

Confirm your Calling



Matthew Allen & Cain Atkinson

Confirm Your Calling **A Study of 2 Peter 1.1–11**

A Bible Study Workbook
By Matthew Allen and Cain Atkinson

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Table of Contents

	Why This Study?	1
Lesson 1	Recipients of Divine Power	3
Lesson 2	Precious and Very Great Promises	9
Lesson 3	Make Every Effort	13
Lesson 4	Goodness	19
Lesson 5	Knowledge	23
Lesson 6	Self-Control	29
Lesson 7	Endurance	35
Lesson 8	Godliness	41
Lesson 9	Brotherly Affection	46
Lesson 10	Love	53
Lesson 11	How to Be Fruitful and Effectual	59
Lesson 12	Don't Ever Forget	67
Lesson 13	Faith So Strong You'll Never Fail	72

Why This Study?

Much has been written about the current culture war Americans are embroiled in. It is easy to see the moral decay, militant anti-Christianity, and family decline. It is easy to see that the decline is picking up speed. Clear differences can be seen when comparing the present with things just a few years ago.

How do Christians engage in times like these and advance the cause of Christ?

Are we prepared to stand in the gap, move in faith, and lead those around us toward the God who loves us?

We serve the great God who has more than enough power to repair our individual lives and bring times of refreshing to a dry and thirsty land. Christians don't bury their heads in the sand or throw their hands up in defeat. God's people stand tall in their commitment, take the battle to Satan, and defend areas of vulnerability. It is this way that we follow Peter's admonition in his first epistle:

Therefore, with your minds ready for action, be sober-minded and set your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the desires of your former ignorance. But as the one who called you is holy, you also are to be holy in all your conduct; for it is written, Be holy, because I am holy. (1 Peter 1.13–16)

In his second epistle, Peter opens with some of the most practical instructions for taking the battle to Satan and his efforts to lead our individual lives, our families, and communities away from God. If we are going to have any impact on those around us, we must be committed to our individual responsibility to add to and grow our faith. As we do this, we'll find the natural result of our growth is an increasing influence on our families, circle of friends, and ultimately, those we engage with inside our community.

This study takes an in-depth look at 2 Peter 1.1–11. In it we find the encouragement to hold onto the knowledge of how we have received *everything required for life and godliness*. We are reminded of the *very great and precious promises* that enable us to *share in the divine nature* and *escape the corruption that is in the world*. We are exhorted to develop our faith and assured that when we do, we will *confirm our calling and election* so that we will *never stumble*. Finally, we are told that as faithful Christians we can look forward to a *glorious entry into the eternal kingdom . . . which will be richly provided*.

Are you ready? Let's go. Let's learn what it takes for us to confirm our calling.

Recipients of Divine Power

2 Peter 1.1–3

1.1–2 — Introduction

As Peter's letter begins, he identifies himself as a servant and apostle of Christ. His inclusion of the word *servant* gives us a little insight into his heart. Peter, once brash, outspoken, and confident in himself, now confesses his submission, sense of duty, and obedience to Christ. But he also was writing from a position of authority and dignity. As an apostle he was divinely commissioned to impart the truth he received from the Holy Spirit. Although not specified, Peter's intended audience is probably the same one addressed in his first letter: those in northern Asia Minor, 1 Peter 1.1. It would have mostly been a Gentile audience, written toward the end of Peter's life, i.e., ~ 68 AD.

Peter's statement in the second part of verse 1 really stands out. He speaks to those who have *received a faith equal to ours through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ*. Note right from the beginning how Peter places the source of our salvation on a divine level. In the original language, the word we use for *received*, refers to the Old Testament practice of casting lots¹ in order to learn God's will. In a broader sense, the word means "to obtain by divine will."² Faith is not something handed down to only the well-connected or privileged few but is freely available and given to all who choose to believe. Faith is something all believers share, whether one is like Peter, who was with Jesus and a divinely appointed apostle, or a common person either Jew or Gentile. Faith brings the same spiritual privileges to every person, regardless of earthly rank, position, heritage, race, education, gender, etc. For more biblical teaching on this read Galatians 3.26–28 and Romans 10.12–13.

