

II PETER 1:1-4
GROWING IN CHRIST!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to II Peter chapter 1 as we begin Peter's second letter to Christians who were scattered for their faith in Jesus. And we will deal more with that in a second.

If you remember from our study in I Peter, that letter focused on persecution and how they were to live out their faith during this time.

Peter put it like this in I Peter 1:6-7, **“In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”**

Persecution against Christians was growing and Peter wants them to understand that these difficult times God is using to help them to grow in their faith! So, in spite of all this persecution, they were to walk in a way that would glorify God. And that is not an easy thing to do when you are being persecuted. But, as they submit to the Holy Spirit, they can have a walk that is worthy of the high calling by which they have been called.

Notice what Peter told them in I Peter 2:9-10, **“But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.”**

Look at what God has done in our lives, thus, live accordingly!

But it is a battle and Peter tells us, **“Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.”** I Peter 2:11-12.

As we move into this second letter that Peter wrote we will see that it deals with false teaching, false doctrine that was coming into the church.

Make no mistake about it, Satan will try to destroy the church by persecution and when that doesn't work any longer, he moves to coming into the church and bringing false doctrine into it.

Persecution and false teaching are the weapons that Satan will use to not only destroy churches but also individual lives!

One pastor put it like this. He wrote,

Peter wrote [his second epistle] to help believers face a world filled with subtle spiritual deception. Knowing that his death was imminent (1:14), the apostle wanted to remind his readers of the truths he had already taught them, so that those truths would continue to safeguard them after he was gone (v. 15).

Peter also knew that the deadly threat of false teachers loomed large on the horizon; he wanted to expose the apostates in order to expel their demon doctrines from the church.

Never has Peter's warning been more timely than it is today. The rapid advancement of mass media, coupled with the church's lack of discernment, has allowed doctrinal error to spread like wildfire.

False teachers propagate their heresies via television, radio, the Internet, books, magazines, and seminars - doing whatever they can for their own self-promotion. In the process, their deceit lures multitudes to exchange the truth for utter lies (cf. 1 Tim. 1:19; 2 Tim. 2:16–18).

To make matters worse, some in today's church, motivated by cowardly fear of rejection or misguided notions of love, are reluctant to expose today's apostates. Instead of countering error, they either embrace it or ignore it in the name of tolerance.

The apostle Peter, however, had no qualms about denouncing the deceivers who threatened his beloved flock. He recognized them for what they were: wolves in sheep's clothing (Matt. 7:15; Acts 20:29), lurking to devour the ignorant with their beguiling lies.

Peter understood that false teachers are the emissaries of hell and pawns of Satan, motivated by the love of money, power, prestige, and prominence.

Because they are masters of deception, they successfully peddle the doctrines of demons to unsuspecting souls, marketing eternal ruin as if it were eternal life.

The only sure defense against their tactics is found in the truth of God's Word. Peter knew this, of course, which is why he penned this epistle. As a true man of God, he was deeply concerned to protect those under his spiritual care.

- John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, 2 Peter*

I also agree, this is a timely book to read and learn from. We need to not only gather the information that Peter is giving to us through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, but we must also apply these things to our lives!

Now let me give you some background information before we dig into this letter.

This second letter of Peter's is also written to the churches in Asia Minor. These churches were, "**. . . in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia . . .**" as we are told in I Peter 1:1.

As I have said, in Peter's first letter we see Peter admonish them to have a steadfast faith in the midst of the persecution they were facing and to live exemplary lives or holy lives in spite of the persecution they were facing for their faith in Jesus Christ.

Paul put it like this in II Timothy 3:10-14, "**But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra - what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them.**"

Persecution and false doctrine, evil men, impostors will come into the church, this is going to happen, and it is happening and thus, live as I lived Paul is telling them and stand strong in the faith!

And this persecution came from Caesar Nero, and it was only going to grow more intense until Nero's death in 68 A. D.

