

“ONLY GOD CAN MEET YOUR DEEPEST NEEDS” 2 Peter 1:1-12

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How many of you have watched at least a part of a Dr. Phil show on television? May I see your hands? If you have not heard of Dr. Phil, you have been in a coma for at least 8 years. Most Americans have probably seen at least a segment of his television show since it debuted in September of 2002.

Dr. Phil isn't my cup of tea. But I've checked him out—mostly on the internet.

His used to be one of the better shows on television—at the opposite end of the spectrum from media muck-mongers like Howard Stern and Jerry Springer. I caught a segment recently, and it made me wonder if Dr. Phil has slipped a bit toward the dark side.

- Dr. Phillip McGraw is a clinical psychologist from Texas who has become a cultural icon.

Even the children's television program “Sesame Street” has a Muppet called “Dr. Feel” who asks guests to share their feelings

Why is Dr. Phil show so popular? Viewers love his no-nonsense advice.

He cuts through pretense and excuses and gets people to admit their failures.

One of his standard lines he uses with stubborn people who refuse to change is, *How's it working for you?*

He offers practical strategies to make life work. Much of what he says makes a lot of sense.

I came across a Dr. Phil quote that I think has a lot of merit: *'Sometimes you make the right decision, sometimes you make the decision right.'* (Dr. Phillip McGraw)

- Can therapists or counselors like Dr. Phil provide all we really need for a full life?

Are you struggling to hold your life together? Does it feel that everything around you is about to collapse?

- Relying on Dr. Phil or secular therapists to make your life work is like building a house on sand.

To make the most of Dr. Phil's counsel, you need a foundation that Dr. Phil doesn't provide.

Jesus said, *“But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”* (Matthew 7:26-27)

All true Christians believe that Jesus Christ really is the only sure foundation for life.

- Our Bible text today is from the Apostle Peter in the New Testament. He wrote to Christians in Asia Minor whose faith was under attack by false teachers.

Peter said, *'These men are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. . . They promise freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity.'* (2 Peter 2:17, 19)

Peter warned the Asian Christians about lies that would rob them of their freedom to be all God made them to be.

- Let's look at how he brings this out in the opening statement of his letter, 2 Peter 1:1-12.

¹ *Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours:*

² *Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.*

³ *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.*

⁴ *Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.*

⁵ *For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge;*

⁶ *and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness;*

⁷ *and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.*

⁸ *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.*

⁹ *But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.*

¹⁰ *Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall,*

¹¹ *and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*

¹² *So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have.*

That is the Word of God, and it is chock-full of awesome assurances and bold promises.

You can become all you're meant to be by following this inspired counsel of the Apostle Peter.

I. ESTABLISH YOUR IDENTITY. 2 Peter 1:1-4

If you have received Jesus Christ as your Savior and believed in him, you are a child of God (John 1:12). By faith in Jesus Christ, you have become a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17).

That's who God says you are. It's your identity. Never doubt it. Never forget it.

The Apostle Peter wanted the believers in Asia Minor to get this straight. They had received a precious faith as a gift from God.

There's no such thing as a "self-made" person who has made the complete and perfect life for himself or herself. We've all proved that "self-made" makes a mess of life. God's Word the Bible is clear that all have sinned and no one is righteous by their own doing.

- Dr. Phil says you need to define your "*authentic self*. . . *The authentic self is the you that can be found at your absolute core. . . It's the composite of all your skills, talents and wisdom.*"

But he doesn't address the basic problem with the "you" that is found at your absolute core.

He doesn't deal with the truth that what we all need most is something only God can provide—and has provided for us in Jesus Christ.

- Dr Phil says, '*When you're not living faithfully to your authentic self, you find yourself feeling incomplete, as if there is a hole in your soul.*'

That's right. But his idea of a hole in your soul is not the same as what Pascal in the 17th century correctly called the "God-shaped void"—*There is a God-shaped void inside every person.*

You can't fill that hole by trying to be authentic. Only God can provide what you need most in your life.

Let's look again at what Peter writes about this.

¹ *Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours:*

² *Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.*

³ *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.*

According to verse 3, every Christian has received the complete package from God with all its potency to be all you're meant to be.

My own abilities alone will never make me all I'm created to be.

We all live in a corrupt world and decadent society.

My friend Pete Hammond said, '*A Bunny Rabbit faith won't cut it in a Roaring Lion world.*' (Pete Hammond)

To be all God made us to be we need immense power that only God himself can give us.

The only way to be all you were created to be while living in this fallen, corrupt society is to have a living connection to the awesome power of Almighty God.

When you repented of your corrupt way of life and placed your trust in Jesus Christ as your Savior, you became a child of God, and God gave you everything you need to live a full and productive life.

No other child of God has received more than what you need for life and godliness.

⁴ *Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.*

If your Christian life is disappointing, it's not God's fault.

If you have put your faith completely in Jesus Christ, God promises that you '*participate in the divine nature.*' (v.4).

- What a bold claim to make—that we participate in the divine nature!

That's exactly what God intended when he created mankind in his image and likeness (Genesis 1:26-27).

But sin came into the world and caused a cataclysmic fall in the human race. We all came under a curse.

That's why God the Son Jesus Christ came into the world. He came to set us free from that curse by suffering the curse for us by his death on the cross, and breaking the curse by his resurrection.

The gospel or good news of Jesus Christ is that all who believe in Jesus Christ as Savior are forgiven and receive new life from God.

The divine nature is born anew in them.

They have the Spirit of Christ in them (Romans 8:9), they become children of God (John 1:12).

All the decadence and corruption of a sinful world is not strong enough to overcome them. Christ's power has given them everything they need.