1 Leviticus 16.8–10; Joshua 7.14; Proverbs 16.33; 18.18; 1 Chronicles 25.8–31.

2 Arndt, William, Frederick W. Danker, Walter Bauer, and F. Wilbur Gingrich. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000, p. 581.

Also note how the only way this is all possible is by *the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ*. Everything in your spiritual life hinges on the work Jesus did while on earth, ultimately leading to the cross where He died in your place as the perfect sacrifice. This verse is also one of the sixteen times in the New Testament where the title of “Savior” is given to Christ. While that is the essence of biblical teaching regarding the purpose of Jesus’ coming, it is also important to note that since Peter is writing primarily to a Gentile audience, the usage of “Savior” fits in very well in the Gentile vernacular of the day. “Savior” was a very popular pagan-religious term that was often applied to Hellenistic savior-gods and divine rulers, especially in the Caesar cult.³ If this is the case, then Peter is using the common religious vocabulary of the day in order to stress who the real Savior and God is.

In verse 2, Peter writes out the standard greeting common to most New Testament epistles. While we often read of *grace* and *peace* in these salutations, here we see the added component of *knowledge*. Peter opens the epistle with a stress on knowledge and also closes it in the same way:

Therefore, dear friends, since you know this in advance, be on your guard, so that you are not led away by the error of lawless people and fall from your own stable position. 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. (2 Peter 3.17–18)

In other words, Peter wants us to make our spiritual life very personal. We’re not amid an academic pursuit simply for the purpose of acquiring knowledge. We are taking the word of God deep into our heart for the purpose of transformation and creating a relationship with our Creator. Included with that comes knowledge of specific things about God and who He is, His church, and what He expects from us. This is, as Moo describes, “a knowledge of God that unites head and heart.”⁴

3 Bauckham, Richard J. 2 Peter, Jude. Vol. 50. *Word Biblical Commentary*. Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1983, p. 159.

4 Moo, Douglas J. 2 Peter, Jude. *The NIV Application Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996, p. 38.

1.3—WHAT JESUS PROVIDES

Divine power

The New Testament makes clear that our ability to accomplish anything spiritually comes by divine power, not our own. This goes all the way back to initial salvation. We did not birth ourselves spiritually. Rather, we surrendered to God on the occasion of our baptism and allowed His Spirit to do the work of washing and regeneration directly upon our heart, Titus 3.5. In Ephesians 1.18-19, Paul prayed that we would grow to a greater understanding of the *immeasurable greatness of His power toward those who believe, according to the mighty working of His strength*. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead is the same power that raised us spiritually from the dead and remains in us. Later in Ephesians, Paul writes about this power and how it is through God that we are able to experience a reality *far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us*, Ephesians 3.20. This power fuels our works as we live to glorify God and expand His kingdom.

As we reread 2 Peter 1.3, please note the verb tense: *His divine power has given us, . . .* This is describing an action that happened once in the past and continues into the present. God's power was not only demonstrated at our baptism (when we received salvation), but it continues to be in us to this day.

Everything . . .

Do not pass over this word, because this holds a very important place inside the sentence. It is written emphatically. The ability to live the type of life that God desires is within the grasp of every Christian. We are without excuse if we fail to follow through because we have already received everything that is necessary to do so.⁵ No part of divine power has been held back from us. We've been given every *spiritual blessing*, Ephesians 1.3. God *freely gives us all things*, Romans 8.32.

. . . required for life

God wants us to lead stable, productive, and influential lives as we sojourn on earth. To facilitate this, He has imparted to us His eternal word, provided us with spiritual leaders who exhort and teach, and given us fellow

5 Davids, Peter H. *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude. The Pillar New Testament Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2006, p. 168.

Christians to lean upon. When trials come, we have the avenue of prayer and the promise that if we will cast our care upon Him, we will receive His care, 1 Peter 5.7. Through the application of Biblical principles, we can lead exemplary lives, live inside meaningful relationships, and impact our communities in a positive way. Christianity equips every Christian, despite their circumstances, to lead the best life possible here, while living with growing anticipation for the *eternal life* that is to come.

