

God's Gift of True Knowledge

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Preacher: Jeff Jackson

[0 : 0 0] I invite you to turn to 2 Peter.

Yes, I know. You've been very patient. It is not our habit, our way here at Grace to do topical sermons very much, but even topical sermons can be expositional because it's all exegesis.

It's all getting into the Word and allowing the Word to dictate by what it says what it means. And we bring that meaning out in an expository way. To exposit the Bible means to expose it, to unpack it verse by verse.

That's typically what we do here at Grace from the Pulpit, whether Greg's preaching or I'm preaching. And of late, I've done a number of sermons that have been more thematically driven.

I just felt the need to do some of that. But now we're back in a book of the Bible. We'll move through it, Lord willing, verse by verse as God gives me breath to life to come and do this with you.

[1 : 2 0] So the title of my message would be God's gift of true knowledge as we begin this morning. God's gift of true knowledge.

And we're going to read from 2 Peter 1, verses 1 through 4, but I'm already letting you know, as you'll see up here, I'm only dealing with verse 1 this morning.

I'm laying the groundwork and foundation for what we're going to be talking about throughout this book. And I'm going to take pains to make sure that we grasp the point that Peter wants to make at the very beginning.

So let's read together in verses 1 through 4. Simon Peter is identified as the author of this book. Simon Peter, a bondservant 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.

[2 : 5 0] 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.

Boy, that is power, power packed. And it may take me a few sermons to get through that, but I know at least one more to get through those first four verses.

Now I want to let you know, knowing. Think about knowing. Think about knowledge. Knowing is important. In fact, what you know, or perhaps what you don't know, can mean the difference between life and death.

Now I'll give you a quick illustration because of what I'll say next. So when we were living in... I come from the deep south. Suzanne comes from out west.

And that's where I met her. So we've been in all kinds of regions around the U.S. But the deep south and the west are known for something particularly vicious and icky.

[4 : 06] And I'm sorry if you're a herpetologist. I'm going to offend you in just a moment. I don't like snakes. And there are plenty of those in those regions of the country.

Venomous ones. Nasty ones. They are camouflaged and they sneak around. They bite you. I know people tell me, they won't bother you if you don't bother them. Yeah, right. See me afterwards.

I'll tell you more snake stories. But I was with my best friend at the time, my dog Bella. We were living out in... I won't bore you with all these.

We were living out in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Actually, we were living in a place called Los Lunas. That's about, what was it? About 25 miles south of Albuquerque. And there was a...

Just the high desert. Now you have to think when I say desert, don't think just flat sand that goes on forever. This is the high desert. We were probably at about 5,000, a little over 5,000 feet in Los Lunas.

[5 : 01] Just short. Albuquerque is at about 6,000 feet. It's higher than Denver. So this is the high desert. And it's beautiful. Just, we got snow there in the winter.

I mean, it's just gorgeous. High desert. There was a place that I would go out and I liked to trail run. So I'd go out in the desert. I found out about a place. I'd take my dog, Bella, and we'd run. And I remember we were running along and I had just been told by the other elders of the church we had joined that there, he had lived there all these years in Los Lunas, farming in Los Lunas, and he'd only ever seen like maybe one snake.

So he said, don't worry about it when you go out there. Because I had been told by a number of people, watch out for those green rattlesnakes. Rattlesnakes. I went, green rattlesnakes. Rattlesnakes aren't green.

Well, these are. They're very green. And they blend in very well. So I remember running along at one point and a hang glider came over above me and he was moving around.

And so I'm doing my thing and I'm, where am I not looking? I am looking up at this guy and he seems to be circling me. So I just kind of waved as I went and the thought hit my head in that moment and I said, I better turn around and look at the ground where I'm going.

[6 : 24] And as I did, guess what was laying, stretched out right in front of me. And I was just clipping along. I took a picture and showed it to my wife and my elder friends of the track marks where I put the brakes on.

In the sand. I'm talking skid marks, baby. And I stopped about two and a half feet from the head of that thing as it was laid out. It wasn't coiled up. He was crossing the road.

Well, I gave him the road. That's what I did. I stopped, took a picture, looked at him. Thank God that I looked down and went on my way. Another time I'm out with my son, Jared and Bella.

And we're walking along. We're in a sunken road. We're all finished with this little run. We're coming back. I get a phone call. I take my phone with me just in case I get in trouble or whatever. And I'm talking to a guy and I'm actually counseling him on the phone as we're heading back to the car.

And as we go along this sunken road that was about this high on each side, about hip high as we're going along, Jared's on this side of me. We walk by and I hear this. I said, hold on just a minute.

[7 : 40] Did you hear that? Did you hear that? No, sir. My dog's sitting there looking. So I look back and I come and I know he's there. And I look and I look and I look and finally I see him coiled up and he's a green rattlesnake, a great big joker.

Get to the parking lot and some people flag us down and say, hey, watch, we just chased a big rattlesnake out of the parking lot. Now, I know what you're all thinking right now. Jeff, these are messages from God.

Please tell us that you didn't keep running. Well, I did and I've got more of those, more of those. Let me tell you, knowledge, the knowledge that those critters were there helped me.

It helped me be aware. It helped me watch. I was actually more afraid for my dog than I was for myself. Knowing is important. This is the kind of stuff that we raise our kids to know.

To know about right and wrong. To know about truth and lies. Safety and danger. Good and bad. The way people are and the way people can be.

[8 : 47] So be careful. I remember when I was young, what was I told? At six years old, I would walk to school in this little town and I remember I lived with my grandmother at the time and she would say to me, don't get in the car with anyone.

If anybody stops and offers you a ride, do not get in the car. Yes, ma'am. I'm on my way to school one day and it's raining and I've got on my little yellow thing. I was so cute, right?

And I'm walking along, all protected and this woman pulls up and says, rolls the window down and says, Jeff, get in the car. I'll take you to school. Get in the car.

