

RCC in the Word
2 Peter 1.3-4
Week of November 12

My children enjoy challenging me to wink and to roll my tongue because they know that their super-strong dad cannot do it. No matter how hard I try, I cannot wink. No matter how hard I try, I cannot roll my tongue. It is impossible for me. In 2 Peter, the apostle repeatedly implores us to do something that is humanely unachievable: become more like Christ. *So you should try very hard to add goodness to your faith. To goodness, add knowledge. To knowledge, add the ability to control yourselves. To the ability to control yourselves, add the strength to keep going. To the strength to keep going, add godliness. To godliness, add kindness for one another. And to kindness for one another, add love. All these things should describe you more and more.* (2 Peter 1.6-8a, NIRV). Peter concludes his letter with this explicit command: *Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ* (3.18). Impossible!

Truly, in our own power, the call for Christian maturity is impossible. We cannot add godly virtues to our personal character. We cannot grow in grace. Thankfully, the ability to do what God commands does not depend on our power or might or ability. Sanctification is based on the power and promises of God. Before Peter tells us, “Grow,” he reminds us of the divine gifts of God that make it possible for us to fulfil the command.

In verse 3, Peter focuses on the divine power of God. By his divine power - the power that created the heavens and the earth; the power that sustains the universe; the power that raises the dead; the power that rescues us from the Evil One – God freely gives to us everything we need for salvation (life) and sanctification (godliness). All things. Everything. When many youths turn 16, parents will often give them money to go toward the cost of buying a vehicle, but the teen must make up the difference. Thankfully, this is not the way it is with God. He does not ask us to make up the difference. He does not meet us halfway giving us some divine power while requiring us to contribute our own strength. God provides all the spiritual resources necessary for our growth in in the grace and knowledge of Christ.

The spiritual resources needed for our sanctification are given when God effectually calls us to Christ for salvation. For the sake of his own glory, God sovereignly summons sinners to repent of their sins and to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. This call comes through the knowledge of Christ. The word knowledge in verse 3 is the Greek word *epignosis*. This is transforming knowledge. This is knowledge with power. *Epignosis* is “contact knowledge” or “experiential knowing.” As John MacArthur says it is “genuine, personal sharing of life with Christ” as a response to the truth of Christ’s person and work. The moment God calls us to eternal life in Christ through the saving knowledge of Christ, he immediately bestows to us everything necessary for sanctification.

Not only do we have the power of God, we also have the promises of God to make our growth in Christlikeness both possible and practical. In verse 4, Peter says that it is by the glory and goodness of God that we have been given God’s precious, dear, honorable and exceedingly great promises. These promises are the very words of God regarding our salvation and sanctification. It is through these promises that the elect become joint-participants or sharers in God’s divine nature. This does not mean we become mini-gods as some religions teach. To be partakers in the divine nature of God is to be born from above by the Spirit of God. By that new birth, we become children of God, we are sealed by the Holy Spirit, and we obtain eternal life with God.

At the moment of salvation, when we share in the nature of God, an amazing escape takes place. God breaks the power of sin and releases from the shackles of this morally corrupt world. Though the world is controlled by its own sinful lusts, cravings and passions, we have escaped this evil world. As we lay hold of the promises of God and apply them and walk in them and trust them, we share in the holy nature of God, flee the fallen nature of the world and are transformed into the likeness of our great Savior.

God has given us all we need to guarantee and empower our growth in holiness. We have both the divine power and great promises of God at our disposal. God both requires and enables our sanctification. You may not be able to wink....it is impossible for me. You may not be able to roll your tongue...it is impossible for me. But you can grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ. You can become more like Christ. You can mature spiritually. Alexander Maclaren writes, "We may have as much of God as we will. Christ puts the key of the treasure-chamber into our hand, and bids us take all that we want. If a man is admitted into the bullion vault of a bank and told to help himself, and comes out with one cent, whose fault is it that he is poor?" By the power of God and the promises of God, we have all we need to experience the riches of life in Christ. Grasping the resources of God with both hands, let's grow!

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