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The Believer's Precious Faith—Part 1: Its Source, Substance, and Sufficiency (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: Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; 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. 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. (1:1–4)

John Murray, one of the foremost Reformed theologians of the twentieth century, wrote the following about the profound and superlative significance of the atonement:

The Father did not spare his own Son. He spared nothing that the dictates of unrelenting rectitude demanded. And it is the undercurrent of the Son's acquiescence that we hear when he says, "Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42). But why? It was in order that eternal and invincible love might find the full realization of its urge and purpose in redemption by price and by power. Of Calvary the spirit is

eternal love and the basis eternal justice. It is the same love manifested in the mystery of Gethsemane's agony and of Calvary's accursed tree that wraps eternal security around the people of God. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32). "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" (Rom. 8:35). "For I am persuaded that neither death nor life nor angels nor principalities nor things present nor things to come nor powers nor height nor depth nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:38, 39). That is the security which a perfect atonement secures and it is the perfection of the atonement that secures it. (*Redemption—Accomplished and Applied* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955], 78)

Without question, God's redemption of sinners unto eternal life through the atoning work of His Son Jesus Christ is, for all those who believe, God's most precious gift. With salvation's certainty in view, Peter opens his second letter by enriching his readers concerning three great truths about it: its source, its substance, and its sufficiency.

SALVATION'S SOURCE

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: (1:1)

According to the custom of his day, the apostle opened his epistle with a standard salutation, appropriately identifying himself as the author. **Simon**, the Greek form of the Hebrew "Simeon," the father of one of the twelve tribes of Israel, was a common Jewish name (cf. Matt. 13:55; 26:6; 27:32; Acts 1:13; 8:9; 9:43). **Peter** is from a Greek word that means "rock" (Cephas is its Aramaic equivalent; see John 1:42; 1 Cor. 1:12; 3:22; 9:5; 15:5; Gal. 1:18; 2:9, 11, 14). The apostle used both names to ensure that the letter's recipients knew exactly whom it was from.

Identifying himself as a **bond-servant**, Peter humbly and gratefully placed himself in the position of submission, duty, and obedience. Some of the greatest leaders in the history of redemption bore the title *servant* (e.g., *Moses*, Deut. 34:5; Ps. 105:26; Mal. 4:4; *Joshua*, Josh. 24:29; *David*, 2 Sam. 3:18; Ps. 78:70; *all the prophets*, Jer. 44:4; Amos 3:7; *Paul*, Rom. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Titus 1:1; *James*, James 1:1; *Jude*, Jude 1), and it eventually became a designation suitable for every believer (cf. 1 Cor. 7:22; Eph. 6:6; Col. 4:12; 2 Tim. 2:24). In Peter's day, to willingly call oneself a **bond-**

servant (*doulos*, “slave”) was to severely lower oneself in a culture where slaves were considered no better than animals. Whereas that practice may have been demeaning socially, it was honorable spiritually. It was to acknowledge that one was duty bound to obey his master, no matter what the cost. Of the sense in which this is true of Christians, William Barclay explains:

(i) To call the Christian the *doulos* of God means that he is inalienably possessed by God. In the ancient world a master possessed his slaves in the same sense as he possessed his tools. A servant can change his master; but a slave cannot. The Christian inalienably belongs to God.

(ii) To call the Christian the *doulos* of God means that he is unqualifiedly at the disposal of God. In the ancient world the master could do what he liked with his slave. He had the same power over his slave as he had over his inanimate possessions. He had the power of life and death over his slave. The Christian belongs to God, for God to send him where He will, and to do with him what He will. The Christian is the man who has no rights of his own, for all his rights are surrendered to God.

(iii) To call the Christian the *doulos* of God means that the Christian owes an unquestioning obedience to God. Ancient law was such that a master's command was a slave's only law. Even if a slave was told to do something which actually broke the law, he could not protest, for, as far as he was concerned, his master's command was the law. In any situation the Christian has but one question to ask: “Lord, what wilt *Thou* have me to do?” The command of God is his only law.

