

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 2 August 2020. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

The Power for Christian Living

2 Peter 1:2-4

In the late 1970's, a very influential author, educator, and psychotherapist named **Jack Canfield** became internationally popular when he began to write and publish a series of self-help / inspirational books called ***Chicken Soup for the Soul***. This series had an incredible number of sequels. There are currently more than 200 sequels in the "Chicken Soup" series. This series appeals to every kind of person imaginable. There is ***Chicken Soup for the College Soul, Chicken Soup for the Kid's Soul, Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul***, etc. There is even a ***Chicken Soup for the Christian Soul***.

Now, surely this is good stuff. How can you go wrong with words like "chicken soup," and "soul"? Canfield even wrote a "Chicken Soup" book just for Christians! It sounds healthy and harmless, does it not? They're just inspirational stories, right? Well, the answer is: "No, it is *not* healthy!" Canfield's pot of "chicken soup" is full of spiritual poison! You see, Canfield very subtly teaches us about a "god" who is not the God of the Bible. He very subtly and cleverly teaches about a pantheistic "god" who is "in" every one of us. He teaches that we need only to develop self-esteem in order to be successful. A former occultist named Johanna Michaelson, who became a born-again Christian years ago, tells of an article that Canfield wrote in *The New Age* magazine in 1978. In this article, Canfield advised public school educators in the U.S.A. that "if they were very wise and very careful, they could worm their way around any parent who might be a little concerned about bringing the children into contact with practice of *mandalas....[or] mantras*." (*Mandalas* and *mantras* are occult techniques that put people in altered states of consciousness—which God forbids!) Canfield was careful to point out that "if any of the parents are concerned about teaching the children how to meet their 'spirit guide,' for goodness' sake, don't call it *that* in the public school classroom! Change the terminology. Call it, 'their special invisible friend'; their 'special counsellor'; their 'wise person.'"¹ (By the way, if you have ever wondered why America has turned into a giant insane asylum, where people burn, loot, and murder with impunity, this is part of the reason why! For the last couple generations, public school kids all over the country have been taught, in the classroom, how to contact "spirit guides." These "spirit guides" are nothing but demons!)

Folks, these psychological techniques are what the Bible calls "doctrines of devils." These devilish doctrines are being pushed not only in classrooms, but in all public arenas, all over the globe. Sad to say, even many Christians are being influenced by these devilish ideas. Many Christians are living powerless Christian lives because they have bought into false philosophies of the world. (And they don't even know it!) The *only* Counsellor and Friend to whom we should listen is the Lord Jesus Christ; and the only way we can know Him is through His Word. The title of this message is ***The Power for Christian Living***.

Read 2 Peter 1:2-3.

I. God's Word is the Source of grace and peace (v. 2)

¹ Johanna Michelson, *Wide is the Gate: The Emerging New Christianity, Vol. 1* (DVD), (Caryl Productions, Menifee, CA), 2011.

In **verse 2**, Peter begins with a greeting that is very familiar in the New Testament epistles: **“Grace and peace be multiplied unto you.”** This is not merely a nice-sounding expression that is designed to make the reader feel good. This is a genuine prayer. **“Grace”** and **“peace”** are blessings that God wishes to impart to His people.

First of all, let’s talk about that word **“grace.”** What is grace? Grace is unearned favour from God. It is God’s giving us blessings that we do not deserve. The first and most important blessing that God gives us by His grace is the gift of salvation. **Romans 5:15** says, **“But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.”**

When a sinner trusts Christ as his Saviour, and is saved from his sin, God pours His grace upon that person. However, it doesn’t stop there. The gift of salvation is only the *beginning* of the grace that God is ready to impart to us. Let’s see what John the Baptist said about this.

Read John 1:14-16.

John says that those who believe on Christ has received **“grace for grace.”** This “grace” is something that unsaved people can’t understand. When the lost world uses the word “grace,” they usually mean “nice manners,” “refinement,” “charm,” or even “kindness.” However, in the Scriptures, grace is an attribute of God. God, in His kindness, gave us the free gift of salvation, which we do not deserve. *That* is grace!