As we said before, Peter's first letter was written sometime in 62 A. D. and his second letter sometime in 64 A. D.

With Nero dying sometime in 68 A. D. it would mean that Peter was martyred for his faith before that, as Nero was the one who put Peter to death!

That would place Peter's martyrdom sometime in late 64 A. D.

So if the writing of this second letter occurred in 64 A. D. that would place Peter's execution within weeks or months of the writing of this letter.

Thus, with Peter's death being imminent, as he is probably sitting on death row in a Roman prison, his last words, the words of a dying man are not going to be fluff. They are going to be meat, they are going to come from his heart, he is going to say what is truly important.

Interestingly enough Peter's focus is not external persecution, which would continue to grow. The focus of this letter is internal persecution or the threat of false teachers spewing out their poisonous doctrines. He wants these believers to be on guard, to pay attention so they won't be overtaken by their lies.

What a great and important warning for us today, we need to heed these words of Peter!

One pastor put it like this. He wrote,

Second Peter (along with Jude) is viewed by some as the "*dark corner*" of the New Testament. As a result, it is not often preached, studied, discussed, or quoted. The book is even neglected in scholarly circles, where critics dismiss it as a pseudonymous (forged) letter, unworthy of serious study.

But the church of Jesus Christ ignores this epistle at its peril.

After all, Peter wrote it to help believers face a world filled with subtle spiritual deception.

- John MacArthur, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, 2 Peter

That is absolutely true, we need to be on guard, especially today as I have seen godly people, those that know the Word of God, fall for these deceptions!

Now, let me ask you this.

How do you expose a lie?

By knowing the truth and we are set apart by the truth of God's Word. Make no mistake about it, God's Word is the truth that sets us apart from the lies of these false teachers!

Think about this for a minute. You can spend your entire lifetime trying to expose and understand all the lies, all the doctrines of demons that are out there, and you will never stop because there are always new ones.

I am not saying we should not be aware of what is happening, but if spend all our time looking for lies, we are going to be in trouble.

And what I mean by that is this. If you know the truth, the Word of God, if you are immersing yourself in the Word of God, then, when a lie comes along, you will recognize it because the truth has set you free from the error!

Interestingly enough, someone called this letter "*The Believers Conflict in the Latter Days*" and how true that is today.

The lies being perpetrated by false teachers, the internal persecution is growing, and church leaders are buying into these lies.

For me, I just scratch my head and wonder how they can fall prey to this stuff when God's Word is so clear.

I guess the reason is simple. They go outside of God's Word and fall prey to the lies!

And they would never admit that is what they are doing, but if you are holding onto something that is against what God's Word says, if you are adding to God's Word or taking away from God's word, you will and you probably are falling prey to these lies.

Listen to the warning that is given to us in Revelation 22:18-19, **“For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”**

That is pretty serious and yet, people will say things like, *“That is only the book of Revelation!”*

I don't think so!

Let me give you a few Scriptures to show you what I mean.

In Deuteronomy 4:2 we are told, **“You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you.”**

Sounds like what we read in Revelation 22:18-19!

Also, in Deuteronomy 12:32 we are told, **“Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it.”**

I think the word **“Whatever”** covers Genesis through Revelation because all of Scripture is given to us by the Lord!

And in Proverbs 30:5-6 we are told, **“Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him. Do not add to His words, Lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar.”**

Did you see that?

God's Word is pure, it is truth, and we are not to add to it because, if we do, we are the ones who are a liar, not God!

I think that is pretty clear and it is only a few references, but they make it very clear that God's Word is His Word, and we are not to add to it or take away from it!

And what we see in this letter is that Peter is calling for believers to grow in the Lord so they can fight the apostasy that is out there and look forward to the Lord's return.

