

Main Idea: According to 2 Peter 1:2-11, we have what we need to experience what God intends for us. We have grace. But to experience the life God intends, there are two things we must do with grace, or rather, grace must do with us.

- I. Grace affirmed (2)
  - A. It is ours in abundance.
  - B. It is experienced through the knowledge of God.
- II. Grace applied (3-11)
  - A. By grace, we have something (3-4).
    - 1. Our sanctification is linked to God’s power (3a).
    - 2. Our sanctification is linked to knowing God as a person (3b).
    - 3. Our sanctification is linked to knowing God’s plan (3c).
    - 4. Our sanctification is linked to knowing God’s promises (4a).
    - 5. Our sanctification is linked to knowing God’s purpose for us (4b).
  - B. By grace, we do something (5-9).
    - 1. Change involves effort (5-7).
    - 2. Change involves remembering the consequences of not changing (8-9).
  - C. By grace, we are expecting something (10-11).
    - 1. People who change are those who keep looking back (10).
    - 2. People who change are those who keep looking ahead (11).

Make It Personal: Let’s ask ourselves two questions...

- 1. What do I have?
- 2. What am I doing with what I have?

*Scripture Reading: 2 Peter 1:1-11*

How do people change? This is a question that applies to all of us, since not one of us is perfect and since God expects perfection (Matt 5:48) and since the goal of the Christian life is Christlikeness (Rom 8:29) and since the goal will not be complete in this life (1 John 3:1-2). So the question is vital. *How does someone CHANGE?*

How do we become the people that God intends for us to be? Is the solution simply, try harder and do better? No, that’s moralism, not biblical Christianity.

I have good news. We have what we need to become all that God intends for us to be and do. That’s the point of emphasis in nearly every New Testament epistle.

When you open you Bible to the New Testament, you read four accounts of the life of Jesus, for to become a Christian you must come to know and believe in Jesus Christ. Then you come to the book of Acts where you discover that Jesus today is working in this world through His church. The New Testament ends with the prophetic book of the Revelation in which Jesus says, “I am coming again.”

But in between Acts and Revelation are twenty-one letters (called epistles) that the Holy Spirit guided the apostles and their associates to write to churches and individual Christians to provide instruction on how to live for Jesus in this world. The epistles are filled with lots of practical, “This is what you need to do,” teaching.

But I want us to see something that’s quite profound. Before getting to the “This is what you need to do” section of the letter, the writers give primary ink to another subject. There’s a phrase that we read again and again.

*Grace to you.* It’s one of the most repeated phrases in the New Testament. Just listen as I read the introduction to several New Testament epistles (in the ESV).

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<sup>\*\*</sup>Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

<sup>1</sup> For a previous look at this passage, see the Wed PM study at WBC on 8/24/05.

-Romans 1:7 - To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: **Grace to you** and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

-1 Corinthians 1:3 - **Grace to you** and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

-2 Corinthians 1:2 - **Grace to you** and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

-Galatians 1:3 - **Grace to you** and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ...

-Ephesians 1:2 - **Grace to you** and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

-Philippians 1:2 - **Grace to you** and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

-Colossians 1:2 - To the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae: **Grace to you** and peace from God our Father.

-1 Thessalonians 1:1 - Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: **Grace to you** and peace.

-2 Thessalonians 1:2 - **Grace to you** and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

-Philemon 3 - **Grace to you** and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

We see it even in the book of the Revelation, in 1:4 - John to the seven churches that are in Asia: **Grace to you** and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne.

Grace to you. How do you help people change? What do people need to know if they are going to honor the Lord Jesus in their lives and church relationships and families, and as they deal with persecution, and job challenges, and unjust suffering?

Yes, you will need instruction, and that will follow. But here's where the New Testament writers begin, and so must we.

*Grace to you.* That's where Paul begins again and again. Whether it's dealing with schisms and sexual sin in the Corinthian church, or doctrinal confusion in the churches at Galatia, or a forgiveness issue in the household of Philemon, Paul begins by declaring, "Grace to you."

John does the same thing to encourage the persecuted churches in Asia minor. And so does Peter, and it's his second epistle to which we now turn our attention.

In Peter's second epistle he both begins and ends trumpeting grace. He opens in 1:2, "Grace and peace be yours in abundance." He closes in 3:18, "But grow in grace."

Grace. Believers have it, they've been saved by it, but they need the constant reminder of it. Grace to you. It's yours. Now grow in it.