Now, what does John mean when he says that we have received “grace *for* grace”? Well, the Greek word for the preposition **“for”** here in **John 1:16** is *anti*: and *anti* means “in the place of.” The way it is used here, it means “grace *in addition to* grace.” It’s like being given a huge plate of food, and then being given *another* huge helping as soon as you’ve finished; and then being given yet another huge helping when you’ve finished that one! God gives His grace to sinners who repent and believe on the Son, at the moment of their salvation: however, as Christians continue to journey through their Christian lives, God gives them more grace, and more grace, and more grace,. All the grace that we need in order to live our lives for God, God Himself supplies for us. God is holding the “ladle” in His hand; and as needs arise in our lives, He keeps piling on more grace! Every good thing that you have, Christian—every enablement that you have to live in a way that pleases God—is a gift of God’s grace.

But that’s not all. Peter says that God also gives us **“peace.”** True peace is something that only a child of God can know. Real inner peace comes from having a relationship with the living God. A lost person cannot have real peace, because he has no relationship with God. Isaiah wrote, **“But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked” (Isaiah 57:20-21).**

Now, every true believer has **“peace with God”** because his sins are forgiven, and because he is justified before God. In *position*, we are at peace with God. We who are saved are no longer God’s enemy; instead, we are His children. That is our *position*. However, many Christians do not have much of a *sense* of peace in their hearts. Instead, their hearts are troubled. Why? Because they are not submitting to God. How *much* peace you will have in your heart, Christian, depends on how consistently you submit yourself to God.

Read Colossians 3:15-16.

Paul says that in order for the peace of God to continue to “*rule*” in your heart, you must have a “*thankful*” spirit; and, you must “*let the word of Christ dwell in your richly in all wisdom.*” This agrees with what Peter is telling us here in **2 Peter 1:2**. Let’s read that verse again. (Read verse **2 Peter 1:2** again.) Peter’s prayer for his readers was that “*grace and peace*” might be multiplied in their lives. However, Peter was quick to point out that this “*grace and peace*” is multiplied “*through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord.*” In order for “*grace and peace*” to be multiplied in your life, you must continue to grow in the “*knowledge*” of Jesus Christ. But where does this knowledge come from? And what, exactly, does Peter mean by “*knowledge*”? Is he talking about mere *intellectual* knowledge? Is he talking merely about filling your mind with *facts and teaching* about Jesus Christ? No, the “*knowledge*” that Peter is talking about is far more than knowing facts. It is a *personal and intimate* knowledge of Christ. It is a relationship with Him.

Read Philippians 3:7-10.

Continued bestowment of grace and peace in your Christian life comes only through an intense, personal knowledge of (relationship with) Jesus Christ. However, a close, *personal* “*knowledge*” of Christ is not possible without having *intellectual* knowledge of Him. Christian, when you were lost, how did you find out who God is, and what salvation is, and how to enter into a relationship with God through His Son Jesus? And since the day you were saved, how have you known the way to live your Christian life? How are you able to discern God’s will? How do you know what is needed to receive His continued grace and blessing? There is only one way that anyone could have the knowledge of these things: **and that is by the Word of God.** It all comes down to the **Scriptures**. We cannot have faith in God without knowing what His Word says! That is why the Scripture says, “*faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*” (**Romans 10:17**).

If you desire to have God’s continued grace and peace in your life, Christian, you must have a close, personal knowledge of Him. He wants you to know Him in a personal way (just as a wife grows in her love and understanding of her husband as they journey through their married life). In order to have this intense, intimate, *personal* knowledge of Christ, you must immerse yourself in the Word of God! This is the only way that your relationship with Him can grow! You *must* read God’s Word every day, and *submit yourself* to His Word. To know the *living Word*, Jesus Christ, you must know the *written Word* that He has given us.

II. God’s Word is the Source of divine power for living (v. 3)

(Read verse 3 again.) Allow these words to soak into your heart, brethren. According to this verse, God’s “*divine power*” has given us “*all things that pertain unto life and godliness.*” Let’s examine that statement carefully. First of all, let’s talk about the “*divine power.*” Just how powerful is God’s “*divine power*”? Paul answers this question in **Ephesians 1**.