One writer put it like this in regard to how to deal with false teaching. He wrote,

“Convinced that the **best antidote for heresy** is a **mature knowledge** of the truth, Peter exhorts his readers to have a proper appreciation for prophecy, to live holy and godly lives while awaiting Christ's coming and to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord.” (Kirby)

Think about the days we are living in and I think the Holy Spirit is admonishing us to do the same!

Before we get to our text this morning, let me give to you a quick outline of this letter:

CULTIVATE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER – II PETER 1

CONDEMN FALSE TEACHERS – II PETER 2

CONFIDENCE IN CHRIST'S RETURN – II PETER 3

I have called our study this morning – ***GROWING IN CHRIST!***

I think Peter gives us some of the tools we need to mature in the faith, to grow in our walk with the Lord.

And I have broken down the verses we will be looking at this morning into the following main points. They are,

INTRODUCTION – II PETER 1:1-2

GROWTH IN CHRIST – II PETER 1:3

GOD'S PROMISES – II PETER 1:4

With that said, let's begin reading in II Peter chapter 1, starting in verse 1 and see what the Lord has for us this morning as we look at - ***GROWING IN CHRIST!***

II PETER 1

VERSES 1-2

Notice how Peter opens up this letter and as you are looking at that, keep in mind that Peter was a big strong fisherman.

Why do I say that?

Because these men had to pull in those nets, and they were heavy. Thus, I don't see him as this little guy, but like a said, a big strong fisherman!

And yet, he opens up this letter in a very humble way.

Why do I say that?

Because he opens up by saying "**Simon Peter**" or that he uses his birth name and the name that Jesus gave to him.

Now we just read over things like that and if we do, we miss the point.

You see, Peter knew his identity, from "***shifting sand***" or Simon, to the "***rock***" or Peter.

Why did he list both names?

Possibly because he knew that even though he was saved, that flesh nature often caused him to act like shifting sand.

Also, he wanted his readers to know who he was and by using both names, there would be no doubt!

I also see this speaking to us in a spiritual sense, the transformation that he went thru as he followed Jesus.

He started out as shifting sand but came to saving faith and his life was stable because it was built upon **THE ROCK**, Jesus Christ!

Look at our lives before we were saved. We were like shifting sand, being driven in all directions as the waves of this world carried us here and there.

But then, when we came to Christ we placed our feet upon the **ROCK**, Jesus Christ and we won't be moved by the currents of this world any longer!

And then Peter speaks of two different titles and the order is important.

First, he is a **bondslave** or **DOULOS** of Jesus Christ.

A bondslave was a slave who served his master and when it was time for him to be released, he refused.

You see, his love for his master was so great he remains a slave but not out of constraint, but freely he serves his master out of love.

Folks, as Peter, we are bondslaves of Christ serving our Master freely!

Then we come to his second title and that is of an **apostle** or one that was sent by God.

He did not exalt himself, call himself the first "**Pope**" because he wasn't, he was a servant and God placed him in that position of being an apostle.

Too often people in ministry like to elevate themselves.

For instance, there are those that call themselves or like to be called, "**The Most Reverend**" so-and-so. That is a title given by man not a ministry given by God!

Thus, that is wrong! We are all bondslaves of Christ first and then whatever position God has placed you in – **SERVE!**

Now Peter was an *A-postle* and we, in a sense, are *B-postles*!

What do I mean by that?

First, Peter walked with Jesus, He saw Him crucified and He saw the risen Lord. We couldn't be a part of that group because none of us were there.

And let me say this so there is no confusion. The primary office of apostles and prophets has passed off the scene. There is no office of apostles and prophets even though many, like the New Apostolic Reformation or the *NAR*, like to tell us there is!

How can I be so sure?

Because Paul tells us in Ephesians 2:20-22, **“having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”**

You only need one foundation and, as the New Testament came into play, the foundation was laid! You don't need multiple foundations, now the structure of the building is coming together!

Like I have said, the word **“apostle”** means ***“one who is sent forth with a commission or a divinely appointed representative.”***

So, in the broadest sense of the word, we are all apostles; we are all sent forth by God with the good news of Jesus Christ.

