"Knowing God: The Secret to Success"

(2 Peter 1:1-4)

1/11/09

Introduction:

- ***Knowing God Personally (through His Word) is the Secret to Successful Christian Living!***

I. Knowing God is the secret to a life <u>filled</u> with <u>grace and peace</u> (v.2)

II. Knowing God is the secret to a life <u>lived</u> with <u>Godliness and moral virtue</u> (v.3)

III. Knowing God is the secret to a life <u>powered</u> by <u>God's character</u> and <u>not the world's corruption</u> (v.4)

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Introduction:

Two things always seem to go together:

1) Persecution & 2) False Teaching

1 Peter emphasized (stressed) the believer's need to be armed against persecution, and this letter of 2 Peter emphasizes the need to be armed against false teaching.

This epistle is a reminder (1:12, 3:1) of truth Peter previously taught God's people. This letter is to remind God's people that the most effective way to resist the heretics and false teachers and false teaching is to mature or grow in their knowledge of God/Christ through His Word, the Bible.

Warning regarding false teachers (cp. 2 Pet. 2:1) makes this epistle similar to that of Jude. Both books are vital to know and understand in these days of mass deception.

The clear theme of verses 2 – 4 involves the word "knowledge" (v. 2, 3; cp. v. 5, 6, 8).

To know the sciences, social studies and mathematics is great knowledge, but the greatest of all knowledge is to know God (the One Who made it all).

We can know about God via creation (Ps.19:1; Rom.1:20); However, we get to know God through a relationship with Jesus Christ and that through a knowledge of God's self-revelation in the Bible.

> The word "theology" is derived from the Greek word *theos* meaning God and *logos* meaning word or rational study of. The Bible teaches that the infinite God transcends the finite, limited, dependent mind of man (Is. 55:8-9). Although God is incomprehensible (Job 11:7, 23:3, 8, 9; Is. 40:18), the Scriptures teach that God has revealed Himself so that we can know about Him and know Him (Deut. 29:29; Jn. 14:7, 17:3; I Jn. 5:20).
>
> **What will a knowledge of God do for me?**
>
> A knowledge of God will:

1) Instruct you (You will formulate a sound and sane world-view or philosophy of life)

2) Humble you (When you see Him as He really is, you will then be able to see yourself as your really are)

3) Encourage you (When His awesome attributes are considered, your heart will be stirred, strengthened, and secure)

4) Mold you (It will provide a pattern for you to follow; we should shape our lives after the moral characteristics of our Creator - I Peter 1:16)

- ***Knowing God Personally (through His Word) is the Secret to Successful Christian Living!***

I. Knowing God is the secret to a life filled with grace and peace (v.2)

v. 1
"Simon" – Peter's real name; named after Jacob's son, Simeon (Gen. 29:33).

"Peter" – Simon's surname (nicknamed by Jesus – Mk. 3:16, Mt. 16:18; cp. Acts 10:5, 32, 11:13). Peter, from *petros* meaning a stone. He would be a servant and apostle of the "Rock of Ages," Jesus Christ (the Petra).

Jesus Christ is called a "stone" or "rock" in Scripture.

--"Spiritual rock" in the O.T. (I Cor. 10:4)
--"Stumbling stone" (Rom. 9:33)
--"Rock of offence" (I Pet. 2:8)
--"Cornerstone" (Eph. 2:20; cp. Mt. 21:42)
--The "foundation" stone (I Cor. 3:11)
--"The Lord is my rock and my fortress" - Ps. 18:2
(cp. Ps. 18:31, 46; 28:1; 31:2-3; 40:2; 42:9; 61:2, 6; 71:3; 78:35; 89:26; 92:15; 94:22; 95:1; cp. I Sam. 2:2; II Sam. 22:3, 32, 47; 23:3)
--The "stone" in prophecy (Zech. 3:9; cp. Rev. 5:6)

When Peter identifies himself, he calls himself a "**servant"** (*doulos*) – a lowly, dedicated bond-servant (note: he never refers to himself as a "Pope").

