Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ,

Can you remember the last time that you received an actual hand-written letter from someone? I can’t. It used to be common, but with today’s technology, writing a letter with pen and paper hardly happens anymore. Well, at the top of the page in our Bibles, it says, “*The Second Letter of Peter*.” So, for the second time in a couple of years, the believers Peter originally wrote to were reading a letter from him. And, just as we would, they would have started at the beginning and read through to the end. And I say that because Peter’s letter in its original form did not have chapters and verses. The chapters and verse numbers in our Bibles are jolly useful but they are not actually part of Scripture. The chapters that we use were first inserted in the 12th century, and the verse divisions that we use were added by Robert Estienne in 1551. So, perhaps sometime in the next week, just read 2 Peter through, from beginning to end. It will be helpful to get a sense of the whole as we work through the letter portion by portion.

But our focus today is chapter 1 and verses 3-4. I explained last week that the key theme of 2 Peter is the importance of correct knowledge. And the focus of chapter 1 is the correct knowledge about the Christian life. Last week, we looked at the greeting. And we saw there that a Christian is one who has come to faith in Christ, and they then have the “*grace and peace of God*” multiplied to them throughout the Christian life. And faith and grace and peace come through “*the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord*.” Well, with the rest of the chapter, Peter is going to unpack and prove and press upon us the reality of what he said in the greeting. He is going to show us how we live a fruitful Christian life, that we need to be regularly reminded of these things, and that this is not just Peter’s opinion but the very Word of God.

So, today we begin the section that explains how we live a fruitful Christian life. And it begins, in verses 3-4 with **a description of the believer’s privileged position**. Before we hear what we must *do*, we will hear about *what we have* in Christ. And congregation, this is always how it is in Scripture; we are always told who we are and what we have in Christ before we are told how we must live. And this is really important. It keeps us from thinking that we must earn our salvation. We cannot! Christ has already earned our salvation! But it also reminds us that the power for Christian living is not from within ourselves, but from our God.

Well, we are going to consider the believer’s privileged position using **a very old investigative theory called 5W1H or the 6Ws**. Have you heard of this approach before? It is to ask Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How. It was developed by Aristotle in the 4th century BC as a way to solve problems. But it can be helpful with Bible study also. Now, 6 points is probably too many, so we will just focus on three of them and touch on the other three as we go along. So, our main three points will be the **What**, the **How**, and the **Why** of the believer’s privileged position.