In the strictest sense of the word, it speaks of the 12 apostles, including Matthias and their function was to lay down the foundation of the church.

I hope that is clear.

Then Peter says that they had “**like precious faith**” or that we all enjoyed the same salvation experience that is only brought about by Christ and not by our efforts!

We may have come to Christ through different methods, but salvation is based in faith alone through Christ alone. It is the same faith that saves all people, it doesn't matter if you are a Jew or Gentile!

One writer put it like this, “*Like precious faith' probably speaks to the fact that the Jews and Gentiles enjoyed the same faith, and therefore the same benefits in Jesus. 'God having given to you - believing Gentiles, the same faith and salvation which he had given to us - believing Jews.'*”

Exactly!

Again, this was not just any faith that they had together, believing in anything and everything that they wanted.

It is as Jude reminds us, “**Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.**” Jude 1:3.

You see, “**the faith**” was delivered to us “**once for all**” and not something different for us today.

That is important for us to understand because there is a challenge today, by so-called Christians, that salvation has nothing to do with the blood atonement and really, all roads lead to God!

Let me show you what I mean.

Liberal theologian and pastor of the Riverside Church in New York City, Harry Emerson Fosdick (1878-1969), believed that the doctrine of the atonement, where “*Jesus suffered as a substitute for us*” because of our sins, is a “*precivilized barbarity.*”

In his book, *The Modern Use of the Bible*, Fosdick says that Jesus’ going to the Cross should be seen as an example of a life of service and sacrifice and not compared with “*old animal sacrifices*” . . . In Fosdick’s book *Dear Mr. Brown*, he states: Too many theories of the atonement assume that by one single high priestly act of self-sacrifice, Christ saved the world.”

Many Christians followed this man and if he denied the blood atonement, then he was never saved!

And it gets worse. Alan Jones, in his book *Reimagining Christianity*, continues on with this false teaching that God never intended Jesus’ sacrifice on the Cross to be considered a payment for our sins.

This is what he wrote, “*The Church’s fixation on the death of Jesus as the universal saving act must end, and the place of the cross must be reimagined in Christian faith. Why? Because of the cult of suffering and the vindictive God behind it.*”

Also, Marcus Borg said, “*Jesus almost certainly was not born of a virgin, did not think of himself as the Son of God, and did not see his purpose as dying for the sins of the world.*”

That is what these men are saying, but what does God say?

What does the Bible say?

Let me show you.

First of all, in Leviticus 17:11 we are told, “**For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.**”

Now some would argue, ***“That is the Old Testament, and we are living in New Testament times!”***

Okay, if you think that way, listen to what Paul wrote in Hebrews 9:22, ***“And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.”***

I think that is pretty clear and it is a New Testament teaching!

John tells us in I John 4, ***“In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins . . . And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world.”*** I John 4:10, 14.

Not only that, but in Revelation 1:5-6, ***“and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”***

Then there is Paul in Romans 3:23-25, who wrote, ***“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith . . .”***

And lastly, and I can give you many more, but this is from Jesus Himself who said in Matthew 26:28, ***“For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”***

Why is there such an attack on the blood atonement?

Because, without the shedding of blood there is no remission for sin and the Devil loves to make people comfortable in believing these lies that will send them to Hell!

This faith is unchanging!

Thus, we as Christians are to be remaining faithful to and defending the truth that saves and sanctifies. And this is the core theme of Peter's second epistle.

One more point and this is very important.

Peter speaks **"of our God and Savior Jesus Christ."**

Here is another Scripture that links Jesus to being God, not "*a god*" or a lesser God than the Father.

He is the second person of the Holy Trinity who is fully God and became fully man in the Incarnation, but He was also fully God and still is!

Now some like to argue that this is speaking of Almighty God and Jesus Christ, and that it is not saying that Jesus is God.

