

Introduction:

- A. *Illus.:* *Don Quixote* is the story of a dreamy Spanish nobleman who, according to Wikipedia, “reads so many chivalric romances that he loses his sanity and decides to set out to revive chivalry, undo wrongs, and bring justice to the world, under the name *Don Quixote de la Mancha*.” You might remember the great song, “The Impossible Dream” from the musical version, *Man of La Mancha*, “*To right the unrightable wrong / To love, pure and chaste from afar / To try, when your arms are too weary / To reach the unreachable star.*” But we also get our word, *quixotic*, from this story, meaning *foolishly impractical, starry-eyed, unrealistic*.
- B. Do you ever feel that living the Christian life borders on the quixotic? I mean, it is a grand ideal but who can do it? That’s why our text today matters. It says that the Lord’s “divine power has given us *everything we need* for a godly life.”
- C. Peter wrote his second letter very near the end of his life. He was soon murdered by Nero, reportedly crucified upside down. He knew that living a godly life was no walk in the park. Both his letters are to Christians under pressure and his great concern in 2 Peter is that they will forget how important it is to live godly lives—rejecting dangerous false teachers and holding fast to our hope in Christ.
- D. Turn to **2 Peter** 1. Last week, Peter’s greeting to the far-flung churches included this blessing in **v.2**, “*Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.*” Did you catch that phrase, “*through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord*”? *Knowledge* is a key word here. Now listen to **vv.3-4...**

There's a drama behind these verses and it is captured in the last line of v.4, "*having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.*"

I. WE WERE BORN INTO SLAVERY IN THIS CORRUPT WORLD

- A. Illus.: Have you ever had a corrupted file on your computer? Does it ever get better? Nope. It gets worse. In fact, if it is infected by a virus it will start corrupting your whole hard drive. Worse and worse stuff happens. Sometimes it can't be fixed. The world is corrupted like that, only worse. There is corruption in this world that continues to spread, disintegrating societies and lives.
- B. That corruption is fed by evil desire residing in every human being, by the sinister work of the devil's evil desires, and by the corruption that feeds on itself.

Illus.: I read about a 22-year-old man who was sliding down a ski run in California. He crashed into a lift tower and died. He was sliding on a makeshift sled of yellow foam. The lift towers are meant to be cushioned by this foam, and the tower he hit was the one from which he had stolen the foam to make his sled. That's what humanity is doing to ourselves. Mankind's foolish and evil desires lead to a corrupt world.

- C. And no one can break free. We're born into slavery to this system. The corruption is bred into our very natures. Our evil desires add to the disintegration. And we live, you might say, on the devil's island.

That is why v.3 is so amazing. *Jesus our Lord's "divine power has given us **everything we need for a godly life.**"* Do you realize how crazy that is?! It would be a much smaller stretch to say that we have everything we need to fly! How can this be? It starts here:

II. JESUS OUR LORD INTERVENED TO SAVE US AND GIVE US OUR PRECIOUS FAITH IN HIM

A. Look at that first line again. The Lord's "divine power" was required for us to be equipped for a godly life. It took all the divine might of God the Son to enable the likes of us simply to have "godly lives" and to "escape the corruption of the world." The Lord's power was displayed in the weakness of the cross and the might of the resurrection. Now, his power—that very power that raised Christ from the dead—is at work in us. Even in our weakness God shows the epitome of his strength.

B. In v.1 Peter says he's writing "To those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ **have received a faith as precious as ours.**" Christ gave us our faith in him. We didn't muster it up on our own. He gave us our faith and now in v.3, "His divine power has **given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.**"

Note the word *called*. Not one of us, no matter how hungry we were, no matter how broken, ever went looking for God on our own. People come to God because he calls them.

God's call is a mysterious wonder. From our side, it is an invitation requiring our surrender to the Lord. "Softly, and tenderly, Jesus is calling, come home, come home."

We have a decision to make. For some it is a wrestling match with the Almighty, and with ourselves. For others God's call is as welcome as a rescuer in the night. You're a Christian because you *chose* to be.

C. But from God's perspective, his call is compelling.

Effectual is the word many theologians use. Some of us believe that God's call is actually mercifully and wonderfully irresistible, even though it doesn't feel that

way to us. Others among us believe that sinners may shut their ears to God's personal call to them. **But anyone who reads Scripture knows that no one comes to the Lord unless the Lord calls them.** *Illus.:* C. S. Lewis described his conversion this way:

*“You must picture me alone in that room in Magdalen, night after night, feeling, whenever my mind lifted even for a second from my work, **the steady, unrelenting approach of Him whom I so earnestly desired not to meet.** That which I greatly feared had at last come upon me. In the Trinity Term of 1929 I gave in, and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed: perhaps, that night, the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England. I did not then see what is now the most shining and obvious thing; the Divine humility which will accept a convert even on such terms. The Prodigal Son at least walked home on his own feet. But who can duly adore that Love which will open the high gates to a prodigal who is brought in kicking, struggling, resentful, and darting his eyes in every direction for a chance of escape? The words “*compelle intrare,*” compel them to come in, have been so abused by wicked men that we shudder at them; but, properly understood, they plumb the depth of the Divine mercy. **The hardness of God is kinder than the softness of men, and His compulsion is our liberation.**”*

You may not have come so reluctantly but if you are saved it is because God called you and gave you the faith to come. Our salvation is entirely the Lord's doing!