(iv) To call the Christian the *doulos* of God means that he must be constantly in the service of God. In the ancient world the slave had literally no time of his own, no holidays, no time off, no working-hours settled by agreement, no leisure. All his time belonged to the master. (*The Letters of James and Peter*, rev. ed. [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976], 345–46; emphasis in the original)

Although Peter viewed himself humbly as a bond-servant, he also represented himself nobly as an **apostle of Jesus Christ**, one officially sent forth by Christ Himself as a divinely commissioned witness of the resurrected Lord, with authority to proclaim His truth (Matt. 10:1; Mark 3:13; 16:20; Luke 6:13; Acts 1:2–9, 22; 1 Cor. 9:1; 1 John 1:1; cf. Matt. 28:19–20; John 14:26; 16:13). Peter, in presenting himself in these terms, sets a pattern for all in spiritual leadership: the submissive, sacrificial anonymity of a slave, combined with the dignity, significance, and authority of an apostle.

The apostle sent this letter **to those** same believers who received his first one. They were part of God's elect scattered in the Gentile

regions of “Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia” (1 Peter 1:1). Those believers were predominantly Gentiles, but certainly Jewish Christians were also among the recipients of the letter, which Peter most likely wrote in A.D. 67 or 68, about one year after writing his first epistle (for details, see the Introduction to this volume).

The manner in which Peter described his readers is theologically rich, albeit brief, and points to the divine source of salvation. **Have received** implies believers’ salvation is a gift. The verb (*lagchanō*) means “to gain by divine will” or “given by an allotment” (as in the biblical practice of casting lots to learn God’s will; cf. Lev. 16:8–10; Josh. 7:14; 1 Sam. 14:38–43; 1 Chron. 25:8–31; Prov. 16:33; 18:18; Jonah 1:7; Acts 1:16–26). Clearly it refers to something not obtained by human effort or based on personal worthiness but issued from God’s sovereign purpose. Peter’s readers received **faith** because God graciously willed to give it to them (cf. Acts 11:15–17; Gal. 3:14; Eph. 1:13; Phil. 1:29).

A faith here could mean *the* objective faith, as in the doctrines of the Christian faith, or it could denote subjective belief. But it is best to understand it in this context without the definite article (in contrast to Jude 3) as subjective faith, the Christian’s power to believe the gospel for salvation. Even though belief in the gospel is commanded of all, so that all are responsible for their obedience or disobedience—and in that sense it is the human side of salvation—God still must supernaturally grant sinners the ability and power to believe unto salvation (Eph. 2:8–9; cf. 6:23; Rom. 12:3; 1 Cor. 2:5). Peter began his first epistle writing about divine choice and election in salvation, whereas here he refers to the human response of faith. God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility form the essential elements of salvation. Only when the Holy Spirit awakens someone’s dead soul in response to hearing or reading the gospel is saving faith initiated so the sinner can embrace redemption (cf. Acts 11:21; 16:14).

Further evidence that faith here is subjective comes from Peter’s description of his readers’ faith as **of the same kind as ours**. The word rendered **same kind** (*isotimon*) means “equally valuable,” or “of equal privilege.” It designated that which was equal in rank, position, honor, standing, price, or value. This would make no sense if referring to the body of gospel truth, since that truth has no equal. Each believer has received faith as a personal gift, a faith that is the same in nature, the precious gift of God, which brings equal spiritual privileges in salvation to all who receive it (cf. John 17:20; Acts 11:15–17; 13:39). Among the faithful, God sees no distinctions among Christians; as Paul wrote, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28; cf. v. 26; Rom. 10:12–13).

All the elect have received, as a gift, the faith that saves. 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, so that no one may boast.” These verses have profound meaning and far-reaching application.