That again is a lie, and it is not what the Greek is saying, not even close.

In fact, Greek scholar Wuest tells us, *"The expression God and our Saviour is in a construction in the Greek text which demands that we translate, our God and Savior, Jesus Christ, the expression thus showing that Jesus Christ is the Christian's God."*

In other words, this statement in the Greek is Peter's way of saying unequivocally that Jesus Christ is both our God and our Savior.

And Blum said, *"The grammar leaves little doubt in these words Peter is calling Jesus Christ both God and Savior."*

There is no mistake about this, Jesus is God and, as Thomas said of Jesus, "**... 'My Lord and my God!'**" John 20:28.

I think that is pretty clear!

And remember how John opened up his Gospel, **“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.”** John 1:1-3.

John’s whole Gospel speaks of Jesus being Almighty God!

John starts out by saying, **“In the beginning was the Word.”**

And the idea here is that the Word, Jesus, existed before creation or even time!

The verb **“was”** in the Greek is *EN* and it is in the imperfect tense, and it means that the Word always existed.

There was never a point when He came into being! He is eternal!

In other words, what John is saying is this, ***“When all things began, the Word already was.”***

What about when the earth was created?

The Word existed!

What about when the angels were created?

The Word existed!

Also, that phrase, **“and the Word was with God”** can literally be translated, ***“the Word was continually toward God.”***

In other words, they were equals. God the Father did not create the Word because the Word always existed as does the Father and they saw eye to eye! Again, they were equals!

And if you are still struggling with this or are unsure, we see God the Father call Jesus God in Hebrews 1:8-9. Paul put it like this as he quotes out of the Old Testament, **“But to the Son He says: ‘Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of gladness more than Your companions.’”**

Now if you want to deny that God the Father has called Jesus God and not *“a god”* you have bigger problems!

You see, in John 8:24 Jesus said, **“Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am *He*, you will die in your sins.”**

The *“He”* was added for clarity, but it is not there in the original. It should read, **“if you do not believe that I am, you will die in your sins.”**

In other words, for those who reject the deity of Jesus Christ, they will die in their sins. Thus, this is very serious, it is a matter of life and death!

Then Peter speaks of the grace and peace of God. And here’s the thing. *You’ll never experience the peace of God until you first experience the grace of God!*

I will explain that in a minute.

First Peter tells us that grace and peace are increased or multiplied as we know God. In other words, we are more aware of the grace of God, and we can enjoy the peace of God.

Think about it. The more we know God, His holiness, that there is no darkness in Him at all, and we examine our own life, we see how far from perfection we truly are!

And thus, it is God’s grace, unmerited favor that He bestows upon us, and I think we understand that a little more each and every day!

And here's the thing. To know God is not just a casual acquaintance but an intimate knowledge of God, a relationship with Him!

The more we spend time in God's Word, in prayer, with other believers, the more we will understand His grace and His peace for our lives!

Thus, Peter starts out with an – ***INTRODUCTION!***

As we read on, we will see all of God's blessings, all of His great and precious promises, all of what it means to know God and be victorious over the enemy and it starts with the new birth.

Now, what do we need for spiritual life and for that matter, physical life?

Peter is going to show us that there needs to be in our lives – ***GROWTH IN CHRIST!***

VERSE 3

Remember the question I asked, ***“What do we need for spiritual life and for that matter, physical life?”***

Peter tells us that we need Jesus because that divine power is only found in Him! It is **“His divine power”** that He has given to us! Folks, we need Jesus!

Paul, in II Corinthians 9:8 makes that point as he says, **“And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.”**

You see, it is not about how strong we are or the power we have, but it is all about the Lord empowering us for the work He has called us to do.

And this power that God has given to us is not because we have worked for it, that we are good enough for it, but it is all based upon His grace towards us.

Let me show you what it is not like. There was a gentleman several years back who was reconciling his checkbook.

So he called the First National Bank of Chicago to make sure his balance was correct.

