

## 2 Peter 1:2

### Introduction

Last week, in verse one, Peter reminded us of the great treasure that we have – the faith that we have in Jesus Christ, which is itself a gift from God. Now, in verse two, Peter builds on this foundation of the past—on the things already accomplished in our salvation, and he looks to the future. So, in verse one:

- 2 Peter 1:1 — Simeon Peter, a bondsman and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who *have been allotted* a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:

And now, in verse two:

### **I. 2 Peter 1:2a** — May grace and peace be multiplied to you...

We already have a faith of equal standing and equal privilege with all others who've ever been saved – including the Apostles themselves. This is a gift that's already ours in full. But isn't it a marvelous thing that our faith isn't something "static"? It's not something we once received in the past and then stored away in the closet somewhere or put up on a shelf. Faith is a living, constantly working reality in our lives. Faith is to the spiritual life what sight and hearing are to the life of our physical bodies. By faith we've already seen and grasped—and we're *still* seeing and grasping more and more—the glory of Christ in the Gospel. By faith we've already heard and understood—and we're *still* hearing and understanding more and more—the truths of God's Word. By faith, you're even hearing this message this morning. The faith that God has given us in the past is a faith that never stops *working*, because it's the most basic, fundamental activity of true, spiritual life – as basic as breath is to the body.

You've been granted faith already, *in full*; therefore, Peter says, in the continuous exercise of this faith "May grace and peace be multiplied to you..." Now, God has already given us everything in Christ. So there's a sense in which there's nothing more that can be given, because God has already given us "all."

- 1 Corinthians 3:21–23 — All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

So how can Peter pray and wish for us this morning that grace and peace would be *multiplied* to us? In these two words we have summed up for us all the blessings of God's salvation – "grace and peace." Here are two of the most beautiful words in all the Christian's vocabulary. **Grace** is the undeserved and unconditional favor and kindness of God toward us. God's grace describes not just His *acts* of kindness and favor toward us but His entire *disposition* toward us, from which all of these acts flow. Stop, for a moment, and think about that!

Peace, then, is all the wholeness and well-being and security and joy that results from God's kind and gracious disposition toward us. We could describe grace and peace together as all the light and glory of God's face smiling upon us.

- Numbers 6:22–27 — The LORD spoke to Moses, saying... Thus you shall bless the people of Israel: you shall say to them, The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be **gracious** to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you **peace**.

And now we know that in the New Covenant grace and peace have been poured out upon us through Jesus Christ. The Apostle John writes:

- John 1:16 — For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.

And Peter speaks of the word that God sent to Israel:

- Acts 10:36 — ...preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ.

We've been granted a saving faith in Christ by the quickening work of the Holy Spirit in us, and it's through this saving faith that all the blessings of God's salvation—of God's grace and peace—are constantly flowing to us. Now, again, there's a sense in which God's grace and peace are already ours in fullest measure. And yet none of us can ever know fully what we've already been given, because what we've been given is beyond all our ability to ever fully comprehend. That's why Peter's prayer and wish for us is this: "May grace and peace be *multiplied* to you." Or, as other translations say: "May grace and peace be *lavished* on you" (NET); "May grace and peace be yours in *abundance*" (NRSV; NIV); "May grace and peace be yours in the *fullest measure*" (NASB; 1 Peter 1:2); "[May] grace and peace be yours *more and more*" (NCV).

**II. 2 Peter 1:2b** — May grace and peace be multiplied to you, **in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.**

If you want to know *how* grace and peace can be multiplied to you, Peter answers that it's through the *knowledge* of God and of Jesus our Lord. When we hear the word, "knowledge," we can tend to think of "head knowledge" – of facts and information stored up in our brains. But in the Bible, knowledge means something far more than this. In the Bible there's a sense in which only Christians have "knowledge." Listen to what Paul says:

- Colossians 2:1–3 — For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden **all** the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Paul says that outside of Christ, there's no true knowledge at all. There's not *another* knowledge or a *different kind* of knowledge; and so that means that apart from this knowledge, there's only be ignorance. The Apostle John writes:

- 1 John 2:20–22 — You have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge. I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth. Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ?

