

Communion

⦿ For the Hebrew people of the Old Testament, the covenant between them and God required that they observe many rituals. One was the Passover Festival. And for some 1400 years they religiously held this ritual feast. It appears that God was not in any hurry, but eventually Jesus, the ‘Lamb of God’, was crucified (i.e. sacrificed) on the *very same day* that all the Jews alive then were sacrificing a lamb in memory of that first Passover. When the blood of a lamb on the door post meant that the angel of death passed over their house and the people within were saved from death.

The timing was more than significant, because Jesus, the Lamb of God, was bringing in a new covenant that did away with the old. It is as we come under the blood of the lamb, Jesus death, that we are saved – for eternity. As we accept Jesus as our Lord and Saviour; as we recognise in faith that His death has paid the price for our sin. We are safe under the blood of Jesus Christ.

Mark records, **“When evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve. While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take it; this is my body.”**

Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank from it. “This is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many,” he said to them.”

This bread reminds us of Jesus body – the Lamb of God giving His life.

Hebrews 9 speaks of the worship that was required through the earthly tabernacle, and we are told that Moses **“sprinkled with the blood both the tabernacle and everything used in its ceremonies.”** Verse 22,... **“In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.”**

Message

⦿ It seems that God is not in any hurry. But we live in an instant world. We have instant noodles and instant coffee. Whatever we want, we can now have it delivered. We want what we want, and we want it now.

That instant mentality is carried over even into our Christian life. We want instant growth. We want instant maturity. We want instant results when it comes to our desires being met – even our expectations of the church. But it doesn’t work that way. Spiritual growth is not automatic. Instead, it is a transformation that can take a lifetime, and it involves our participation.

When Paul wrote to the church at Philippi, he sought to encourage them, and declared that he was confident that God, who had begun a good work in them would carry it on to completion. But that “good work” requires our involvement, and again, takes time.

I’d like to look this morning at the beginning of Second Peter. Peter’s second letter to the persecuted believers in Turkey begins, ⦿ **“Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ. To those who through the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours: Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.”**

Peter begins from a place of humility. He says, “I’m a servant of Jesus, and although an apostle, your faith is equal to and just as precious as ours. There is no hierarchy in the Kingdom. There are no levels of faith greater or lesser than others. Our faith in God is a precious thing.” The Greek word brings equality and preciousness together, suggesting that their faith was equally as precious and valuable, as was the apostles.

Your faith in God is a precious thing, not to be thought of lightly or taken for granted, but treasured. And we mustn’t get drawn into the comparison game; looking at each other and suggesting that their level of faith is greater than ours. Faith in God, in any measure; even as small as a mustard seed; is to be valued. For He who has begun a good work within you is determined to bring it through to completion – with your co-operation. Why? Because...

⊗ 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. 4 Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.”**

The key to these verses is the goodness and glory of God. By the goodness of God and for His glory, we have been saved and drawn into an increasing knowledge of God, and He gives us all that we need to live a godly life. By the goodness of God and for His glory, He has given us His great and precious promises so that we may live godly lives (or put it another way, “participate in the divine nature”).

His promises are precious, and they increase our precious faith – so that we may live God honouring and God pleasing lives. These “great and precious promises” speak of the promises of abundant and eternal life. The all sufficiency of our God, has in His grace, given us all that we need. He is all sufficient, and He is our source.

And the power of God is such that He can transform us for His glory and for our good and well-being; the power of God is such that His promises are forever true and dependable. All powerful, all sufficient; all faithful and dependable.

⊗ In the 1950’s, Herbert Jackson and his wife worked as missionaries in Vietnam. And Herbert acquired a car that wouldn’t start without a push. So, for two years, whenever he needed the car, he would ask people to push it so that it would start. During his rounds, he would park it on a hill. When they retired, he turned over the car to the new missionary. While he was explaining how he would get the car started, the new missionary looked under the bonnet, and said, “I believe the trouble may be that loose cable.” After securing the cable, the engine started first pop. For two years, Jackson endured unnecessary trouble. The power was there all the time. Only a loose connection kept Jackson from putting that power to work.