. . . required for godliness

“Godliness” comes from a word that means “piety” and focuses on “reverence towards the gods,”⁶ the devout practice for, and appropriate beliefs about God. Another writer describes it as “good worship,” that “summarizes the behavior expected of Christians who have come to know the God of Scripture.”⁷ You have everything you need to live the type of life God desires. Godliness is the *activity* of this life. All that we need to preserve, strengthen, and bring to consummation, has been provided.

1.3B—HOW JESUS PROVIDES

All of this comes *through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness*. Our ability to lead the type of life God desires comes by a deep and genuine knowledge. Our understanding and acceptance of the fact of Jesus’ death and resurrection on our behalf, fuels our motivation to live as a Christian should. In our relationship with Him, we grow each day with a larger conviction and courage to live like Jesus did. As we do this, He continues to provide guidance, support, and care. This is why the apostles spent so much time directing the early Christians to grow in knowledge. Colossians 1.9–11 and Ephesians 3.17–21 are two such examples that go along with what Peter emphasizes in this short epistle.

The *calling* in this verse is a common expression inside the New Testament.⁸ This is God’s general call upon men/women to be saved. This call came by the goodness and glory of Christ. When combined with “glory,” “goodness” refers to the divine moral excellence of Christ, focusing especially on the

6 Liddell, Henry George, Robert Scott, Henry Stuart Jones, and Roderick McKenzie. *A Greek-English Lexicon*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996, p. 731.

7 Moo, p. 41.

8 1 Peter 1.15; 2.9; Romans 1.7; 8.28.

beauty of His goodness. In the original language when the term *goodness* is applied to God, it refers to “that which manifests divine miracle-working power for good.”⁹ Think of how that plays out here. We trust in the fact of Jesus’ death and what it accomplished and the divine miracle of His resurrection. Through this and the message of the apostles, God has called us. We respond to that calling through our belief, repentance, and baptism, resulting in salvation.

For Thought and Reflection

1. Share your own thoughts about Peter’s description of himself as a servant and apostle. How does this provide us with an example to follow as we lead our own Christian life in whatever capacity we serve?
2. What is so important about Peter’s statement of those who have received a faith *equal to ours*? How is this especially relevant to our day and age?
3. Whose divine power is in view at the beginning of v. 3?
4. Why is the word *everything* stressed?
5. In what way has Christ provided you with everything you need to live in this life & the life to come?
6. In what way has Christ provided you with everything you need in order to live a godly life?

⁹ Hillyer, Norman. *1 and 2 Peter, Jude. Understanding the Bible Commentary Series*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011, p. 161.

8 *Confirm Your Calling*

7. What is meant by *knowledge* in this epistle? Is it merely academic knowledge, or is it something else?

8. When were we called to salvation?

9. How far was God willing to go to save you?

10. Why are *glory and goodness* such important ways to describe Jesus?

Lesson 2

Precious and Very Great Promises

2 Peter 1.4

Introduction

Previously we examined the opening verses of 2 Peter. We especially focused on verse 3, where we learn that the accomplishing power of Christ has provided us everything we need as sojourners on earth to lead the type of life God expects us to. We tap into this power through *knowledge*, which is a deep and personal experience whereby Christ's teachings are placed deep into our heart for the purpose of transformation.

Now in this lesson we explore two more things that Christ's divine power has given us: the opportunity to be connected to the fulfillment of *very great and precious promises which enable us to share in the divine nature and escape the corruption that is in the world because of evil desire*.

Very Great and Precious Promises

By His power, we have been given the possibility to experience the fulfillment of *very great and precious promises*. This is the only place in the New Testament where we have the word combination of *very great*. It's a superlative (the greatest) and used to describe the preciousness (value) of the promises we've received. What kind of promises? First our mind might wander to the ultimate promise: eternal life in heaven, which Peter references later in chapter 1 and again in chapter 3:

For in this way, entry into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be richly provided for you. (2 Peter 1.11)

But based on his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness dwells. (2 Peter 3.13)

But as we reread verse 4 again, the promises Peter mentions here are just not something way off in the future, we experience some of the promises right here and right now which enable us to become partakers of the divine nature. The words *may share* indicate something that exists in the present. It