On the other end of the phone was an electronic voice that announced to him, ***“You have a balance of \$924,844,204.32.”***

After he got up from the floor, he wondered what had happened. How he had that much money in the bank!

What he found out was that he was one of 826 customers who became instant millionaires due to a computer error.

As great as that sounds, none of those 826 customers were allowed to keep that money!

In Christ, we don't deserve this power and yet, we've become instant billionaires, and it's no *glitch* - it's *grace!*

Your account gets credited with His merit. You're now entitled to all that Jesus earned!

And this word **“power”** in the Greek is *DYNAMIS* and it is where we get our English word **“dynamite”** from! It speaks of explosive power!

This same Greek word is used in Romans 1:16 where Paul wrote, **“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.”**

Also, we see this in Acts 1:8, **“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”**

In both cases this power was to bring the Gospel message to the lost, to spread the good news! Not only to our own lives as we come to Christ, but then to spread it onward to others!

And Peter is telling us that this same power that saves us and empowers us to move the Gospel will also sanctify us and make us all that God wants us to be.

It is as Paul said in Galatians 3:3, that we can't accomplish in the flesh the things of God. Paul put it this way, "**Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?**"

This is a supernatural work of God, not some glorified self-help program!

Let me show you what I mean as I share part of this article from 2024. We are told, Today, more than 10 million self-help books are sold annually, with topics ranging from time management to pop psychology to discovering one's true calling.

While some focus on how to navigate career or relationships (think Dale Carnegie's 1936 *How to Win Friends and Influence People*), others guide readers to success through reformation or reassessment of their unique interior worlds (such as Brené Brown's 2010 *The Gifts of Imperfection*).

What unifies the genre is a message of self-improvement delivered in a personal way by a confident figure who inspires readers to pursue their "*best life now.*" . . .

"It is no coincidence that the Evangelical Revival (which became the evangelical movement) began in the same century that saw the rise of the novel, the industrial revolution, and the very idea of social mobility," she told me. *"The same evangelical value of each individual soul that led to an emphasis on individual conversion led naturally to an emphasis on individual improvement."*

Given this connection, it's no surprise that some of the most famous self-help titles have been penned by religious leaders. *The Power of Positive Thinking* (1952) was written by ordained Reformed minister Norman Vincent Peale . . .

Stephen R. Covey, the author of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (1989), was a leader in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

And management guru John C. Maxwell, of *The 21 irrefutable Laws of Leadership* (1998), is an ordained Wesleyan minister with a doctorate of ministry from Fuller Theological Seminary.

Today, the gap between self-help and spiritual-living books is almost nonexistent, with readers and authors traversing it effortlessly.

For example, Rachel Hollis' s 2018 *Girl, Wash Your Face* (whose subtitle calls readers to "**Stop Believing the Lies About Who You Are So You Can Become Who You Were Meant to Be**") was released by evangelical publisher Thomas Nelson.

In it, Hollis writes, "**You, and only you, are ultimately responsible for who you become and how happy you are.**"

The book has sold over 4.5 million copies and reached No. 1 on *The New York Times's* nonfiction bestseller list.

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The question is, "**Why do people buy so many self-help books?**"

The answer is because they don't believe Jesus is sufficient and they need to look elsewhere.

How foolish that is when you think about it!

We don't need self-help; we have been trying it that way most of our lives. We need the Holy Spirit's help, His empowerment to live a life that is pleasing to God!

Paul said and warned us in Colossians 2:8-10, **“Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.”**

Many Christians continue to be deceived into thinking that there’s some information for living the Christian life that they’re somehow lacking in their relationship with Jesus. In other words, they feel that this information is not found in the Bible.

There must be some secret principle or spiritual mystery that if they only knew, they would be instantly catapulted into spiritual power and victory.

Again, that is foolishness, and it is dangerous as it has led many into false doctrine, heresy!

And for those who are doing this, it truly means you don’t have a high view of Scripture.

