and peace. That's how we grow. And if we're growing in knowledge, then we need to be growing in grace and peace. And so we're going to follow that up this morning, continuing, discussing knowledge, looking at if knowledge is what we need to grow in grace, how does knowledge actually do that?

How does knowledge motivate and empower our obedience? How does it create that growth in our lives? You might be someone who's listening. You think about the Bible, and often it feels dead to you.

[2 : 1 6] You read it. It doesn't seem to bring life. Maybe you're growing in knowledge, but you don't feel like you're growing in grace. Maybe you've given up on knowledge because it doesn't seem to make a difference.

Well, Peter's going to continue what he told us before. He's going to help us understand how it is that knowledge leads to this growth. We're going to get the beginning of an answer.

In fact, much of the book of 2 Peter is going to be about how doctrine affects our day-to-day lives. So we're going to look at some detailed doctrines. We're going to look later at the doctrine of Scripture and inspiration, how we have the Bible.

And it's going to be practical. How does that affect our lives? We're going to look at the doctrine of the end times, what's going to happen at the end of the world. And it's going to be practical. It's going to affect our day-to-day lives. Because Peter is not going to tell us how many cans of tuna we should stockpile.

But instead, he's going to tell us how we live in light of the fact that Jesus is coming back. And so with that question, how does knowledge motivate and empower our obedience?

[3 : 22] We're going to turn now to 2 Peter 1, starting at verse 3. And remember, as we come to this, this is God's Word. And God tells us that his Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. Which means that God has not left us to stumble alone in the dark. But instead, he's given us his Word to show us the way to go. And so that's why we read now, starting at verse 3.

I invite you to pray with me.

As we come to this portion of God's Word. Our Father in Heaven, we thank you for your Word that gives life. And we ask that you would use it to do that this morning.

That you'd break up the hard soil of our hearts. And that you would challenge us by your Word. That you would encourage us with it. And you would cause us to look to Jesus Christ as our hope and our Savior.

[4 : 41] We ask these things in his name. Amen. When I was 9 years old, some of you know that in a previous life, I played violin and viola.

And when I was 9 years old, I don't believe in reincarnation. When I say previous life, I just mean a long time ago. When I was in a previous life, when I was 9 years old, I began taking violin lessons from a woman who lived close to us.

And this woman was married to a man who was also a musician. That's how they met. He, however, did not teach lessons. The reason he didn't teach lessons is because he didn't need to. And the reason he didn't need to is because he had one of the most coveted jobs in the music world, which is that he was in a military band. Now, if you know anything about the music world, you know that those jobs are highly coveted.

Because they're one of the few jobs as a musician where you have a full-time job. You have benefits. You're not trying to piece together a lot of different gigs. Part-time in an orchestra.

Part-time teaching.

[5 : 42] Relying on performances during Christmas. And so this man had no need to teach. And, of course, it also means you're at the very top of your game. If you meet someone and they play for a military band, you know, oh, you are very good at what you do.

So, for example, when I first met John Alpeter, I had not heard him play, but I knew he played for a military band. I thought, oh, you must be very good at what you do. I see you.

I see you, John. And so this man, of course, the United States Marine Band, not only was he in a military band, he was in the Marine Band, which is known as the President's Own. And so they're responsible for playing at presidential events and diplomatic events.

So he had a picture. This was in the 90s. He had a picture in his house of him with Bill Clinton. And I'm sure now, at this point, he has a picture with President George Bush and President Barack Obama and President Donald Trump.

He actually sometimes would be at state events, and he would walk around and just play. So he'd be, you know, feet, inches away from world leaders. All to say, he was very good.

[6 : 41] He had no need to teach. Now, I was taking lessons from his wife. And at one point, during a lesson, I complained about how I was not able to get the sound that I wanted, and I blamed it on the instrument.

Just can't, you know, there's something about this instrument. It's just, it's not doing what I want it to do. And so, this one being very wise, called. The man was home, so she called him and said, hey, you know, Matthew's complaining about this instrument.

Would you take a look at it? Now, this man normally played a \$14,000 instrument, which was owned by the U.S. military.

