

# “Responding to God

2 Peter 1:1-11

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**2 Peter 1:1-11** *Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:2*

*Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord,3 as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,4 by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.5 But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge,6 to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness,7 to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.8 For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.9 For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.10 Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble;11 for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*

Peter had already written his first letter to the churches and believers in Asia. He had encouraged them not only to endure, but to even thrive and grow despite the natural fatigue that comes with a faithful walk. Despite even persecution and torment from Caesar Nero. Yes and even despite the stress, ...the adverse conditions, that are inevitable for every believer who passes through this world.

Now comes Peter's second letter, that which would be his swan song. For these words would be Peter's last upon this earth. Soon after the writing of this letter Peter would be executed for being a follower of Christ and definitely for being a preacher of Christ. It is highly doubtful that such would have come as a surprise to him. Yet despite his impending departure, Peter was still determined to endure...to be faithful until his end. And we have every reason to believe he did just that. One can only wonder what happened to our faith, in that people used to die for it, and now, well, many of us don't even want to break a sweat for it.

Peter "finished well." His finish however was not without a certain irony. For this was the guy who had failed Christ in His hour of greatest need. In fact, let's face it. It truly was one of the most spectacular failures in recorded history! And yet, it would be this very man that would now call upon us all to 'endure.' It was not that he was or even imagined himself to be a "perfect man" on any stretch of the imagination. He was a man of weakness, and yet he was at the same time the man to whom Jesus replied, "*You are blessed, Simon son of John, because my Father in heaven has revealed this to you.*"

It seemed, as is the case with many if not all of us, he was both men in one, but the difference it seems was that he knew it. It seems that somewhere along the way, this man, at least on some level, came to know how to embrace the strength of the Spirit in himself, and leave the flesh behind. There was the Peter of Mark 14:37 where Jesus said to him... "*Simon, are you sleeping?*" And then there was the Peter found early in the book of Acts...the one who was unflinching before the very men who had condemned Jesus to death as he pronounced judgment upon them for executing Christ. They both were Peter. But something happened along the way to have changed him.

It is quite clear from the onset that Peter was writing this letter to *believers*. No doubt even those not yet redeemed can find great truths and direction herein, but the bottom line is that the power and the promises spoken of in this letter were and *are* only for the disciple of Christ. So often we claim to know Christ, yet in truth our understanding and real personal familiarity with the person and the ways of Christ are often limited to what we hear in church and live out in church. Few of us are willing to put on the cloak of the disciple all week long. Rare is the individual that is so willing to step out of the pack to really experience the Jesus of the Gospels. To put His ministry and kingdom above all other dreams, desires, and worldly passions. We frankly want Jesus to fit into our present lives and plans, and if that doesn't happen easily, we will trim and 'reshape' the gospel so that square peg will fit into that round hole that we call our life!

In this letter, Peter will now write concerning what is the complete relationship with Christ. The “wholeness” of both Christ's message *and* His presence. This is more than just an intellectual understanding or a passive church attendance. For he now takes us to the crucible of a living participation ...not in religion or even church life, but rather abiding in Christ's living presence.

Peter began this letter by calling himself a “bond servant.” Perhaps this is where it all begins and it all hinges upon. Some would translate that term to simply mean “servant” as in our modern vernacular. But the original language speaks of much more than that. A servant works his or her shift and goes home... back to their “real life” after their service is over. There is a crowd of folks who can embrace that model of Christianity. The original text actually uses the term “bond-slave.” A bond slave is a willing *slave*. And a slave does not punch out at the end of their shift, nor does he go home after, nor does he have “another life” separate from that of his service. A bond-slave is in complete subjection to his master.

Along with “bond-slave” Peter embraces the title of “apostle.” Such was not self-anointed as it is often applied today, for Jesus Himself first designated him as such early in the gospels. The word “apostle” means “one sent forth.” Specifically, these “apostles” were men who personally witnessed Jesus and walked with Him, and were called into service by Him.