When Peter wrote this letter, he had to address a thorny subject. "There will be false teachers among you," he writes as he begins chapter two, with a sober warning about people who will try to destroy the church of Jesus Christ by introducing destructive heresies and shameful lifestyles into the assembly. Churches need to know about false teachers, and how to deal with them.

But there's something they need to know first, and so do we as we face our challenges, and that's in chapter one. According to 2 Peter 1:2-11, if we're going to

experience life the way God intends, there are two actions we must embrace on a daily basis. First, we must *affirm grace*. Second, we must *apply grace*. In every situation, in every challenge. This is how we live. Grace affirmed. Grace applied.

### I. Grace affirmed (2)

Verse 2, “Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.” In the ESV, “May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.” Here’s the Young’s Literal translation, “Grace to you, and peace be multiplied in the acknowledgement of God and of Jesus our Lord!”

What is grace? Grace is God’s unmerited favor, to use the classic definition. God’s unmerited help. Grace is God giving us what we don’t deserve. God’s riches at Christ’s expense, to cite another popular definition.

Peter here stresses a couple of things about grace.

**A. It is ours in abundance.** It is multiplied to us (and so is peace). There is no skimping with God. He lavishly places into our possession super-abundant provisions of His unmerited favor and help.

Facing a challenge in your life? You have grace sufficient for it. Encountering a tough situation in your family, or at your job, or in the church context? We have grace sufficient for it. But sufficient does not mean automatic, for...

**B. It is experienced through the knowledge of God.** Notice the end of verse 2, “through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.” There’s how we experience God’s sufficient grace. It’s linked to knowing Him, and specifically, knowing His Son the Lord Jesus Christ.

For Peter, “knowledge” is a key theme in this letter (1:3, 5, 8; 3:18), and for good reason. If we’re going to stand up against heretical teaching, we need to keep going back to the truth. And here’s bedrock truth for Christianity. We experience grace, not by our works, but by getting to know God, and particularly, by getting to know the second person of the Godhead, Jesus Christ the Lord.

There are many reasons to come to church, but here’s what must be at the top. We are after knowledge, specific knowledge. We want to get to know God better, specifically His Son the Lord Jesus. That’s how we experience God’s unmerited favor. We can have tremendous music, and wonderful fellowship, and that can be beneficial, but only if it contributes to our growing knowledge of God.

Everything we do at this church is designed to help you get to know God better. And why is that? It’s so we can experience the fullest expression of what we have. “May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord (ESV).”

Here’s where we begin. If we are going to become the people God wants us to be, if we’re going to deal with challenges as He intends us to do, we begin by affirming grace. We don’t just think it. We say it. We affirm it. *Grace to you.*

Think of how we often greet each other. “Hi, how are you?” “I’m fine.” What would happen to our relationships if we began our interaction the way the NT writers did? Rather than, “Hi, how are you?”, it’s “Greetings brother. Grace to you.”

When I say, Grace to you, I'm affirming that we are needy. I'm also affirming that what we lack personally we have because we know God, and the better we get to know Him the more fully we'll experience what we have.

Grace affirmed. This leads to...grace applied.

## II. Grace applied (3-11)

We could easily spend several weeks working through Peter's "Grace applied" section. Today I just want us to see the framework. There are three steps in the application of grace. First, by grace, we *have* something (3-4). Second, by grace, we *do* something (5-9). Third, by grace, we are *expecting* something (10-11).<sup>2</sup>

**A. By grace, we have something (3-4).** What do we have? "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.<sup>4</sup> 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."<sup>34</sup>

Keep in mind that Peter is writing this to Christians who are facing some challenges. Having affirmed grace, he now applies grace to areas where they needed to grow and change. The biblical word for growing and changing is *sanctification*.

"By one sacrifice," says Hebrews 10:14, "he has made perfect forever [there is grace affirmed] those who are being made holy [there is grace applied]."

Peter wants us to know that, by grace, we have something that is the basis for our sanctification, five divine provisions.

1. *Our sanctification is linked to God's power (3a).* Verse 3 begins, "His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness." To whom is "His" referring? According to verse 2, it's God. To whom is "us" referring? Believers, right? According to verse 1, "To those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours."

Why is it vital to keep these pronouns straight? If a person isn't a believer in Christ he is reading someone else's mail. He does not have access to the power of God, for he is alienated from God, as we too were until by God's grace we received (ESV "obtained") a faith.

Notice that faith is a gift from God for which He deserves all the glory. And where there's no faith in God, there's no power from God. *His* divine power has given *us* something.

