

# HOW TO LIVE AND LIKE IT

by David H. Roper

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The more I read the Scriptures the more convinced I become that they keep saying the same things over and over. The writers may vary, each book may take a different approach, there may be different emphasis, but basically all Scripture is designed to confront the same basic problem of life today: *how do you live* it? How can we live a full, adequate, purposeful, meaningful life in the world today? This is Peter's concern in this passage that we have before us. Let's take a minute or two to look at the introduction before we move into the main body of this letter.

**Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours in the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ: May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.**

I am sure you recognize this as the common greeting found in many of the New Testament books. This was the common literary practice of the writers of the day. But though it is a common salutation there are some very uncommon statements that give us a line to pursue as we move through the book. In these opening verses the writer gives us two keys to 2 Peter. The first of these is found in the first verse in his statement, ". . . *in the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.*" This is, perhaps, the most straightforward statement of the Deity of Christ to be found anywhere in the New Testament. It is not obvious from the English translation that we have, but Peter uses a Greek grammatical device to bracket together two ideas: the Godhood of Jesus Christ, and the Saviorhood of Jesus Christ. It could have been translated ". . . in the righteousness of our God, Jesus Christ, and our Savior, Jesus Christ." Jesus Christ is God. There is no question about it. The Scriptures affirm this repeatedly. Paul says that all the infinite glory, all the fullness of God dwelt in bodily fashion in Jesus Christ. This man, Jesus Christ, who walked among men and who lived the life of man, though essentially a man, was God. He says that the Creator, the One for whom everything was created, the One through whom everything was created, the One who held in his mind the idea of creation, became the creature, became the man Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the architect, the builder, and the landlord of creation, and yet he became a part of his own creation. In the words of the Old Testament, and in the opening words of the Gospels, he was Emmanuel, God with us. John says

**In he beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father. No one has ever seen God; the only Son (God), who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known.**

In another passage of Scripture he is called "*the Lord Jesus, the only Sovereign, King of Kings and The Lord of lords, who alone has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light.*" The demons worshiped him. The spirit world never questioned his authority. The demons said, "We know who you are. You are the Holy One of God," He claimed equality with God, he claimed the right to forgive sins and to release from guilt. He said he had the ability to cure the ills of the world. But more than that, he acted as you would expect God to act if he were here on the earth. Many men have made the claim that they are God, but thoughtful people have rejected their claims simply because they could not produce the character of God in their life. To say you are God is one thing; to act like God is another. Jesus Christ, in his life before men, repeatedly demonstrated that he acted as we would

expect God to act if he were to come in the flesh. The Scriptures are very clear when they present Christ as the Sovereign God of the universe. Napoleon said, "I think I understand something of human nature, and I tell you that all these heroes of antiquity were men and I am a man. But no one was like Him. Jesus Christ was more than man: Jesus Christ is God." That is the first item of importance in this introduction, and something which Peter is going to be talking about in the rest of this book that we need to understand clearly. Jesus Christ was God.

Secondly, he says,

**May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.**

Grace--all of God's resources, all that God is, his omnipotence, his omniscience, his holiness, his love, his honor, his integrity, and the peace that is the result of having all that he is--is the result of *"the knowledge of Jesus Christ"*. The knowledge to which he refers here is not just knowledge about Christ. The word speaks of an intimate, personal friendship, a deep personal relationship. This is basic Christian belief. It is possible to have an intimate relationship with God. This is the answer to all of the problems of life. If we can be linked to the source of power, to the author of life itself, then we have resources to solve the problems of life. If he made life then he ought to be able to solve the problems of life. We are saying that when a person comes to Jesus Christ he is immediately plugged into the source of power by which he can solve the issues of life that he has to face. This is nothing new, I'm sure you have heard this many times before, but it is good to keep reminding ourselves that this is really what the Christian life is all about. Peter says in verse 12 in this same chapter,

**Therefore I intend always to remind you of these things, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have. I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to arouse you by way of reminder, since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me. And I will see to it that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things.**

When the recipients opened up this book I'm sure they said, "Peter, we've heard these things before, so why bother?" But you see, this is such a basic issue in the Christian life--this is where we start--the recognition that we have at our fingertips the power of the universe to use in life. It is right there, available to us. When Jesus Christ comes into a life he can solve the practical problems of life. You have seen the same thing in friends close to you, and you can think back in your own experience to the change that has taken place in your life as a result of coming into contact with the source of power.