Not receiving what we deserve is “mercy.” But receiving instead the favor, love, and all that we do not deserve, that is grace. Grace is the term Peter uses herein. And without receiving first his grace, we will never know, never possess, this second gift, peace. I have heard the claims of the rebellious who taunt the believer with "I have never been so happy now that I am away from Church and faith!" Happy like a trip to the fair no doubt, but peace they do not and will never have outside of Christ. Php 4:7 "*...and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*"

Peter next says something quite extraordinary. He says “*By his divine power, God has given us “all things” (or everything) we need for living a godly life.*” Certainly one of the most powerful aspects concerning scripture is the use of emphatic forms...grammar words and phrases to denote passion and extreme positions. One would be hard-pressed herein to ignore the term “all things” or “everything.” According to this passage, we *have been given already* “all things.” Everything we need to live a godly and righteous life. Such a concept rightfully should shake the foundations of our faith and belief systems. Especially those of us that are still looking for the “missing link.” The magic elixir to sweep them into dynamic living. For if one would embrace this existing truth and make it his or her own, then it will change...*well*, everything!

Would it not change the way we pray if everything we need to live a godly life is already available to us? For don't we tend to pray like we are ordering something off of Amazon for delivery? Oh Lord...give me peace! *I already sent that.* Father, bless me....*Uh, I already did that.* God, give me the power to serve you...*I already gave you that.* Ok...Lord, how about that new car...or a date with that cute girl Betty, or maybe that winning lottery ticket. No...the text reads “...*all things that pertain to life and godliness.*” He has already provided everything we need to walk the walk. And apparently, to do so with great success.

But let us not miss the next part of that verse, for on it hangs the critical element of the promise that we have thus received herein; The text reads “...*His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, ...through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue...*” Thus we can gather that the path to the list of attributes which follow is found through our knowledge of God: Personally, intellectually, and experientially.

Sadly, there are many folks sitting in pews across the country today that are clutching ‘white-knuckled’ to the first half of that verse while failing to acknowledge the second half, let alone actually embracing it. There are those who cling to the idea that “God does it all”, *which is true in its most basic and fundamental form*. However the fact remains that God is seeking a response from us. His divine power is given to us, *through the knowledge of Him*. What does that mean? What does that look like in the practical realm?

Perhaps we should stop for a moment and ask ourselves in truth, “what do we really know about God? Do we only know *of Him*, or do we really *know Him*?” Often our problems of peace and thus that illusive spiritual endurance stems from this very fact. The truth is, very few of us really know Him personally and intimately and are willing to invest the time and effort to do so.

Verse 3 is indeed one of the greatest verses of scripture. For we are here told that we have been given...past tense “given”...ALL THINGS in the matters of life...ALL THINGS of Godliness. Everything? Apparently so. Which is ironic in a world that keeps looking...keeps searching, for that ever illusive ‘meaning of life’...at least the meaning of *their* life personally and individually. Thus there remains that constant search for purpose and peace.

Outside of Him, lies nothing I need. In Him lies all the secrets, purposes, and passions of life. Coming to that understanding and embracing such is the “brass ring” of our years on this planet! This therefore should eliminate the “highbred” life that we as believers so often attempt to live, with some mixture of the “God element” and additional addendum's from the “catalog of life in the world.” For the doulos, the bond-slave, God has it all.

This complete life of “all things” is there for any one of us. But it is not a simple “how to guide” or a free cereal box prize. It is not a magic incantation or an Aladdin's lamp we can rub for 3 wishes! It is found “through the knowledge of Jesus Christ.” Once again, this negates the false doctrine that I play no part in my personal sanctification. Unless I make a real effort to relate to Him and experience Him and learn of Him, no such gift is assured.