I'll take you to school. No, Mama Dale, that's what I called her. Mama Dale says, I can't ride with anybody and she looked at me and went, well, you can't argue with that, right?

That's the kind of stuff that we teach our kids. Can you imagine a little kid, two or three years old, wandering off from you out in an environment like I just described and coming up against a venomous snake and they don't know.

[9 : 53] They don't know. See, this is why the Lord tells us knowing is important. What you know is important. What you do with what you know is important.

And that begs the issue of it matters who you listen to. It matters who you listen to. The right kind of knowledge and belief can be life-giving and helpful.

I've already given you several examples. But like knowing how to feed and clothe yourself. Yeah, we raise little kids up learning how to do that. This is how you bathe yourself.

This is how you feed yourself. This is how you wear your clothes. Those are important things. How to make a living. How to go out and earn a wage. Who to listen to.

Who to believe as you listen to those people. We teach our kids, you can't believe everything you hear and everything that everybody tells you. The wrong kind of knowledge and belief can be life-draining and harmful.

[10 : 57] Like, first-hand knowledge of impurity. See, you want to be as ignorant as you can be about having first-hand knowledge of impurity.

You know what I'm talking about. It's very, very prominent. It's easy. Easy to be impure these days. But that's the kind of first-hand knowing that you don't want in your life.

Why? Because it's hard, if not impossible, to unknow it. If I could use it that way. Or how about this? The wrong kind of knowledge.

Believing the lies of false doctrine. False teachings. Or listening to gossip from a busy body. That's the wrong kind of knowledge coming at you in the wrong way.

The Bible tells us what is at stake in knowing the truth. And about how God has loved us by telling us this truth.

[11 : 57] Here's just one example from Scripture. We'll look at many more. Look at this one. And we know, see, we know by the grace of God that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding.

Now, why has Jesus come and given us understanding? So that we may know Him who is true.

And we are in Him who is true. That's marvelous. In His Son, Jesus Christ, we are in the one who is true.

true. This is the true God and eternal life. Now, you tell me by that verse alone what's at stake in knowing truth.

Life. Eternal life. So to know truth in the way that we're speaking about here in this verse, to know truth is to know the God of that truth.

[13 : 03] The God who is truth. and by having a personal knowledge of Him, you are brought to eternal life.

Now, how critically important is that kind of knowledge? That is the knowledge that Peter is going to be speaking about throughout this book. We're going to capitalize on that as we move through.

This, then, is the true knowledge that saves men's souls and sanctifies us for godly living. it has only one source.

God. Not 50 sources. Not a few sources. This truth has one source. God. I'll say that 50 times in going through this book if I have to.

I want you to understand very clearly at the outset as Peter writes about the truth that saves, the truth that sanctifies, it has one source and it's not mankind.

[14 : 07] It is not science. It is not psychology. The idea that all truth is God's truth has to be qualified. We have to understand what we're meaning by truth.

People out in the world call a lot of things truth. We have to be circumspect about whether or not it really is. this saving knowledge is not inside of us by nature and it can't be discovered.

Did you hear me now? This knowledge is not inside of us as mankind, as human beings, and it cannot be discovered by us. Try as we might with 50 lifetimes, we will never ever discover this kind of knowledge.

What are you talking about, Jeff? God has revealed this true knowledge in scripture and in the person of Jesus Christ. This kind of knowledge has to be shown to us.

It has to be opened and revealed to us, or we will live in the darkness of the lies of what we think and call truth. Quote unquote. God has to reveal it.

[15 : 22] Now, friends, this is Peter's second letter to the same people that he wrote to in his first letter. I'll show you that.

We'll look at several places in the book this morning as I kind of give you this foundational overview. If you look at chapter 3, verse 1. This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you, in which I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder.

So he's writing to the same people that he wrote his first letter to. Now, as we move through this, understand that as he writes to these people, these are the folks he mentioned in 1 Peter that are scattered in groups and local churches throughout Asia Minor.

Asia Minor would encompass a good bit of what we would call modern Turkey. That's who he's writing to. Peter knows that he's nearing the end of his life, so he writes with a sense of urgency.

If you look at this with me, too, look at chapter 1 in 2 Peter verses 13 and 14. Look at what he says here. I consider it right as long as I'm in this earthly dwelling to stir you up by way of reminder.

[16 : 53] That's the second or third time in this chapter he's said, I want to remind you knowing that the laying aside of my earthly dwelling is imminent.

as also our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. Now, Peter is most likely imprisoned in Rome, awaiting execution under Nero's persecution.

We know that Nero died in about A.D. 68. So this is probably written sometime in A.D. 67 or so.

And Peter offers his final encouragements and teaching for his beloved brothers and sisters in Christ. And he is paramountly concerned that these people understand the high degree of importance and urgency of the truth.

Let me put it to you this way. Peter wants us, he wants these readers and us to be certain of the truth.

[18 : 01] Lots of people out there talking about truth. To believe that truth and then to obey it. To obey it means to be faithful to live the truth for God's glory.

So Peter writes in characteristically bold, bold fashion about the certainty of this truth from God. He encourages believers to base their lives on a true knowledge of God in Jesus Christ.

So Peter is contrasting God's truth throughout this letter with the falsehoods of men. He's very, very concerned with these false teachers who've infiltrated the church.

I'll finish the quote in just a second. Right now, we're about three decades into Christianity. It's been about 30 years since Jesus ascended to the heavens and in just that short period, because it is a short period.

The older I get, I see, I recognize that. In that short period of time, false teachers have infiltrated the church all around the known world where the church has been scattered and planted, where Christians have been scattered out and churches are cropping up as people come together in their saving knowledge of Jesus and want to do what we're doing this morning.

[19 : 21] Already, the freshness, the newness, the readiness of the gospel is being compromised by evil and Peter is writing about that and he's very, very concerned.

So he's contrasting truth with the falsehoods of men. Sixteen times he uses different forms of the word knowledge in this epistle.