Peter picks up this idea of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and he begins at this point to thread it through the argument of the book and concludes in chapter 3 with the statement, *"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."* But we see it particularly in verses 3 and 4 of this first chapter:

**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.**

The key phrase here is, *"through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence."* Peter here is not referring to "a call" in the theological sense, but *is* referring to a time in his own experience when Jesus Christ called him into association with himself. He refers quite frequently in this book to events that took place in the life of Christ as he knew him in the days of his flesh. I think he is referring to the time when Jesus Christ called Peter into association with himself. Peter and Andrew had come down from Galilee to Judea to hear John the Baptist speak. Andrew had been introduced to Jesus by John the Baptist and Andrew, who was always introducing people to Christ, took his brother Peter and in turn, Peter came to know Christ,

The Lord staggered Peter by changing his name immediately. Evidently, not all the conversation is recorded in the first chapter of John. but at least in the course of this conversation, early in this period when they were getting to know each other, the Lord said to Peter. "Simon, I am going to change your name to Peter," referring undoubtedly to the fact that Jesus Christ intended to change Peter's life. Simon signifies all that he was before--unstable, ill at ease. Peter suggests the poise and stability and confidence that Jesus Christ added to his life as a result of their relationship. The subsequent history of Peter's life bears this out. This is a mark of a man who comes into contact with Jesus Christ: his life is changed. If you have all the resources of God available to you to put to work in various circumstances, there is no question about the fact that your life is going to change. You are going to have a sense of peace and quietness and confidence of heart that you never had before. Your life will change. your character will change. As stress and problems drive us back to faith, this immediately opens up the channel by which all of God's resources are available to us. We have love and joy and peace and patience and gentleness and faithfulness and meekness and self control--these things we call the fruit of the Spirit--the character or Christ himself. Now we know that this is true on a human level because whenever two people come in contact with one another, the person who has the dominant personality undoubtedly will change the other person. He will begin to gesture the same way and his attitudes will be the same. Just the interaction of two human personalities changes people. How much more is this true when two personalities come into contact and one of them is a divine personality, with infinite ability to meet each need that we face!

Peter says in this passage that Jesus Christ called him to his *glory* and *excellence*. He was not called just to follow an itinerant teacher. He called him to share in the very character that he himself possessed--his glory and excellence. Now in the Scriptures, when the writers refer to glory, they are referring to the character of God, all that God is. Christ, of course, is called in the Scriptures, "*the Lord of glory*," "the Shekinah glory of the Old Testament, the one who reflects in his own life the character of God --"*the express image of his glory*," "to use the words of Hebrews. Beyond his humanity men saw the glory of God being reflected, realized fully in Christ. When we come to Christ, when he calls us to himself, he grants to us his glory, his character as God. But secondly, he says, we are called to his excellence. This is the same word that is translated in verse 5 by the word "virtue," but basically it means, "manhood." It is repeatedly affirmed in the Scriptures that Jesus Christ was a man, that he was essential humanity, but yet he was more than that. He was fulfilled man, he was man as man was intended to be, a man filled with God. He had the ability to take rebuff and hatred and disappointment and misunderstanding with poise and confidence.

Here is a quote I read recently:

There has never been a more real or genuine man than Jesus of Nazareth. He embraces all the good elements which mark other men, and it is not too much to say that there is no element missing which men think desirable in the human character. Not only so, he possesses all these elements in a higher degree than anyone else, and with perfect balance and proportion. There is no weakness, no exaggeration or strain, no strong or weak points, as is the case with the rest of mankind. Still more, there are certain elements and traits of character which are not found elsewhere, such as absolute humility, entire unselfishness, wholehearted willingness to forgive, and the most beautiful and perfect holiness. Nor must we overlook the wonderful blending of contrasts which are to be seen in Jesus Christ; the combination of keenness and integrity; of caution and courage; of tenderness and severity; of sociability and aloofness. Or we may think of the elements of sorrow without moroseness; of joy without lightness; of spirituality without asceticism; of conscientiousness without morbidness; of freedom without license; of earnestness without fanaticism. He was, in every sense, a man.

I often ask students who are history majors, "Who do you think is the most outstanding figure in history?" Almost without exception they say, "Jesus Christ," even though they may not be believers. I asked a man the other day, "Why do you feel that Jesus Christ is the most significant figure in history?" His comment was, "Because he was the only man who lived up to his own standards as a man." You see, there is no such thing as a self-made man. Jesus Christ as God, but yet as man, fulfilled in his own humanity all the ideals of manhood, all the courage and integrity and honor that a man should possess. That is why O. Halsby, when asked by a group of students why he became a Christian, said, "I became a Christian in order to become a man." Now this is what Peter is saying. When he came in contact with Jesus Christ he immediately recognized that here was a resource that could supply to him the character of God himself and fulfill him and give him meaning and purpose as a man. He was called to his glory and excellence. Jesus Christ was a revolutionary. He set out to change society by changing individuals.