Read Ephesians 1:15-20.

Think of this! God's "***mighty power***," which raised Jesus from the grave, is the same divine power that enables believers to live victorious Christian lives! No created being has the power to raise the dead to life. Yet, God does! That same unspeakable power by which God raised Jesus from the dead is available to every believer. It is available to *you*, Christian.

How *effective* is this power? Well, what does Peter say? Does he say that God's power is sufficient to help you with "*some*" things? No! God's "***divine power***" gives us "***all***" things that pertain to life and godliness! Christian, there is no temptation that is so severe, that God is unable to give you victory. There is no dilemma that is so dark, that God's wisdom cannot give you light and direction through it. There is no area of your life in which God's Word is irrelevant, and where your *own* wisdom, or the *world's* wisdom, must be supplied instead! God's divine power is sufficient to meet *every* need in your life. Whether it be marriage problems; child-rearing problems; battles with depression, anger, bitterness, or fear; workplace or career problems; financial problems; relationship problems with family or friends; health problems; schooling or education problems; difficulties in the fulfilment of your obligations and commitments to God; afflictions and persecution in your witness for Christ; or in any other area of life, material or spiritual, God's power is all-sufficient to meet your every need!

Now, here is the important question: "How is this divine power accessed?" Let's read **verse 3** again, and find out. (**Read verse 3.**) According to this verse, it is "through the **knowledge of him**" that God's divine power is accessed. Once again, I would ask the question: Where is this personal 'knowledge' of God and Christ to be found? **It is found in the Scriptures.**

Once again, we are brought back to the importance of knowing God's Word. God's Word is the source of all the wisdom and knowledge that you need to live your life successfully and victoriously. As we saw back in **verse 2**, this knowledge is not only personal (a *relationship* with Christ), but intellectual (the actual knowledge of *what God's Word says*). You must have *both*. It is necessary for every Christian to know Christ in a real, intimate way, *and* to know His *words*. We would know nothing about Christ, or His plan of salvation, or His precious promises, or how we are to live our lives, or how we are to access His power to live, without reading the words of the Bible! The Bible is all-sufficient. Its words are not the fallible opinions of men, but the words of the living God. As we search out the words of Scripture, and trust in God's promises, we are able to *claim* those promises, and to *live* in the way that pleases God, through the power of the Living Word, Jesus Christ.

Christian, be sure that you are living your life according to God's Word! Don't trust in your own heart, or in your own wisdom. **Jeremiah 17:9** says that "***the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.***" **Proverbs 14:12** says, "***There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.***" Seek the *Lord's* will, by reading His Word and praying for guidance. Don't listen to the opinions of lost men who do not know God or His power. Their counsel is like quicksand. **Colossians 2:8** warns us, "***Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit.***"

I'd like to examine some specific philosophies that are impacting people's thinking today. Particularly, I'd like to focus on psychology and psychiatry. Folks, secular psychology does *not* have any answers to your problems. Nor does "Christian psychology" have the answer. Psychology cannot be blended with the Bible. It is absolutely contrary to the Bible. Psychology denies that man is a sinner. Psychology denies that the emptiness in man's heart

can be filled only by surrendering to the Lord Jesus Christ, and receiving the forgiveness of sins. The principles of psychology were dreamed up by satanically-inspired men. Psychologists are nothing but witchdoctors in suits and ties. Their methods are no different from the occultic, mind-altering techniques of pagan shamans. (Many psychologists actually use the word “shaman” to describe themselves!) Jung, Freud, and Rogers made no secret of the fact that they despised God and His Word, and that they longed for the destruction of Christianity. Jung was as insane as they come. He admittedly talked on a regular basis with spirits (which were *not* from God). Yet, these men’s ideas have become foundational pillars of modern thought. You may say, “Well, pastor, I’ve never taken a psychology class.” Well, unfortunately, you don’t *have* to take a class in order to be influenced by psychology! The ideas of humanistic psychology have trickled down into every area of society. It’s on the telly, in the books and magazines, and in the schools. These poisonous ideas are so pervasive in our society, that they are almost impossible to escape—unless you are wearing the armour of God, and are armed with the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