John is saying that only those anointed by the Holy One and who confess that Jesus is the Christ have knowledge. Everything else is a lie, and is therefore not true knowledge at all, but only ignorance. So we read in Ephesians about all unbelievers:

- Ephesians 4:18 (cf. 1 Pet. 1:14) — They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance [Gr. “no knowledge”; absence of knowledge] that is in them, due to their hardness of heart.

The pagan's “knowledge” of his idols is not knowledge at all, but ignorance – the complete absence of true knowledge. All the philosophical “knowledge” of the world is not actually knowledge at all, but only empty arguments and ignorant opinions raised against the only true knowledge—the knowledge of God. So Paul says:

- 2 Corinthians 10:5 — We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.

And finally, all the impressive “knowledge” of the false teachers in the church is once again not “knowledge” at all, but only something falsely called “knowledge.” So Paul says to Timothy:

- 1 Timothy 6:20 — O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called “knowledge.”

Now we know that there are lots of really, really smart unbelievers. There are even some unbelievers who “know” the Bible far better than most Christians do. So how can the Bible say that only Christians have knowledge? The answer is that **in the Bible, the only true knowledge is the knowledge that we gain by faith**. Why is this? Because this is the knowledge that begins with God and not with me. We could take it a step further and say that the only true knowledge—even, in a sense, the only true mathematical knowledge, and the only true scientific knowledge, and the only true knowledge of the arts, and, of course, the only true theological knowledge and Bible knowledge—the only true knowledge is knowledge that's gained in subservience to that fundamental knowledge **of God** that's only gained **through faith**. Can you see clearly now why true knowledge in the Bible can never be just a head knowledge (something we can attain on our own as long as we're smart enough), but rather an experiential, practical, and living knowledge that's available to us only through the faith that God grants to us as His sovereign gift?

Listen, again, to the words of the Apostle John: “You have been anointed by the Holy One, and [therefore] you all have knowledge.” If this isn't just a head knowledge, then we see here that

neither is it an esoteric, mystical knowledge that only the spiritually elite can gain. We have to guard against both of these false ideas because both are ultimately damning to our souls. There are many who are full of Bible knowledge, but who have no true “knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.” They’ve confused their knowledge of the Bible and of the Gospel that they’ve gained through reading and study and a godly upbringing with the true “knowledge” that only comes by faith. On the other hand, there are many today who are rejecting this sterile and lifeless “so-called” knowledge and pursuing a different kind of knowledge – a knowledge of the very “being” of God. They’re not seeking new information, they’re seeking higher plateau’s – they’re seeking a greater absorption into the being of God. This might sound far out, but it’s with this goal in mind that *all* of today’s worship “experiences” in the church are designed. And the damning reality this time is that the god we experience in this way cannot actually be the *true* God. There are many who are constantly experiencing lofty and mystical encounters with “God” in “church,” but who have no true “knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.” In other words, they’ve confused their mystical and esoteric “knowledge” with the knowledge that all true believers already have by faith. Remember, again, the Apostle’s words: “You [all] have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all [already] have knowledge.” As true Christians, we need to guard against both of these errors in our own lives and in our churches. We need to guard against a sterile, theoretical, lifeless religion on the one hand. And on the other hand, we need to guard against the carnal craving for something newer and better, and more spiritually satisfying and exciting. We need to remember the words of John in his second epistle:

➤ 2 John 9 — Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.