- In his first letter Peter wrote that God has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1 Peter 1:3), and he said, *'You have been born again . . . through the living and enduring word of God.'* (1 Peter 1:23)

You are a child of God. You share in the divine nature.

- That is your identity as a Christian. If you don't stand firmly on this truth, then none of Dr. Phil's or anyone else's life strategies will help you in the long run.

II. EXERCISE YOUR RESPONSIBILITY. 2 Peter 1:5-8

In his 7th Life Law Dr. Phil says, "Life is managed; it is not cured. . . Learn to take charge of your life and hold on. This is a long ride, and you are the driver every single day."

It's true; you don't have the ability to cure your life.

The Prophet Jeremiah said, *'The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?'* (Jeremiah 17:9)

The Apostle Paul confessed, *'I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.'* (Romans 7:18)

Life cannot be cured. Dr. Phil is right. But we can't manage it well either. If we rely completely on ourselves we mismanage life abysmally.

That's why Jesus taught his disciples to pray to God the Father, *'Thy kingdom come (may your reign come fully to this earth). . . Give us this day our daily bread (we cannot manage our lives for one day without the necessities that only God can provide).'*

- Even when you have been cleansed from sin and renewed within by faith in Jesus Christ, you still have a huge responsibility for your life.

Peter says you must *make every effort* (5). This is your biggest responsibility.

⁵ *For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge;*

⁶ *and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness;*

⁷ *and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.*

Good works won't save anyone, but hard work is essential in the Christian life.

John Calvin, the Reformation leader of the 16th Century said, *'While it is faith alone that justifies, the faith that justifies is never alone.'* (John Calvin)

Your new life is all God's doing. It's by his grace.

But once you have this salvation, there's a lot you must add to your life in Christ.

The Apostle Peter clearly says the Christians life is not one of relaxation.

- Peter explains our responsibility to add to our faith.

It's a stack of eight virtues, starting with faith (which is a gift of God).

These godly virtues don't suddenly appear full-blown in your life. It's your responsibility to add them—and it demands "every effort."

- a. Goodness: This is what we mean by being virtuous. It's a quality attributed to God in verse 3.
- b. Knowledge: This is the knowledge of God's will and purpose.
- c. Self-control: In contrast to self-indulgence.
- d. Perseverance: You don't quit when it gets tough.
- e. Godliness: This is devotion to God in every aspect of life.
- f. Brotherly-kindness: Jesus said his followers should be known by their love for one another (John 13:35).
- g. Agape love: This is the queen of the virtues; self-giving love.

All these are our responsibility. But remember, they all depend on faith at the start—faith in Jesus Christ.

⁸ *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.*

To be all God created you to be, you have a huge responsibility. It takes "every effort" on your part.

You must add these virtues to your faith. If you don't, your Christian life will be ineffective and unproductive—empty and disappointing.

III. ERASE ANY UNCERTAINTY. 2 Peter 1:9-12

Anxiety is born of uncertainty.

During the time between medical tests and the doctor's report life gets squeezed into a knotted ball of nightmarish imaginations.

Uncertainty feeds our fears and grows them into giants!

Dr. Phil says, *'Work on gaining confidence—low self-esteem and pent-up guilt gives you an excuse to sit on the sidelines. It gives you an excuse to be less than you can be.'*

- But can you work hard enough to gain the confidence you need to be all God created you to be? 'Fraid not! Our confidence as Christians does not rest on our own gumption. Our confidence rests fully on what God has done for us.

Confidence is a hallmark of the Christian faith. The Apostle John wrote, *'Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God.'* (1 John 3:21)

Those who have repented of their sins and placed their faith in Jesus Christ alone as their Savior have been cleansed from all their sins.

⁹ *But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.*

What is it that keeps the truth clearly in focus? It's the virtues in verses 5-7.

To a nearsighted person distant objects appear blurred. That person can see clearly only what is close at hand.

Peter uses this metaphor to describe a Christian who *has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins!*

You have a serious problem if you remember your sin but not God's forgiveness.

Too many Christians are spiritually exhausted from hauling along a heavy load of guilt of past sins that are forgiven.

Carrying the load of past sins paralyzes your spirit.

- Neither Dr. Phil nor most therapists deal with this key problem of sin. We must.

To be all God created you to be it is absolutely essential to have no doubt that all your sins have been forgiven.

¹⁰ *Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall,*

Peter says, make sure that you are a true Christian—that you are one of God's called, or elect ones.

The Apostle Paul appealed, *'Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you-- unless, of course, you fail the test?'* (2 Corinthians 13:5)

- Have you ever asked someone, *Are you a Christian?* And the answer was, *'I think so. I hope so.'* "Hope so" won't do. It must be "know so." The word *sure* in v. 10 is *bebaios*, meaning *firm, reliable, dependable.*

Peter says you must make sure.

¹¹ *and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*

Peter's readers would have pictured a victor in the Greek games being welcomed home, swept into the city with great fanfare—like a ticker-tape parade today.

You won't just barely make it into heaven by the skin of your teeth. It will be a grand celebration.

¹² *So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have.*

- This is the kind of certainty you must have as a Christian to be all God created you to be.

Does this mean that a Christian should never seek the help of a professional counselor? That's not what this means.

Some of our Christian brothers and sisters have come to Christ from hellish backgrounds where they have been abused and victimized and the bruises and scars go deep.

They benefit tremendously from godly, competent counselors.

But it won't do any lasting good, unless it's based on the truths we've seen today: Establish your identity as a child of God; Exercise your responsibility by adding godly virtues to your faith, and Erase any uncertainty. Confirm the genuineness of your faith. that you have been reborn as a child of God.

- How long has it been since you reviewed the core Christian truths that are the basis of Christian faith?