1. And we begin with the **What**. What is it that we Believers are given?
   1. Well, if you look ahead to **verses 5-7**, you will see that Peter describes the things that make up the fruitful Christian life. They are faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly affection, and love. And in **verse 8**, Peter says that if these qualities are ours and are increasing we will be fruitful, and in **verse 10**, that it is in practising these qualities that we “*will never fall*.” Clearly, then, there is a lot that we must do and there is a lot hanging on this work – if we do not practise these qualities, then we will be *un*fruitful, and we may fall. And this sounds quite daunting, doesn’t it.
      1. But perhaps you can remember a time when you were in a new situation, like a **new job** or something like that, and you were told all the things that you needed to do, and your head started swimming with all the responsibility and pressure. How can I do all this? What if I muck it all up? How can *anyone* do all this? But then your supervisor told you that before you start, you will get three days of training, and that he will be with you for the first week to get you familiar with it all, and he also reminds you have all the qualifications for the job, so you will be fine; you have nothing to worry about. And then the stress levels drop, and you breathe a sigh of relief. You have got this. You can do this. You have all that you need for this task.
      2. Well, that is what verses 3-4 are. Before Peter gets into what believers must do, he wants us to know **what we have been given** in order that we may live the fruitful Christian life. And we see this in verse 3: “*His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness*.” And what are the two key words in that sentence? “*All things*” We have everything we need in order to live the fruitful Christian life.
   2. And what are all the things that we need for the fruitful Christian life?
      1. Well, these words look back to the greeting of **verses 1-2**, where we were told that we *have* faith and we *will be* given grace and peace.
      2. But these words also look forward to **verse 4** where we see that we have been granted “*the precious and very great promises*” of God.
         1. For example, Jesus said, “*All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out … and … I [will] lose nothing of all that He has given me, but raise it up on the last day*.”
         2. He said, “*Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age*.”
         3. He said, “*I will ask the Father, and He will [send you the Holy Spirit] … He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you … [and He will] be with you forever*.”
         4. He said, “*In my Father's house are many rooms … I go to prepare a place for you … and … I will come again and will* *take you to myself, that where I am you may be also*.”
         5. These are just some of “*the precious and very great promises*” of God. And by the power of the Holy Spirit, they are all ours. You can type them out and stick them on the fridge and know that they are the promises of God and of Jesus your Lord, to you!
      3. So, your **faith**, which was worked in you by the Holy Spirit, and which has as its object the obedience and sacrifice of Jesus Christ, together with the **grace** and **peace** of God, which are multiplied in you, daily, by the Holy Spirit, together with the **precious and very great promises** of God, are all the things that you need to be able to live a fruitful Christian life. That is what believers are given.
         1. So, if you have had a bad week or a bad year and you are overwhelmed with sin and guilt, and feeling dirty or worthless, or doubting your salvation, well, the fact that you are troubled by your sin is actually a very healthy sign. It is people who are not troubled by sin who have a much greater problem. But as you look to Christ and His finished work on the cross, remember that you have been given all the things needed for you to live a fruitful Christian life. So, confess your sins, trust in Christ, and tell yourself, I have been given faith, I am receiving grace and peace, and I have the promises of Jesus!
2. But we must note also, in the second place, the **how**. How do we receive all the “*things that pertain to life and godliness*”?
   1. And just before we get into that, we have already made many references to the Father and the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit. So, quite simply, the **Who** of the believer’s privileged position is the Triune God of the Bible. It is from the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit that we receive all we need to live a fruitful Christian life. But **how** does the Triune God supply us with all that we need? Well, we see the answer in verse 3: “*through the knowledge of Him who called us to His own glory and excellence*.”
      1. Now, the **‘Him**’ of this knowledge is the Lord Jesus. The Scriptures typically attribute the work of calling to the Father. But in verse 2, knowledge is connected to “*God and Jesus our Lord*,” and in verse 8, knowledge is connected with “*our Lord Jesus Christ*.” And the emphasis on the glory and excellence of the Lord Jesus that continues throughout chapter 1 suggests that it is He who Peter had in view here. Now, because of the **unity of the Trinity**, this in no way excludes the Father or even the Spirit from this knowledge; you simply cannot know Christ apart from the Father and the Spirit. But because the person and work of Jesus is so central to salvation, it is He that is foremost in view in vs3.
      2. So, we are supplied with all that we need for the fruitful Christian life “*through the knowledge of [Christ]*.” It is not *our* inherent abilities that make us able to live a fruitful life, but the knowledge of Christ. It is as we are exposed to Jesus in the Bible and by the power of the Holy Spirit that we will be fruitful.
         1. In **Ephesians 3:16-19**, Paul prayed that believers would know “*the breadth and length and height and depth*” of the love of Christ, “*that [we] may be filled with all the fullness of God*.” Paul wanted believers to know the fulness of who Christ is, what He has done, what He is doing, and what He will do.
         2. A much loved Christian book that has become a favourite of many is ‘***Knowing God***’, by Rev. J. I. Packer. He writes:

*What were we made for? To know God. What aim should we set ourselves in life? To know God. What is the eternal life that Jesus gives? Knowledge of God. "This is life eternal, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent" (John 17:3). What is the best thing in life, bringing more joy, delight, and contentment than anything else? Knowledge of God. "Thus says the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glory glory in this, that he understands and knows You" (Jeremiah 9:23). What, of all the states God ever sees man in, gives Him most pleasure? Knowledge of himself. "I desire... the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings," says God (Hosea 6:6) ... Once you have become aware that the main business that you are here for is to know God, most of life's problems fall into place of their own accord.*

* + - 1. Dear brother, dear sister, is knowing God a priority in your life? Do you want to grow in contentment and purity? Do you want worship to be more than just a going through the motions? Do you want a better marriage? Do you want victory over a particular sin? Do you seek a deeper assurance of salvation? Then make knowing God a priority. Make the study of His word, in public worship, and in public and private Bible study, a priority.
         1. So, if you wonder why your elder or me up here keep urging you to come to the afternoon services or at least one of the regular Bible studies, here is your answer – the divine power of God that grants to us all things that pertain to life and godliness comes to us through the knowledge of Christ. It is by the very ordinary means of sermons and sacraments Bible studies that we grow in the knowledge of Christ.

