

II Peter 1:1-11

Let's Start at the Very Beginning

Sermon

Hobart, October 22nd, 2013

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Scripture Readings:

I John 4:16-19

¹⁶We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in him.

God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them. ¹⁷And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face him with confidence because we are like Christ here in this world.

¹⁸Such love has no fear because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of judgment, and this shows that his love has not been perfected in us. ¹⁹We love each other* as a result of his loving us first.¹

* **1 John 4:19** Or *We love him*; Greek reads *We love*.

¹*Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. 1997, c1996 (electronic ed.) (1 Jn 4:15). Wheaton: Tyndale House.

2 Peter 1:1-11

1 This letter is from Simon* Peter, a slave and apostle of Jesus Christ.

I am writing to you who share the same precious faith we have. This faith was given to you because of the justice and fairness* of Jesus Christ, our God and Savior.

2 May God give you more and more grace and peace as you grow in your knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord.

Growing in Faith

3 By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence. **4** And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires.

5 In view of all this, make every effort to respond to God's promises. Supplement your faith with a generous provision of moral excellence, and moral excellence with knowledge, **6** and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with patient endurance, and patient endurance with godliness, **7** and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love for everyone.

8 The more you grow like this, the more productive and useful you will be in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. **9** But those who fail to develop in this way are shortsighted or blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their old sins.

10 So, dear brothers and sisters,* work hard to prove that you really are among those God has called and chosen. Do these things, and you will never fall away. **11** Then God will give you a grand entrance into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.²

* Greek *Symeon*.

* Or *to you in the righteousness*.

* Greek *brothers*.

²Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. "Text edition"--Spine. (2nd ed.) (2 Pe 1:1-11). Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

INTRODUCTION:

I. YOU PROBABLY REMEMBER THE OLD SONG FROM THE SOUND OF MUSIC;

A. DO-RE-ME.

1. It contains a very simple piece of wisdom;

Let's start at the very beginning

A very good place to start

When you read you begin with A-B-C

When you sing you begin with do-re-mi³

B. LIKE TO START TODAY BY ASKING TWO BASIC QUESTIONS

1. Two that we have looked at before
 - a) One about the nature and purpose of The Bible
 - b) The second, about the nature and heart of God

C. WHAT DO YOU THINK THE BIBLE IS ABOUT?

1. How should we be reading it?
2. For what purpose?
3. What should we be looking for and learning from it?

D. TAKE A MOMENT TO THINK ABOUT YOUR ANSWER:

1. Then later, I'd like as many of us as possible to quickly give us a short title, or perhaps a description of God
2. The aim is to think about the importance of our spiritual foundations
3. Because the place we begin and the direction, profoundly affect the entirety of our Christian faith and how we live it.

E. WE HAVE ALL HAD MANY YEARS TO GET TO KNOW GOD

1. We have heard hundreds of sermons, studied the Scriptures, prayed to him and thought about him in most cases for many decades

³ Do-Re-Mi, Oscar Hammerstein II, Richard Rodgers: <http://www.lyricsondemand.com/>

- a) But before you volunteer your title or description of God, let us pray

F. PRAYER

G. SO LETS GO ROUND AND SEE WHAT SOME OF OUR IDEAS OF THE BIBLE

1. What is its purpose?
2. How should we read it?
3. What should we be looking for and learning from it?

II. GARY DEDDO; BIBLE AND THEOLOGY

A. WHAT THE BIBLE ISN'T

1. It is not a neat set of doctrinal statements designed to be a place for us to go to PROVE we are right on what we believe
 - a) So there, I am right, you are wrong
2. It is NOT there to provide a manual for living, or to function as source of ethics and morals
3. Not a list of definitive statements on every topic you can think of from history, science to human psychology and happy or successful living
4. It is NOT there to give us absolute knowledge, or as the source of all knowledge so we can walk by knowledge rather than by FAITH

B. IT IS ABOUT GOD, AND HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH US AND PEOPLE DOWN THROUGH THE AGES

1. And the life he wants to share with us and all mankind
2. Peter wrote about God, and our knowledge and relationship to him

C. II PETER 1:3-7

3 By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him

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1. This is the key; We need to come to know him in order to receive all he has to give us.

D. SO TO START AT THE VERY BEGINNING,

1. We need to have a relationship with him in which we come to know him more and more closely
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III. SO LET'S DISCUSS, WHO IS GOD?

A. THE ONE WE ARE CALLED TO KNOW, TO TRUST IN, TO RESPOND TO AND BE BLESSED BY

B. WHAT ONE WORD DESCRIPTION OR SHORT PHRASE WOULD YOU USE TO DESCRIBE GOD?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

C. OUR UNDERSTANDING OF GOD'S DIVINE NATURE IS THE FOUNDATION OF HOW WE THEN LIVE THE NEW LIFE

II Peter 1:4-5

3 By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence.

4 And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires.

5 In view of all this, make every effort to respond to God's promises.

D. GOD'S DIVINE NATURE, HIS GLORY AND EXCELLENCE, HIS LOVE AND GRACE ARE THE VERY BEGINNING, WHERE WE START.

1. His divine nature is what he promises to share with us (v4)
2. It is what we respond to, and grow in

E. THE NEW LIFE OF FAITH IN GOD'S LOVE, IN JESUS—

1. leads us to grow in the knowledge and life of God whose promises enable us to share in his divine nature – to be like him

2. And that nature and life is love

v8 Supplement your faith with a generous provision of moral excellence, and moral excellence with knowledge, 6 and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with patient endurance, and patient endurance with godliness, 7 and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love for everyone.

3. These are all aspects of the divine life and nature of God that Jesus lived, and the Holy Spirit enables us to participate in

F. SO KNOWING AND TRUSTING IN GOD IS THE STARTING POINT THE SCRIPTURES TAKE US TO

1. And that knowing and trusting leads us to seek more understanding of him and his life

a) Which then leads to our sharing in that life, to experiencing and living it on a day to day basis

b) Which then leads us to know and appreciate God and his ways more, which strengthens our faith,

c) and the cycle continues

2. This is a beautiful, dynamic spiral

a) Faith leads to understanding and knowing more about God and his life, and that leads to a greater faith and trust, and love for him, which then leads to a greater understanding etc.

b) We respond to God and who he is, to his promises; by supplementing our faith with moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, patient endurance, godliness and brotherly affection and love for all

G. THIS IS WHAT THE SCRIPTURES ARE THERE TO HELP US IN

H. II TIMOTHY 3:15-17

¹⁵You have been taught the holy Scriptures from childhood, and they have given you the wisdom to receive the salvation that comes by trusting in Christ Jesus.

¹⁶All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and

teaches us to do what is right. 17 God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.

IV. LET'S THINK A BIT ABOUT HOW MUCH OUR CONCEPT, OR UNDERSTANDING OF GOD MATTERS

Mark 8:27-34 Who Do You Say that I am?

27 Jesus and his disciples left Galilee and went up to the villages near Caesarea Philippi. As they were walking along, he asked them, "Who do people say I am?"

28 "Well," they replied, "some say John the Baptist, some say Elijah, and others say you are one of the other prophets."

29 Then he asked them, "But who do you say I am?"

Peter replied, "You are the Messiah.* "

30 But Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.

Jesus Predicts His Death

31 Then Jesus began to tell them that the Son of Man* must suffer many terrible things and be rejected by the elders, the leading priests, and the teachers of religious law. He would be killed, but three days later he would rise from the dead. 32 As he talked about this openly with his disciples, Peter took him aside and began to reprimand him for saying such things.*

33 Jesus turned around and looked at his disciples, then reprimanded Peter. "Get away from me, Satan!" he said. "You are seeing things merely from a human point of view, not from God's."

