Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Our Precious Faith, Part 2
Scripture: 2 Peter 1:2
Code: 61-3

Tonight we're coming to the Word of God again and looking at 2 Peter, chapter 1. We have recently begun our study of this second epistle of Peter. We're just getting started really, still dealing with his introduction. And as we come to 2 Peter, chapter 1, again, I want us to major on verse 2. Let me just read it to you, and then I want to digress for a rather lengthy time, and then come back to it. I think when I come back you'll understand its meaning. "Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord." Now, the key word in that verse is "knowledge." Grace and peace are multiplied to those who have the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. Our precious faith is built on knowing the truth, and knowing the source of truth. Now, you might think that's fairly obvious, and it is. But amazingly, it does not appear to be so obvious to everyone today. In fact, in our day it seems to be rather obscure. Let me show you why.

A recent issue of the *National Review* magazine, there's an article called, "Paganism American Style," written by John Wauck. This is what he said. "The New Age Movement is not about discovering reality but about making it. It is about power rather than truth," end quote. That's a very insightful statement. That is a very encompassing statement. The culture in which we live is not interested in discovering what is. It is interested in creating what it wants to be. They talk about mind power, the power of positive thinking. Because you believe it strongly enough to be so, it will be so. Because you say it is so, it will become so. While all of this New Age stuff has sort of an intellectual veneer, it is not about reality, it is not about objectivity, it is not about truth, it is not about fact. It is about feeling, it is about intuition, it is about experience, it is about self-generated power.

One very popular New Age writer is Joseph Campbell, who has written a book called *The Power of Myth*. The thesis of the book is that you can imagine something to be so and it becomes powerful. Campbell's credo comes in three words, "Follow your bliss – follow your bliss." Whatever would make you blissful, whatever bliss you can imagine, follow that. Now, in that system you have to create your own reality. You have to create your own values. What you choose to create with your mind power, whether it's the power of positive thinking, or whether it's the power of personal choice, whether it's the power of spoken words, whether it's the power of the imagination – they say what you choose doesn't really matter, as long as you choose it. And if you choose it, you can make it so. Spiritual power in your mind is the key to controlling the perception; to controlling the perception to the degree where you can perceive something so clearly that you create the reality you want. In other words, spiritual power in your mind fine tunes a perception of what you want, and wanting that perception clearly and strongly enough makes it a reality. Your mind can create. That's New Age thinking. That's

popular today.

Now, in the pursuit of this inner power, there is a combination of four things that sort of interplay a little bit, or four ideologies. Let me just share them with you. The first one is evolution. There is an evolutionary principle behind this that says you can wish something to be. That's basically evolution. Once there was a snake who wanted to fly, and so he wished himself wings. That's basic evolution. There's a few steps in the process, but that's basically it. Evolution also indicates that everything that exists is equal. We're all in a long chain. Man is no more significant than anything else; he's just the latest result of monkeys' wishing. He is sort of the final accident, at least for now, but he has no more value than a rock, no more value than a bird, no more value than a cat, no more value than a tree, no more value than a dolphin, because that's evolution. Evolution is just this process of wishing things to be, and so they came into existence in a long chain of all equal products of wishing. And that is why there is no particular concern for man, as over against any other part of this evolutionary chain.

There's a second ideology bound up in this New Age thinking, and that's pantheism. Since there is no creator, there is no God, the creation itself is God, and since it created itself it's the God of its own creation, and since everything in the process bears something of the power to create itself, it is all God. Pantheism sees the only God, then, as the energy that exists in everything. You hear people talk about pyramid power. And some people will walk around with a wire pyramid on their head, or hang a pyramid over their door in their house. They talk about tree power. I don't know if you've read any about that. Talk about rock power. There's energy in all of these things. That's what mind power is. It's the God energy that exists in everything. Everything is equal to everything else, and everything is God, so everything has a right to its own identity, and a right to its own free course, so there have to be human rights, but there also have to be animal rights, there have to be tree rights. I noticed in the paper today a man wanted to remove a sycamore tree in front of his house out in Santa Clarita valley. The city's in an uproar that he would think about cutting down a sycamore tree. Begs the issue to ask them if the houses in the Santa Clarita valley happen to be built out of wood. Everything is seen as having some kind of theistic energy in it. Everything is God. Everything has power. Everything has energy. And you want to plug in to that energy.

Now, we just had Earth Day, and I asked myself on a number of occasions, "What is Earth Day?" And I realized what it was. For some people it was an elevating of environmental consciousness, which is certainly good. All of us would like to do something to enhance our environment and to protect the creation of God, and that's very good. But to the orchestrators and the fanatics, Earth Day was based upon a pantheistic view, and it was "let's stop the world and worship the earth. We'll all worship the earth." I was very interested in the fact that down at the beach there was a huge Earth Day celebration, and everybody left, and nobody cleaned up a horrendous mess. The Earth is God, let's stop and worship the Earth. It doesn't seem to be a problem for the government to tolerate that; I can't imagine what would happen if somebody decided to have a God day or a Jesus Christ day. See, nothing has more value than anything else. Save the rain forests, save the whales, save the dolphins,

save the oak trees, don't kill a cat in medical research, even if it might save thousands of people from death.

In fact, as I analyze it, the only living creature that I can think of that doesn't have any rights is an unborn baby. Everything else has rights. I heard last night about someone who is now very upset that people step on bugs. This is true. And he had a huge layout of all of these bugs, and was trying to convince people that bugs have enough self-consciousness not to like being stepped on. It is incredibly inconsistent to me, isn't it, that many of the same people who want to save the trees, and save the cats, and the whales, and the dolphins, are the same ones that want to kill the unborn babies. Nothing has more value than anything else, except unborn babies, which have absolutely no value. Pure pragmatism – a baby will get in the way. Pantheism is typical of man's religion. It's very pragmatic. And pantheism has to be abandoned if it invades their hedonism and their selfishness. They are only true to their religion if it doesn't cramp their life style.

There's another component, another ideology in this besides evolution and pantheism; that's what we'll call amoralism. If everything is equal to everything else, and everything is God, then all behavior is acceptable, because it's just the energy of this pantheistic religion. The only moral value is whatever you decide is moral. You're your own God, and if it feels good, and there's energy in it, then do it. So we have left in our society one moral law, and that is that there are no binding moral laws, only whatever anybody feels is good for them. Morality is what I create. There's no standard outside of myself. Any kind of sexual behavior is perfectly fine. If I want to have sex with people outside of marriage, if I want to be a homosexual, if I want to be involved in bestiality, and recently there is an escalation of the most bizarre, unthinkable, unimaginable kind of interaction with animals that I wouldn't even describe to you, but know about from medical doctors, who are having homosexuals come into the hospital in conditions that are absolutely indescribable. But, you see, it's all okay, because there's no morality except the morality that you create. And all of this stuff isn't intellectual at all. Facts, if you look at facts, would totally defy all of it.

If you want to look at fact and reality, you're not going to come up with evolution, right? The facts disprove evolution. If you're going to look at truth, and reality, and fact, you're not going to come up with everything is God, and God is everything, you're going to come up with the true God. If you're going to look at fact, you're not going to come up with an amoral kind of value system. Facts tell us that an amoral society will destroy itself. That's false knowledge, that's neo-gnostic paganism, that's the new gnosticism, it masquerades as knowledge; it isn't knowledge at all.

Now, it is built on the fourth ideology and the fourth component, and that's mysticism. Mysticism is the foundation for all of this kind of thinking we have today in the New Age. You say, "What is mysticism?" Let me give you my MacArthur definition. Mysticism is beliefs and ideas which are the product of personal intuition. Let me say it again. Mysticism is beliefs and ideas which are the product of personal intuition; further, assumed to transcend ordinary understanding – that's mysticism. It is a

system of beliefs and ideas which are the product of my own personal intuition, which I assume transcends ordinary understanding. To put it simply, it is sheer speculation believed to be reality – sheer speculation believed to be reality. Mystical belief systems are collections of ideas that have arisen out of emotion, out of self-authenticated ideas, unrelated to objective fact or evidence. In that same paper in our community, this article appeared last week. “God revealed Himself to a Canyon Country man, and made him the leader of a church whose members are absolved from sin by having sex with church priestesses.

God spoke to him in his Santa Monica bungalow April 24, 1984, and ordained him as the high priest of the church after explaining the sex-oriented doctrines.” Then it says, “Wilbur Tracy is the man. Acting as the couple’s attorney himself, said God appeared to him in the form of a six-foot tall man with white hair and a white beard, who was surrounded by a bright white light.” He added that the man was elevated, and was wearing a white transparent robe which was open in the front. Tracy said God explained to him the purpose of life and the creation of the world in about an hour and a half, but Tracy declined to discuss it any further. “I was told to tell no man what the specifics were,” he said. “I was told only to tell those who believed.” Tracy said he learned the importance of sexual rituals he said are required before one’s sins can be forgiven. The religion of the goddess is what you might say a sexual religion. He explained the vision to his wife, who later agreed to become the high priestess. God told him that the priestess had to have sex with a thousand men before getting such an appointment.

Now, our culture has a very difficult time arguing with this lunatic, a very difficult time. Why? Because we have already allowed people to spawn out of their own minds any kind of imaginary reality that they choose. That’s the ultimate bizarre form of mysticism. On the one hand, he might be lying. On the other hand, he might have been engaged with demonic beings. But it’s very possible also that this man spun out of his own mind some kind of self-authenticated justification for his own absolutely rampant lust. Mystical belief systems, then, are collected inside a person, arising out of self-authenticating ideas and emotions, utterly unrelated to objective fact or evidence. New Agers will tell you that yoga, meditation, and even wordless New Age music induces these kinds of internal intuitions. No objectivity, no reality. Just inward, subjective, non-rational, intuitive feelings that then become fact.

Andrew Greeley relates the following as an example of the kind of thing we’re discussing – this is very simple. “A troubled young man had been listening to Beethoven’s “Ninth Symphony” on a phonograph in his apartment. He turns off the music and begins to work on a term paper, but he makes little progress. The doubts, the fears, the thoughts of self-destruction that have harassed him return. Then, in counterpoint, he hears the hymn of the “Ode to Joy,” and something takes possession of the room and of him. The doubts, the fears, the anxieties are dispelled forever. The young man knows there is nothing to worry about,” end quote. Now, what really happened in time and space to that young man? How did he know there was nothing to worry about? He didn’t. He didn’t know there was nothing to

worry about, he didn't know anything. There's no reality to that. You don't listen to an "Ode to Joy" and conclude, "O, I have nothing to worry about." "Ode to Joy" induced a movement within him that was emotional. In the emotion he had feelings of wellbeing. He translated those feelings of wellbeing into reality. But it isn't reality. That young man's self-generated feeling of wellbeing didn't mean he wouldn't be dead in 24 hours. It meant absolutely nothing.

People come along and say, "Well, with your mind you can accomplish healing." Oh, how does that work? I can tell myself I am healed, I can tell myself I will never be ill, but that is purely my own imagination, has nothing to do with reality. Viruses don't know I said that. And even if they did, there's no indication that they wouldn't go ahead and do whatever they were going to do. This is not knowledge. Such an internal, subjective experience provides no knowledge, no reality, and worse, it provides a silly illusion, which becomes a false hope. To know something is to have accurate fact about reality; then you know it – then you know it. You know, we border on this. Sometimes we'll say, "Well, I think everything is going to be all right." Well, how do you know that? "Well, I just kind of feel everything" – you don't know that. That is an illusion induced by your own mind. That is mysticism. And it can concoct anything, a system of belief, a system of religion, a system of healing, anything. Arthur Johnson, in his very interesting book, *Faith Misguided*, writes, "There are two aspects of mysticism that we must recognize to avoid confusion. First, there is a psychological aspect, often called the mystical experience, which is an event completely within the person," totally subjective and easily counterfeited – I added that. Then he says, "Then there are the beliefs that arise from that experience. These philosophical religious beliefs constitute a set of ideas collectively called mysticism."

Now, what frightens me is this has wholesale invaded the church. And it's come into the church primarily through the Charismatic Movement, where people are creating assumed illusory reality out of their own imaginations, unrelated to fact. No doubt there was stuff like this floating around in Peter's time. No doubt Peter was writing to churches as he penned this letter who were dealing with some of this kind of belief that you could transcend the natural, you could transcend objectivity. You could surpass normal understanding. Listen to me very carefully. Christianity is not mystical. Christianity is totally, and utterly, and completely, and fully contrary to anything and everything that is mystical. Contrary to believing in imaginary feelings, Christianity believes in objective, historical, revealed, actual, rational truth from God. That must be understood. The mystic, he rejects reason for experience, and the line between truth and lies is erased. So the mystic reads the Bible and that's truth, and has an experience and that's truth, and truth and lies overlap.

The basic lie of mysticism is that my inner feelings tell me the truth about what is. That is not true. My inner feelings do not tell me the truth about reality. The lie of mysticism is my experience, self-interpreted, gives the truth about reality. That's not true. That's not so. What is really appalling about this is that it's in the church, and all of a sudden, Christianity, instead of being objective, historical, revealed, actual, rational truth from God, is literally a mish-mash of revealed truth, and intuition, and

experience. The contemporary Charismatic Movement is full of this kind of stuff. People say, “Well, the Lord showed me in my heart that this will not happen.” Oh? That has nothing to do with whether it will happen or not. “The Lord showed me in my heart that that won’t happen.” Oh? That has nothing to do with it. Now, those are mild forms. A stronger form is what is commonly called “positive confession.” We talked about Kenneth Hagan, Kenneth Copeland, Fredrick Price, Robert Tilton, a number of people like that, Paul Crouch, Oral Roberts, those kinds of people, who say if you verbalize it, and if you say it, and if your mind conjures it up, and you positively affirm it, you will create it. That is sub-Christian mysticism – not Christianity.

Another form of it that’s come recently is called visualization – visualization. This runs the gamut all the way from a psychological counseling technique clear over to a religious situation with many in the Charismatic Movement. The man who today is known as the pastor of the largest church in the world is a man by the name of Paul Yonggi Cho – C-h-o. His church, the largest in the world, is located in the city of Seoul, in Korea. And Yonngi Cho is heavily into visualization, into the idea that you can create reality with your mind if you visualize it. Dave Hunt, of course, has dealt with him in his book on *The Seduction of Christianity*. Just as a little bit of a refresher, let me bring you up to date on this man, who is the pastor of the largest church in the world, and one who is very central to the Charismatic Movement today. This is what Dave Hunt has indicated, “Anyone who imagines that because he thinks certain thoughts, or speaks certain words, God must respond in a certain way, has slipped into sorcery, and if not playing God, is at the very least attempting to manipulate God. Pastor Cho declares ‘By the spoken word’ – this is a quote – ‘by the spoken word we create our universe of circumstances. You create the presence of Jesus with your mouth. He is bound by your lips and by our words,’” end quote.

Cho declares that it was through the power of imagination that God created the world. This is in his book called *The Fourth Dimension*, which I’ve read – that “God created the world through imagination, and that because man is a fourth dimension spirit being like God, he too” – listen to this – “whether occultist or a Christian, can create his own world through the power of imagination. Occultists have long known that the most powerful way to tap into the spirit dimension is through visualization,” says Cho. Whether you’re an occultist or a Christian, you can use your imagination to create your own world. Nowhere in the Bible does it indicate or even imply that the people of God are to use the same methods or power as the pagans. Pastor Cho, however, not only says that miracles must all conform to his law of the fourth dimension, but that anyone, including occultists, can apply the law of the fourth dimension and perform miracles. Nevertheless, