

## **Is Your Faith Real?**

### **2 Peter 1:1-4**

#### **Pastor John Miller**

I want you to follow with me beginning in verse 1 of chapter 1 of 2 Peter. It starts with “Simon Peter.” He uses his full name. “Simon” being from his former converted days, and then “Peter” being “Petros,” that Jesus gave him. “Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the...”—and here’s one of the key words of 2 Peter—“...knowledge of God, and of our Lord Jesus Christ; according as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge...”—there it is again—“...of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue; whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”

A story is told of a Chinese boy who wanted to learn about jade. Jade is very popular in China. And he wanted to become a specialist in jade, so he went to the master, senior teacher of jade, this older, wiser man. He said, “Would you take me on as one of your students and teach me all about jade?” And the man agreed. He said, “For your first lesson, here, hold this piece of jade.” So he put a piece of jade into the young man’s hand, and he said to hold it tightly. And then he went on to talk about everything else but jade. He talked about life and death and men and women and philosophy and religion, but he didn’t say a word about the jade. At the end of his lecture, he said, “Give me back the jade.” The boy took the jade and gave it to the senior man, who said, “Come back tomorrow for your next lesson.” He came back and again he said, “Hold this jade in your hand.” And he said, “Hold it tightly.” And then he went on to talk about everything else but jade.

Well, this went on day after day after day. He took the jade and held it tightly in his hand. Until one day he became discouraged and thought, “When am I going to learn about jade? When is he going to teach me about jade?” And he came that day and the old man put the stone in his hand and he held it tightly. But the minute he grasped the stone, he realized that it wasn’t jade. And sure enough, he opened his hand and in it wasn’t jade. You see, the wise, older man knew that the way to detect the false was to get familiar and have an experience with the real.

That is exactly what Peter is going to do in this second epistle. Peter’s going to put the truth of God into our hands so that we know God’s Word, we know the truth about our relationship to God, about Who Jesus is and about our salvation. So when a false doctrine or a lie comes along, we are able to detect it as such.

In 1 Peter he was dealing with persecution from the outside. And he encouraged them to stand in the face of persecution and suffering. The contrast of 2 Peter is that now we have not persecution from without but poison from within. And I would say in the pulpit and in the pew. It’s interesting that in 1 Peter, Satan is likened unto a lion that comes fiercely, roaring, “seeking whom he may devour.” But in 2 Peter, Satan is likened unto a serpent. And he comes with

subtlety, with his lies, to deceive us.

You know, the greatest danger of the church today is not from the outside. It's not persecution on the outside, it is poison on the inside. The greatest danger in the church today is poison in the pulpit and poison in the pew; false teaching. And the fact that God's people sometimes lack discernment—they don't know the true from the false. If you want to know the counterfeit, you study the real thing. You can't study all the counterfeits that are out there. You need to study the real thing, and then when something false comes along, you are able to detect it.

In Acts 20:29 when Paul was meeting with the elders of Ephesus, he said, "I know that after I depart shall grievous wolves come in among you, not sparing the flock." That's persecution from the outside. But he said, "Some will arise of your own midst, and they'll seek to lead people astray." Wolves in sheep's clothing, Jesus called them.

So first Peter dealt with submission to God as a proper response to suffering from without. 2 Peter focuses on growing in grace and in knowledge. And the word "knowledge"—we get it twice in the first four verses—the word is "epignosis." And I'll explain what that means in just a moment. It means an experiential knowledge. It means a personal, powerful knowledge is the way of coming against the false truths and teachings around us. So the response to the lies is the truth of God found in the Word of God. The best antidote ever for the Christian is understanding God's Word, God's truth. Satan's lies can only be combated with God's truth, and God's truth is found where? In God's Word. It's found in the Word of God.

Now in these first four verses of chapter 1 we're going to just kind of get our feet wet. Peter lays the foundation of his whole letter by making five important affirmations about real, genuine faith. He wants us to have a faith that is real and a faith that is genuine.

Now faith that is real, chapter 1, is going to issue in holiness. If I were going to say one thing about real faith, it is that real faith produces holiness in the life of a believer. In chapter 2, he's going to be dealing with heresy and that we stand against the lies with God's truth. And in chapter 3, he's going to be dealing with hope. So we're standing in holiness, we're standing against heresy and, chapter 3, we're going to be standing in hope.