My goal in helping us to see what biblical “knowledge” *is not* has been not only to warn us against these errors in our own lives, but also to help us see in clearer contrast what true biblical “knowledge” *really is*. If it’s not this and it’s not that—if it’s not theoretical head knowledge and it’s not an esoteric mystical knowledge—then what is it? It’s a personal, relational knowledge of a person – it’s a personal relational “knowledge of *God* and of *Jesus our Lord*.” In other words, true knowledge of God is ultimately fellowship with God. **By faith** we gain the true *knowledge* of **God’s** self-existence, and eternity, and infinity, and immutability, and absolute perfection as revealed in the Scriptures and so we **respond** with humble awe and worship of Him. **By faith** we gain the true *knowledge* of **God’s** measureless love for us, revealed in the Scriptures and in Christ and so we **respond** with love and thankfulness to Him. **By faith** we gain the true *knowledge* of **God’s** omniscience (His knowledge of all things), and omnipotence (His almighty power), and sovereignty, and wisdom, and justice, and faithfulness as revealed in the Scriptures and in Christ, and so we **respond** with praise and adoration of Him and with trust in Him. **By faith** we gain the true *knowledge* of **God’s** holiness, and of all His righteous law and commandment as revealed in the Scriptures and in Christ, and so we **respond** with obedience and submission to Him. When you put it all together, this is all just to say that **by faith** we gain the true *knowledge* of **God** as revealed in the Scriptures and ultimately in Christ, and so we **respond** as those now **walking in personal relationship and fellowship with Him**.

On the one hand, relationship with God is like any other relationship we might have with any other human being in the sense that it’s not something esoteric and mystical, but neither is it

something theoretical and cold and sterile. On the other hand, it's unlike any other relationship with any human being because it's a relationship with *God* and therefore it depends for its very existence on faith. In other words, it's only with the spiritual eyes and the spiritual ears of the faith that God has sovereignly granted to us that we can truly "*know*" who God is and what God is like and so walk in personal fellowship with Him. It's this knowledge of God that was a major theme in the prophet Hosea.

- Hosea 6:6 (cf. 6:1-3; 8:1-4; 13:4-6; 14:9) — I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the **knowledge [epignosis]** of God rather than burnt offerings.
- Hosea 4:1-6 — Hear the word of the LORD, O children of Israel, for the LORD has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land. There is no faithfulness or steadfast love, and no **knowledge [epignosis]** of God in the land; there is swearing, lying, murder, stealing, and committing adultery; they break all bounds, and bloodshed follows bloodshed... My people are destroyed for lack of **knowledge [gnosis]**; because you have rejected **knowledge [epignosis]**, I reject you from being a priest to me.
- Hosea 5:4 — Their deeds do not permit them to return to their God. For the spirit of whoredom is within them, and they **know [epiginosko]** not the LORD.

So what's the solution? The solution is that God will one day give to His people what they could never attain to themselves.

- Hosea 2:19-20 — I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall **know [epiginosko]** the LORD.

So now maybe we can understand the miracle of these words in 1 John:

- 1 John 2:13 (cf. 2:14) — I am writing to you, fathers, because you **know [ginosko]** him [Jesus] who is from the beginning... I write to you, children, because you **know [ginosko]** the Father.

And now listen to this:

- Galatians 4:9 — ...you have come to *know [ginosko]* God, **or rather to be known [ginosko] by God...**
- 1 Corinthians 13:12 — Now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know [ginosko] in part; then *I shall know fully [epiginosko]*, **even as I have been fully known [epiginosko]**.
- John 10:14 — I am the good shepherd. **I know [ginosko] my own** and *my own know [ginosko] me*.

To say that *we* have been known **by God** is to say that God relates *personally* to us in *love* and that this is the basis on which we now come to know Him and to have personal fellowship with Him.