Our response in salvation is **faith**, but even that is **not of ourselves** [but is] **the gift of God**. **Faith** is nothing that we do in our own power or by our own resources. In the first place we do not have adequate power or resources. More than that, God would not want us to rely on them even if we had them. Otherwise salvation would be in part by our own **works**, and we would have some ground to **boast** in ourselves. Paul intends to emphasize that even faith is not from us apart from God’s giving it.

Some have objected to this interpretation, saying that **faith** (*pistis*) is feminine, while **that** (*touto*) is neuter. That poses no problem, however, as long as it is understood that **that** does not refer precisely to the noun **faith** but to the act of believing. Further, this interpretation makes the best sense of the text, since if **that** refers to **by grace you have been saved through faith** (that is, to the whole statement), the adding of **and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God** would be redundant, because grace is defined as an unearned act of God. If salvation is of grace, it has to be an undeserved gift of God. Faith is presented as a gift from God in 2 Peter 1:1, Philippians 1:29, and Acts 3:16. . . .

When we accept the finished work of Christ on our behalf, we act by the **faith** supplied by God’s **grace**. That is the supreme act of human faith, the act which, though it is ours, is primarily God’s—His **gift** to us out of His **grace**. When a person chokes or drowns and stops breathing, there is nothing he can do. If he ever breathes again it will be because someone else starts him breathing. A person who is spiritually dead cannot even make a decision of faith unless God first breathes into him the breath of spiritual life. **Faith** is simply breathing the breath that God’s **grace** supplies. Yet, the paradox is that we must exercise it and bear the responsibility if we do not (cf. John 5:40). (John MacArthur, *Ephesians*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary [Chicago: Moody, 1986], 60–61)

Peter’s use of the pronoun **ours** most likely had in view the conflict between Jews and Gentiles in the church. The book of Acts records that he was heavily involved in that issue in the early days of the church. Peter explained to separatist Jewish brethren his encounter with the Gentile Cornelius’ household:

But Peter began speaking and proceeded to explain to them in orderly sequence, saying, “I was in the city of Joppa praying; and in a trance I saw a vision, an object coming down like a great sheet lowered by four

corners from the sky; and it came right down to me, and when I had fixed my gaze on it and was observing it I saw the four-footed animals of the earth and the wild beasts and the crawling creatures and the birds of the air. I also heard a voice saying to me, 'Get up, Peter; kill and eat.' But I said, 'By no means, Lord, for nothing unholy or unclean has ever entered my mouth.' But a voice from heaven answered a second time, 'What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy.' This happened three times, and everything was drawn back up into the sky. And behold, at that moment three men appeared at the house in which we were staying, having been sent to me from Caesarea. The Spirit told me to go with them without misgivings. These six brethren also went with me and we entered the man's house. And he reported to us how he had seen the angel standing in his house, and saying, 'Send to Joppa and have Simon, who is also called Peter, brought here; and he will speak words to you by which you will be saved, you and all your household.' And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as He did upon us at the beginning. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He used to say, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' Therefore if God gave to them the same gift as He gave to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?" (Acts 11:4–17; cf. 10:1–48)

At the Jerusalem Council Peter reiterated the truth that God plays no favorites concerning the salvation and spiritual privileges of Jews and Gentiles:

But some of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed stood up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them [the Gentiles] and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses." The apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter. After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe. And God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us; and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are." (Acts 15:5–11)

Therefore it should not be surprising that Peter referred to that same truth here. Among His elect, God makes no favored distinctions based on ethnicity—He gives all Christians the same saving faith with all its privileges (cf. Eph. 2:11–18; 4:5).