But let me give you these five characteristics of genuine faith. And I really encourage you to take these down. I'm going to be giving you some information this morning that you're not going to want to miss in taking notes.

So the first characteristic of a real faith is, number one, it's a "like precious faith." I want you to notice that in verse 1. "Simon Peter..."—who's the human author of this letter—"...a servant..."—which is "doulos" or "bond slave"—"...and an apostle..."—one who is commissioned and sent out—"...of Jesus Christ to them that have obtained..."—here it is—"...like precious faith..." Stop right there. Peter tells us that we have obtained a "like precious faith." The word "precious" means "equal value" or "of equal value." It was used for foreigners who had been granted the privilege of citizenship, which was equal to those of the natural-born

citizens.

Now, I'm an American. I was born in America; I'm a natural citizen. But others may have immigrated, and they came to America and became citizens. But that's equal footing. Their citizenship is no different than mine. They are equally American citizens.

So in the kingdom of God, real faith shares commonality. It shares a "koinonia," a fellowship; that our faith, if it is real and genuine, is the same faith of Peter, James and John, the Apostles. "You," he tells these believers, "have a like precious faith." Now, he could be speaking as a Jew to Gentiles. We're really not sure if the people that he was writing to were primarily Gentiles or primarily Jewish. I believe it was a mix of both. But he's saying one of two things or both. He's saying that you have the same faith that the Apostles had, which I think is important. And you have the same faith as Gentiles that we, the Jews, have. Peter is saying that the faith has been given to them by God. They don't earn it. They don't deserve it. They inherit it. And it's of equal honor and value with that of the Apostles.

In the NASB, it's translated like this: "To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours. What kind of faith is real? The kind that Peter, James and John had; amen? The same faith the Apostles had. And we're going to see it's faith in a person, Jesus Christ. It's based on the promises of God. It's faith that experiences the power of God. It's a faith that brings a new nature to live a holy life.

So my question in my message this morning is, "Is your faith real? Is it genuine? Is it authentic? Is it the same faith that Peter had and Paul had and John had, and Mathew and Luke and the other early Apostles had? Is your faith genuine?" It doesn't matter whether you are an Apostle or the most obscure believer, Jew or Gentile, man or woman, free man or slave. We can all stand equally at the foot of the Cross and share this common faith.

Notice in verse 1. This "like precious faith" is "obtained." It's not "attained." That's a very significant word there in verse 1. You have "obtained." The word "obtained" means it was given to you as a gift. It's actually given to you by lot. So you don't attain it by good works or by good deeds.

Now what does this "like precious faith" bring you? Let me just mention three things. It brings you justification, it brings you sanctification and it brings you glorification. Now I know those are big, kind-of-confusing words to some. Biblical terms or theological terms. But let me make them simple for you.

To be justified means that God declares you righteous. It means to be righteous by acquittal, that God declares you to be sinless. It doesn't mean you are, but it means how God sees you. That's how God views you. It's the act of God whereby He declares—not makes—but declares the believing sinner to be righteous. And that righteousness is as righteous as Christ's. And the fact that God did that is all based on the finished work of Jesus Christ on the Cross.

Now once you have been justified, the second thing that God does for you is He begins to

sanctify you. Now the words “holy” and “sanctify” and “saint” all come from the same root word, “hagios.” It means to be “set apart” and to be made “holy.” It can have a positional sense in being declared holy—that’s justification—but practical sanctification is something that changes and grows and develops. From the moment you are saved until you go to be with the Lord, you should be growing more and more and more into the likeness of Jesus Christ. So the process of sanctification is likeness to Jesus; God is trying to make you more like Jesus.

And then the third thing: it brings us glorification. Now obviously we’re not glorified yet. Did you look in the mirror this morning? I did. I’m anything but glorified. Got a long way to go. But thank God, what begins with grace ends in glory. Whom God justifies, He sanctifies, and whom He sanctifies, He glorifies; amen? So we’re on our way to glory. We’re on our way to heaven. We’re on our way to being changed completely, and when that happens, we’ll be free from sin altogether. I don’t know about you, but I look for that day. We’ll be free from sickness altogether. We’ll be free from sorrow altogether. God will wipe away every tear from our eyes. It’s heaven! We are going to heaven. So we’ve been justified, we’re being sanctified and one day we’re gonna go to heaven and we’ll be glorified. So no wonder Peter calls it a “like precious faith.”