A. ONE OF THE MOST BASIC ASPECTS OF TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY

1. is that what you believe about the fundamental nature of God effects profoundly the rest of our theology; our beliefs and relationship with God and our lives
2. Many people start with the supposition that God doesn't exist at all
 - a) Others reject him because they think he is an uncaring, remote, harsh impersonal being

- b) But Christians also vary in their starting point, their foundational understanding of the core of God's nature
- c) E.g; Many see the central aspect of God's being, as his omnipotence, his sovereignty, and almighty power
 - (1) Many emphasise his being the Great Almighty King and judge
 - (2) Or that his is the great all living, all powerful, creator and sustainer of all things
- d) Nothing wrong with any of this. All totally true, more true that we as humans can really grasp.
 - (1) God is, Almighty, Omnipotent, all powerful, the sovereign creator and ruler and sustainer of all things, the supreme judge, king and ruler of the universe.

3. But where else could we start as an even more core, prime, central and vital description and understanding of who God is at his very core and heart?

- a) With God as love.
- b) The God who is love through and through and desires to share his love, his divine nature—with us.

B. LET'S CONSIDER WHAT DIFFERENCE EACH STARTING POINT CAN MAKE TO OUR APPRECIATION OF GOD, OUR FAITH, OUR THEOLOGY

1. And our day to day relationship with him

C. FIRST:

- 1. What sort of teachings, practices and emphasise do people and churches tend to have that start with God as primarily a God of authority and power and the Bible principally as a rule book?**
 - a) (emphasise that we are not saying these things aren't true, or that they are unimportant).
 - (1) Just asking what impact it has when we begin with, emphasise or prioritise God's power and authority
 - b) We end up with teachings like double predestination, emphasis on works righteousness
 - c) The law
- 2. When we see the Bible as a rule book or manual for living, we tend to have churches that put emphasis on**
 - a) Judgment before mercy and compassion

- b) Making sure everyone behaves appropriately
- 3. When we see the Bible as the last word on Science and history, we end up with**
- a) Arguments over creation and evolution
 - b) Prioritising getting everything right in knowledge and practice
- 4. Can you think of any people or groups in Scripture who saw God in this way, and emphasised these things?**
- a) Pharisees
 - b) Job's friends
 - c) Many of the Kings of Israel
 - d) Judaizers, Gnostics, and other legalistic teachers in the early church
 - e) Most fundamentalist groups, including us in the past
- 5. It is interesting that the new Pope, Francis has just made an amazing statement on the need to emphasize the right things, mercy and relationships, rather than always focusing on being right and ending up judging and ostracizing people**

Pope Francis said the Catholic Church must shake off an obsession with teachings on abortion, contraception and homosexuality and become more merciful or risk the collapse of its entire moral edifice "like a house of cards".

In a dramatically blunt interview with an Italian Jesuit journal, Francis said the church had "locked itself up in small things, in small-minded rules" and should not be so prone to condemn.

Its priests should be more welcoming and not cold, dogmatic bureaucrats.

His comments were welcomed by liberal Catholics, but they are likely to be viewed with concern by conservatives who have already expressed concern over Francis's failure to address publicly the issues stressed by his predecessor Benedict.

Francis, the first non-European pope in 1,300 years, the first from Latin America and the first Jesuit pope, did not hold out the prospect of any changes soon to such moral teachings.

But ...he said the church must find a new balance between upholding rules and demonstrating mercy.

...Pope also said he envisioned a greater role for women in the 1.2 billion-member church but suggested it would not include a change in the current ban on a female priesthood.

In a remarkable change from Benedict, who said homosexuality was an intrinsic disorder, Pope Francis said that when homosexuals told him they were always condemned by the church and felt "socially wounded", he told them "the church does not want to do this".

He restated his comments ...that he was not in a position to judge gays who are of good will and in search of God.

In the interview he added: "Religion has the right to express its opinion in the service of the people, but God in creation has set us free. It is not possible to interfere spiritually in the life of a person."