So the military doesn't just own mobile gun units. They also own \$14,000 violas. He takes this instrument and plays it. And, of course, it sounds amazing, right?

There is nothing wrong with the instrument. And so, he hands the instrument back to me. Says, the instrument's good. The point is this.

[7 : 43] The power is in the player, not the instrument. Whether it is a student instrument or a \$14,000 professional instrument, it is not the instrument that matters as much as the one who plays it.

And the power is also not in the listener, but the player. And so, if you are at a concert and you're moved by the music that's being played, you don't say to yourself, unless you're very deceived, wow, I am such a good listener.

No, you are moved by the music because it is such a good musician. It is not the instrument that matters as much as the power that is behind it.

And that is what Peter is telling us here. We are told in verse 3 that we are given God's divine power through knowledge. The through word here is an instrument word.

God uses knowledge as an instrument of his power. It is God, the player, that matters. It is not that knowledge has some kind of inherent power to it, but that God has chosen to use it as his instrument.

[8 : 56] That's why we're told in Jeremiah chapter 23 that God's word is like a hammer that breaks a rock into pieces. Ephesians chapter 1 verses 19 and 20 tells us that the same power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead is the power at work in us.

We are not like Muslims. We don't believe that there's something special about this book as a physical object. If I sleep at night and the Bible is next to me, there's not some sort of osmosis that happens.

No, the power is not in the instrument fundamentally, but in the one who is behind it. And so as we ask this question, how does knowledge motivate and empower our obedience?

We see this first of all, that God uses knowledge. He uses his word as an instrument for his power to play a song of obedience in our lives.

Knowledge matters because God is powerful.

[10 : 09] Knowledge matters because God has chosen to use it. And so it's divine power. It's the player that matters through knowledge.

Knowledge, the instrument. And so we come week after week, right, showing up here at church expecting God to be at work.

The power is not ultimately in the preacher. The power is not ultimately in the words, though God uses them.

They are instruments of God and his power in our lives. And in fact, Peter tells us exactly the song of obedience that's being sung.

So we know there's a song, there's a divine power. The instrument is knowledge, verse 3, verse 4, by which he has made us partakers of the divine nature.

[11 : 09] And then in verse 3, he's granted to us, again, this is giving language, sort of like we saw last week, granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness. So he's given us these things to participate in the divine nature.

Now, participate in the divine nature might sound a little strange. Mount Sin, like maybe we're somehow becoming many gods. That is not what Peter is talking about.

Instead, he's talking about what we would call God's communicable attributes. In theology, we talk about God having two kinds of attributes, communicable and incommunicable. His communicable attributes are the ones he can share with us.

The incommunicable attributes are the ones he can't. If you didn't follow any of that, think about it in this way. As we grow in sanctification, as we grow as Christians, we don't think, man, as I follow God, I really want to grow in my omnipresence.

I am going to be able to be at all places at all times. Despite what Harry Potter might tell you, horcruxes are not a real thing. You cannot have multiple places where you are present.

[12 : 16] God doesn't share those things with us. We do not participate in the divine nature in that way. There are, however, characteristics of God that he does share with us. God is love.

We grow in our love. God is holy. It's our goal to grow in our holiness. In fact, this is the sort of thing that we see listed in Galatians 5 as the fruit of the Spirit.

What are the communicable attributes of God? What do we have if we participate in the divine nature? Well, we have love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. That is what happens when we participate.

We're partakers of the divine nature. Peter, by the way, is going to give his own list, verses 5 through 8, that we'll look at next week.

I'll just give you a teaser here. Virtue, self-control, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly affection, love. Those are the things that are in God's song of obedience that he plays in our lives by his power through knowledge.

[13 : 26] We become partakers of the divine nature. Hebrews chapter 4 tells us that the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and

spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

God's word is powerful in our lives. And so how does knowledge motivate and empower our obedience? Well, first of all, it does that because God places his power behind it.

God chooses to use it. It's not, however, just God's power, but his promises. That's what we see in verse 4. He's granted to us his precious and very great promises.

Now, you all know last week we had Labor Day. Of course, when there's Labor Day, there are lots of amazing sales. Some of the best sales going on that I know about were at REI, and they had some sales that they typically don't even have.