But let me give you the second characteristic of genuine, real faith. It’s a faith in a person. One of the favorite things for Peter to do in letters is not just use the word “Jesus,” not just use the word “Christ,” not just use the word “Lord,” but to lay it out and call Him “our God; our Savior; our Lord, Jesus Christ.” He puts all of this in his epistles, and I want you to notice it there in verses 1 and 2. At the end of verse 1, he says we have a “like precious faith with us...”—referring to the Apostles and the Jews and Gentiles sharing a “like faith”—“...through the righteousness of God...”—or “through the righteous act of God...”—now in the Greek it would read “our God”—“...and Savior Jesus Christ.” Now I preach from the King James Translation, but where needed or necessary, I make note of this that unfortunately, the translators put the word “our” in front of the word “Savior.” So you could conclude that there are two individuals there; there’s “our God” and “our Savior.” But this is how it should read: “our God and Savior Jesus Christ.” Why is Jesus the object of our faith? Peter tells us why: because He’s our God, because He’s our Savior, because He’s the “mâsh •ach,” the Messiah, the anointed of God. “Our God and Savior Jesus Christ.”

You know what the object of faith needs to be for you to go to heaven? Jesus Christ. Now I gotta be careful; I got stuck first service talking too much about this, and I went way too long. You go, “Yah, I know. I couldn’t get in the parking lot.” Sorry. “My faith”—this is not a Scripture. I’m quoting a hymn—“My faith is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus’ name. On Christ the solid rock I stand. All other ground is sinking sand.” Amen? Jesus is my only hope. He’s my only Savior.

So if your hope of heaven is in your goodness, it won’t get you there. If your hope of heaven is in religious rites or rituals, it won’t get you there. If it’s in being a chosen race, it won’t get you there. If it’s because you belong to a certain denomination or affiliation, if it’s because I’ve been baptized or I have a Christian haircut or I’ve changed the way I live—I don’t smoke, I don’t

chew, I don't hang out with those who do, and I don't go to movies, and I don't go to picture shows and I don't play cards—Some ask, “Can Christians dance?” “Some can, some can't.” “Oh, if you don't dance and you don't smoke and drink and you don't party, you get to go to heaven. If you're a really good person and you don't lie and you don't steal.” If possible—it's not possible—but if you could reform and do all those things, it won't get your soul to heaven. I'm going to get there in a moment.

Genuine faith experiences the power of God and becomes the inheritor of a divine nature. You have to have the life of God in your soul to be genuinely saved. It's not religion; it's a relationship. That's why he uses the word “know,” and in the Greek, it's the word “epignósis,” the word “gnósis,” “know.” But he uses that word “epignósis,” experiential knowledge. A powerful—it's like you know Jesus. Not know about Him. It's not just a theory. It's an experience. You know Him, and knowing Him, you know God.

Now if you're taking notes, I want you to write this down. Notice that this is a black-and-white statement that Jesus is God. “The righteousness...”—verse 1—“...of our God.” Stop right there. That's Jesus Christ. People say, “Oh, the Bible doesn't say that Jesus is God. It says He's the Son of God.” Well, that's true, but unbeknownst to most people, that term “the Son of God” is an affirmation of His deity. It doesn't say He is “a son of God.” He is “the Son of God.” I am not the Son of God, but I am a child of God. You are a child of God. But Jesus is the Son of God in a unique sense. So that when someone used that term, the Jews picked up stones to stone Him. And they said, “Because You, being a man, make Yourself equal with God.” They understood that He was claiming equality with God. But there are those who say that the Bible doesn't really say Jesus is God.

Well, number one, it says it right here. Write these down if you want references to the deity of Christ. There is Titus 2:10, looking for the blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ. Then Titus 3:4. Then the classic, John 1:1. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God,” or “God was the Word.” And then in John 1:14, “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” You can't get any clearer or more powerful. John 1:1 tells us that the Word, referring to Christ, is God. And then the Bible tells us in John 20:28 that Thomas, after seeing Jesus Christ resurrected, said these words, “My Lord and my...”—what?—“...God.”