He also reveals his God-given title, **"apostle"** (sent one, commissioned one – with the task of spreading the Gospel and feeding God's sheep – John 21:16-17).

"An apostle <u>of Jesus Christ</u>" –

--Sent <u>by</u> Jesus Christ (in the Great Commission – Mt. 28:19-20; Mk. 16:15-16)

--Sent <u>for</u> Jesus Christ (to spread the gospel primarily among the Jewish world – Gal. 2:7-8)

As an apostle, Peter was appointed by Jesus Christ to carry out a task <u>on behalf of</u> Christ and with the <u>authority</u> of Christ (backing him up).

"Obtained" - to obtain by lot (by God's grace); our faith (the capacity to believe the Gospel) is a gift from God.

"Here it is not the faith as a body of doctrine, but the faith or God-given capacity to trust Him that brings a man salvation" (Green, cited by Rogers, p. 581).

"Like precious faith" – faith equal in value or worth. Our faith and Peter's faith are of the same status, which makes every child of God equal in privilege. We are "equally privileged" in Christ. Not only are both Jews and Gentiles sharing a common precious faith, but we share the same blessing of faith that Peter and the rest of the Apostles had.

Our faith is as precious as Peter's!

We have received the same precious faith as Peter, just as we have received the same gift of the Holy Spirit: **Acts 11:17**
Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?

This equally precious ability to believe the Gospel came to us by means of Christ's righteousness. He is just and right to grant the same gift of precious faith to all of His children.

When it comes to the quality of our faith, no one has it above anyone else. Quantities of faith may differ among God's children, but the quality of faith is shared in common. Faith is simply the capacity to fully trust Jesus Christ.

Note: It is through our God and Savior Jesus Christ that we share this precious faith (implied here by the one definite article governing two nouns is the Deity of Christ!).

v. 2

"Grace and peace" - Having received the grace of God and peace with God for salvation, Peter wishes God's people to experience a greater measure of grace and peace as we live the Christian life.

Such blessings of "grace and peace" can be more than added to us – they can be multiplied to us. But how? The answer: In your knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord. By knowing more about God, we tap into greater repositories of grace and peace. Implied here is this: to know God is to know grace and peace, and to not know God is to not know grace and peace.

"Grace" – the unmerited kindness of God flows unreservedly deeper/richer & fuller to those who know Him more deeply, richly, & fully.

"peace" – the serenity of soul or calmness of spirit is showered upon those who sit at His feet and learn of Him.

Matthew 11:28-29

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

The word **"knowledge"** is a strengthened form of *gnosis* (1:5-6, 3:18) and implies a more intimate and personal relationship than the simple term. . . the meaning (with *epi*) is "know exactly, completely, through and through" (Hiebert, p. 39).

II. Knowing God is the secret to a life <u>lived</u> with <u>Godliness and moral virtue</u> (v.3)

v. 3

"According as" = In the same way as grace and peace come by <u>knowing God</u>, so real living and godliness come to us by knowing God.

It's because of God's great power and enablement that we have already received all that we need for successful Christian living. My Christian friend, we are already equipped with everything we need for good living and good reverential obedience to our Maker. How is this quality of life and godliness ours? By or through our "knowledge of Him."

"All things" – spiritual, not material, provisions are in view (Hiebert, p. 44).

Nothing I need for successful Christian living is unavailable! It is all here in God's Word! This is why Peter will make such a strong appeal for us to take heed to the written Scriptures (1:19-21).

Have you come to know God? Have you come to know the One who is inviting you to Himself? If not, He is calling out to you by His glory and goodness! He is requesting that you come to Him today.

III. Knowing God is the secret to a life <u>powered</u> by <u>God's character</u> and <u>not the world's corruption</u> (v.4)

v. 4

"Whereby" - by means of God's splendid glory and moral goodness ("virtue") are given to you and me "MEGA" promises and precious promises. These promises are so great and so valuable because they involve the believer sharing in the very life of God.

Verse 3 describes God's "divine power" and verse 4 His "divine nature."

