

The *Pursuit* of God

2 Peter 1:1-11

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Golfing, fishing, following your favorite sports team. For some, good ways to relax, to recreate. For others, they are pursuits. Something that consumes them. It's a passion of theirs. Golfers who are slamming the clubs to the ground! Fishermen who are out every weekend. Sports fans decked out in all sorts of apparel, yelling at the top of their lungs!

Or when you think of a pursuit, maybe you think of a chase. A dog chasing a squirrel. An officer chasing a suspect. A runner chasing down the one in the lead. Or maybe it's a relationship. You pursue having a relationship with someone. What do you do? You call them. Bring them flowers. Go out on dates.

The life of a follower of Jesus is like that. An obsession, a hunger, a lifelong pursuit of the One pursuing us.

Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be multiplied to you [Do you need grace and peace? Where do you find it? How do you get it?] ... in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.

Since the day you were born, even before, someone's been after you. Seeking you out. Calling you. Sending you flowers. Pursuing you.

Ever ask yourself, "Why am I here? What's my purpose?" When God created all that we know, the heavens and the earth and all that is in the earth, He wasn't done creating until he created man. Why? That He and man would enjoy *koinonia*, communion, everlasting relationship!

Yet, when sin entered the picture, everything changed. Our sweet fellowship with God turned sour. Trusting the voice of the tempter, the deceiver, instead of our Creator, we turned away from God and turned inward upon ourselves, worshipping *self* above all else. And we've been doing that ever since. As it is written: [Ps 14] "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away ... (Romans 3:10-12)

The question is often asked, "Why would a loving God send anyone to hell?" God doesn't send anyone to hell. We run there, all on our own, away from Him. *The Lord is not ... wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.* (2 Peter 3:9) The question we shouldn't be asking is, "Why would a loving God send anyone to hell?" but rather, "Why are we running away from a loving God?"

But if we've all turned away from God and none of us seeks Him, pursues Him, what hope is there for eternal life? How will we ever make it back to God? Is it even possible? What did Jesus say? "*No one can come to me ... unless the Father who sent me draws him ...*" (John 6:44)

We would never pursue God unless He first pursued us. "*And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.*" (John 12:32) *And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.* (John 17:3-4)

Koinonia, communion, everlasting relationship with Jesus, is what the Christian life is all about! In Jesus, you'll find the grace and peace you're looking for. Yet, following Jesus isn't an easy road. Just ask Peter's original readers. In his first letter, Peter writes to those being persecuted from the *outside* ... suffering for the follower of Jesus is normal. Expect it. Rejoice in it even! In Peter's second letter he warns followers of Jesus about the dangers on the *inside* ... false teaching ... that would lead them away from Jesus. Satan, the roaring lion, is on the outside and on the inside, seeking to devour us.

What are we to do? How are we to survive? What do we need to survive (and thrive) as a follower of Jesus on a daily basis? Peter tells us that God has already given us *everything we need* to live a godly life in this world. There is nothing else we need, no special programs, no secret knowledge, no new teaching.

His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises [in Christ - 2 Cor 1:20], in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

What has God given us to survive as His children? Knowledge of Christ and all of the promises that are found in Him - forgiveness, new birth, eternal life, a new start, with us, grace, peace, hope.

Why did God give us His precious and magnificent promises? So that we can stay the same? So that we can go on living our lives like we always have? No. God gives us His precious and magnificent promises in Christ so that we might be more and more shaped into *His* image. *That by them you might become partakers of the divine nature.* C.S. Lewis puts it this way,

"Imagine yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild that house. At first, perhaps, you can understand what He is doing. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on: you knew that those jobs needed doing and so you are not surprised. But presently he starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts abominably and does not seem to make sense. What on earth is He up to? The explanation is that He is building quite a different house from the one you thought of - throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards. You thought you were going to be made into a decent little cottage: but He is building a palace. He intends to come and live in it Himself.

... If we let Him - for we can prevent Him, if we choose - He will make the feeblest and filthiest of us into a god or goddess, a dazzling, radiant, immortal creature, pulsating all through with such energy and joy and wisdom and love as we cannot now imagine, a bright stainless mirror which reflects back to God perfectly (though, of course, on a smaller scale) His own boundless power and delight and goodness. The process will be long and in parts very painful, but that is what we are in for. Nothing less." (Mere Christianity)

"Partakers of the Divine nature". Not that we will be gods or absorbed into God, as some Eastern religions teach. But through His gifts of grace and faith and getting to know Him more and more through His Word, we will partake in His nature. What's the nature of the world? Unrighteousness. What's the nature of God? Righteousness and glory and excellence.

As we diligently exercise/put into practice the knowledge and faith in Christ God has gifted us with, grace will be multiplied in our hearts and minds, and peace will be multiplied in us, and godly living will be multiplied. As we pursue Jesus, our attitudes and our actions will reflect more and more God's nature, His righteous, His glory, His excellence.

Through Jesus's life, death, and resurrection for us, having escaped the corruption/rottenness that is in the world, we will be less and less slaves of sin, and more and more slaves of righteousness. Sin will no longer be our master, but grace will grow more and more to direct our attitudes and our actions. God has given us His wonderful promises in Christ not only to save us from hell, but also to save us from ourselves, and to mold us into His image, to change us from a corrupted image to a righteous image. (Eugene Boe)

Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge; and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness; and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love.

For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins.

So make it a daily practice to show goodness towards others. Meditate on God's Word. Show restraint in the choices you make. Don't just do whatever feels good at the moment. Rather, learn to say "no" to yourself and "yes" to a higher calling. Hang in there. Don't give up. Make godly decisions. Treat others like a close brother or sister. Remember to love as Jesus loved you (giving, not taking).

If you're *not* growing in these areas - not practicing these things, not exercising your faith, not pursuing Jesus - you're *not* going to know Christ and enjoy fellowship with Him. And you're going to stumble. But as you pursue Jesus and are daily growing in these areas, you won't stumble. Instead, you'll grow in knowing Christ better and your life will be *fruitful*. And as you see how God is alive and working in you, you'll have no doubt about where you'll spend eternity ... with Him! (Boe)

Peter says - don't let persecution from those *outside* the church intimidate you in any way. Rather, rejoice that you are privileged to suffer for Christ's name! And don't be led astray from Jesus by false and deceptive teaching *within* the church.

Again, C.S. Lewis writes, "Your real, new self (which is Christ's and also yours, and yours just because it is His) will not come as long as you are looking for it. It will come when you are looking for Him. ... Look for yourself, and you will find in the long run only hatred, loneliness, despair, rage, ruin, and decay. But look for Christ [*pursue Him*] and you will find Him, and with Him everything else thrown in."

Sports. Hobbies. Travel. Various activities and interests we're involved with. What's worthy really pursuing? How did the Apostle Paul put it? "*I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord ...*" (Phil 3:8-10)

The next time you look up at the stars and ask, "Why am I here? What's my purpose? What's worth living for? What's worth pursuing?" Remember the Creator, pursuing you. Humbling Himself to the point of the cross - to bring you back to Himself! You're here to pursue the One pursuing you. Grace and peace be yours in abundance in Christ!