



Indispensible and Thoroughly Sufficient

Series: A Divine Antidote to Heresy – Sermons in 2 Peter

2 Peter 1:3-4

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Pastor Nick Shaffer

Introduction

As we get into the body of this second letter from Peter to the churches in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, I want for us to be reminded again of Peter's intent in this letter, his reason for writing it. You remember that we said last week that Peter's concern was to fortify and strengthen the church, to remind them of God's eternal and unchanging truth, to refresh their minds concerning their spiritual foundations, and to encourage them to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ so that they might stand against these wolves in sheep's clothing and remain faithful to Christ. He wants the churches to go on living in the joy and hope of the apostolic gospel even after he was gone to be with the Lord. As we said last week, Peter is writing this letter convinced that: Growth in the grace and true knowledge of God in Christ will fortify the church and make it to stand unwaveringly and eternally steadfast against the destabilizing and soul-destroying power of error. This is the overarching theme that frames this letter. Peter begins the process of the fortification of the church by reminding the churches of the indispensability and sufficiency of Jesus Christ.

1) Jesus is indispensable and thoroughly sufficient because He has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness. (v. 3a) Now here were these false teachers coming to these Christians who had repented and trusted in Christ's work upon the cross and His faithful fulfillment of God's law in their place for salvation and life and they were saying in essence: "We know that you trust in Christ, that you love Christ and believe in Christ and that is all well and good, but there is more to be had than just Christ, there is more to experience than Christ, there is more to know than Christ. Christ is just the beginning but you need to move past Him to the more."

Powerfully and with finality, Peter unashamedly counters these damnable heresies by saying that everything needful for life and for godliness has been fully granted to us by the divine power of our Lord Jesus Christ. We stand in need of nothing when we stand in Him. All that we

need for eternal life and for a life that brings glory to Christ and is fully pleasing to God has already and abundantly been granted in fullness to us in Christ.

Now at first, this may seem like a huge promise. This may seem to be an over-reach by Peter, and exaggeration, but it is not and I want you to see this. All that we need for eternal life and for godliness is found in Christ alone. Now let's break this phrase down so that we fully understand the immense nature of what Peter is saying. All that we need for eternal life and that we need for godliness...godliness is a word that speaks of reverence and of awe that is expressed in our living. It's a desire to be pleasing to God in all that we say and do and think. It speaks of an inner attitude of worship that expresses itself word and deed. Godliness pictures a man or a woman who is empowered by grace and the indwelling Holy Spirit to conduct themselves in the reverence and awe of God, not just in appearance but in reality, in a way that pleases God. Peter says that all that we need for life and for godliness had been granted to us, literally, has been generously and abundantly and graciously given to us and how has it been given? It has been given to us by the divine power of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Peter wants for us to see that there is nothing that is life apart from Jesus Christ. He wants to drive home the essential, irreplaceable, indispensable power of Christ for His church, for His people. Beloved, make no mistake. To give spiritual life to sinners dead in trespasses and sin and then to sustain that life requires the power of God Himself. His divine power as God, His glorious might has given us all we need (Heb 1:3; Col 2:9-10; 1 Cor 1:24) Peter will not allow the focus to come off of Christ. He is not content to have Christ mentioned but not be pre-eminent. He must clearly and unambiguously magnify Jesus Christ as Lord and God. He does so to expose the counterfeit spirituality of the false teachers. As he told us in his first epistle, to true Christians, Christ is a chosen and precious cornerstone, but to the false, He is a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence.

Now what are these things that Peter has in mind that have been granted to us by Christ's power? In his first letter he spoke of our being born again, having a new heart toward God as a result of Christ's resurrection from the dead. In Christ we are new creations. Peter has in mind the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the commandments of Christ he has given to us, the right of access to the throne of grace, a full and free forgiveness through the shedding of His blood in our place. Peter is thinking of the mind of Christ which is now ours, the gifts of the Spirit purchased by His blood, the gifts of apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers for the building up of His body. He is thinking of Christ's place as our advocate and intercessor. He is thinking of Christ as our wisdom from God, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption. (1Co 1:30) By Christ's divine power we are freed from the power and the penalty

and dominion of sin, we have every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. By His divine power we have been made sons and daughters of God, adopted in His family and made joint heirs with Christ. This truth hits us right where you and I live. I want you to notice that the focus here is not Christ's miracle working power or an extravagant display of His universe creating and sustaining might. No, the focus is on the powerful working of Jesus' divine power in the seemingly unimpressive work and reality of transforming ordinary men and women to live lives that honor Christ in normal, ordinary, everyday life. Christ's power grants to us just what we need to live life in a way that pleases Him fully.