Believers' saving faith is available because of **the righteousness**

of . . . Jesus Christ. Sinners are given eternal life because the Savior imputes His perfect **righteousness** to them (2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:8–9; 1 Peter 2:24), covering their sins and rendering them acceptable to Him. Romans 4:4–8 says,

Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness, just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds have been forgiven, and whose sins have been covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account.” (cf. Acts 13:38–39)

This immensely important doctrine of imputed righteousness is at the very heart of the Christian gospel. Salvation is a gift from God at all points. Both the faith to believe and the righteousness to satisfy God’s holiness come from Him. On the cross Christ bore the full wrath of God against all the sins of those who would believe (2 Cor. 5:18–19). Those sins were imputed to Christ so that God could impute to believers all the righteousness that was His. His righteousness fully covers the redeemed, as the prophet Isaiah beautifully expresses it, “I will rejoice greatly in the Lord, my soul will exult in my God; for He has clothed me with garments of salvation, He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels” (Isa. 61:10).

It is noteworthy that Peter does not refer to God **our** Father here but to **our God and Savior, Jesus Christ**. Righteousness here does proceed from the Father, but it reaches every believer through the Son, Jesus Christ (cf. Gal. 3:8–11; Phil. 3:8–9). The Greek construction places just one article before the phrase **God and Savior**, which makes both terms refer to the same person. Thus Peter identifies Jesus, not just as Savior, but as God (cf. 1:11; 2:20; 3:2, 18; Isa. 43:3, 11; 45:15, 21; 60:16; Rom. 9:5; Col. 2:9; Titus 2:13; Heb. 1:8), the author and agent of salvation. The apostle made the same relation clear in his Pentecost sermon, in which he took the Old Testament truth of God and applied it to Jesus (Acts 2:21–36; cf. Matt. 1:21; Acts 4:12; 5:31).

SALVATION’S SUBSTANCE

Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; (1:2)

In Peter's version of this familiar salutation, he reminds readers that true saints live in the realm of **grace and peace**, as the apostle Paul taught the Roman Christians: "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God" (Rom. 5:1–2). God wants the substance of salvation **grace and peace to be multiplied**, to come in unending, abundant streams to His children. Similar statements fill the epistles (e.g., 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:3; Eph. 1:2). **Grace** (*charis*) is God's free, unmerited favor toward sinners, which grants those who believe the gospel complete forgiveness forever through the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:24; Eph. 1:7; Titus 3:7). **Peace** (*eirēnē*) with God and from Him in all life's circumstances is the effect of grace (Eph. 2:14–15; Col. 1:20), flowing out of the forgiveness God has given to all the elect (cf. Ps. 85:8; Isa. 26:12; 2 Thess. 3:16). "Grace upon grace" (John 1:16) is an expression that defines the boundless flow of divine favor, while peace comes with such fullness that it is divine and beyond human understanding (John 14:27; Phil. 4:7). Believers receive surpassing **grace** for every sin (Ps. 84:11; Acts 4:33; 2 Cor. 9:8; 12:9; Heb. 4:16) and abundant **peace** for every trial (John 14:27; 16:33).

All this grace and peace comes **in** (through) **the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord**. It is not available to those who do not know and wholeheartedly embrace the gospel. **Knowledge** (*epignōsis*; cf. 1:8; 2:20) is a strengthened form of the basic Greek word for "knowledge" (*gnōsis*; cf. 1:5, 6; 3:18). It conveys the idea of a full, rich, thorough knowledge, involving a degree of intimate understanding of a specific subject (cf. Rom. 3:20; 10:2; Eph. 1:17). The substance of one's salvation is this kind of rational, objective knowledge of God through His Word (cf. John 8:32; 14:6; 17:17; 2 John 2). This fundamental concept of knowing was first of all an Old Testament one (cf. Ex. 5:2; Judg. 2:10; 1 Sam. 2:12; Prov. 2:5; Hos. 2:20; 5:4). Paul often used the same word in relation to divine truth (Eph. 1:17; 4:13; Phil. 1:9; Col. 1:9, 10; 2:2; 3:10; 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Tim. 2:25; 3:7; Titus 1:1). The knowledge that brings salvation derives not from feelings, intuition, emotion, or personal experience, but only from the revealed truth, based on the gospel preached in and from the Word: "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17; cf. v. 14).