They had 25% off very nice backpacking packs. And I happen to have a couple very short backpacking trips coming up, and I'm in the market, and I've been talking to one of my friends who I'm going with who knows a lot about these things, and he's been advising me.

[14:43] So I went ahead and I bought a pack. It was painful, but I knew it's not going to be 25% off for a long, long time. Now, I have a trip coming up in a couple weeks, just for a couple nights.

And next Friday, the guys that I'm going with, we're going to get our packs and our gear together, and we're going to pack them just to make sure we have everything, and to make sure everything fits, because it's been a long time since any of us have been backpacking.

So if there's something we're missing, we're going to have another couple weeks to go out and buy it. If the packs are too small, we'll know that. We need to readjust. We are the ones packing our bags, right? We have to make sure we have everything we need.

This passage is telling us that God has already packed our bags. God has already given us everything we need.

We see that in verse 3. His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness. God has given us what we need to live lives of godliness.

[15:47] He's given us what we need to become partakers of the divine nature. He has granted them, right? I had to pay a lot for a backpack.

We pay nothing for what God has given us. I have a limited amount of space. It's 48 liters, by the way.

I cannot pack everything. I cannot be prepared for every situation. God has prepared us for every situation.

God has given us everything we need for life and godliness. God has packed our bags for this life. I have limited space. God has given us 66 books to prepare us for every situation. God always prepares us. He gives us what we need for what he commands.

[16:45] God never sends us out without backing us up. God has given us what we need for our lives of God. God has given us what we need for our lives of God. And he has done that through knowledge. And so we can reach into the bag that he's given us.

And there's all sorts of things we're going to draw out, right? One of them is his promises. Peter is going to tell us all sorts of things in knowledge that we need to make it through life.

He starts out by telling us about God's precious and very great promises. When I was living over on Whistler Hollow a couple years ago, before I moved, I lived with a couple.

And the man, his father was a firefighter. And so he understood the danger of wildfires. He was a firefighter on the western slopes. And so at one point while I was living with him, they put together a go bag, which is a bag where you have what you need if you have to leave your house in, say, 10 minutes.

Someone knocks on your door. They say, a wildfire is coming. That's the bag you grab that has your essentials. And they had a plan they put together for their pets as well. They knew which car they were taking, how they were going to operate it all.

[17:55] They even bought these canisters of water that they had in their garage in case something happened. No matter what happens to the Christian, if our house is on fire, what we leave with is God's precious and very great promises.

No matter what situation is going on, when we reach into the bag that God has given us for this life, we look for his precious and very great promises.

That is the way and one of the only ways that we are prepared for whatever life gives us. When we are facing an election season and a country filled with turmoil and perhaps we're tempted to give up hope, we look to God's precious and his very great promise in this book in 2 Peter 3, verse 13, that we look forward to new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

We look to God's precious and very great promise in Psalm 46 that he is our refuge and our strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, we will not fear.

When we become Christians and our family does not understand our decision and we feel alienated and isolated from them, we remember God's precious and very great promise in Psalm 27, verse 10, though my father and my mother have forsaken me, the Lord will take me in.

[19 : 32] When we face persecution because of our faith in Jesus Christ and we wonder whether it's worth holding on and being faithful, we remember God's precious and his very great promise in Matthew chapter 5, that though men speak all manner of evil against you on my account, you are blessed for great is your reward in heaven.

When you are at the doctor's office and you knew you were going to talk to the doctor, but you forgot you had to talk to the nurse beforehand, and she comes in and asks you, why are you here to see the doctor?

And normally you would speak without hesitation, but this time you find a lump in your throat because you don't want to say, I'm here because of depression.

I'm here because of a miscarriage. We remember and take hold of God's precious and his very great promise in 1 Corinthians chapter 2, verse 9, that what no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him.

We take hold of God's precious and his very great promise in Psalm 34, verse 18, that God is near to the brokenhearted and he saves the crushed in spirit.