Given us what? Notice carefully what God has given us. It is staggering. "Everything we need for life and godliness." What does "everything" include? Strength, yes. Wisdom, yes. Everything.

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<sup>2</sup> To put it another way, the Provision for Change (3-4), the Process of Change (5-9), and the Perspective for Change (10-11)

<sup>3</sup> In the ESV, "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence,<sup>4</sup> by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, 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."

<sup>4</sup> Young's Literal, "As all things to us His divine power (the things pertaining unto life and piety) hath given, through the acknowledgement of him who did call us through glory and worthiness,<sup>4</sup> through which to us the most great and precious promises have been given, that through these ye may become partakers of a divine nature, having escaped from the corruption in the world in desires."

And for what purpose? “For life and godliness.” “All things that pertain to life and godliness,” says the ESV. We’ll find out shortly where we obtain this provision, but ponder this statement for a moment. He has given us everything we need for life and godliness.

*Life.* That’s as comprehensive a term as Peter can use. We have what we need for life. From the cradle to the grave.

And for *godliness*. The Greek word *eusebia* means, “the devout practice and appropriate beliefs of God.”<sup>5</sup> The word “piety” captures it. There’s a way of thinking and living that goes along with a genuine relationship with God.

To put it simply, God has given us everything we need in order to live the kind of life that pleases Him. We have what it takes. We didn’t use to, but now we do.

To folks who have some changes that need to occur in their lives, Peter begins by declaring this reality. As God’s people we *have* what it takes. We have His power, and by which He has given to us everything we need to accomplish everything He desires.

This is a revolutionary truth. When I sit down with a couple that’s having marriage trouble, I know that if they know Christ, they have everything they need to experience the kind of life that will please God. I know things can change. They can work through problems, and forgive each other, and start loving each other God’s way. And for that to happen, here’s what they must do. They must affirm grace and then begin to apply grace.

2. *Our sanctification is linked to knowing God as a person (3b).* The next phrase is key, “through our knowledge of Him.” The Gnostics talked a lot about knowledge, asserting only a few spiritually elite folks were entitled to knowledge. Not so, says Peter. Who can live a godly life? Everyone who knows the Lord.

Then why doesn’t everyone who knows the Lord live a godly life? In short, it has to do with that word “through” in this phrase, “through the knowledge of Him”? In order to be godly, a person must be growing in knowledge. But not just the knowledge of any subject. It’s through the knowledge of *Him*.

Why is that important to remember? Christianity is not just a ticket to a better life. It’s a relationship. God saves a sinner so that the sinner can know Him. God’s intent is highly personal, and those who grow in godliness make it their highest aim in life to know Him well.

Our sanctification is linked to God’s power and to knowing God as a person.

3. *Our sanctification is linked to knowing God’s plan (3c).* What is God’s plan? Peter takes us back, way back to eternity past and tells us about God’s eternal plan.

“Who called us,” he says. Peter elaborated on this calling when he began his first letter, in 1 Peter 1:1-2, “Peter, an apostle... To God’s elect, strangers in the world...who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Swanson, J. 1997. *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains : Greek (New Testament)* (electronic ed.) . Logos Research Systems, Inc.: Oak Harbor

<sup>6</sup> Paul speaks of this calling in Romans 8:28-30, “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who<sup>[a]</sup> have been called according to his purpose. <sup>29</sup> For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. <sup>30</sup> And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.”

So God called us. Why was this call of God necessary? Because as sinners we weren't on speaking terms with Him. In fact, we were dead. Until He called us.

What's the basis of God's call? Peter says, "Who called us *by His own glory and goodness.*" This is the God that we now have the privilege to know. He is full of glory, and He is good. Indeed, His glory and goodness is the basis of the call He extended to us.

There could be no other basis. Sinners are not capable of calling on Him, let alone interested. But He called us, "to the praise of the glory of His grace" (Eph 1:6).

What does understanding God's call have to do with growing in godliness? Everything! The fact that He called us means we are forever indebted to Him, for sure, but it also guarantees that He will provide us with everything we need for His goal for us to be realized.

I love how Paul puts it in Romans 8:31-32, "What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? <sup>32</sup> He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?"

4. *Our sanctification is linked to knowing God's promises (4a).* Peter begins verse 4, "Through these" (ESV "by which"). Through what? Does Peter mean through the understanding of God's power, person, and plan, or does He have in mind specifically God's glory and goodness? Probably the latter. We're about to see another demonstration of God's glory and goodness. On the basis of "these," He gave us something.