The church, he said, should see itself as "a field hospital after a battle" and try to heal the larger wounds of society and not be "obsessed with the transmission of a disjointed multitude of doctrines to be imposed insistently".⁴

D. CLEARLY POPE FRANCIS IS SEEKING TO START WITH THE GOD OF LOVE

1. Rather than with a God of judgment, power and rules and dogma.
2. And to live and grow from that foundation of love
3. Putting a priority on caring for people not insistently telling them about all that is wrong with them

E. WHERE WE START IN ANY JOURNEY EFFECTS THE NATURE, DIRECTION AND OUTCOME FOR THE REST OF THE JOURNEY

1. Our foundational beliefs and assumptions about God and Scripture effect our Christian walk, and who we become
2. We tend to become like the image of the God we have in our minds, ironically and tragically—the God we have made in our own image

⁴ "Pope Francis says Catholic Church must shake off 'small-minded rules' on abortion, homosexuality", Australian Broadcasting Corporation, News item, September 20, 2013; <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-09-20/pope-francis-says-church-must-shake-off-homosexuality-obsession/4970058>

3. If we believe God is primarily a God of holiness, power and righteousness, that will profoundly effect the rest of our beliefs, attitudes and actions
4. Why do many get so concerned about laws, days, diets and prophecy etc.?
 - a) Because they start with a belief that God is a god of holiness, purity a powerful King and judge who will not allow any imperfections
5. But Jesus made clear, that those are not the primary aspects of God's nature we are to start with
 - a) He repeatedly and boldly opposed those who misrepresented God that way
6. To conclude, let's read through part of I John 4 where the centre and heart of God's nature is spelled out clearly and unequivocally

V. I JOHN 4:7, 16-19

I John 4:7-12

⁷ Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God.

⁸ But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

1. **This is the point isn't it!**
 - a) If we know God, if that is our starting point in our Christian faith and walk, then that understanding, that faith will lead to us being like God.
 - b) God is primarily, at his very heart and core, love
 - c) If our lives aren't growing in love, but judgmental and legalistic, then how can we claim to really know God or have a relationship with him?

⁹ God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. ¹⁰ This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.

¹¹ Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other.

¹² No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love is brought to full expression in us

2. **God wants his nature to be brought to full expression in us.
And his nature is one of love**

B. I JOHN 4:16

¹⁶ We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in him.

C. THIS IS THE STARTING POINT IN OUR KNOWING GOD,

1. **The beginning of our journey of Faith**
2. **John boils it down even more**

God is love

3. **We need to always start thinking about any topic with the foundational understanding that God is love**

D. BECAUSE GOD IS LOVE, LIFE IS TRANSFORMED

1. **Our lives are transformed**
2. **And the lives of others should also be transformed as we share God's love with them**

16b God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them.

3. **As we read in I Peter; we are called to experience and live in God and his love**

- a) **To know and experience God's love**

¹⁷ And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face him with confidence because we are like Christ here in this world.

E. THIS AGAIN IS WHAT WE READ IN I PETER

1. **The more we know and Live in God**
 - a) **The more our faith grows**
 - b) **The more God's divine nature and love grows in us**

¹⁸ Such love has no fear because perfect love expels all fear.

F. OUR FEARS ARE REMOVED, BECAUSE WE SEE GOD AS HE REALLY IS, NOT AS WE FEARED HIM TO BE

1. We don't have to be afraid of him, or of life, or other people because God loves us, and we have our fulfilment and identity in him
2. Fear too often leads to division and legalism
3. To exclusivism, and moralism as we try to control the world around us, and make it conform to what we see as moral and right

18b If we are afraid, it is for fear of judgment, and this shows that his love has not been perfected in us.