Sixteen times. The form in chapter one, verses two and three, and I know that we're going to get to two and three God willing next week, but this is all foundational to help us understand how he introduces his letter and then brackets it by how he closes it out.

The form that he uses is epignosis. Epignosis. Now, specifically, specifically, epignosis is used, that particular form of the word for knowledge is used some 20 times in the entire New Testament.

According to the Lexham Theological Word Book, it's used three times in Romans, and each time in Romans, it stresses spiritual blindness.

[20 : 35] I'm going to show you, or not having the true knowledge that leads one to God. All right, let me show you that real quickly. This is the contrast.

If you turn to Romans one, Romans chapter one, we'll look at verse 28 and see this word.

The same word that Peter is using in verses two and three of second Peter, he uses, Paul uses here. Romans 128, and just as they did not see fit to acknowledge, acknowledge God any longer.

God gave them over to a depraved mind to do those things which are not proper. So let me show you what I'm talking about here. Did not see fit to acknowledge is literally rendered in the Greek to have God in knowledge.

That's the literal rendering to have God in knowledge. That's the problem. Go on down through the passage with me to end chapter one and look at what it says.

[21 : 51] These people who did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind. They didn't want to acknowledge God.

They didn't want to know God through this knowledge that is being revealed to them. So what did he do? He gave them over to that to do things which are not proper in the sight of God.

Look at verse 29. What is that kind of stuff? Being filled with all unrighteousness. Now that's the main issue. Let me stop you there. That is the main problem that all of us face as we come to confront this knowledge of God.

We are people who are unrighteous. We are unfit to stand before a holy God. We are too polluted, too corrupted in our hearts.

And so we cannot stand unblemished or unaccused before a holy God. We don't have a righteousness of our own. That's the problem.

[22 : 58] The first thing that he says out of the gate, they are filled with this problem. They are filled with wickedness, greed, evil, full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice.

They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents. Verse 31 without understanding.

That is the result of unrighteousness. They don't have understanding. They don't have the knowledge that saves. Untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful.

And although they look now, although they know. Know here in verse 32 is a little bit different form. It's the verb form of what we're looking at in 2 Peter.

Although they know the ordinance of God, they know the truth of God, they know the principle of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death.

[24 : 04] They know that. they know that what they're believing is worthy of death. They know that what they're shunning and moving away from puts them in this state of being worthy of death.

That means the wrath of God is on them. God's judgment. They not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them. How terrible! It's bad enough that they want to pursue the lies, but now they're packing up with other people and encouraging those people in the lies.

They give hearty approval to people who also want to go that route of turning away from the knowledge of God and turning toward that knowledge which moves them further and further away from the Lord.

Now notice what the problem is at the root of all of this. I've mentioned the unrighteousness that we have. Look at how it comes out and what it is all about in terms of practice. Look over in verse 24 of chapter 1.

Romans 1. Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity so that their bodies would be dishonored among them.

[25 : 12] Now why? Here it is. For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie. They exchanged the knowledge, the true knowledge of God for a lie and they worshipped and served the creature rather than the creator who is blessed forever.

Amen. That's the problem. This is where the lies lead. Lies lead to false worship because we are worshipping people we will, will, will worship.

We have to worship. So the question then is every day of my life, what will I worship? Whom will I worship? It's not will I worship, I will.

But what? If that worship is not based in a true knowledge of him, then it will not be worship acceptable to the Lord because it won't be worship to him, offered to him.

You with me on that? That's the problem. That's what we're seeing here. That's what's at stake in all of this. Back to 2 Peter.

[26 : 22] Now the remaining 17 uses, I told you there were 20 uses in the New Testament of epignosis.

The remaining 17 uses of this word refer to one of three aspects of spiritual understanding. And I want to give those to you so that again you'll have this kind of in your hopper so as we move through the book you can reflect on this.

The first one is this. Knowledge of God. That's what we've been hitting on and talking about. The remaining 17 uses of the word epignosis in the New Testament refer to one of three aspects of this spiritual understanding which is what we want.

And the first is a spiritual understanding or a true knowledge of God. We see that in our passage first of all. Second Peter one, two, and three.

Grace and peace be multiplied to you notice in the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ our Lord. Seeing that his divine power has done what?

[27 : 40] Granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness through the true knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and excellence.

He goes on then in verse four to talk about these precious and magnificent promises. Folks, where do we go to find, to see, to know all of this wonderful, true knowledge, this saving knowledge about God?

Where is the one place that we can go in our life to stake our life on this is the truth? This is the true knowledge of God. Where? Scripture, the Bible, Scripture, and that's what he's telling us.

Now, we're headed to that in future sermons, God willing. But this is important for us to understand. If you look at Ephesians 1, 17, I didn't want to pass this up as I did some cross referencing and some thinking about where this is showing up in the Scripture, the reading I was doing, I came across this, Ephesians 1, 17.

We'll back up to 15 to get the running context. For this reason, I too, Paul says, having heard of the, look, faith in the Lord Jesus, all right, that's true knowledge, that's saving knowledge, which exists among you and your love for all the saints, do not cease giving thanks for you while making mention of you in my prayer.

[29 : 15] So he's offering thanksgiving, he's offering prayers of thanksgiving to God, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may do what? May give to you a spirit of wisdom and of, notice the word, revelation in the knowledge of him.

The word knowledge there is our word and it means true knowledge, not just any knowledge, not just facts, a true knowledge, a leading to salvation knowledge, a sanctifying knowing of God.

It's helping me to become more like my savior. Folks, why do we spend so much time talking about that this morning in Ham? Because this is the foundation. This is the foundation of true knowledge.

So many people in religious circles, Christian circles over the years that Suzanne and I have been doing ministry miss this. They miss it.

We've got to start here. Another aspect, I told you there are three aspects of this spiritual understanding used in the New Testament, emphasized in the New Testament, in these 17 other uses of the word epignosis.

[30 : 33] So here's the second one. Knowledge of God's truth. Knowledge of God's truth. They go together. Knowledge of God, you can't have knowledge of God apart from his truth in Scripture.

So we go to Titus. Chapter 1, verse 1. Titus is right after 2 Timothy. Paul, this is his introduction to the letter to Titus, similar to how Peter is introducing his second letter.

Paul, a bond servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ. Doesn't that sound familiar? That's just exactly how Peter started his letter, isn't it? For the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth, which is according to godliness.

That knowledge of the truth is our word. It is a true knowledge. knowledge. It is a I know God or I have God kind of knowledge and he ties it here to the truth of God in Scripture.

That's how we know that we know. All right. And then number three, a knowledge of God's will. And that's Colossians 1-9.

[32 : 03] I'm taking you to other places in the Bible just real quickly to show you how this is born out as the New Testament uses our word throughout. For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

Here's another instance where Paul is saying, I'm praying for you Christians. I'm praying for you, you Colossian Christians, and I'm asking God to give you a true knowledge of his will for your lives together as you do this work of the church together.

Give you this comprehensive understanding of his will. That means to help you understand the truth of Scripture. How to live to please God. that's a very important aspect.

So we have knowledge, a true knowledge of God, a true knowledge of God's truth, a true knowledge of God's will. They all come together in Scripture.

And so here's what we've established together already. We've established is that throughout his letter Peter is using knowledge to encourage us in a saving knowledge of God and in a sanctifying.

[33 : 33] Sanctifying means a growing in grace knowledge, a likeness to Jesus knowledge knowledge of the truth and of God's ways. See, that all comes together and it's so critical for us as Christian people.

One of the reasons that I want to do this with you is because if you don't have this already, I want you to develop more and more of this treasured understanding and mentality so that you and I will fulfill what the Scriptures tell us, that we are to guard the truth.

Folks, this is a hill to die on. This is one of the hills to die on. No truth, no hope. No truth, no salvation.

No truth, no being like Jesus. No truth, no mission for the church. We stand or fall on a true knowledge of God, a true knowledge of the truth, and a true knowledge of knowing and being able to do His will.

Again, this is one of the reasons that Greg and I come to this pulpit or come to a teaching moment in our church and we strive to teach thus saith the Lord. Thus saith the Lord.

[34 : 47] It's His truth. It's His truth. We are guardians, purveyors of that truth. This is, to get our minds around it, this is much like the way Proverbs and Ecclesiastes encourage us to own and treasure wisdom.

Wisdom, which is God's wisdom. It's not just any wisdom, but the very wisdom of life that leads us to know God and to fear Him.

You remember that? We've seen several verses or several places in Proverbs. We went through the entire book of Ecclesiastes together, and over and over again, we're being told by Solomon and these wise writers of Scripture, we're being told over and over again, this true knowledge should lead us to fear God, to reverence God, to bow before the Lord.

You see? That's what this is all about. That true knowing that leads us to live our lives in awe of God as our Savior.

It is much more than knowledge for knowledge's sake. I want to be so clear about this from the pulpit. It is so much more than knowledge for knowledge's sake.

[36 : 02] What do I mean? Listen, hours and hours of Bible study, great, good thing. Listening to sermons, another good thing, can be, depends on who you listen to.

And filling your head, listen, filling your head with facts about the Bible and God, all of that does not guarantee a transformed heart.

It doesn't. I know people, you know people, I've been guilty of this, you've probably been guilty of this, where we sit down in front of the Bible and we read the Bible and maybe even we spend hours studying the Bible, but whatever it is that we're reading and studying isn't getting in our heart where we're being transformed, where we're being made to be more like Jesus.

So I ask you, friends, are you in the scriptures in a way where you are recognizing and the people around you are recognizing that the scriptures, the truth, this wonderful knowledge of your God and Savior, Jesus Christ, is making you more like him?

Are you becoming more gentle? Are you becoming more long-suffering and patient? Are you becoming more discerning about what is right from wrong, what is true from error, what is highest and best from what is good?

[37 : 25] are you becoming more like Jesus? Are you learning to love and treasure the things that God loves and treasures? Are you growing in your love for each other and the people of God?

Are you growing in a desire to not be away but to spend more and more time with these people and invest in their lives and sacrifice for them? If we could say it that way, it's really not much of a sacrifice for us to do what we can do to please the Lord.

Are you growing in those things? Do you have a growing love for the truth? Is it becoming more precious to you? See, you can do all the hours and hours of study you want.

You can memorize scripture, you can come here, you can go through all the motions, but the question that remains is this, am I becoming more like my Lord and Savior?

You might say to me, Jeff, sometimes it seems that way. Sometimes it doesn't. I'm not going to ask for it. If I ask for a show of hands right now in this room, of all of you who are walking with the Lord, how many of you feel like sometimes it feels like I'm becoming more like Jesus, it seems like it, it seems clear to me that's happening, there are other times not so much, I think everybody would raise their hand.

[38 : 46] Everybody, I would. So this isn't something beating you down, this is me asking you, is a true knowledge of him transforming you at the very place that God wants to do his work?

Here. In your person, are you becoming more like the person of your Lord and Savior? Folks, if you're not, something is miswired.

There's a disconnect somewhere. even if you're spending lots of time in the Bible. We don't look at the scriptures and study the Bible just to tick off that I read it today.

I can say that I did that box. We don't look and study and read the Bible and spend time in the scriptures where we find God's truth and where God introduces himself to us and makes himself known to us.

We don't do all of that just so that we can have facts so that when we talk to other Christians, we sound like we know what we're talking about or because we want to be able to go out there and argue down or argue over or out argue other people, even unbelievers, because we can do that in a way that isn't salt and light.

[40 : 00] We sound like people who weaponize the Bible and they feel that. No. No. We want to be as wise as serpents and gentle as doves.