The application, I think, is obvious. If Christ, by His divine power, gives every provision that I need for life and godliness, then He is all I need. Any other teaching that tells me that I need Christ plus something else in order to please the Father in heaven, is a lie. There will always be people who want to supplement and add on to the work of Christ with extra teaching, and try to convince us that we are living less than Christian lives, that they have the secret that will take us to another level, that will please God more or make our lives more effective or more blessed. It takes all sorts of forms: Christ plus a second blessing, Christ plus counseling, Christ plus an overwhelming experience, Christ plus a certain cause, Christ plus a certain set of rules. Beloved, Peter means for us to see that all we need for life and godliness is found already in Christ. We have all we need in Him and in His divine power. That is a great encouragement but it is also a tremendous warning. We cannot blame God for not making us godly enough, or not making his will clear enough, for we already have everything we need. We must pursue sanctification as we will see in verses 5-11 in this chapter. But suffice to say, the point that Peter is stressing here is this: There's no such thing as an incomplete or deficient Christian. Our Savior's divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness. Every Christian has received all that he or she needs to please God. Each of us must grow and mature, but no necessary resource is missing. There's no need to search for something more. Jesus Christ is indispensable and thoroughly sufficient -- Peter tells us His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness. Moreover:

2) Jesus Christ is indispensable and thoroughly sufficient because we have received these blessings as a result of knowing Him who has called us to life. (v. 3b) When and how did we receive these blessings? We received these blessings through the knowledge of Christ – through saving knowledge of Jesus Christ that came about by His calling us to his own glory and excellence, His calling through His word to behold His beauty and perfection and character as the only Son of God and only Savior of men and women. In other words Peter wants us to see that we received these blessings on the day we were saved and they are ours entirely by grace.

Here Peter is speaking of the gracious work of Christ to call us to Himself – to His glory and excellence. He is speaking of His divine word to awaken our dead souls by His Word that brings life, His divine work to open our darkened eyes to behold the glory and the beauty of who He is and His divine work and power to give us saving personal knowledge of Him – faith. He is speaking of the effectual calling of Christ to salvation.

If a person is going to be saved, an internal call, an effectual call, must be coupled with the external call – the preaching of the Word of God. The internal call is the call of God that empowers and makes the external call effective. No one will love Christ unless God first changes the disposition of their heart. No-one will respond to the gospel in faith except God do a work in them. That is what effectual calling does, it is God making the heart of a person alive so that they hear the words of Christ and are irresistibly drawn to believe the gospel with repentance and faith, thereby changing their entire disposition from hatred or apathy toward God to fervent love for their Savior, making them a child of God, making them a Christian. When any minister stands up to teach the Bible, if he does faithfully and correctly, it is not his word you are hearing, it is the word of God and the conviction that you feel or correction that you hear or the encouragement that comes forth is the voice of Christ. When you respond to the Word of God, you are not responding to the preacher, you are responding to Jesus who calls you through His appointed channel of sound preaching. So the issue is not the smoothness or slickness of the preacher, his flair or looks or style, it is his faithfulness to the truth of the word of God and his faithfulness to proclaim it as it is. Augustine, said: "Yes it is I who admonish, I who order, I who command, it is the bishop who teaches. But it is Christ who commands through me." "The preacher explains the text; if he says what is true, it is Christ speaking." Augustine is saying that when a preacher preaches the truth of God accurately, then Christ Himself issues His saving call to His sheep. This had happened to those to whom Peter is writing. They were saved in the same way as us and what Peter means for them and for us to know is this: All the blessings that you need have been given already; they were gifts accompanying our coming to know Christ by faith. They are our birthright as the children of God by faith in Christ – they are ours and we have them, but Peter says there is even more. Peter wants them to know that

3) Jesus Christ is indispensable and absolutely sufficient in that it is through Him we have the precious and very great promises of God. (4a) Peter is busy showing the amazing worth of Christ here and he is not done. So, he tells his readers – Christ's divine power, which by virtue of your gracious salvation has granted to you all that is necessary for your life and godliness, that same power is the source of some precious and very great promises. Not only have you

received everything that you need for salvation and growth in godliness, you have received even more – the promises of God. What are the promises of God? The promises of God are the promised blessings, the covenantal blessings of God that flow to God's elect by His free grace given in Christ alone. The precious and very great promises of God find their source in the heart and good pleasure of God. They are rooted and established in God's unchanging character, in His faithfulness to His covenant people, to His church, and in His omnipotence. They are given to us because Christ has purchased them by His blood and given them to us. What promises are we talking about? I cannot begin to give you all of the promises of God in Scripture but let me give you just a few: (1Jn 2:24-25; Rom 10:9; Php 4:19; Joh 14:13-14; 1Jn 1:7,9; 2:1; Heb 13:5; 1Co 10:13; Rom 8:28, 38-39; 2Co 12:9; Joh 8:31-32; Joh 10:27-28; 15:4-5; 14:2-3) These are just a few and there are thousands upon thousands more besides. Do you see the exceeding Christ centeredness of what Peter is saying here? It is through the knowledge of Christ and by His divine power that we have received these precious and very great promises of God. It is by His divine power that we have them. Even more the guarantee of these promises is Christ, Himself. As Paul wrote: For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory. (2Co 1:20) All of the blessings of God are ours in Christ, we need look nowhere else. These promises of God in Christ encourage us and comfort us and teach us but Peter tells us that there is more...