Salvation requires a genuine knowledge of the person and work of Jesus Christ (cf. Gal. 2:20; Phil. 3:10). It involves not merely knowing the truth *about* Him, but actually *knowing* Him through the truth of His Word (cf. John 20:30–31; 21:24; 2 Tim. 3:15–17; 1 John 5:11–13). Hence Peter closed this letter by exhorting his believing readers, who already possessed that saving **knowledge**, to "grow in the grace and knowledge

of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (3:18). Knowing the Lord in salvation is the starting point. The rest of the believer’s life is a pursuit of greater knowledge of the glory of the Lord and His grace. Paul said that was his passionate pursuit: “that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death” (Phil. 3:10). He also made it clear that being consumed with the glory of His Lord was the means by which the Holy Spirit transformed him into Christlikeness (2 Cor. 3:18).

SALVATION’S SUFFICIENCY

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. 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. (1:3–4)

In 2 Corinthians 9:8, the apostle Paul makes an amazing statement of the overwhelming, generous sufficiency of God’s salvation: “God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed.” The word rendered “sufficiency” (*autarkeia*) refers to self-sufficiency, which means having all that is necessary. It further means to be independent of external circumstances and from what outside sources may provide. Believers’ spiritual resources, provided lavishly by divine grace, are sufficient to meet life’s demands (Phil. 4:19; cf. 2 Chron. 31:10).

But in spite of God’s revelation of His tremendous generosity (cf. 1 Chron. 29:10–14), Christians often think He was somehow miserly in dispensing His grace. He may have given them enough enabling grace for justification (Rom. 3:24), but not enough for sanctification. Or some believers have been taught that they received enough grace for justification and sanctification, but not enough for glorification, and thus fear they may lose their salvation. Even if they believe there is enough grace for final glorification, many Christians still feel there is not enough for them to handle life’s problems and trials. But there is no reason for any believer to doubt the sufficiency of God’s grace or to look elsewhere for spiritual resources (cf. Ex. 34:6; Pss. 42:8; 84:11; 103:11; 107:8; 121:1–8; Lam. 3:22–23; John 1:16; 10:10; Rom. 5:15, 20–21; 8:16–17, 32; 1 Cor. 2:9; 3:21–23; Eph. 1:3–8; 2:4–7; 3:17–19; 1 Peter 5:7). Paul admonished the Colossians:

See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority. (Col. 2:8–10)

Jesus compared salvation to a wedding feast: “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son. . . . ‘Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fattened livestock are all butchered and everything is ready; come to the wedding feast’” (Matt. 22:2, 4; cf. Luke 15:17–24; Rev. 19:6–9). He used that analogy because in first-century Jewish culture the wedding feast epitomized lavish celebration. In the same way, when He redeemed His own, God lavishly dispensed through the indwelling Holy Spirit all the grace and spiritual resources (Rom. 12:5–8; 1 Cor. 12:8–10; Eph. 3:20–21) they would ever need. Four essential components reminded Peter’s audience of the reality of their sufficient salvation: divine power, divine provision, divine procurement, and divine promises.

DIVINE POWER

seeing that His divine power has granted to us (1:3a)

Whatever spiritual sufficiency believers have is not because of any power they possess in themselves (cf. Matt. 19:26; Rom. 9:20–21; Eph. 1:19; Phil. 3:7–11; 1 Tim. 1:12–16; Titus 3:5) but derives from **His divine power**. Paul expressed it this way: “Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us” (Eph. 3:20). The **power** that operates in believers is of the same divine nature as that which resurrected Christ (cf. Rom. 1:4; 1 Cor. 6:14; 15:16–17; 2 Cor. 13:4; Col. 2:12). That power enables saints to do works that please and glorify God (cf. 1 Cor. 3:6–8; Eph. 3:7) and accomplish spiritual things they cannot even imagine (see again Eph. 3:20).