I had a Jehovah Witness on my doorstep once. I've had a lot of Jehovah Witnesses on my doorstep many, many times. And I shared that verse with them. Well, Thomas called Him “God.” You know what they told me? “He was so freaked out by seeing Jesus that he said, ‘Oh, my God.’” Really? Well, for starters, He said, “My Lord and my God.” And Jesus said, “Blessed are thou, Thomas.” If he were using the name of the Lord in vain, I think Jesus would have rebuked Thomas. Or He would have corrected Thomas; “Oh, no, I'm not God.” Thomas said, “My Lord and my God,” and Jesus said, “Blessed are you Thomas, because you've seen and believed, but blessed are those who have not seen, yet believe anyway.”

You know, you haven't ever seen Jesus. I've never seen Jesus. But we see Him with the eyes of faith. We see Him on the pages of the Word of God. And we believe. I believe that Jesus Christ is God and that He's the Savior of the world. If you're wrong about Jesus, you're going to be wrong about God.

In Hebrews 1:8, He's called "God." "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever...a scepter of Thy kingdom." Colossians 2:9, the fullness of the Godhead dwells in bodily form in Jesus Christ. Those are just a few of many verses that clearly say Christ is God.

Notice He's also called "the Savior" or "our Savior," verse 1. And then He's also called the "Christ." And then in verse 2, he says He's the "Lord." Now you have "of God," which is God the Father and "of Jesus our Lord." So Jesus is God, He is Savior, He is Messiah and He is Lord. Well, you say, "John, why are you belaboring this point?" I'm belaboring this point because He, and only He, is the object of our faith. Trust Him. Put your faith in Him. You can bank your eternal destiny on Jesus Christ; that in the flesh God came, He died on the Cross for your sins, He was buried, He rose again, He ascended into heaven and He lives exalted in heaven right now to save you from your sins. There's no other ascended guru, there's no other ascended master, there's no other religious leader who can save you from sin. Only Jesus Christ. The Bible says, "There is no other name given among men by which we must be saved." Jesus said, "I am the way, I am the truth and I am the life, and no one comes to the Father except through Me."

Now I know that that's not politically correct. But my job is to be Biblically correct. Amen? Not politically correct. My job is to tell you what God has said in His Word—what it says and what it means. And God has declared that the only way to heaven is through His Son Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. God has given to us salvation in no other name.

Let me give you the third evidence of real or genuine faith. It's a faith that involves God's power. Peter mentions the power in our salvation. Notice it in verse 3. This third verse is packed. He said, "According as His divine power." Not just dunamis but "divine dunamis," "divine dynamic," "dynamite power." He "has given unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness..."—and they come to us—here it is, key word—"...through the knowledge of Him that has called us to glory and virtue."

So just as faith in Jesus Christ saves us from the penalty of sin, it is also faith in Jesus Christ that saves us from the power of sin. Notice in this verse, verse 3, that He's "given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness." How? By the power of the Holy Spirit. By the power of His Word as we grow in knowledge. We have everything we need to live the Christian life. The word "power" there is the Greek word "dunamis." We get our word "dynamite" or "dynamic" from that.

You know that if you're a Christian God's given you dynamite? Dynamic. Power. Why is it that so many Christians are defeated? Why is it that so many people who claim to be Christians can't seem to "love their wife as Christ loved the church," or "to submit to their husband," and to

walk in holiness or resist sin? Now, there's no way you're ever going to be perfect; don't get the idea that I'm preaching sinless perfection, because I'm not. You go, "Whew, praise God!" But the longer you're a Christian, you should be sinning less and less and less and less and less. If you've been a Christian 10 years, and you're more sinful than when you got saved...[looking skeptical]. You'd better make sure you're saved. Is your faith real? Is it genuine? Is it authentic? Is it the real thing?

Notice that he says He's given us "power for all things in life and godliness." Two categories: life and godliness. Life is spiritual life in the soul of man. What is a Christian? A person with the life of God in his soul. And godliness is "God-likeness." When you say about a person, "They're godly," you know what you're saying? You're saying that they're like God. "He's a very godly individual." That means they're god-like. Godliness is god-likeness. You cannot be godly until you have the life of God in your soul. That's one of the problems; people are trying to live a godly life, they're trying to be a good person, they're trying to earn their way to heaven. But you first have to have life, and then that leads to godliness. So a Christian's a person who has the life of God in their soul.