Now please understand that I am not saying you can’t read a book on how to fix your car or whatever. But when it comes to our spiritual well-being, when it comes to living our lives as God desires, His Word opened up to us by His Spirit is all that we need!

We are complete in Christ and His Word is sufficient for our lives.

In other words, everything that we need in the way of truth to be saved and live our Christian lives is contained in the Word of God. We don’t need to add or supplement it with any other source of knowledge or information! The Bible is complete – it is sufficient!

And Peter says that all **“that pertains to life and godliness [is] through the knowledge of Him . . .”**

According to Blum, the ancient Greek word “**knowledge**” doesn’t refer to a casual acquaintance. It means an exact, complete, and thorough knowledge. And that is gained as we spend time with Him in His Word!

Also, in Psalm 19:7 we are told that, “**The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul . . .**”

Let me explain it like this.

The word “**perfect**” is the translation of a Hebrew word meaning, “*whole, complete or sufficient.*”

It conveys the idea of something that is comprehensive, so as to cover all aspects of an issue.

Albert Barnes put it like this, “*The meaning [of “perfect”] is that [Scripture] lacks nothing [for] its completeness; nothing in order that it might be what it should be. It is complete as a revelation of Divine truth; it is complete as a rule of conduct. . . . It is absolutely true; it is adapted with consummate wisdom to the [needs] of man; it is an unerring guide of conduct. There is nothing there which would lead men into error.*”

And Warren Wiersbe wrote,

When you are born into the family of God by faith in Christ, you are born complete. God gives you everything you will ever need “*for life and godliness.*” Nothing has to be added! “And you are complete in Him” (Col. 2:10).

The false teachers claimed that they had a “*special doctrine*” that would add something to the lives of Peter’s readers, but Peter knew that nothing could be added.

Just as a normal baby is born with all the *“equipment”* he needs for life and only needs to grow, so the Christian has all that is needed and only needs to grow. God never has to call back any of His *“models”* because something is lacking or faulty.”

- Warren Wiersbe, The Wiersbe Bible Commentary – NT, p. 930

And the Devil loves to attack at this point, the sufficiency of the Scriptures and many have bought into his lies, his deception instead of listening to what the Lord has said in His Word!

How have they stumbled?

They have stumbled by buying into the lie that the Bible needs to be supplemented with the wisdom of the world if Christians are to be fully victorious and fruitful.

Let’s think about that for a minute. Almighty God, the creator of heaven and earth, the One who not only created all the stars of heaven, and it has been estimated that the universe could contain up to one septillion stars – that’s a one followed by 24 zeros and our Milky Way alone contains more than 100 billion stars, and He knows each one by name, and yet, He can’t tell us what we need to live out our lives!

Again, that is foolishness!

If we want to grow in Christ then we need to receive **“His divine power [that] has been given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue.”**

In other words – ***GROWTH IN CHRIST!***

Now, we have seen God's grace extended to us as He empowers us and gives to us all we need to live, not because we deserve it, but it is a gift of God to us, we also see – ***GOD'S PROMISES!***

VERSE 4

Why are these precious promises important to us?

Because when you read these promises, when you take them to heart and apply them to your life, when you believe them, Peter tells us that the peace of God is found in these precious promises of God to us.

But this is not for everyone, these promises!

What do I mean by that?

First you have to be saved!

Paul tells us, **“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”** Romans 5:1-2.

Once we have made peace ***WITH*** God through Jesus Christ, then we enjoy the peace ***OF*** God.

Look at the promises that God has given to us in His Word and that knowledge should help us to live godly lives.

Think about this for a minute. ***“It is estimated that there are at least 30,000 promises in the Bible. John Bunyan once said, ‘The pathway of life is strewn so thickly with the promises of God that it is impossible to take one step without treading upon one of them.’”*** (William MacDonald)

Let me share with you just a few of these promises and just keep in mind that this is a very short list.