His refers back to the Lord Jesus. If the personal pronoun modified God, Peter probably would not have used the descriptive word **divine** since deity is inherent in God’s name. His use of **divine** pointing to the Son underscores that Jesus is truly God (cf. John 10:30; 12:45; Phil. 2:6; Col. 1:16; 2:9; Heb. 1:3) and also refutes any lingering doubt some readers may have had concerning that reality (cf. 1 John 5:20). Peter himself had been an eyewitness to Christ’s divine power (1:16; cf. Mark 5:30; Luke 4:14; 5:17).

God’s supply of spiritual power for believers never fails. They

may distance themselves from the divine source through sin, or fail to minister and use what is available, but from the moment they experienced faith in Jesus Christ, God **has granted** His power to them. **Has granted** (*dedōrēmenēs*) is a perfect, passive participle meaning that in the past, with continuing results in the present, God permanently bestowed His power on believers.

DIVINE PROVISION

everything pertaining to life and godliness, (1:3b)

Because of their constant sins and failures as Christians, many find it hard not to think that even after salvation something is missing in the sanctification process. This faulty idea causes believers to seek “second blessings,” “spirit baptisms,” tongues, mystical experiences, special psychological insights, private revelations, “self crucifixion,” the “deeper life,” heightened emotions, demon bindings, and combinations of various ones of all those in an attempt to attain what is supposedly missing from their spiritual resources. All manner of ignorance and Scripture twisting accompanies those foolish pursuits, which at their corrupt roots are failures to understand exactly what Peter says here. Christians have received **everything** in the form of divine power necessary to equip them for sanctification—they have no lack at all. In view of that reality, the Lord holds all believers responsible to obey all the commands of Scripture. Christians cannot claim that their sins and failures are the result of God’s limited provision. There is no temptation and no assault of Satan and demons that is beyond their resources to overcome (1 Cor. 10:13; 12:13; 1 Peter 5:10). To stress the extent of the divine power given each believer, Peter makes the amazing statement that saints have received from God **everything pertaining to life and godliness**. Syntactically, the term **everything** is in the emphatic position because the Holy Spirit through Peter is stressing the extent of believers’ self-sufficiency.

The great power that gave Christians spiritual life will sustain that **life** in all its fullness. Without asking for more, they already have every spiritual resource needed to persevere in holy living. **Life and godliness** define the realm of sanctification, the living of the Christian life on earth to the glory of God—between initial salvation and final glorification. With the gift of new life in Christ (John 3:15–16; 5:24; 6:47; Titus 3:7; 1 John 2:25) came everything related to sustaining that **life**, all the way to glorification. That is why believers are eternally secure (John 6:35–40; 10:28–29; 2 Cor. 5:1; 1 John 5:13; Jude 1, 24–25) and can be assured God will empower them to persevere to the end (Matt. 24:13; John 8:31; Heb.

3:6, 14; Rev. 2:10), through all temptations, sins, failures, vicissitudes, struggles, and trials of life.

The word translated **godliness** (*eusebeia*) encompasses both true reverence in worship and its companion—active obedience. Saints should never question God’s sufficiency, because His grace that is so powerful to save is equally powerful to sustain them and empower them to righteous conduct (Rom. 8:29–30; Phil. 1:6).

DIVINE PROCUREMENT

through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. (1:3c)

In light of the divine power and provision available to Christians, the question then arises, “How does one experience those to the fullest?” The apostle indicates that it is **through the true knowledge of Him.** **Knowledge** (*epignōsis*) refers to a knowledge that is deep and genuine. The word is sometimes used interchangeably with the more basic term *gnōsis*, which means simply knowledge. But Peter is referring to more than a superficial knowledge of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. Christ Himself warned of the peril of an inadequate knowledge of Him, even for those who minister in His name:

Not everyone who says to Me, “Lord, Lord,” will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, “Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?” And then I will declare to them, “I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.” (Matt. 7:21–23; cf. Luke 6:46)