Now I want to say a couple of things. This is a soapbox that I could go off on. I just want to give you some seed thoughts to hang on to some important points. Don't ever let anyone tell you, if you're a Christian, that you're missing something. I believe with all my heart that the Christian life is not lived by addition but by appropriation. Now the reason I told you to take notes is because I think you should write that down. You meditate on that. You use an old English word "muse" on that; you think about that. The Christian life is not lived by addition. It's lived by appropriation.

And this is what Peter is saying, "all things." All that you need for "life and godliness" became yours the moment you were saved. You say, "Well, why do I struggle?" Here's a couple of reasons why. Number one, you don't know what you have in Christ; you're ignorant of the blessings that are yours in Christ, and, number two, if you do know them, you don't appropriate them by faith. So you need to, number one, have knowledge of God and who you are in Christ, and then you need to appropriate that by faith.

Now all human analogies break down somewhere, but I'll make the analogy of when a baby is born. Does not a baby have everything within its DNA to grow? To get teeth? To get hair? To begin to walk? To begin to talk? You know, when a baby's born it doesn't have teeth. Did you notice that? Don't freak out; they'll come. Can you imagine when a new baby comes, and the parents go, "Wow! It's got no teeth! We gotta go get some teeth!" The teeth will come. Our first three were girls, and all of our girls were bald-headed until they were three. We had bald-headed little girls. We used to have to tape bows on their heads so people knew they were girls. "For heaven's sake! We've got a dress on her." We used to actually Scotch tape bows on their bald heads. They didn't start getting hair until they were three. I didn't freak out; "Gotta get a wig! Gotta get a wig!" Now they have beautiful hair. In the DNA, everything's there they need to grow and to mature and to develop. When they were first born, they didn't talk intelligently, but they grew and they began to talk and develop and they began to walk. When

they were first born, they didn't walk, but they began to walk.

So when you—now let me make the analogy—were born into God's family, everything is there. All you need is nourishment. All you need is to grow in the knowledge of the Word and feed on the Word. And the Spirit of God, using the Word of God, transforms your life. And so you begin to appropriate. You don't begin to add. And I say that because a lot of false teaching is floating around. "You need this. You need that. You need this. You need that." Christians go around looking for their "cure-all": a new book, a new seminar, a new speaker, a new doctrine. And they want some new fix rather than just believing God, taking Him at His Word, growing in the grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior.

And what Peter says right here in this verse is—you ought to underline it and highlight it—"All that we need for life and godliness." God's given you His Word, He's given you His Holy Spirit, He's given you everything you need for "life and godliness." So you need to know what it is, and then you need to step out in faith and then begin to appropriate it. This is why I believe the knowledge of the Word of God is so important. You can't just grow on emotions. You can't just grow on excitement. You grow through feeding on God's Word. And a real faith will feed on God's Word, and there'll be a power, there'll be a dynamite of life transformation.

Let me give you number four. It's in verse 4. How do we know if we have a real faith? Real faith is a faith that is based on God's promises. These are all aspects of real salvation or genuine faith. It's faith that's based on the promises of God. Look at verse 4 with me for just a moment. Peter says, "Whereby are given unto us..."—"us," meaning "Christians"; us, "children of God"; us, "believers in Jesus"—"...exceeding great and precious promises, that by these..."—"great and precious promises"—"...you might be partakers of the divine nature, and doing that, you escape the corruption that is in the world through lust." True, saving faith is a faith that rests on, acts on the promises found in God's Word, the Bible.

Did you know that it's estimated that there are at least 30,000 promises in the Bible for the child of God? We haven't even begun to scratch the surface. John Bunyan, the author of *Pilgrim's Progress*, said "The pathway of life is strewn so thickly with the promises of God that it is impossible to take one step without treading upon one of them." I love that. As you walk down the pathway of life, it is strewn with the promises of God. Let me give you three promises out of the 30,000.

First promise, God promised to forgive your sins and iniquities and remember them no more. Is that good news or what? That's good news. All of your sins—and we won't ask you what they were—all of my sins—and I won't tell you what they were—have been forgiven. "Your sins and your iniquities I will remember no more." You know what that means when God says He'll remember them no more? God will treat you like it never happened. That's what it means to be justified. You're declared righteous.