As we do this together now, I just spent a little time there because I don't want to be misunderstood that I'm telling everybody if you'll just study the Bible and read the Bible, there's this automatic thing that will happen to you.

You've got to study. You've got to read, but you've got to read with the heart that says I want to listen and understand and take this in and obey it and submit to it and know it because I want to love God more.

I want to grow in my love for my Savior. Not just in how to use facts. So look at this. Scripture.

Scripture. That's another way of saying true knowledge. Brings us to God in Christ. Wonderful. So that we can worship him.

[41 : 06] That's what I've been saying. God uses Scripture to change our hearts by his love to love him.

That's why. Why do we go into the word? So that the word of God will change our hearts so that we will learn to love God even as he loves us.

And we can then love others with the same love with which we are loved. Oh, don't miss that. Now, given Peter's emphasis on this saving and this sanctifying knowledge, this morning we can begin to better appropriate God's blessings of what we're calling true knowledge because that's that's what the Scripture literally renders this as.

This is true knowledge. Now, here's the first the first of these blessings God grants to us in this or through this true knowledge.

Here's the first God willing. When we come back next week, I'll be able to do three more. Maybe one.

[42 : 15] I don't know. We'll see. Oh, it's just it's just so good. It's so good. All right. Here's the first one that we'll look at. What is this, Jeff? Again, what is what is this the first of?

This is the first of God's blessings of true knowledge. True knowledge grants us gifts of faith and righteousness.

Second Peter. One, one Simon Peter or Simeon 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.

We don't want to hurry past this introduction that Peter gives because it's so rich as it is with Paul and others who introduced their letters. Now, please notice Peter mentions Jesus twice in this one verse twice to start the letter off here.

And Peter says that he is a slave. Literally bond servant. There is is slave. He is a slave and an apostle of Jesus.

[43 : 34] His fellow believers share in this same salvation and they share in it for the same reason they share in it just as Peter does because of the righteousness of their God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

That's so important. Notice that Peter attests to Jesus being both God and Savior. Did you pick up on that? If anybody ever wants to argue with you about whether or not Jesus was God, Peter says very, very clearly by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

He doesn't say the God and the Savior. There's one article there that combines both of those together to reflect on the same subject, Jesus Christ.

He is both God and Savior. This is a beautiful, beautiful reality that we celebrate. That true knowledge of Jesus as God and Savior.

That's true knowledge. That true knowledge is critical to saving faith. Do you agree? All right. We we come. This is what we tell people when we evangelize them.

[44 : 51] Do you realize that that your greatest need before God is that you recognize that you have sinned against him?

Yes, you've hurt other people. Maybe your marriage is in trouble. Maybe your family's in trouble. Maybe you've had trouble on the job. Whatever God is doing to squeeze you and draw you and make you aware of your need for him.

Whatever that is, what you need to realize first and foundationally is that you are a sinner by nature standing before a holy God. And in that condition, you are under his holy wrath, his holy anger.

He will judge you and send you to hell in that condition. You will not be able to stand before God in that condition. Please come to God and embrace the only way that he has made for you to change or see that condition before him changed.

And then we begin to share more of the gospel with them. How does that happen? That's what we're going to talk about because that's what Peter's talking about. How do I change all of that up?

[46 : 02] Now, I want to tell you, Peter here, as he says this, I am a slave and apostle of Jesus Christ. Peter's use of slave is not derogatory.

Now, we hear that word and it's somewhat offensive to us, right? We we understand that. But here's what Peter's saying. As Jesus slave, Peter sees himself under the authority of Jesus.

And he wants to be under that authority. Why? He sees that as a privilege of doing Jesus will in all things. You see, Peter doesn't want to map out his own way.

His way is I want to walk the way of Jesus. I'm his slave. I am privileged to do the bidding of my Lord and Savior who gave his life for me. That is a privilege.

I am glad to be his slave. Delight in it. It is an honor. It is an honor to serve Jesus, not a burden. It is not a burden for me to be a slave of Jesus.

[47 : 03] Peter submitted to Jesus lordship over his life. You hear all those words? Oh, those are the words that smack right into our prideful heart, isn't it? Submit, lordship, yield.

Serve, slave. But it's a privilege. And then as an apostle, Peter carries the weight of Jesus's authority.

Wow. Not only is Peter himself submitting to and getting under the authority of Jesus so that all that he does pleases the Lord, and that's an honor for him to live like that.

But Peter, as an apostle, carries Jesus's authority. In other words, let me say it this way. Peter writes on behalf of Jesus. Wow.

I want to show you two examples of this in the letter itself. It's in chapter 3, verse 2. Remember, we read from one earlier. This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you in which I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder.

[48 : 12] Reminder. What does he want them to remember? That you should remember the words, okay, spoken beforehand. All right. By the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles.

You see, the apostles are not writing suggestions, are they? They're not writing their opinions. The apostles are writing God's word. They are writing the commandments of God.

Another way to say it, they are writing the will of God for God's slaves. That's us. That's us. And we are privileged to serve Jesus in that way.

The question is, are you? To what degree are you aiming and endeavoring in your life to be a slave of Jesus?

Have you come to the place in your life where that's important to you? I want to live like a slave. When's the last time you prayed that? I find it an honor and a privilege to be, what did I tell you a couple sermons ago about Greg and I?

[49 : 26] In, is it 1st or 2nd Corinthians 4? Where he, I think it's 1st. Where he talks about himself as ministers of the gospel. And he identifies himself as a servant.

The idea of God and the idea is I am a galley slave. I'm an under rower. I'm at the bottom of the ship and I got my oar and I'm just stroking my turn.

That's me and Greg. That's who we are. See, you don't get, I remember I was at a conference recently and I was introducing myself. And I didn't recognize or realize that the man I was introducing myself to was one of the speakers for the conference.