1. So, the **How** of the fruitful Christian life is through the knowledge of Christ. And that brings us, thirdly and lastly, to the **WHY** of it all. Why are we given all things that pertain to life and godliness and the precious and very great promises of Christ? And this question is answered in the second half of **verse 4**: It is “*so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire*.”
   1. Well, as we think about what this means, a few moments ago I listed a few of the promises of Jesus, and one of them was to return and to take us to be with Him in heaven. And the return of Jesus will be the focus of chapter 3. But that end goal that is in view in verse 4 is more than just being in heaven. Let me explain what I mean:
      1. If you ask people what their **worst nightmare** is, a common response is being in a room full of people and then realizing you are naked. That would so embarrassing and shameful, wouldn’t it. Well, the fact is that if you could be beamed up to heaven right now, as you are, it would be a thousand times worse. In **Revelation 1:17**, we read of the Apostle John being transported to heaven in a vision and standing in the presence of the Lord Jesus. And we read, “*When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as though dead*.” Why? Wasn’t John just happy to be in heaven? No, he was not. Because he was still conscious of his sin and guilt, and his body was still subject to death and corruption. So, in comparison to the holiness and immortality of Jesus, he felt dirty and guilty and worthless.
         1. And congregation, by way of an aside, this highlights a common problem in the accounts of those who say that they saw Jesus in a vision or that they ‘died’ and went to heaven for a time and saw Jesus. For while the Apostle John fell at His feet as though dead, when you listen to them, it’s like they were having coffee in a café! There is no sense of terror and dread at His holiness. And if you don’t understand the holiness of Christ then you don’t understand your sin and misery. And we simply must come under the deep conviction of sin for Christ to be most beautiful and most precious and most needed!
      2. But the key point here is that to truly enjoy being in the presence of Christ in heaven, we need to be changed, we need to be free of sin and to have a body that is free of corruption and death. In other words, we need a body like the body of Jesus!
         1. **1 John 3:2** says, “*Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when [Jesus] appears we will be like Him*.”
         2. And listen to **1 Corinthians 15:51-57**, “*Behold! I tell you a mystery … the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality*.”
         3. And **1 Thessalonians 4:16** tells us that when Jesus comes again, the bodies of those who have died will rise and be reunited with their souls, and those who are alive when Jesus returns will meet them and the Lord Jesus in the air, and their bodies will be changed into sinless, imperishable, and immortal bodies.
         4. And thisis what is in view here in verse 4 as it says that through faith and grace and peace and the according to His promises, we “*may become partakers of the divine nature.*” It is not that we become God, but that our bodies become like the body of the Lord Jesus.
      3. We have been praying, recently, for many in the congregation who have suffered injury or illness. We also have those among us who have disabilities of one sort or another. And we know that unless the Lord Jesus returns, we will all die. But one day, when we are with Jesus in heaven, there will be no more disease, no more dysfunction, no more disability, and no more death! And perhaps most wonderful of all, there will be no more sin! Can you imagine that? It’s hard to imagine isn’t it. But I hope that it sounds wonderful to you. I hope that you pray, regularly, that Jesus will come back soon!
   2. So, the **why** of God giving us “*all things that pertain to life and godliness*,” is so that we may one day be sinless and immortal beings with Christ in heaven. And as we draw to a close, the only parts of our 5W1H inquiry that we have not referred to specifically are **WHEN** and **WHERE**. Well, ultimately, as we have just seen, the when is when Jesus returns, and the where is in heaven. But Peter did not write these words with heaven as his primary focus. He wrote for the here and now. He wanted believers to live a fruitful Christian life while on earth. And the good news of the gospel is that the process of becoming the divine nature begins when we become believers.
      1. **2 Corinthians 5:17** says, “*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come*.” If you have received Jesus as your Saviour and Lord, you are a new creation.
      2. And **Romans 6** explains that a big part of being a new creation is that we have been set free from slavery to sin. You are now able, looking to Christ, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, to choose not to sin. And so, verses 12-13 say, “*Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness*.”
         1. You do not need to commit the same sin you committed yesterday, and the day before, and three months ago. You are not ‘a hopeless addict,’ which is what the world says you are. You are not ‘a prisoner of your personality,’ which is what the world says you are. You are a new creation in Christ who has been set free from slavery to sin.
      3. Now, this does not mean you can be reckless and flirt with temptation. It does not mean that you, in and of yourself, have the power to resist temptation. As **Galatians 2:20** says, “*It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me*.” It is as you spend time in the Bible, and in prayer, alone and with other believers, that the Holy Spirit will multiply the grace and peace of God in you and enable you to resist sin.

So, even though we will not fully partake of the divine nature until we are with Jesus in heaven, the process of becoming like Him began the moment you put your faith in Him. You are a new creation in Christ, and you have all things necessary to live a fruitful Christian life. And this, believer, is your privileged position. Amen!