This fact is why there are certainly those who are present amongst us, or participatory in the greater church body and have never attained such a fullness. They participate for years in the church community and still fail to thrive...and ultimately fail to endure. All because they really do not know their Savior, His promises, and His ways, His character and His demands. Verse 5 begins with “*for this very reason...*” What reason? Because of the fact we have been given “*exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world...*”

*5 But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge,6 to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness,7 to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.8 For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

It is clear in this text that God seeks a reply. A “response” from us. A reciprocation because of the gifts He has given us. That would mean some effort is requested...required even on our part. Not for salvation, but for sanctification. A “giving back.” A “reasonable service” as Paul puts it in Romans 12. So much for the “lazy-boy faith” practice that sits back and waits for Jesus to magically turn you into a disciple. He did His part...He died for you, and sent His Spirit to equip us.

Apparently we need to define the rules of the game here. If there is no effort on our part, it’s all over before we even start. We do not win unless we play. So these steps MUST, by design, also include that ever crucial effort...*diligence*,

on our part. This fact is realized in every area of life on this plain of existence...from sports, to work, to marriage, to even eating. Yet apparently such fact is lost...or better yet *denied*, when it comes to Christ and Christianity!

There are so many of us that claim to be His, yet constantly struggle with finding in themselves any element of effort to do and be and grow in Christ. We don't want to be uncomfortable or "put out" in any way. We want our faith to fit into our life plans and worldly pursuits. If it was a baseball or football game, they'd be there, or a free fine dinner in Minneapolis, they'd drive there, or some other earthly pleasure or passion, they would make the time and give the effort...But Jesus? Yet we claim to love Him best. He's not buyin' it...

And where does this diligence come from? It's a natural "side-effect" of the most critical element of all, *our love*...our very passion, for the one who redeemed us in the first place. Throughout scripture, we have passage after passage telling us that our love...if it is real love, will create in us a passion... a natural forward action on our part. There is no way around it, and no explaining our contrary actions in any other manner.

John 21:16 "He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My sheep."

Acts 21:13 "Then Paul answered, "What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

Heb 6:10 "For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister."

As we study His Word, and experience his presence, we consume the deeper truths and challenges of scriptural direction...we fall deeper in love. Does such not happen in our earthly love relationships? The more I come to know Sharon the more I love her. The more time I spend with her, the more time I *want* to spend with her. We therefore come to know what God wants, and understand His truths.

What "response" is God seeking from us herein? What proof of our love is He desiring to see in us? Peter begins now to list these additions, telling us we are seek after them with *diligence*. That word means earnestness and striving. We are to earnestly strive for *virtue*. Another of those old words that have fallen out of use. Virtue is high achievement and purity. Then to virtue, we are to add *knowledge*. This is the knowledge we receive upon the study of the Word, consuming the deeper truths and challenges of scriptural direction. We must *know* what God wants, and *understand* His truths. If we do not, we are doomed to an immature walk and ultimately, much failure.

To that knowledge we are to add *temperance*. This simply means self-control, which is only managed through the addition of the next item on the list: *patience*. Self-control is to deal with the *pleasures* of life, and patience is to deal with its problems and pressures.

To patience we are to add *godliness*. Meaning God-like-ness. It has in it the idea of reverence, and worship. To godliness, *brotherly kindness*. We are to love the brethren. We are to love one another. (John 13:35, Heb 13:1, Rom 12:10) And to brotherly kindness, *charity*. This is agape love. The supernatural love that is without expectation of reciprocation. Brotherly kindness loves *because* of our commonalties, and agape loves *despite* our differences.

If these things exist within us and truly *abound*, then we will be effective and fruitful. Not just for the furthering of the kingdom, but for ourselves as we pass through this life. These that Peter has listed here for us, are the true manifestation of real knowledge of Christ. Some say they have such knowledge, but these traits are never made evident in their lives. **THIS** is the fruit of *real* understanding and learning. The knowledge of Christ that has moved from the intellect to the actions, from the head to the heart, from the heart to the hands and feet. Peter, like in his first letter, still desires to see the believers really *live* what they hear; and so do I.