Make no mistake about it: psychology claims to meet *spiritual* needs in your life. The very word “psychology” comes from the Greek word *psuche*, which means “soul.” Can people who deny God have answers to the issues of your heart and soul? No, they cannot! Nonetheless, they *claim* that they can. Psychologists claim that in order to succeed, you must learn to “love yourself,” and have “self esteem”; but the Bible says that you must repent, and *abase and humble yourself* before God. Christians who love themselves will fail in their Christian lives, and will not have God’s divine power. **John 3:30** says, “*He must increase, but I must decrease.*” Receiving “more grace” depends on humble submission to God.

Read James 4:6-10.

Psychologists say that you need to “visualise” the things that you desire, and to create a vivid mental image of it. Folks, this is extremely dangerous. The Bible commands us to *pray* for the things we need, *not* to visualise the things we desire. This is nothing but mental idolatry. Furthermore, the Bible has nothing good to say about “imagination” (or what we would call “fantasy”). **Genesis 6:5** says that “*every imagination of the thoughts*” of man’s heart is “*only evil continually.*” That is why Paul instructed Christians to *cast down* imaginations. **Second Corinthians 10:4-5** says, “*(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.*”

How else do psychology and God’s Word contradict each other? Well, psychology instructs you to seek to know “your inner self,” or your “higher self.” However, the Bible says that our “inner self” is sinful, and that it is to be abhorred, and not trusted.

Read Romans 7:18-25.

Should we examine our “inner self”? Yes, we should! However, the *reason* that we should examine our “inner self” is that we might *shine the light of God’s Word* upon our hearts, and see what sins are hidden there, so that we can confess and forsake them. We shouldn’t look into our hearts so that we can *follow* our hearts; rather, we should pray what David prayed:

“Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Psalm 139:23-24).

Psychology says that the only way to have “healing” and “closure” is to dig up past wrongs that people have done you, and to realise that you are a “victim.” However, the Bible says, ***“Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins” (Proverbs 10:12).*** The Bible commands you to *forgive* others who have wronged you, ***“even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.”*** The Bible says to ***“let not the sun go down upon your wrath.”*** The Bible commands Christians not to dig up past wrongs, and caress them, and try to “cope” with them, but rather to *bury* them, and leave them! The resurrection power of Jesus Christ enables us to put the past behind us, and to walk in the freedom of forgiveness and cleansing!

Read Philippians 3:10-14.

How else does psychology contradict God’s Word? Well, psychology tells you to “think positively.” However, the Bible commands us to think on the *Lord and His Word*; and thinking on the Lord and His Word often involves thinking thoughts that the world calls “negative.” How so? Because thinking on the Lord and His Word involves thinking about your *sin*, and of your need to turn from your sin, so that you can walk with the Lord. (When you realise how holy God is, you see how sinful you are!) Acknowledging and confessing sin is never an easy thing; but when this step is taken, you are able to think on *these things*!

Read Philippians 4:8.

Brethren, the thoughts that Paul commands us to think upon here in **Philippians 4:8** are not “positive” thoughts! Rather, they are *godly* thoughts. God commands us to ***“think on these things.”*** God’s definition of “meditation” is *“filling your mind with His Word.”* In contrast, psychology’s definition of meditation is *“emptying your mind.”* According to worldly counsellors, emptying your mind is supposed to “relax” you, and eliminate stress, and promote health. However, God *forbids* us to empty our minds. To empty your mind is to open a door to the enemy, so that he can influence your mind. The Bible commands us to be “filled with” (controlled by) the Holy Spirit. The Bible also commands us to meditate on God’s Word. **Joshua 1:8** says, ***“This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.”***

Modern apostate Christian leaders now advise us to do “mantra prayers” and “centering prayers.” They encourage you to focus on one word, and to repeat it over and over in a whisper, so as to focus on that spiritual idea. They say that it will lead you into a “deeper,” or “mystical,” experience with God. However, the Bible condemns this as a pagan practice. The Bible commands us to pray specifically and intelligently to the Father, in the name of His Son Jesus, and *not* to pray using ***“vain repetitions (mantras), as the heathen do” (Matthew 6:7).***