Here's the second promise. God says, "I'll never leave you or forsake you"; that He would be with us, that He would protect us and He would provide for us. You go, "That's three promises."



I know. I had to add them as the second one. I had to throw that in there. He'll be with us, He'll protect us and He'll provide for us. We have His presence, we have His protection and we have His provision. And the list could go on and on and on. Jesus promised, "I will be with you to the end of the age." You know you'll never be alone, if you're a Christian? I'll never be alone. He'll never leave me. He'll never forsake me. Wherever I go, whatever is happening—though man forsake me, though family forsake me, though friends forsake me—Jesus will never forsake me. That's an "exceeding great and precious promise."

And here's the third and last one. We'll look at it tonight. Jesus promised to go to prepare a place in heaven for you. He's building you a heavenly "crash pad" or "crib," whatever you call it. I don't know where we got this term for house, a crib. I'm still living in the '70s, so I don't know. "I'm going to prepare you a place, and if I go to prepare you a place, I'll come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, you may be also." That's a promise. It's a good one too.

Now I want you to notice that His promises are called "exceeding great and precious," verse 4. I love that. Precious is one of Peter's favorite words. He used it seven times. He used it in 1 Peter 1:7: Our faith is "more precious than gold." He used it in 1 Peter 1:19: "The blood of Christ is precious." He used it in 1 Peter 2:4: Jesus is the precious and living stone. He used it in 1 Peter 2:6: He is the precious corner stone. He used it in 1 Peter 2:7: to all who "believe He is precious." He used it in 1 Peter 3:4: "a gentle and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God precious." And then, last but not least, our text, 2 Peter 1:4: God's promises are precious. Of great value.

J. Hudson Taylor started a bank account for the Inland China Missions in Barrington, England. On the application where he was asked to designate his assets, he wrote these words, "Ten pounds and the promises of God." He was banking on the promises of God, because God's promises are "exceeding great." Why?

Let me give you some reasons why God's promises are great. They come from a great God. He is just and holy. He cannot lie. Did you know that's something that God cannot do? God doesn't promise you something and then lie about it. He's not a politician. I am so weary. I'm so glad that when God makes a promise, He is able to perform. He is holy, righteous and He keeps His Word.

He's all-knowing. So He can't forget. Wouldn't it be a bummer if when you got to heaven, God forgot who you were? "I'm John Miller. I was a pastor at Revival Christian Fellowship. Certainly you remember me! Menifee? Center of your universe!" Forgive me. "You remember me, Lord!" And He looks at me and goes, "Man, I just don't remember you." You'd go, "Ahhhh! Isn't my name written somewhere down there?" Aren't you glad that God will never, ever forget? I forget about stuff all the time.

God is unchanging. He doesn't change.

And I love this: God is all powerful, so nothing is outside of His purpose. Nothing can hinder

God. Remember when your kids were little? I remember when my kids were little. I'd make them a promise, and something would go wrong and I couldn't keep my promise. I'm not in control. Like, "Kids, we're going to go to Disneyland on Saturday." We all pile in the car, and the engine blew up. I mean the transmission flew out across the street, it burst into flames, get the kids out. The car is burning in the driveway, and—this is an embellished story; it didn't actually happen. Some of you are looking like, "Wow! John's family almost died in a burning car!" No; I'm just trying to get your attention. I mean, the car blows up, and we can't go to Disneyland. What are the kids going to say? "But you promised!" "I know I promised you, but I didn't know the car would blow up and burst into flames." "Well, you promised! Rent a limo. Get a taxi. You promised!" "I know I promised, but I didn't know the car would break. I didn't know that Dad would get sick. I didn't know that this would happen."

You know what? There's nothing that can happen that God doesn't know about. And there's nothing that could happen that God isn't bigger than and He doesn't control. So there's no way that God will ever be thwarted. His promises are good. So it's like money in the bank.

And you know what? God's promises are like a check. Now I don't know if you use checks anymore. That's kind of a lost art. Not many people write paper checks anymore. But think about what a check is. You make it out to someone, you fill in the amount and you sign it. But checks are just a piece of paper—right?—until they're cashed, and then there has to be sufficient funds to back it up. I could write you a check right now for \$1million, personally, from John Miller. Yah, you should laugh, because it's just a piece of paper. There's nothing to back it up. It's no good. It's only worth the paper it's written on.