He's well known, widely known. He's written a number of books. Well, I just didn't, I've seen him before. He was at the ACBC conference we went to with Greg and Marie and a few of you. And so I introduced myself and we're talking.

And as he begins to talk, I recognize the voice. And I remember seeing him on the, on the platform. I said, ah, you're Nicholas Allen. Yes, yes. And he went, and who are you?

[50 : 33] But he, he did it in a way that was like, and what part do you have? What? And I said, no, no, no, no. I'm nobody, man. I'm, I'm just, I'm just a pastor. And he went, just a pastor? That, but immediately when he said that, you know what I thought of?

Because I just preached it. Yeah, brother, I'm just a galley rower. I'm just an under rower. That's what I am. I'm glad you guys love Greg and I. I'm glad you respect us.

What does God say? Love them and respect them for the work. Love them and respect them for the work that they do in serving Christ and serving you. Highly esteem them for the work that they do.

You're not highly esteeming us because we're any better than you. You highly esteem us because our work is to bring you the truth and to be shepherds who shepherd you in that truth and guard you in that truth.

Love you in that truth. That's why. That's the way it should be. That's the way the Bible describes us. We need to get a true perspective on ourselves and understand who we are in the Lord.

[51 : 39] It's wonderful. We're slaves. Peter is an apostle. I told you I'd give you two examples. Here he's saying listen to the commandments that have been spoken by your apostles that are being written by your apostles.

God is using us to write the truth. Folks this is one of the reasons. This is an aside. This is one of the reasons there are no apostles today. None. I know that there are churches out there that label their leaders as apostles.

I understand that. I see that too. There aren't any. Now I can't judge those people. Men or women. I don't know what's in their hearts. I don't know why they've adopted that title.

My hope is that they just have misunderstood what what God says about us as his servants to God's people. I don't know. Maybe they really feel like they're apostles.

They just need to understand this. Apostles write scripture. It's what they do. Nobody today is an apostle because nobody today is adding to the canon of scripture.

[52 : 40] Amen. Nobody. So your first flag if you come across people who identify themselves as apostles is to be wary. Be very wary of what's going on there.

The other example is in chapter 3 verses 15 and 16. This is where Peter is referencing the apostle Paul.

We'll start in verse 14. Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things that he's just described that will come as the end of the world, be diligent to be found by him in peace, spotless and blameless and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation.

Just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom, notice the word now given him. You see that? According to the wisdom given to Paul, not discovered, not innate.

He wrote to you. Now that's scripture. As also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things in which are some things hard to understand, given.

[53 : 47] Which the untaught and unstable distort as they do also notice the rest of the what? Scriptures. What is he saying? Paul is writing scripture to you.

Wow. This is one of the weights of the authority that these particular men bore at this particular time in history when God was writing the Bible for our benefit.

For those who would come later and need to know how to know God, how to know Christ, how to walk in his will. Oh, that's the beauty of what we're seeing in these verses.

Apostles wrote true knowledge, i.e., that is scripture. That's all done. We need to know to always, always tie this true knowledge to the person and the work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is not knowledge for knowledge sake. It is knowledge that brings us to Jesus and brings us to exalt Jesus. That's what we're talking about.

[55 : 02] Let me show you how Peter handles that. Again, I'm just giving you some overview here as we start all of this off together. Chapter 1, verse 8. For if these qualities that he's just described are yours, these are qualities of Christian virtue.

If these qualities in verse 8 are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of whom?

Our Lord Jesus Christ. See? It's tied to Jesus. Has to be. Then, over in chapter 2, verse 20. So in each of the chapters, Peter is highlighting this.

Chapter 2, verse 20. For if after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome.

The last state has become worse for them than the first. That sounds like they can lose their salvation. Don't worry about that. God willing, we'll get there. If I die and we don't get there, Greg will pick it up and he'll tell you and he'll explain it to you. No worries.

[56 : 14] But the point here is this is a knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ that is the saving knowledge they need to hold on to. The knowledge is always tied to Jesus.

And then in chapter 3, verse 18. This is important because here in verse 18, the final verse in this chapter, Peter is bookending what he's talking about.

He begins his letter in verse 1 with this knowledge. He ends his letter in chapter 3, verse 18. There are bookends to the reality. It's called an inclusio. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. See? It's all about Jesus. Look, folks. Jesus is the source of this true knowledge.

Jesus is the means of this true knowledge. And Jesus is the end of this true knowledge. Always about Jesus.

[57 : 18] Always rooted in him. Always bringing us to him. Always. Always. Now, look at what he says next. To those who have received in the text.

To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours. Of the same kind is the Greek adjective. And this is an interesting word to me.

Isotimon. Isotimon. It means equally precious or valuable. So, those of you who have received a faith that is equally precious.

That is of the same value. That has put you in the same standing. This is so interesting. In light of the fact that he's just said, I'm a slave of Jesus. And I'm an apostle of Jesus.

Nevertheless, as an apostle bearing that weight and writing scripture. We have all come to the same standing in Christ Jesus together. Father, I'm not going to stand in heaven more righteous than you.

[58 : 24] Even though I'm an apostle. Peter says. Why? Because I have been made righteous by the same righteousness as you. I got all of that righteousness at the moment of my salvation.

Just like you did. And it's that same righteousness that puts us on a level playing field in that regard. Lord. We all need Jesus. And we're all saved by Jesus.

And we're all kept saved by Jesus. And we'll all be brought to glory in Jesus. It's Jesus that levels the playing field. Whom we love and worship. Beautiful.

Love it. Notice too, folks. There's just no way to get around this. So, I've got to deal with it. Who have. And I love it. I love it. Who have received.

A faith. Received a faith. That's important. Because it is a faith received exclusively by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.

[59 : 26] That's what he says next. What I'm saying here is this is one example. One of many, many examples in the Bible of how true knowledge. This knowledge requires you and I to be careful students of this knowledge.