Call to Me, and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know. (Jeremiah 33:3)

Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. (Matthew 7:7)

Delight yourself in the Lord; And He will give you the desires of your heart. (Psalm 37:4)

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. (Jeremiah 29:11)

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding, in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight. (Proverbs 3:5-6)

So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. (Isaiah 41:10)

The LORD Himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. (Deuteronomy 31:8)

Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. (Matthew 11:28)

But those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint. (Isaiah 40:31)

The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still. (Exodus 14:14)

He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. (Isaiah 40:29)

And here’s the thing for those who struggle with the Word of God being important. Not only did Jesus tell us that God’s Word is truth (John 17:17) but we are told in Psalm 138:2 that God honors His Word above His name.

What that means is that if God’s Word is not truth, if we can’t trust it, then the whole character of God fails as well.

But here's the thing. We never have to doubt any promise of God.

We need to remember what Paul said in Romans 3:4, "**. . . Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar . . .**"

Trust what God has said as opposed to what man says when he twists God's Word to make it say what he wants it to say instead of what God is truly telling us!

Thus, as Paul said in II Timothy 3:16-17, "**All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.**"

Also, peace through the storms of life can be ours as we rest in His promises.

Paul, in Romans 15:4 put it this way, "**For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.**"

We do have all we need to succeed in this life if we have Jesus!

But, if you lack the knowledge of Him, you will be swept away and thus, read His Word and apply it to your life and the pulls of this corrupt world will not have its grip on you!

As you take this all in you see that because of all those precious promises, they become to us exceedingly great or there is a Bible full of them and they are imposing or magnificent!

Not only that but they are precious to us or they are valuable to us!

Spurgeon put it like this. He wrote, "*Many things are great which are not precious, such as great rocks, which are of little value; on the other hand, many things are precious which are not great—such as diamonds and other jewels, which cannot be very great if they be very precious. But here we have promises which are so great, that they are not less than infinite, and so precious, that they are not less than divine.*"

May we not lose sight of that!

Remember what Peter said in I Peter 1:3-5, **“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”**

Look at those precious promises that God has for us, eternal life with Him and that is a done deal if we have come to Christ!

Of this one writer said, *“When the sinner believes on Jesus Christ, the Spirit of God uses the Word of God to impart the life and nature of God within. A baby shares the nature of its parents, and a person born of God shares the divine nature of God.”*

How true that is. We are born into the family of God, and it is His nature that should be manifested in us. But we must grow up, we must mature in the faith, and that is a lifelong process, and it is called the – ***SANCTIFICATION PROCESS!***

Think about it like this. Even though a baby has inherited the nature of its parents, they still have to be taught and trained, encouraged and disciplined in the right course that they might grow up to become the physical embodiment of their parents’ values and characteristics.

The same is true with the children of God. We have within us all the potential to become the living embodiment of God’s nature (His values and characteristics), that is the goal of the Christian life

God is molding and shaping us into the men and women He wants us to be!

And as we surrender to God, we are escaping the corruption, the depravity of this world and its influence on our life. We are living in this world, but the world is not living in us!

So the - *INTRODUCTION* where we, like Peter had a life that was built upon shifting sand, but when we came to Christ, our feet were placed upon the *ROCK*, Jesus Christ.

And thus, since we have received the grace of God and have made peace with God through Jesus Christ, we can enjoy the peace of God in our lives!

Then we looked at our – *GROWTH IN CHRIST!*

Our growth is based upon surrendering our life to Him, because it is His power that gives us what we need to live lives that are pleasing to Him! We are being transformed into the image of Christ and because of that, we escape the depravity that is in this world!

And we finished up looking at – *GOD'S PROMISES!*

As we have seen, there are volumes of promises from Genesis through the book of Revelation that will help us to live out our lives, help us to grow in the Lord!

And I will close with these words from Peter who wrote in I Peter 3:15-17, **“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.”**