[20 : 47] When we are struggling with sin and we're not sure if we're going to make it, if we are going to survive to the end, we remember God's precious and his very great promise in Philippians chapter 1, verse 6, for I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

When we face all sorts of situations in our lives and we don't know what to do, we remember God's precious and his very great promise in James chapter 1, verse 5, that he gives wisdom to those who ask.

We remember his promise in Psalm 25 that he gives wisdom to the humble. God has packed our bags with his precious and very great promises.

And so again, we see that knowledge and grace are intimately connected. We must know God's promises.

That is the knowledge that leads to grace and peace. And of course, an even greater promise than all of those is in 2 Corinthians chapter 1, verse 20, where we're told that all the promises of God find their yes and amen in Jesus Christ.

[22 : 17] It's not the promise that matters as much as the one who makes it. And so why can we trust and believe all of the promises that I've just listed for you? It's because Jesus is the one who underwrites them.

It's not the paper that State Farm or USAA or GEICO sends you that matters. It is the company that stands behind it.

Jesus is the one who stands behind all of God's precious and very great promises. He is the one who has paid for them and earned them on our behalf.

And he did it when he lived as a man without sin on this earth, living the perfect life that we should have lived and then dying the death that we deserved. And so everyone that has faith in him, everyone that has faith in Jesus Christ, having repented of their sins, turning away and realizing that he is their only hope, they can call on God's precious and very great promises.

That's what we see in verses 3 and 4. He has called us to his own glory and excellence. Why do we have access to these things?

[23 : 30] Not because we are great, but because God is great. And he shows us his glory and his excellence because he gives us salvation.

And it's his glory and his excellence that allow him to give us salvation. It's his perfection that allowed him to die on our behalf.

It's his perfection that meant he could pay the penalty for our sins. And so it's his glory and his excellence that enables him to pay the debt for our sin. Remember I told you, even at 25% off, backpacking bags are not cheap.

God has purchased our bag for us. Everything in it he has given to us. It is free. Not to Jesus, but it's free for us.

And so we have God's promises. We have them in our go bag. Those are the phone numbers that we're memorizing. Remember I talked about that last week.

[24 : 43] Not as abstract knowledge, but as knowledge that we need for the journey ahead of us. Brothers and sisters, if we want to grow, if we want knowledge to motivate and empower our obedience, we must know the promises of God.

We know them, not as abstract knowledge, but as things that we stand on no matter what happens in our lives.

Some of you know that I'm sort of a casual runner. And I have to say casual because in the running community, if you run less than 15 miles a week on average, no one has any time for you.

But there was a period in my life when I ran a few half marathons. I haven't done that in a long time. But if you're aware of what it takes to run a half marathon, especially of a marathon, you know that nutrition matters a lot.

In fact, if you don't eat right, you're not going to make it. And there's been a lot of damage done to athletes who don't have the right nutrition. There's been a lot of research that's come out the last few years, especially female athletes who were told the lie that they shouldn't eat any fat.

[25 : 56] Of course, that leads to all sorts of injuries and problems. Your body desperately needs fat if you're going to go the distance, if you're going to work out at that level. Of course, you know the same thing is true if you're lifting weights.

If you lift big, you got to eat big. If you don't, you will injure yourself. At worst, you will not grow at the very least.

That's the best thing that could happen to you. So if you go out and you run 20 miles and you get back, are you going to drink regular milk? No, you're going to drink chocolate milk. Let's go. If you're lifting, are you going to try to make sure you have a carb-free diet?

If you're smart, you won't. If you are going to run far, you got to eat right. And if you are going to lift big, you better eat big.

How is it that God's knowledge empowers and enables our obedience? He does it through his power and he does it through his promises.

[27 : 07] If we have any hope of going the distance, if we want to live big, if we want to participate in the divine nature, we will also have to eat big, feasting on all of God's promises that he's given to his people.

That is how God gives us his power and his promises. If we want to lift big, we better eat big. Please pray with me.

Our Father in heaven, we thank you for the power of your word. We ask that you would drive it deep into our lives, that we would know and understand and rest on your promises more and more.

And we thank you most of all for your promise in Jesus Christ, that everything finds its yes and amen in him. And so we ask these things not in our power, but in the name of Jesus.

Amen.