Every word matters. So, we need to approach this true knowledge in Scripture as careful students of the Word of God. We need to see it as a wonderful treasure.

And we need to handle it with great care. With great respect. With a high degree of esteem as we read the Word of God.

And take it into our hearts. So, Peter says this. I'm a slave and I'm an apostle of Jesus Christ. And I am writing to those of you who have received a faith of the same kind as ours.

And that faith has come by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ. Folks, this is the doctrine that we stand and fall on.

[60 : 29] That we live and die by as Christians. This is it. Here is the very heart of what we believe. And what makes us who we are in Jesus Christ.

It matters that saving faith is received. In other words, what is it not saying? It's not discovered.

It's not earned. You cannot earn favor with God and freedom for the forgiveness of your sins. You cannot earn it. You cannot discover it.

You can't purchase it. You can't do it by being a good person. That's not true knowledge. That's a lie. This is very, very important.

Saving faith is received, not discovered. Here's what I'm saying. Peter's emphasis is on the operation of divine will.

[61 : 33] The sense of the Greek verb is this. To obtain something by or is if by the random casting of lots.

Often understood as indicative of the divine will. Now I'm going to unpack that a little bit for us. But don't miss the point here that we are defining what it means for Peter to say in the language that he's using.

What it means to receive faith. Which is a critical doctrine that we stand on. When you see that quote that I have up there. You might think random lots and divine will.

That those sound opposite of each other. Right? Random and divine will. How are we going to get our minds around that? In scripture, people cast lots to help them discern God's will.

So that they understood the outcome as allotted by God. Or willed by God. Now if you press me and you say, Jeff.

[62 : 39] Can you help us understand why they did that in the first place? I don't know. I just know that the scripture tells us that when they did it. They understood it as we're going to try and discern the allotment.

Lots. The allotment. Or the will of God. Now I don't want you to take my word for that. So I'm going to show you. I'm going to take a few minutes. And I want to show you what I'm talking about in scripture.

First of all, go with me to Proverbs 16.33. Just hold your finger in 2 Peter. Proverbs 16.33. This will be the foundation that we'll jump off from as I show you one or two other examples.

The lot is cast into the lap. But it's every decision is from whom? The Lord. Now that should settle it. But we're going to...

I want to work this out now. Okay, that's fine. What does this look like as it works out in the lives of the people of God, particularly in the New Testament? Was this just an Old Testament thing?

[63 : 49] And now we get into the New Testament and that we jettison? No. Not at all. So let me show you a couple of places. First of all, we'll stay in and I'll give you a place where it ought to be fairly familiar to you.

It's the book of Jonah. I want to show you this in Jonah. Chapter 1, verse 7. Chapter 1, verse 7. How did this work out in the Old Testament?

This is just one of many examples. I chose it because I thought it would be familiar. Start in verse 7 with me. Each man... You remember what's going on here?

Jonah's boarded the boat. The storm is up. They're all going to die. Each man, each of the sailors, said to his mate, Come, let us cast lots so we may do what?

Learn on whose account this calamity has struck us. Now, folks, that's how much they counted on this system. They trusted that when they cast these lots, that God, even though they didn't worship God, God would reveal to them who it was on the boat that was bringing this trouble on them.

[64 : 57] So what happened? Look at the end. So they cast lots and coincidentally, just by chance, the lot fell on Jonah.

Ah, what a coinkydink, right? No, we understand what's going on here. They cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah. Even though these sailors didn't worship Yahweh, God's will was revealed in what they did.

How do we know that? Because Jonah was identified as the issue. He's the issue. God brought the storm. God brought all the events that are... You remember that from Jonah?

Should I just start preaching this again or what? Yeah. Amen. All right, let me give you one more before we move on. Look at Luke. Luke chapter 1.

A New Testament example. Luke 1, starting in verse 5.

[66 : 04] In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zacharias of the division of Abijah, and he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron.

Her name was Elizabeth. Now, we're familiar with this story. They were both righteous in the sight of God. So these were believers, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord.

This is a way of saying these people were saved, and these people were sanctified. They were walking with the Lord. They were trying to serve the Lord. They were looking to the Lord. But they had no child.

Remember? Remember, barrenness in this age was a sign of God's disfavor. What we were just told in verse 6, they walked in the favor of the Lord. See how that... You see what I'm saying about true knowledge here?

But they had no child because Elizabeth was barren. And they were both advanced in years. Does that remind you of some other people in the Old Testament? Abram and Sarai, right?

[67 : 10] Now it happened, verse 8. Now it happened that while he was performing, while Zacharias was performing his priestly service, he was a priest, before God in the appointed order of his division, according to the custom of the priestly office, what did they do?

He was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. Well, what a coincidence, again, that he was chosen.

Why was it important for him to be chosen? Out of all that could have been chosen, out of all where the lot could have fell, it fell on Zacharias. Notice what happens next.

And the whole, verse 10, and the whole multitude of the people were in prayer outside of the hour, at the hour of the incense offering. An angel of the Lord appeared to Zacharias, standing to the right of the altar of incense.

Zacharias was troubled when he saw the angel, and fear gripped him, I guess. But the angel said to him, Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition has been heard.

[68 : 14] And your wife, Elizabeth, will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John. This is John the Baptist, isn't it? You will have joy and gladness. Many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and he will drink no wine or liquor.

The Nazarite, Nazarite vow. And he will be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother's womb. And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God.

It is he who will go as a forerunner before him in the spirit and power of Elijah to turn the hearts of the fathers back to their children and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

How important was that? Coincidence? No, not at all. These are examples of how God Almighty prevails and purposes in the affairs of men.

Right? We may plan it, but God directs our steps. This is what is going on here. This is the operation of divine will in this saving faith, this receiving of faith.

[69 : 32] It's the same word in Luke, verse 9. He was chosen by lot. That entire phrase clause there, that is the same word for receive in our passage.

Zacharias was chosen by lot because God appointed him by that allotment to enter the temple so that he could speak to him in the way that he did and give him the knowledge that he did.