Now we come to that astonishing phrase.

III. THE LORD JESUS HAS GIVEN BELIEVERS “EVERYTHING WE NEED FOR GODLY LIVING.”

A. Some of your translations may say, “*everything we need for life and godliness.*” These are the entwined capacities of the born again meaning “*godly living.*” Godliness is God-like-ness. Of course, we don’t acquire God’s omnipresence, omniscience, or omnipotence, but we *are* able to demonstrate his *moral* qualities, what we call God’s *communicable attributes* like goodness, mercy, and love.

Peter comes around to the idea of the godly life again in **v.4**, “*Through these [his glory and goodness] he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature.*” That’s a very arresting phrase: “*participate in the divine nature.*” Paul says again and again that believers are “*in Christ.*” The Bible says that we are “*filled with the Holy Spirit.*”

Do you grasp that as believers in Christ we are not like other people? We are fundamentally different; as different as day and night, as life and death. Actually, we’re a different *race* – the saints; the immortals. All people bear the image of God, but only those who are born of the Spirit “*participate in the divine nature.*”

B. When **vv.3-4** say that Christ “*has given us everything we need for a godly life,*” that godly life we live comes through two gifts.

1. **V.3** again, “*His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life **through** our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.*” Godly living requires us to grow in our knowledge of Christ.

When we are born again we *know* Christ. We enter into his life. Then, just as any two people who love one

another, we continue to learn of him; to know him better and better.

Illus.: In C. S. Lewis's *Prince Caspian*, the children Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy all find themselves in Narnia after a long absence. Aslan, the great king and lion, is nowhere to be seen. Lucy, the youngest of the children, particularly aches to see him. Then on a midnight search she finds him and rushes to embrace him.

"Aslan," said Lucy, "you're bigger."

"That is because you are older, little one," answered he.

"Not because you are?"

"I am not. But every year you grow, you will find me bigger." [in *The Rest of God* by Mark Buchanan, pp66-67]

As we "*find God bigger*" we will grow in godliness.

Being near God is how we become more like God.

2. Once more, let us pick up at the end of v.3, "*who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature.*" There is another *through*. Christ's "very great and precious promises" are our doorway to the Christ-life. God's promises are embedded throughout every part of Scripture—in stories, laws, psalms, prophecies, gospels, epistles and the great Revelation of the end. But we must **walk through** the promises, as through gates into the godly life. We read or hear them, then rest our faith and obedience on them. We live in them.

No one can live a godly life without knowing and owning our God-given "*very great and precious promises.*" They saturate Scripture. We have the rich

Old Testament promises of God’s covenant love. We have the promises with Jesus himself made: *“I am with you always.” “I go to prepare a place for you.” “Whoever believes in me shall never die.”* We have countless promises throughout all the epistles. Then we have the promises Peter specifically refers to in this letter—the second coming of Christ, and his promise of *“a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.”* Paul wrote in **2 Cor 1:20**, *“For no matter how many promises God has made, they are ‘Yes’ in Christ.”*

When we read and believe God’s promises in Scripture, all stamped *YES* by Christ, we are enabled to take on *“the divine nature”*—to live *in Christ*. So when this corrupt world is trying to “press us into its mold,” we pick up our Bibles and read the promises of God, embedded in every part of the Scriptures, and all guaranteed to us in Christ.

Conclusion

Illus.: This week I was visiting with one of our wonderful students. He was tired, carrying a heavy academic load and trying to be a good husband and dad. He was feeling a bit badly because he’d overslept till 6 that morning. Usually he rises at 5 so he has an hour with the Lord. This brother challenged me more than he realized because he’d sooner give up his academic time than miss that time with God. He’d rather go through his day tired than neglect that time. I sat there and thought, *“Who’s mentoring whom here?”*

Do you want to live a godly life? A life participating in the divine nature, escaping the world’s corruption and evil desires? Do you? Christ has given us *“everything we need for a godly life.”*

But to live in that wonderful life we need these two great helps:
our *knowledge of him who called us*, so **grow in knowing Jesus**.
And through *his very great and precious promises* so **constantly
walk into God's promises**.

There's nothing quixotic about that!