Personal saving knowledge of the Lord is the obvious beginning point for believers, and as with everything in the Christian life, it comes from **Him who called** them (John 3:27; Rom. 2:4; 1 Cor. 4:7; cf. Jonah 2:9). Theologically, God’s call comprises two aspects: the general call and the effectual call. Theologian Charles M. Horne succinctly defined the two aspects as follows:

The general call is a call which comes through the proclamation of the gospel: it is a call which urges sinners to accept salvation. “On the last day, the great day, of the feast, Jesus stood and cried aloud, ‘If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink’” (Jn 7:37, Williams; cf. Mt 11:28; Is 45:22; etc.).

This message (*kerygma*), which is to be authoritatively proclaimed—not optionally debated—contains three essential elements: (1) It is a story of historical occurrences—an historical proclamation: Christ died, was buried, and rose (1 Co 15:3–4). (2) It is an authoritative interpretation of these events—a theological evaluation. Christ died for our sins. (3) It is an offer of salvation to whosoever will—an ethical summons. Repent! Believe!

The general call is to be freely and universally offered. “Jesus came up . . . and said, ‘Full authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go then and make disciples of all the nations’” (Mt 28:18–19, Williams).

The effectual call is efficacious; that is, it always results in salvation. This is a *creative* calling which accompanies the external proclamation of the gospel; it is invested with the power to deliver one to the divinely intended destination. “It is very striking that in the New Testament the terms for calling, when used specifically with reference to salvation, are almost uniformly applied, not to the universal call of the gospel, but to the call that ushers men into a state of salvation and is therefore effectual.” [John Murray, *Redemption—Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), p. 88.]

Perhaps the classic passage on the effectual call is found in Romans 8:30: “Whom he did predestinate, them he also called” (KJV). Other pertinent references include: Romans 1:6–7; 1 Corinthians 1:9, 26; 2 Peter 1:10.

The efficacious call is immutable, thereby insuring our perseverance. “For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable” (Ro 11:29, NASB). (*Salvation* [Chicago: Moody, 1971], 47–48; italics in original. See also these other New Testament references: John 1:12–13; 3:3–8; 6:37, 44–45, 64–65; Acts 16:14; Eph. 2:1, 5, 10; Col. 2:13; 1 Thess. 1:4–5; 2 Tim. 1:9; Titus 3:5.)

As in all appearances of this call in the epistles, Peter’s use of **called** here clearly refers to the effectual and irresistible call to salvation.

God effects His saving call through the revealed majesty of His own Son. Sinners are drawn **by** the **glory and excellence** of Jesus Christ. In Scripture **glory** always belongs to God alone (cf. Ex. 15:11; Deut. 28:58; Pss. 8:1; 19:1; 57:5; 93:1; 104:1; 138:5; 145:5; Isa. 6:3; 42:8, 12; 48:11; 59:19; Heb. 1:3; Rev. 21:11, 23). Thus when sinners see the glory of Christ they are witnessing His deity (cf. Luke 9:27–36; John 1:3–5, 14). Unless through the preaching of the gospel (Rom. 10:14–17) they realize who Christ is (the glorious Son of God who is Savior; cf. John 20:30–31; 2 Peter 1:16–18), and understand their need for repentance, so as to come to Him in faith, pleading for salvation, sinners cannot escape hell and enter heaven.

So, when God draws sinners to Himself, they see not only Christ’s

glory as God, but also His **excellence** as man. That refers to His morally virtuous life and His perfect humanity (cf. Matt. 20:28; Luke 2:52; 22:27; 2 Cor. 8:9; Phil. 2:7; Heb. 2:17; 4:15; 7:26; 1 Peter 2:21–23; 1 John 3:3). All salvation blessings, power, and provision come only to those who see and believe the words and acts of the sinless God/Man (cf. John 14:7–10; Acts 2:22; 1 Cor. 15:47; 1 John 1:1–2; 5:20).