Now, Peter, Peter writes to those, listen to my language, please, to whom God appointed to receive saving faith in Jesus.

There's no way around that. If we're going to get around that, we've got to do all kinds of other gymnastics that don't apply to the text. Peter writes to those whom God appointed to receive saving faith in Jesus, and that treasured faith in Jesus Christ is the beginning, the middle, and the end of true knowledge.

I'm going to borrow from Marivi's study that she's been doing with the women over these weeks, and I'm going to turn you to Ephesians chapter 2. And I'm going to remind you of what you already know.

[70 : 51] This is a cherished little section of Scripture. Scripture, as we speak to other people about receiving faith or placing saving faith in God, we understand that the faith to do that comes from God himself.

That apart from the gracious work of God, I wouldn't believe in Jesus because I'm dead in my sins. Now, I know many of you know this, but stay with me on this. This is as much for the tape here that we're making of this sermon as anything.

What does it say in Ephesians 2, verse 8? For by grace, that is by the undeserved favor of God on your life, you have been saved through, what?

Faith. And that faith is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. Not as a result of works so that no one may boast.

Amen? The gift of faith, the gift of saving faith to believe in God is a gift. It is granted to you. And that's the whole point that we're hammering in this message.

[72 : 05] That what we're experiencing in the way of salvation and faith in this passage of Scripture is something that God has granted to us as gifts of His grace.

And we believe that here at Grace Church. It's one of the reasons that we call ourselves Grace Church. God appointed, and Peter writes to those people whom God appointed to receive salvation, to receive saving faith.

Now, folks, why is it so precious? Because it's the faith of being justified. Another critical, critical doctrine in the gospel, what we call the good news of Jesus.

This received faith, this gift of saving faith to believe on Jesus for the forgiveness of our sins and to believe on Him alone is the faith of being justified.

What does that mean? This true knowledge of believing in Jesus for your salvation results in your justification. That is, in you being made right with God in Jesus Christ.

[73 : 20] That's what He says. Look at it again with me. To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Your faith has come by the righteousness of Jesus and stands in that righteousness. righteousness. All people stand before God guilty for sin.

That's the starting place of true knowledge, isn't it? How do we know that we all stand before God guilty of sin? Because the true knowledge of God as we encounter it reveals to us, opens to us, a holy God.

And as we see that holy God, we realize we're not like that. We are in the presence of something holy and I'm not holy. That's where it starts. Now look, when Jesus went to the cross, God the Father imputed or credited our sins to Jesus.

He, Jesus, was punished to death as our substitute so that he bore the pain, he bore the penalty for our wrongs against God as our substitute.

[74 : 38] And look at this. I want to make sure we get this very clear. And through God's gift of faith, his gift of faith, our, that is, our true knowledge of Jesus being our substitute, our sin substitute, God imputes or credits the sinless perfection or the righteousness of Jesus to us.

Jesus took on our sins and by faith we take on Jesus' righteousness so that we now stand before God in the perfect holiness of Jesus Christ.

That's the gospel. That's the good news. The good news isn't that we're sinners under the wrath of God. That's terrifying. The good news is God's done something about it.

You don't have to be that person anymore. You can have a new nature. Your saving faith in Jesus dying as your substitute for the forgiveness of your sins and your new nature as righteous in Christ give you equal precious footing in relationship to God.

Right in line with the apostles. Same faith, same gift, same righteousness and you stand before God clean and pure.

[76 : 08] All of you. You say, Jeff, what about those of us with different color skin? men? Are we lesser? Do we have the same hope for salvation?

Do we have the same standing? What about those of us who are more poor? What about those of us who are from a different social class or system?

What about those of us who speak a different language, come from a different place in the world? what about all of that?

It's like God took the needle, the big needle of saving faith and threaded it with the perfect righteousness of Jesus and according to his sovereign will he pierced one heart and pulled it through and then he pierced another heart and pulled it through and now we got two and then he came over here and they're threaded and he pierced another and pulled it through and another and pulled it through until until what until we all brethren all colors all ethnicities all tribes and tongues and nations and classes young and old rich and poor male and female all of us threaded together with Jesus in our hearts kneeling together hand in hand at the foot of the cross are equally righteous in the blood of our

Savior Jesus Christ that is the good news that we are desperate to tell and they are desperate to hear that's the hope of humanity read verse one again with me 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 friends we cannot compromise God's true knowledge in scripture we cannot compromise too much is it stake for us to waffle on the truth which brings us to God in Christ it's why we preach and teach and counsel from the scriptures the scriptures not from the wisdom of men and that was the first of these gifts of true knowledge that I brought to you today now Lord willing we'll be able to look into more of them next

[79 : 13] Lord's day we're going to talk about the true knowledge that God grants us as gifts of grace and peace and right on through in all of this from the scripture let's pray together well father we honor your heart and we thank you for the true knowledge of your son that we receive as a gift of faith so that we can believe in him and be forgiven for our sins past present and future we thank you that at the foot of the cross we are all made equal by the righteousness of Jesus all of us as sinners looking to him and to him alone and you without prejudice without bias with no capriciousness at all in you you give us the righteousness of Jesus so that we are bound together in a heart of love for him

I pray father that you'll fill this church family with people who look different from each other we all pray and ask you almighty god to give us the privilege of having people in our congregation who don't speak the same language we speak who don't have the same customs that we have please bring people like that into our lives and into our midst help us to reach to them in the gospel and find that in Jesus Christ we are all made like him together as a family that we can blow through the language barrier the cultural barrier the political barrier and all the prejudices that we hold in our hearts to see Jesus teach us to love each other as we have been loved by him that's what we pray we thank you for this wonderful gospel of Peter we thank you that you have kept it for us and that we can read it today and be transformed and made more like him help us to be your people

Lord and help us to do well in showing the world who you are in Jesus name we pray
amen