His very great and precious promises. What promises does Peter have in mind? He tells us in verse 19, "And we have the word of the prophets made more certain." He's talking about the Scriptures and in verses 20-21 he tells us how we got the Scriptures.

"You must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation [so the Bible isn't just the product of human effort]...but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit [the Bible is God's Word]."

So here's how it happens. Our growth in godliness is connected to the Bible. We must learn God's promises, and put our weight into them.

And if we do? Here's the outcome, the reason God gave us this Book filled with promises. Notice the purpose clause, "So that." So that what? "so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires."

This is critical. Not only is our sanctification is linked to God's power, to knowing God as a person, knowing God's plan, and to knowing God's promises, but...

5. *Our sanctification is linked to knowing God's purpose for us (4b).* What is His purpose? It's twofold. It's for us to participate in something, and escape something.

First, God's intent is that we participate in His nature (KJV "that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature"; ESV "so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature"). Let's get some insight on this from other passages.

-Ephesians 4:24 "Put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness."

-Hebrews 12:10 "God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness."

-1 John 3:2 “Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”

God’s agenda for us is that we resemble Him, that we—as much as it’s possible for a creature to be like the Creator—look like Him.

For that to happen God’s intent is for us to escape something. Corruption. Where is this corruption? “In the world,” says Peter, the *cosmos*, the world system. What causes corruption? “Evil desires,” he says.

Peter has much to say in his letters about this conflict. People who live by their natural desires, by their *feelings*, don’t grow in godliness. Only those who live by God’s Word grow in godliness.

I’ll say it again. People who live by their feelings do not grow in godliness. I believe this is one of the main reasons followers of Christ miss God’s good agenda for their lives. They don’t grow in godliness because they live by their feelings. We don’t read our Bibles because we don’t feel like it. We don’t attend church faithfully because we don’t feel like it. We don’t serve, we don’t forgive, we don’t resolve conflict because we don’t feel like it.

But here’s the good news. It doesn’t have to be that way. And it doesn’t have to be that way because, by grace, we have something. We have everything we need for life and godliness, so we can choose to live by God’s promises rather than our natural desires, and as we do that we begin to share in His likeness.

This brings us to the second application of grace. By grace, we have something.

**B. By grace, we do something (5-9).** Here’s what we’re to do, verses 5-7, “For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge;<sup>6</sup> and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness;<sup>7</sup> and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.”<sup>8</sup>

So by grace we have something and do something. Notice that...

1. *Change involves effort (5-7).* Interesting charge in verse 5, “Make every effort.” The command is somewhat difficult to translate. It involves a participle: “Apply/bring to bear/make an effort.” There is the adjective, “all” or “every.” And there is the noun *spoudan* which means “haste/diligence/eagerness.”

While difficult to translate, it’s not difficult to understand. Change, growth in godliness, involves effort. We must DO something. Peter says the growth process begins with faith.

“Make every effort to add to your **faith**.” We are saved by faith alone (Eph 2:8-9). But saving faith is not alone (Eph 2:10). The Lord wants us to live the same way we first entered His family, *by faith*. Peter says “to add” to our faith. That indicates that faith is NOT to be alone, that true faith is like a foundation. You build on it.

“Make every effort to add to your faith **goodness**.” The Greek term is *arête* – “moral excellence, virtue, any particular moral excellence, as modesty or purity.”<sup>7</sup>

Think of it this way. Goodness is something we have. Christ gave it to us. But it’s also something we should be exhibiting in growing measure. There ought to be more goodness/virtue/moral excellence in our lives today than there was last month, last year.

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<sup>7</sup> Enhanced Strong’s lexicon

What else are we to do? Next, we show the reality of our goodness by adding **knowledge**. In part this means we are not only to add goodness (i.e. do right things), but are to be growing in our knowledge of why we do right things.

And to knowledge, we are to add **self-control**. Greek *egkrateia* – “the virtue of one who masters his desires and passions, especially his sensual appetites”<sup>8</sup> The term applied to first century athletes who in preparing themselves for the games abstained from unwholesome food, wine, and sexual indulgence.<sup>9</sup> It appears as a fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:23. So the Holy Spirit produces it, but we are to “make effort to add” it.