⊗ How’s your connection with God? Are you spending time in His Word, allowing His promises to empower you to live a godly life? By His great and precious promises, we may participate in His divine nature – we may experience Him and be like Him; living godly lives.

You know, a promise is only as good as the person who makes it. I can make you a promise with every intention of fulfilling it, but certain circumstances may arise and I may let you down. But when God makes you a promise you can take it to the bank. Hebrews 6:18 tells us that it is impossible for God to lie. He is the Way, the TRUTH, and the Life, and He is faithful.

Let's consider briefly some of the promises that God has made to His children:

1. ☉ He Has Promised To Love Us - Romans 8:38 **“For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”**
2. ☉ He Has Promised To Be With Us - Matthew 28:20 **“...lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”**
3. ☉ He Has Promised To Provide For Us - Philippians 4:19 **“But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”**
4. ☉ He Has Promised Us A Home - John 14:1 **“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many rooms: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.”**
5. ☉ He Has Promised To Return For Us - John 14:3 **“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”**

There is not much that we can count on in this world. A man's word isn't what it used to be. People will betray you intentionally. Some will fail you unintentionally. Promises are made and promises are broken. But we can trust that the promises of God, for they will never fail. His promises are great and they are precious, because He is faithful (He will never fail), and they're given in love for our well-being. And as we consider what God has promised us we must admit, they are far more than we could have ever asked for!

So, if God has given us all that we need ... if He **“who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.”** (Eph 1:3), He who by His **“divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life”** as we trust in His promises through His Word, then v.5-7 apply,

☉ **“For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love.”**

The word knowledge in v.3, implies an intimate relationship. Peter was not talking about a superficial, head knowledge, but a close and deep connection with God that affects the way we live and treat one another. It's of no value slapping a coat of paint over the wall if there are white ants eating away at the bearers. Peter is not talking about a make over, but a deep and effective rebuild; a transformation.

As we consider these qualities, they describe Jesus; we see each of the qualities in Jesus. And Peter encourages us to make every effort to work on and participate with the Lord to see that these qualities are developing within us.

To these Christians living in Tukey and under times when Rome was persecuting Christians, Peter is calling them to develop their Christian life and character. He was calling them to grow to be more like Christ. He had seen Christ-like character develop within himself. He wanted to see that their effectiveness and fruitfulness for the Lord increase. To their faith in God he longed to hear of increasing levels of goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, mutual affection, and love.

⦿ The result of pursuing these qualities; V.8, he says will be that they will live effective and fruitful, godly lives, and v.10 that, pursuing by these qualities they would never stumble or fall; they would stand firm.

In these days when we are tempted to rest on our faith in God and wait for God to do the rest within us, and we hope for instant results. In these days, many a Christian wants the best of both worlds. Jerry Bridges in his book, *The Pursuit of Holiness*, says that many a Christian has become paralysed into indecision, “sometimes wishing they had the courage to enjoy a fully committed Christianity, and other times wishing they had the courage to forget it, and enjoy being utterly pagan.” He goes on to say that those in such a place, who want the best of both worlds, actually end up having the best of neither. And I think that Jesus would call this, being lukewarm.

How many of us have pondered how easy it would be to give it all away – because we don't find the Christian life easy? But Jesus encouraged us to take up our cross, daily, and follow Him.

Peter calls us to effective, fruitful, godly and abundant lives, where we will not stumble or fall, by calling us to return to the Word of God; trusting in Him, and making every effort to live like Christ, with Christlike qualities. As we spend more time with God in His Word; connecting to the power source; as we listen and obey; as we work with Him; He will bring to completion that which He has begun within us. Being confident of this...

May we defer from seeking instant results, and commit to developing Christlike qualities as we trust more in the precious promises of God. Can we spend more quality time with God; in His Word; and get involved in a home group, KYB or Bible study group. **“Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.”** Amen.

TN 201 Ancient words

Hymn 007x Standing on the promises of God