

What You Don't See Is What You've Got • 2 Peter 1:3-4

Danny Simpson was a 24-year-old bank robber in Ottawa, Canada. He must have been really desperate for money to commit a high level felony for only \$6,000. He was arrested, tried, convicted and sentenced to six years in prison. The investigators seized the gun he used in the armed robbery and gave it to a local museum. The gun was a .45 caliber Colt semi-automatic made by the Ross Rifle Company in Quebec City in 1918. It was an antique valued at \$100,000. If Danny has realized what he had in his hand he wouldn't have robbed the bank!

It's a common mistake. Many of us don't realize what we've got! We desperately search in all the wrong places for grace and peace when God assures us that he has already given us all we need.

Let's take a look at what the Bible has to say in the New Testament book of II Peter. It is the second letter St. Peter wrote to first century Christians in the Roman Empire who wanted to move on to the next level of Christianity. I invite you to take your Bible and not only read it but write in the margins and highlight and personalize it. Let's look at II Peter 1:2-4:

Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him 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 and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

What we have here is a list of the resources God has given us to make it in life. Compare this to the inventory you take before going on a dream vacation. You have money in the bank, cash in your pocket, credit cards in your wallet, clothes in your suitcase, plane tickets, insurance, a list of emergency numbers and your

best friend is going along. You have everything you need for your journey, whatever it takes to meet your needs. Now, multiply the list by a million—maybe more than a million! That is the God-list we have here: *“His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness.”*

Before we look at the list of divine resources let's be sure we get the main point. God has given us everything we need. Everything! Whether we know it or not and whether we access the resources or not, God has totally resourced us. Sometimes we live like paupers but the clear teaching of the Bible is that we are endowed like royalty.

If and when we grasp this truth our lives will be truly transformed. If ever we doubt that we can make it, God has given us everything we need. If we worry about running out of what we need, be assured that we will not. If we think we lack whatever it takes to succeed in life, the truth is that God has given us whatever we need. We do not lack anything we need. God is on our side. God is totally for us. God wants us to live good and godly lives. God *“has given us everything we need for life and godliness.”*

Here is a suggestion that can literally transform your life—memorize II Peter 1:3. Read these words ten times a day for 30 days and let the truth sink into your soul. You may want to personalize the words: *“God has given me everything I need for life and godliness.”* Practice it out loud now: *“God has given me everything I need for life and godliness.”* Now keep this transforming truth in

your head while we break down the list to understand how God gives us everything we need.

First on this list is power, the power of God. Peter used the Greek word *dynamis* from which we get our

English word dynamite. The same power of God that created the universe, performed the miracles in the Bible and raised Jesus from the dead is the power that gives us everything we need. The point

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here is that you and I don't have the power to live good and godly lives but we can tap into the power of God. And this power of God cannot be stopped. It is a fantastic and formidable power that is made available to us so we can have an astonishing confidence for living that otherwise we would not have. The power of God flows to us *"through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness."* This refers to our personal relationship with Jesus.

Peter is reflecting on his own experience. He was a fisherman who wanted more of God and life. Then one day Jesus called him to be his friend and follower. He decided to hook up with Jesus. The reason he decided to do this is because of Jesus' glory and goodness. "Glory" refers to reputation and "goodness" refers to virtue. From everything Peter had heard about Jesus and everything he saw of Jesus' goodness, Jesus was worth following. So, when Jesus called, Peter said "yes" and plugged into the power of God.

It works the same for us. Jesus calls us. He asks us to believe in him and follow him wherever he goes. We check him out. We run references, talking to others who believe in him and follow him. His references are solid. His reputation is excellent. We look him in the eye; we listen to his teaching; we sense that he is special, supernatural and good. We say "yes" to his call to become a Christian and when we do we plug into the power of God. And we identify with II Peter 1:3: *"His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness."*

Second on Peter's list of what we have are the promises of God. In II Peter 1:4 he says, *"He has given us his very great and precious promises."* Jesus—who has the power of God, a great reputation and genuine goodness—guarantees the promises of God. It's interesting that when you read this no specific promises are given, but the teaching is that God is good for whatever he promises.

Think of it in terms of money. Take a look at the paper currency in your pocket. It may be a one, five, ten, twenty or hundred dollar bill but it is just a piece of paper with ink on it. Put a million of them in a pile and it is still just paper and ink. Each one has a picture of a dead guy and signatures of government officials most of us have never heard

of. Yet, we value the money. We work hard to get more. We save it. We spend it. We believe in it. It is more than paper because it has the government of the United States of America to make the paper's promises come true.

The promises in the Bible are ink and paper. They say that God will meet our needs, answer our prayers, heal our bodies, comfort our grief, forgive our sins and get us to heaven. The paper and ink promises grace and peace in abundance—everything we need for life and godliness. The promises aren't valid because of the paper and ink. The promises are good because they have the God of the universe backing them up.

If you want to experience how this works try a practical exercise. Get a yellow highlight pen. Open your Bible to any page and start reading until you find a promise from God and highlight that promise. Keep reading until you find and highlight some more promises from God and discover the amazing promises God has given to us. You will be impressed and empowered, especially when you realize that *"he has given us his very great and precious promises."*

When I was a little boy I always looked for cash in my birthday cards. I did read the rest of the card but it was always good to see the money. It's like that when you read the Bible. Be sure to read it all, but it's especially good when you see the promises.