"Partakers of the divine nature" - not that we will share in Divinity but in Divinity's character. We can actually take on certain attributes of God! Moral attributes which Peter will expand upon in vv. 5-7.

We have already in large measure escaped the rotten, putrefying, stinking corruption that operates in the world by means of man's sensual appetites.

The promise here is that we can to ever-increasing levels attain more God-likeness and less world-likeness.

Conclusion:

Truth shall set you Free!

See: John 8:30-32

"As he spake these words" – While Jesus taught about His equality with God the Father and the Father's authentication of His Son, many of the Jews believed in Him. They came to trust His Person while they listened to His words.

This is exactly how "faith" comes into a person's life – by their hearing the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). You cannot have faith in Christ apart from the Word of God. Faith and the Word cannot be separated. To have faith apart from God's Word is to have a faith without a solid foundation.

Therefore, whenever you witness, always give the Word of God.

At the very least these people made an outward profession of faith (Rienecker, citing Morris & Schnackenburg).

There is a belief which is not a true saving faith (Acts 8:13-24; Ja. 2:19; 1 Cor. 15:2).

The "belief" was perhaps "nominally at any rate, as in John 2:23" (Robertson Word Pictures V, p. 148).

"Many believed. Yet before long they were picking up stones to cast at him (8:59). It is the old story of pseudo faith" (The Wycliffe Bible Commentary, Pfeiffer & Harrison, Moody Press, p. 1091).

v. 31
Some might profess to be believers (or true disciples) but the real test is whether or not they remain committed to the Word of Christ.

Jesus now singles out those whose faith has been ignited upon hearing His words.

"Continue" = to <u>remain</u> or <u>abide</u> in the Word of Christ

The grand mark of a true disciple of Christ is <u>continuity</u> in His Gospel message.

A true disciple is one who holds on to the truth and never lets go. There is no apostasy for a true disciple; there are no defectors from genuine Christianity; there is no true child of God who will ever abandon his/her faith in the word of Christ.

"Then are ye" – Jesus uses His words carefully. He does not say "then will ye be."

He is not saying that continuing in His Word will make you a disciple, but rather that continuing in His Word reveals that you "are" a true disciple.

"My disciples indeed" – A disciple is one who has come under the spiritual teachings and disciplines of His master (the word discipline and disciple are related terms).

The word "disciple" refers to one who has been trained in such a way that he mimics, imitates, or copies the lessons and lifestyle of his teacher.

That is why the first-century Antiochian believers were called "Christians," because others noticed how much they resembled Christ (in their actions and reactions, in their attitudes and motivations).

"Disciples indeed" – the word "indeed" means truly. It is the same word as the word "truth" in v. 32.

A disciple "indeed" refers to a true, bonafide, real or genuine disciple. The statement then does not refer to a good disciple or a better disciple (as if some might assume that Jesus is implying that one might be a disciple but not a good one, unless He continues in His Word).

Here, Jesus is referring to a real disciple (a real Christian) as opposed to a false one.

Jesus is saying: "Your future loyalty to My teaching will prove the reality of your present profession. . . continuance in the word (teaching) proves the sincerity or insincerity of the profession. It is the acid test of life" (R.W.P. p. 149).

"Ye shall know the truth" – Here, the term "truth" is linked to the term "word" in v. 31. It is interesting that Christ, who is the living "word" (*logos* – Jn. 1:1, 14) and who is the living "truth" (Jn. 14:6), is the one who gave us His written word which is written truth (Jn. 17:17 – "Thy word is truth").

"Knowing the truth" is inseparably connected to continuing in Christ's Word (v. 31). Therefore, your relationship with God's Word will determine your knowledge of the truth which will in turn determine whether or not you are **"free"** from sin.

Question: How much time have you spent in God's Word this week?

Truth is the engine or driving force of the Christian's life.

Apart from the truth we dwell in the realm of lies, deceit, darkness, and death!

A good definition of truth: Truth (*aletheian*) is reality; it comes to us as reality that has been revealed, unveiled, unsealed, or opened up. When God's revelation opens up before our eyes, we come to see and know reality. The fog and mist of Satan's lies is lifted and the reality of Jesus Christ and His will becomes clear to us.