Peter writes in this passage that there are two things that came to him as a result of his knowledge of Jesus Christ. In verse 3 he says, "*His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness.*" I am coming to think that that is one of the greatest passages in all the New Testament. "*His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness.*" That means we don't need anything but Jesus Christ. This is the counterpart of Paul's statement, "*My God shall supply **all your needs** according to his riches in glory through Christ Jesus*"; and the counterpart of David's statement, "*The Lord is my shepherd, **I shall not want***"; power concentrated in one direction in order to live as we were intended to live. Paul writes to the Colossians, "*May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy,...*" All of God's power is available, concentrated, ready to be used in order to make us patient, joyful, to give us endurance, the very qualities we need to face life today. Then he says that this power is granted in two areas: life and godliness. These are the two areas with which we are most concerned: life, that is, what we do, the daily round of living, taking care of children, working, cleaning house, recreation, whatever it may be we are involved in, he is available for that; and godliness, *what we are*. He is talking about God-likeness, which is his aim for every person who comes to Jesus Christ. He has called us in order that he might make us the kind of men and women we were intended to be.

There is a second thing Peter says is a result of this knowledge. His divine power came, "*through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great **promises**, that through these you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of passion, and become partakers of the divine nature.*" First, *power*, and second, his precious and very great *promises*. Now it may be that in this passage he is saying that Jesus Christ himself is the fulfillment of all the promises, that all the great lines of hope and aspiration of the Old Testament, all the desires of men, their greatest ambitions, find their fulfillment in Jesus Christ. Paul says that in Christ all the promises of God are Yea! and Amen! As the song goes, "The hopes and fears of all the years are met in Thee tonight." It may be that that is what he is referring to, but I think he has something else in mind. If you will notice, he makes a change in the personal pronoun. In verse 3 he says

**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, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, that through these you may escape.**

He is saying that Christ called us (apostles) into association with him, twelve men whom he chose to be with him. He displayed before them his perfect humanity and his Deity, and he made available to them his divine power. He gave to them (the apostles) these very great promises in order that they might pass them on to us, those of us who read these promises, those of us who have come to see that the Word of God means what it

says. We have found that it is reliable. On the basis of this Book we have placed our faith in Jesus Christ and we have discovered that it works, it does change our life, that he is available to us, that his divine power is there, all we have to do is to claim it. In verse 1 he writes to those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours in the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ. I do not think here he is referring to the new relationship between Jew and Gentile as a result of the cross, because Peter was writing to the Jews, not to Gentiles, He was the apostle to the

Jews. I think what he is saying is, "you people have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours (apostles) in your relationship with Jesus Christ. We have no greater relationship than you have, though we walked with him in the days of his flesh; we experienced his power and saw him work miracles; we saw him change men's lives and meet the daily problems of life and prove his mastery over them. We saw these things and now we write them down in order that you may possess them as fully as we do."

I believe that this is the same word that John writes when he said, "*These things write I unto you in order that you may have fellowship with us, and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.*" This is why the Scriptures were given, in order that we might come in contact with this great majestic person, Jesus Christ, that we might share his divine nature, as Peter says in verse 4, and therefore escape from the corruption that is in the world because of passion. We move from self-entered activity, self-oriented, self-guided thought, the kind of thing that causes life to disintegrate around us in our own personalities to a new center of life, the divine nature which is Jesus Christ. There we find the power to face the corruption in the world, to be distinctive in the middle of it, to be there where it is as God intended us to be, but to stand with the same integrity and strength and courage as Jesus Christ himself. Now do you see what he is saying? Peter came in contact with a man. It was difficult to evaluate him from a human standpoint, but as they saw him face life, as he faced emotional illness and disease and disorder and death, people who had lost their motivation, people who were empty and could find no meaning in life, men in the grip of sin and habits that controlled them, he was never at a loss. He knew what to do in any situation. He was the master of every circumstance. They discovered that the secret of his mastery over life was that he was the author of life. He had the key for understanding it, solving it. Then they came to realize that his divine power was available to them. By knowing him in a personal way they could share the very life of God himself. Now they say we want to share this with you. We want you to experience the same abundant life that we know, and it is yours if you want it, if you are willing to act upon it. Not only a once-for-all commitment of life, but a continual day-by- day, moment-by-moment drawing upon the power that is there, available to us.

Now I am sure that we all can say this is pretty basic, we've been through this a number of times. But the question that I have to ask myself is, "Do I really understand that there is no reason for me to give way to worry, anxiety, fear, frustration, and defeat when there is a resource like this that I can tap? In a time of decision, am I willing to say, "Lord Jesus, your knowledge is infinite. You know the past and the future, nothing is hid from you. I need your wisdom. Thank you for giving me your wisdom"? In a time of temptation we can say, "Lord Jesus, you are the Holy One and I call upon your moral perfection, your courage, your ruggedness, to meet this test." When we are hurried, harassed, and the kids get on our nerves, we can call upon him. We can say, "Lord, we need your peace and your contentment, your sense of order, your self-control." When we are worried and anxious we can thank him for his adequacy, knowing that all things are in his hands, that he holds everything together, that he is the Creator of all the universe. Everything belongs to him. When we are afraid to speak of Christ we can draw upon his courage and his strength, his availability. This is the key to life, knowing that Jesus Christ, this One we love and have come to know in a personal way.

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II Peter 1:1-4

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