### III. 2 Peter 1:2b — May grace and peace be multiplied to you, in the knowledge of **God and of Jesus our Lord**.

Notice that John says in 1 John 2 that we know both Jesus *and* the Father. Paul speaks in Galatians of knowing God and Jesus says in the Gospel of John that His sheep know Him. And, of course, in our passage this morning, Peter speaks of “the knowledge of God *and* of Jesus our Lord.” Brothers and sisters, here’s the awesome mystery. We don’t “know” two gods. We only “know” one God, and yet we have come to “know” *both* God the Father *and* Jesus our Lord. How do we “solve” this? If this means that Jesus is less than God, then it would be blasphemy to put Jesus on the same level with God as Peter does here when he speaks of “the knowledge of God *and* of Jesus our Lord.” How, then, can we “know” *personally* only one God and yet at the same time “know” *personally* both God the Father and Jesus our Lord? Listen, now, to the testimony of Jesus:

- Matthew 11:27 — All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one **knows** [*epiginosko*] the Son except the Father, and no one **knows** [*epiginosko*] the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.
- John 14:7–9 (8:19) — “If you had **known** [*ginosko*] me, you would have **known** [*oida*] my Father also. From now on you do **know** [*ginosko*] him and have seen him.” Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not **know** [*ginosko*] me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’”

And the Apostle Paul writes:

- 2 Corinthians 4:6 — God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the **knowledge** [*gnosis*] of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Even as Peter distinguishes Jesus from God, he also identifies him as *one with* God because **only one who is fully God can reveal God fully to us**. So what about the Holy Spirit? Jesus said that we would also “know” [*ginosko*] the Holy Spirit because He would be with us and in us (John 14:16-17), but for the most part in the Bible the Holy Spirit is the one who works in us the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ by supernaturally working in us the new birth and the gift of faith (cf. Titus 3:5) and then by constantly bearing witness in our hearts to the Father and the Son (cf. Eph. 3:16-19).

- 1 John 2:20 (cf. 5:7) — You have been **anointed** [with the Holy Spirit] by the Holy One, and [therefore] you all have knowledge.
- 1 Corinthians 12:3 — No one can say “Jesus is Lord” [“no one can have the true knowledge of Jesus as Lord”] except in the Holy Spirit.
- Romans 8:15 — You did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” [“by whom we have come to know God as our Father”]

Does all this mean that the Holy Spirit is less than God? Not at all! Because **only one who is fully God can work *in us* the true knowledge of God**. To know God, then, means to know experientially and relationally that He is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – one in three, and three in one. Here is a most remarkable miracle and a most wonderful gift.

## **Conclusion**

So now let's come back to Peter's prayer and wish for us: "To those who have been **allotted a faith** of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ: **May grace and peace be multiplied to you, in the *KNOWLEDGE* of God and of Jesus our Lord**."

What is Peter's prayer and wish for us? It's that through our ever deepening and growing "*knowledge*" of God [of the *true* God!] and personal fellowship with Him, we might come to know always more and more the grace and peace that's already ours in fullest measure.

Why is this Peter's prayer and wish for us? Because he knows that it's this true knowledge of God that keeps us and guards us from every empty lie and every false teaching that arises within the church. 1 Peter also begins with these same words: "May grace and peace be multiplied to you" (1:2). But it's only here in 2 Peter with its emphasis on false teaching that Peter continues:

➤ 2 Peter 1:2 — May grace and peace be multiplied to you *in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord*.

Peter will come back to this theme of the knowledge of God and of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in verse 3, in verses 5-6, in verse 8, in chapter two verses 20-21, and then again in chapter three, he'll conclude as he began with these words:

➤ 2 Peter 3:17-18 — You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. But grow in the grace and **knowledge [epignosis]** of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

Do you have the true knowledge of God the Father and of Jesus our Lord that only comes through the *faith* that the Holy Spirit works in us? Are you avoiding the errors of a sterile, theoretical counterfeit "*knowledge*" on the one hand, and an esoteric, mystical counterfeit "*knowledge*" on the other? Are you walking in personal relationship and fellowship with the *true* God?—In worship, and love, and thankfulness, and praise, and adoration, and trust, and submission, and obedience? May Peter's prayer and wish for us also be our prayer and wish: "May grace and peace be multiplied to [us], in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord!"