He is the truth (Jn. 14:6) because He not only tells us reality, but He is reality. He is really God. He is in fact God in visible form. He is the personification of everything that is real.

"**You will know" –** future middle – meaning: you will come to know for yourself. You will be personally enlightened or illuminated to the truth.

'The truth shall make you free" –

***"the" truth -
Truth is exclusive (truth is not relative; ex. What is true for you may not be true for me)
Truth is not optional, where you can pick any set of beliefs and turn out okay

***"shall make you"
Truth is powerful

***"shall make you free" –
Truth is liberating

The word "free" means to be released from enslavements; to be unshackled from that which held you captive.

"Free" – free from what?

Free from enslavement of sin (v. 34)

Free from the lies of Satan (v. 44-45)

"Freedom *intellectual, moral, spiritual) is only attainable when we are set free from darkness, sin, ignorance, superstition and let the light of the world shine on us and in us" (RWP, p. 149).

The precious theme of freedom from condemnation of the Law and from the enslavement of sin is found in verses such as:

Romans 6:18
Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

Romans 8:2
For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

2 Cor. 3:17
Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

Galatians 5:1
Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

1 Peter 2:16
As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.

Knowing the truth about . . .

- God sets you free from the lie and enslavement of idolatry
- Man sets you free from the lie and enslavement of humanism
- Creation sets you free from the lie and enslavement of evolution
- Salvation sets you free from the lie and enslavement of false religion
- Love sets you free from the lie and enslavement of self-centeredness
- Marriage sets you free from the lie and enslavement of divorce and adultery
- Church sets you free from the lie and enslavement of the cults

There is one main truth for all. The Gospel of Jesus Christ.

John 8:36 - If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

Get to know God! *(not just know about God; but to know Him personally)*

John 17:3 - And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

> *If a servant of God is uncertain of his Master, he will be uncertain of everything that follows in his service. If you and I have no doubt about having seen God, then our divine service will grow sweeter and clearer and easier every year we live. I have had men say to me, "Didn't Paul's Christian life begin with the question, 'What wilt thou have me to do?' " No, it did not; no life begins with that question. It began with the question, "Who art thou, Lord?" (Acts 9:5ff). —Bible Illustrations*

If you know Him, get to know Him better!

- To know someone, you must spend time with them.
- To know someone, you must be a good listener.
- To know someone, you must see them in various situations and circumstances.

To know God is to trust God (and this is the key to all successful living)

When you come to know God's attributes (His character), you come to know Him and His will (plan).

God's Attributes

A. **GOD'S ESSENCE** (Attributes of ***Personality***)
(God's Attributes that reveal His personal nature)

* 1. God is Spirit
2. God is Life
3. God is Intelligent
4. God is Emotional
5. God is Purposeful
6. God is Active

B. **GOD'S GREATNESS** (Attributes of ***Perfection***)
(God's Attributes that reveal His distinctive ability
[i.e. attributes that belong only to deity])

* 1. God is Self-Existent (the independence of God)
2. God is All-Powerful (the omnipotence of God)
3. God is All-Knowing (the omniscience of God)
4. God is All-Wise (the omnisapience of God)
5. God is Always Present (the omnipresence of God)
6. God is Sovereign (the control/authority of God)
7. God is Unchangeable (the immutability of God)
8. God is Eternal (the timelessness of God)
9. God is Beyond Full Comprehension (the incomprehensibility of God)

C. **GOD'S GENUINENESS** (Attributes of ***Purity***)
(God's Attributes that reveal His moral character)

* 1. God is Holy (the set-apartness of God)
2. God is Righteous (the justice of God
3. God is True (the honesty / truthfulness of God)
4. God is Faithful (the loyalty / trustworthiness of God)

D. **GOD'S GOODNESS** (Attributes of ***Piety***)
(God's Attributes that reveal His expression of benevolence)

* 1. God is Love
2. God is Merciful
3. God is Gracious
4. God is Patient

Make the pursuit of this knowledge the greatest pursuit of your life, and you will come to know true success!