4. Fear stops us from being gracious and loving, patient and gentle
 - a) Fear is worried about being wrong, about not being perfect, about making a mistake, or associating with the wrong people who may corrupt us

G. WHEN GOD'S LOVE DOMINATES OUR MINDS AND STRENGTHENS AND ENCOURAGES US,

1. we become confident and at peace with God and ourselves
 - a) And as the John goes on to add;

19 We love each other* as a result of his loving us first.

2. Note: Or *We love him*; Greek reads *We love*.
 3. We are no longer alone, and desperately needy or fearful
 4. We are filled with God and his love
 - a) We have a healthy and life enhancing relationship with him
 - b) Which leads us to be like God and be able to love as well
 - c) To love him, and to love others
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* *1 John 4:19* Or *We love him*; Greek reads *We love*.

CONCLUSION:

VI. SO THE PLACE WE SHOULD ALWAYS START IN LOOKING AT ANY ISSUE IN LIFE, IS WITH GOD

A. WHO GOD IS

1. When we hear and see and begin to understand who God reveals himself to be, we begin to have a solid foundation for our lives
2. For finding real love and care in God himself
3. For understanding who we are, and our meaning and purpose in life

B. GOD REVEALS HIMSELF TO BE A GOD OF LOVE

1. The Father, Son and Spirit mutually love, respect and serve one another
2. Jesus the living Word, came to reveal who God is to us
 - a) To show us what he is like, his loving, caring nature, his mercy, generosity, grace and forgiveness
 - b) And his wonderful plan for our lives with him for eternity

C. WE ARE MADE TO BE LIKE GOD

1. Not to look like him in some physical way, because God is Spirit
 - a) But to be like him in nature
2. To be loving, respectful, generous, gracious and forgiving beings
 - a) Living in close, intimate relationship first of all with God
 - b) And secondly with our fellow human beings
3. This is what God is all about, what the Scriptures are all about, and what we are to be all about

D. LET US THEN, CONTINUALLY SEEK GOD'S HELP THROUGH HIS SPIRIT, HIS SON THE LIVING WORD, AND HIS WRITTEN WORD

1. To see how foundational and vital it is to understand that at the core of his being God is love
 - a) And that the purpose of the Scriptures is to reinforce our understanding of God and his love in Jesus Christ

b) To lead us to grow in faith in our God and to grow in his love

**E. NEXT TIME I PLAN TO LOOK AT THE ALLIED QUESTION;
WHO IS JESUS?**

1. What is the view or picture of Jesus we hold

a) Because that in turn affects our understanding of “Who God is”.

F. PRAYER

VII. NOTES:

VIII. NOW LET'S CONSIDER THE OTHER STARTING PLACE WE DISCUSSED

A. BEGINNING WITH AN UNDERSTANDING OF GOD AS FUNDAMENTALLY AND AT THE CORE OF HIS VERY BEING, THE GOD WHO IS LOVE

1. **The God whose every thought and action begins and ends with love**
 - a) **We are then led to understand all that he has said, and done, and promises to do from the foundational motivation of love.**
 - b) **We see that he always uses all his omnipotence, power and authority in love**
 - c) **He has created all things in and out of love.**
2. **We come to see that all his promises are given because he loves us all unconditionally, totally and without limit or end**
3. **We look forward to the future, no matter how we have failed, or how bad life or the world around us may get, knowing, having faith that our God's love will in the end will win out over all that stands against his loving intent and purpose for all he has created**

- a) **Not that God is powerful, or a great judge or king, or that he is omnipotent and omniscient**
 - (1) **These are all true, but if we start off with them, and not with his primary trait of love, we tend to end up with a distorted view of God**
 - (2) **Which then leads us to have a wrong view of life and ourselves, and God's way of approaching life and its issues**
- b) **In the past we have tended to look at Christ's dramatic return on a white horse using power and force to solve the world's problems**
- c) **Instead of remembering John 3:16**
 - (1) **That God sent his son to die for us out of love**
 - (2) **That the solution to our problems is found in the love of God pictured by Jesus' supreme act of loving sacrifice for us on the cross**