4) Jesus Christ is indispensable and thoroughly sufficient in that we have been redeemed by Him so that we might become partakers of His divine nature. (4b) The purpose is that through them we might become partakers, that we might become partners, that we might share in the divine nature. Now what does that mean and how does that work? First, to be a partaker of the divine nature does not mean that we become little gods running around all over. God's great purpose in giving us these precious and very great promises given to us in Christ alone is that we may become morally and spiritually like Himself - just and true and holy and righteous, even as Christ Himself is. How does that work? How do these promises make us more and more like Christ? How do they make us to partake of the divine nature? The promises of God are not meant to be simply read and forgotten. They are to be aggressively pursued and diligently applied. They must be made our own. We do that in this way:

First, we need to know the promises of God. Pour through the Scriptures; search the word of God for His promises to His people. Be certain to understand the context and the scope of the promise. Make sure it is a promise that is applicable to all of God's people. This is important. God, for instance, has not made the blanket promise that he would give to all men offspring as numerous as the stars. That one was for Abraham alone. It must a promise universal to God's

people. Second, join faith with the promise. Believe it. That is, believe that God is able and willing to do all that He has promised that He would do. Third, obey any instruction attached to the promise. Let me give you an example. God promises wisdom for example: If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. The precept attached to is, though is this: But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. (Jas 1:5-6) Fourth, pray the promise back to God. We were talking about this Friday in men's bible study. George Mueller used to do this. He would search the Scriptures for a promise that fit his circumstance, trust in what he read, obey whatever precept or requirement was there and then he would pray God's promises back to Him. When we do that God's word is magnified. Moreover, God is glorified as we take Him at His Word. Not only that, but God's promises begin to mold and direct our prayers. And as Peter tells us, we become to greater and greater degrees partakers of the divine nature. God has given us these precious promises to live by, to lay hold upon, to pray through, to trust in so that we may become partakers of and participate fully in the new life that is in Christ alone as we are shaped and molded by their power. As the promises of God take greater and greater root in our souls, the deceitfulness of sin and its false promises of lasting pleasure and the lure of temptation lose their attraction on our soul, replaced by the superior power and allure and appeal of the promises of God. If we hold before our eyes the amazing promises God has made to us now and for the life to come, his divine power will be present and we will escape temptation and be partakers of the divine nature.

(I didn't include this Sunday but think it may be profitable for you) Listen to the words of Charles Spurgeon regarding the promises of God: Make the Lord's testimonies your delight and your counselors, and they will befriend you at every turn. Search the Scriptures, and you shall meet with a passage which will be so applicable to you as to appear even to have been written after your trouble had occurred; so exactly will it apply that you will be compelled to marvel at the wonderful tenderness and suitableness of it. As if the armorer had measured you from head to foot, so exactly shall the armor of the promise befit you. The promises are precious in themselves, from their suitability to us, from their coming from God, from their being immutable, from their being sure of performance, and from their containing wrapped up within themselves all that the children of God can ever need. The promises are precious, in the second place, because of their service to us. What will not the promises do for us? They will comfort us in distress. Give a child of God a divine promise, let him be able to appropriate it to himself, and you cannot make his house dark, or his heart dark! A promise believed in is a sun in the soul, and a song in the heart, marrow to the bones, and rejoicing to the spirit. He that hath the promises, hath heaven and earth as his heritage; he shall ride on the high places of the earth, he shall suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock; the eternal God is his refuge,

and underneath are the everlasting arms. He shall dwell in safety alone, his fountain shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew. Jesus Christ is indispensable and thoroughly sufficient in that the promises He gives are intended for our partaking of His divine image. And last, Peter wants us to see that:

5) Jesus Christ is indispensable and thoroughly sufficient for our lives because by Him we have escaped from the corruption that is in the world. (4c) Peter is telling us that every believer has completely, effectively escaped from the corruption of the world. Now that we have escaped, we must put this truth into practice and pursue the promises of God daily so that our "escape" becomes in practice (image of Christ) what it is in our position (in Christ) – so that we become conformed to Christ.

Concluding thoughts: Peter is bold to proclaim the gracious provision of God in Christ for His people in this world and he is bold to show that by contrast, the folly and the madness of looking anywhere else for life. Jesus Christ is the centerpiece of Christianity and the centerpiece of life. That is Peter's message to us and I pray it will be deeply driven into our souls.

In Christ we have a love that can never be fathomed; a life that can never die; a righteousness that can never be tarnished; a peace that can never be understood; a rest that can never be disturbed; a joy that can never be diminished; a hope that can never be disappointed; a glory that can never be clouded; a light that can never be darkened; a happiness that can never be interrupted; a strength that can never be enfeebled; a purity that can never be defiled; a beauty that can never be marred; a wisdom that can never be baffled; and resources that can never be exhausted. (Author Unknown)

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