We do it by grace. As well as this. We make every effort to add to self-control, **perseverance**. This too is a fruit of the Spirit. Greek *hypomone* – endurance, patience, fortitude, constancy. Here’s a helpful definition: “the characteristic of a man who is not swerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials and sufferings.”<sup>10</sup>

Is there any significance in placing perseverance at this point in the list of virtues? Think of it this way. The opposite of perseverance would be to bail out, to throw in the towel, which happens when a person is living by his or her feelings. And that again short-circuits the intent of grace, which growth into godliness.

And to perseverance, **godliness**. Greek *eusebia* –the devout practice of appropriate beliefs, piety, reverence, fear of God. Again, we are to be growing in godliness. We ought to have a greater reputation for godliness today than when first saved.

To godliness, **brotherly kindness**. Greek *philadelphia* – love for brother. I once heard a teenage girl say, “I just can’t get along with that person.” What counsel would Peter have given her? He tells us right here. Add to your godliness brotherly affection.

Prior to our salvation we hung out with people we liked. But Christ changed that. Now we have the capacity to show kindness towards all of our brothers and sisters. And we’re to make every effort to turn that capacity into a growing reality. Again, grace affirmed leads to grace applied.

Finally, Peter says, add to your brotherly kindness, **love**. Greek *agape* – This is how God loved us. For God so loved the world that He gave. Sacrificial giving, meeting needs, an other-oriented focus in life, choosing to treat others the way God has treated us.

When we apply grace, we start with faith, add to it, and end with love. Note the progression in this list. We don’t coast. We put every ounce of effort we can into changing and becoming more and more like Christ.

What about a person who has grace but isn’t growing? How do you explain that? Notice Peter’s answer in verses 8-9, “For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins.” In other words...

2. *Change involves remembering the consequences of not changing (8-9).* Notice the “if” in verse 8, “If you possess these qualities in increasing measure.” If a

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<sup>8</sup> Enhanced Strongs

<sup>9</sup> Strong, J. 1996. *The exhaustive concordance of the Bible*

<sup>10</sup> Strong, J. 1996. *The exhaustive concordance of the Bible : Showing every word of the text of the common English version of the canonical books, and every occurrence of each word in regular order.* (electronic ed.). Woodside Bible Fellowship.: Ontario



person doesn't have them at all, that person isn't a Christian. But it's possible to be a Christian and begin to coast. What's true if that occurs? Peter says that people who are not growing are nearsighted.

The Greek term is *muopozo* from which we get *myopic*. I have some myopia in my physical eyes. Things at a distance are fuzzy to me.

That's the case with a believer who isn't growing. He is not seeing something. The cross has become distant to him. He has "forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins."

Thankfully, there's a ready-made fix to this problem, and it doesn't take months, or even weeks to experience it. Just start remembering the cross again.

That's why every month we come to the Lord's table, to remember that we've been cleansed from past sins. That's why every week we sing songs about the cross, to remind ourselves that we've been cleansed. That's why I urge you again to sing about the cross in your personal devotions every day. It's God's remedy for our insane tendency to become myopic, for when we stop seeing the cross clearly, we stop growing.

There's one more step in the application of grace. First, by grace we have something and we affirm it. Second, by grace we do something, we put all our energy into growing into Christlikeness. And here's the incentive for it all.

**C. By grace, we are expecting something (10-11).** "Therefore, my brothers, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble,<sup>11</sup> and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

People who are growing live with a twofold perspective. They keep *looking back* and *looking ahead*.

1. *People who change are those who keep looking back (10).* Peter says we need to remember God's calling and election. Election isn't controversial for Peter. It's a very practical incentive for holiness.

We don't know why God chose us and then called us, for there's nothing that would make rebels like us attractive to Him. But we know He has, on the basis of His grace. And knowing that He has moves us into action. We want His purposes for us to be "sure" (the Greek word *bebaios* means "firm, secure" and carries the idea "trustworthy, verified").

As your pastor, that's what I want for you, and for me, not just to start well but to finish well. I want God's calling and election to made sure in us, to be verified. So let's keep looking back, brothers and sisters, and we will never fall. But not just back.

2. *People who change are those who keep looking ahead (11).* "For if you do these things, you will never stumble,<sup>11</sup> and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

That's what we're living for. That's why grace affirmed must lead to grace applied in our lives. We're going to see the Giver of grace one day, and He's going to welcome us into His kingdom.

Make It Personal: It boils down to this. Let's ask ourselves two questions...

1. *What do I have?* Grace affirmed.
2. *What am I doing with what I have?* Grace applied.