Third on Peter's list is participation. In verse 4 he says, *"... he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature."*

Wait a minute! This is getting serious and supernatural. We Christians can participate in the divine nature of God? Does this mean that we become God?

When he wrote this Peter took a chance and he has faced some big time criticism as a result. The pagans in the first century Roman Empire believed they could move up a spiritual staircase until (at the top) they became gods. How cool is that! You start out being a fisherman and work your way up to become the god Neptune. You are a mail carrier and you get promoted to become the god Mercury. Now you are the CEO of your family business but someday you will be Zeus himself on top of Mount Olympus.

Those pagan religions have pretty much died out, but the idea of working your way up to become a god is still around in some modern religions today. It is sort of the ultimate self-improvement.

The risk Peter took was using pagan terminology to teach Christian truth. When he wrote about Christians being able to “*participate in the divine nature*” some thought he was teaching paganism, but that is not at all what he was writing.

Do you know the story of Helen Keller? Born in 1880 Helen Keller became ill and lost her sight and hearing when she was 19 months old. As a result she became unable to speak. At the suggestion of Alexander Graham Bell, her parents recruited a teacher from the Perkins Institution for the Blind in Boston. They hired 19-year-old Anne Sullivan and brought her into the home of the unmanageable six-year-old Helen. She started out by spelling letters of words on the little girl’s hand, words like doll and puppy. Within two years Helen Keller was able to read and write in Braille. When Helen was ten years old Anne Sullivan took Helen’s fingers and put them on her larynx and talked to her so that Helen could feel the vibrations until, amazingly, Helen Keller learned how to speak. With Anne Sullivan’s help Helen Keller went on to graduate with honors from Radcliff College. She became a best-selling author. Her life was made into the stage play, *The Miracle Worker*, and eventually into a Hollywood film.

The two women, although thirteen years difference in age, spent much of the rest of their lives together. When Anne Sullivan died in 1936 Helen Keller wrote:

My teacher is so near to me that I scarcely think of myself apart from her. I feel that her being is inseparable from my own, and that the footsteps of my life are in hers. All the best of me belongs to her—there is not a talent or an inspiration or a joy that has not been awakened by her loving touch.

Helen Keller did not become Anne Sullivan, but she “partook” of Anne Sullivan’s nature. And so it is for us as Christians. We are locked into a world where we are spiritually blind and deaf. Jesus awakens us with his loving touch. He pours himself into us and brings the best out of us. We can scarcely think of ourselves apart from him. We feel inseparable. The footsteps of our lives are in him. All the best of us belongs to Jesus. There is not a talent or an inspiration or a joy that has not been awakened by his loving touch. “*He has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature.*”

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Last on the list is a very practical and measurable outcome of being given everything we need for life and godliness. “*He has given us his great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption of the world caused by evil desires.*”

Here’s what happens. We live in a world where there are a lot of corrosive evils. There are toxins that range from political corruption to personal greed, from sexual lust to spiritual idolatry. When evil desires are left untreated they eat away at our lives like rust on the hull of a sunken ship. And you don’t have to look very far to see it. There is a nice kid—a sweet little girl, a nice little boy. As they grow older they allow sins to settle into their souls. A sweet child grows up to be a felon. The happy teenager becomes a discouraged and depressed grown-up. The loving husband becomes addicted to pornography. The faithful wife enters a series of extramarital affairs. All because of evil desires and corruption in the world in which we live.

But there is a way to escape the corruption of the world caused by evil desires. It is through the power, promise and participation of Jesus. Really! It is true. It actually works. When we plug into Jesus and take advantage of everything we need for life and godliness we are actually preserved from the rotting of our souls.

Frankly, it sounds too good to be true. But have you ever seen a movie where divers explore a sunken Spanish galleon loaded with valuable gold? The moviemakers intentionally dull the gold because real gold is so bright and untarnished that it looks fake. The wood is rotten. The iron is rusted. The sails and ropes have long faded away. But the gold is preserved without blemish after hundreds of years in salt water. Movie directors know the truth but figure that most viewers wouldn't believe it, so they dull it to be more convincing.

The power, promises and divine nature of Jesus Christ preserve so well from sin and corruption that it seems too good to be true. But it is true! Christians can actually “*escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.*”

There's a story about a young man who came to his girlfriend's house to ask her father's permission to marry her. The father asked the suitor what kind of work he planned to do and the suitor said he didn't yet know. So, the father asked how he expected to provide a home where his daughter would live. The young man answered, “God will provide.” The father asked if he planned to buy her a diamond engagement ring and the boyfriend said, “God will provide.” The father said, “What about when you two have children? How will you support the children?” Predictably he answered, “Don't worry about it, Sir. God will provide!”

Later that evening the mother asked her husband how the conversation had gone with their potential son-in-law. The father said, “The bad news is that he has no job, no money and no plans. But the good news is that he thinks I'm God.”

Well, in our lives the bad news is that we don't have what it takes to make it in life and godliness. But the good news is that we think Jesus is God . . . and he is!

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