But when God writes you a check and signs His name in His Word, it's as good as done. When He says, "I'll forgive your sins," when He says, "I'll never leave you," when He says, "I'm going to take you to heaven when you die," that's money in the bank. You can bank on that. It's a good check. So we need to step out by faith and begin to appropriate what is ours, those promises.

And did you know that that's what salvation is? You know how you go to heaven? It's not behaving, it's believing,. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son..."—here's the promise—"...that whoever believes in Him..."—that is, His Son—"...would never perish but have..."—what?—"...everlasting life." That's a promise. And God is good on His promises. If you trust in Him, believe in Him, you'll "never perish but have everlasting life."

One last aspect to real faith is in verse 4. Real faith makes us "partakers of the divine nature." I want you to notice it in verse 4. "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye may be..."—here it is—"...partakers of the divine nature." And as a result of being a partaker of the divine nature, which is what theologians call "regeneration" or we call it being "born again," you "escape..."—verse 4—"...the corruption that is in the world through lust."

Now when do we become partakers of the divine nature? The answer is, the moment you put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ. And if you are here this morning, and you haven't become

a partaker of that “divine nature,” you haven’t experienced His power to change your life and you don’t have the life of God within you, then you need to trust Him.

Now being a “partaker of the divine nature” doesn’t mean we become little gods. But it means that God’s life is in us, that we take on His divine life. That’s what a Christian is; the life of God in the soul of man. Jesus told Nicodemus, a very religious Jew, “You must be born again to enter in or see the kingdom of God.” The same is true of us. And at the moment we are born again, we are saved and, verse 4, we “escape the corruption that is in the world through lust.” Why? Because we get a new nature.

Do you know that nature determines appetite? Do you know what pigs eat? Pig food. Dogs eat dog food. I was sitting down to dinner last night—some of the food that my wife did leave me to eat—and there was a commercial about this exotic, gourmet dog food. And I’m thinking, “Wow. It’s better than what I’m eating right now.” This has vegetables in it, and it’s got meat in it. And it’s 100% pure. Like, “Wow. I need to buy some of that.” But I’m not a dog; I don’t eat dog food. Dogs eat dog food. Pigs eat slop. God’s children feed on the Bread of Life. You know how to know if your faith is real? I’ll tell you one way to know your faith is real: you can’t get enough of God’s Word. You thirst for His Word. You delight in His Word.

Not only does nature determine appetite, but nature also determines behavior. Eagles fly, fish swim, bees buzz—or whatever they do. Nature also determines environment. Squirrels live in trees, gophers live in my backyard. And nature determines association. Lions live in prides, sheep in flocks, fish in schools.

You know, I’ll never forget when I got saved. I actually wanted to go to church. I actually enjoyed being with Christians. Before I got saved, Christians were creepy. They were just creepy. They even looked clean. They just looked nice. “I can’t be like that.” I didn’t like the singing and the preaching and all that stuff, you know. And in my wildest imagination, I never thought that God would not only save me but call me to be a pastor. And that’s because He changed my nature. He gave me a new heart. He made me a new person. “Old things passed away. All things became brand new.”

Nature determines association. You’re not only gonna want to feed on God’s Word. You’re gonna want to associate with God’s people. So Godly living is the result of cultivating that new nature within.

My question to you today is, have you a real faith? Is it the same precious faith that the Apostles had? Is it the same faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ, Who died on the Cross for your sins? Does it involve the power of God? Do you see that you have a new dynamic in your life to live a life of godliness? Is your faith real? Does it rest on God’s promises? Or does it rest on your performance? And fifthly and lastly, does it produce a new nature within? Have you been born of God? Are you a true child of God? You see, before Peter can warn us about the faults, he wants us to make sure that we are grasping tightly to the true, to the real, to the genuine.

God knows you this morning. I don't know your heart, but God knows your heart. And if you're here this morning, and you are not sure, beyond any doubt, that you are His child, that your faith is real, that you are born again, that when you die, you're going to heaven, then I want to give you an opportunity this morning to trust in Jesus Christ. And I don't want anyone to leave here this morning without knowing that your sins are forgiven, that if you die, you would go to heaven and that you are a child of God, that your faith is real.

So I'm going to ask that every head be bowed.