DIVINE 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. (1:4)

Christ's glory as God and His excellence as the perfect Man attract people to a saving relationship with Him. **By these** attributes of glory and excellence **He has** accomplished all that is necessary for believers' salvation, so that He also **granted to** them **His precious and magnificent promises**. The term rendered **has granted** is from the same verb (*dōreomai*) that occurs in verse 3, again in the perfect tense, describing past action with continuing effects.

Peter describes all the salvation promises in Christ as **precious** (*timios*) **and magnificent** (*megistos*), meaning “valuable” and “greatest,” respectively. These words include all the divine **promises** for God's own children contained in the Old and New Testaments (cf. 2 Cor. 7:1), such as: spiritual life (Rom. 8:9–13), resurrection life (John 11:25; 1 Cor. 15:21–23), the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:33; Eph. 1:13), abundant grace (John 10:10; Rom. 5:15, 20; Eph. 1:7), joy (Ps. 132:16; Gal. 5:22), strength (Ps. 18:32; Isa. 40:31), guidance (John 16:13), help (Isa. 41:10, 13–14), instruction (Ps. 32:8; John 14:26), wisdom (Prov. 2:6–8; Eph. 1:17–18; James 1:5; 3:17), heaven (John 14:1–3; 2 Peter 3:13), eternal rewards (1 Tim. 4:8; James 1:12).

The Lord bestows all these **so that** believers **may become** full **partakers of the divine nature**. First, **may become** is not intended to present merely a future possibility, but a present certainty. The verb builds on all Peter has written. He has said that in salvation saints are called effectually by God through the true knowledge of the glory and excellence of Christ, and thus they receive everything related to life and godliness, as well as priceless spiritual promises. It is because of all that that believers **may become**, here and now, possessors of God's own eternal life (cf. John 1:12; Rom. 8:9; Gal. 2:20; Col. 1:27). **Partakers** (*koinōnos*) is often translated “fellowship,” and means “sharer” or “part-

ner.” Believers are in this life partners in the very life that belongs to God (Col. 3:3; 1 John 5:11; cf. John 6:48–51).

From what they do partake in, Peter turns to what believers do not partake in, **the corruption that is in the world by lust**. Those who share the eternal life of God and Christ have completely **escaped** the effects of sin (Phil. 3:20–21; 1 John 3:2–3; cf. Titus 1:2; James 1:12; 1 John 2:25; Rev. 2:10b–11). **Corruption** (*phthora*) denotes an organism decomposing or rotting, and its accompanying stench. The world’s moral decomposition is driven by sinful **lust** (*epithumia*), “evil desire” (1 John 2:16; cf. Eph. 2:3; 4:22). **Having escaped** depicts a successful flight from danger, in this case the effects of one’s fallen nature, the sinfulness of the decaying world, and its final destruction (cf. Phil. 3:20–21; 1 Thess. 5:4, 9–10; Rev. 20:6). At glorification, believers will be redeemed completely so that they possess eternal life in perfect holiness in a new heaven and new earth where no sin or corruption will ever exist (cf. Rev. 21:1–4; 22:1–5).

It is noteworthy that Peter borrows from the terminology of mystical, pantheistic religion that called for its adherents to recognize the divine nature within them and lose themselves in the essence of the gods. Ancient false teachers (the Gnostics) and more recent ones (Eastern mystics and New Age gurus of all sorts) have often emphasized the importance of personally attaining transcendent knowledge. The apostle Peter, however, stressed to his readers the need to recognize that only by being spiritually born anew (John 3:3; James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23) can anyone attain true divine knowledge, live righteously as God’s children (Rom. 8:11–15; Gal. 2:20), and thereby share in God’s nature (cf. 2 Cor. 5:17). The false prophets of Peter’s day believed that transcendent knowledge elevated people above any need for morality. But Peter countered that notion by asserting that genuine knowledge of God through Christ gives believers all they need to live godly lives (cf. 2 Tim. 3:16–17).