If you want demons to have a wide-open door into your home, and to influence your thinking, then listen to the advice of, and admire the lifestyles of, people who don’t know God. **Psalm 1:1-2** says, ***“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.”*** If you want trouble in your life, then watch Oprah and Dr. Phil, and other ungodly talk show hosts. If you want trouble in your

life and your home, then watch Hollywood's movies, and watch lots of telly. Ungodly ideas will soak into your mind effortlessly! If you want to wander off into a spiritual wilderness, and to live a powerless Christian life, then listen to the spiritual counsel of the people on the God Channel, or on the "best seller" list of Christian authors—lying apostates like Joyce Meyer, Benny Hinn, Kenneth Copeland, John Hagee, Andrew Wommack, Nathan Moriss, Beth Moore, Philip Yancey, Max Lucado, John Piper, Joel Osteen, and Rick Warren.

If you want demons to influence your thinking, then practice Yoga, and controlled breathing. If you want to play with strange spiritual fire, then incorporate "chakras" into your vocabulary and thinking. If you start trying to develop the so-called "energies" in your spine, you will be telling evil spirits, "Come on into my home! Influence my thoughts!" Should anyone start to tell you about "chakras," run! It is demonic and evil! It will *not* balance or align your life: it will cause tremendous harm. Should someone start to use words such as "holism," or "holistic," you'd better put up your spiritual antennae! Most likely, this person is about to give you a New Age, pagan teaching about balancing your "mind, body, and spirit." Any Christian writer who tries to incorporate the world's idea of "holism" into Christian thought is playing with fire. Yes, God does expect us to take care of our bodies, since they are His property; but never does God blend *physical* techniques with *spiritual* "techniques." Any system that attempts to blend physical *and* spiritual health through some kind of "technique" is occultic. In fact, God has not given us any "techniques" to "develop" our spirits. Instead, God commands us to *submit* our spirits to Him in faith, and to obey His Word. As for the physical part of our being, Paul said, "***For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of life that now is, and of that which is to come***" (1 Timothy 4:8). You can take care of your body and your physical health in legitimate ways (and you should); however, taking care of your body *cannot*, in any way, make your spirit right with God! *Godliness* is "***profitable for all things***"—both in this life, and in the next.

Now, does God have a plan for our "whole" being? Yes, He does. However, you'd better make sure that you are not confusing the *world's* plan with *God's* plan. Here is God's plan.

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-23.

God's plan for our "***whole spirit, soul, and body***" is to **save our souls** by His grace; **to cleanse our spirits** from sin, through His Word; and, one day, to give us **new, resurrected, glorified bodies**, which have no sin nature in them! If you have soaked in an idea of "holism" that doesn't match this biblical teaching, then you'd better confess and forsake it. It is poison!

I could go on for hours pointing out all the dangerous philosophies that Christians should avoid. However, I don't need to give you a mile-long list. The means to recognise and combat error is in your hand, Christian. It is the Word of God. Read it fervently every day! As Peter says here in **verse 3**, the Lord has "***called us to glory and virtue***"; however, the only way that we can have the power to *live* lives of "***glory and virtue***" is to submit to God's Word.

Conclusion: The "chicken soup" that the world offers us does not produce spiritual health. It cannot even *supplement* the nourishment that God's Word provides. Any system that claims to be able to help you live a fulfilled life, yet denies God's Word, and the necessity of the shed blood of Christ to wash away sins, and the necessity of Christ's resurrection power to live our lives, is spiritual poison. If you know Christ as your Saviour, you cannot lose your salvation; but you *will* be powerless to live your life

for God if you do not submit to His Word every day. Are you submitting to Christ and His Word? Or are you listening to your own heart, your own thoughts, and the philosophies of the world?

Perhaps you have never truly placed your trust in Jesus Christ to save you from your sin. If so, I urge you to admit your sinfulness; believe that Jesus paid the full price for your salvation through His death and resurrection; and turn to Christ for forgiveness. Christ's divine power for living will not be available to you until you enter into a relationship with Him by faith. Won't you repent and believe on Him today?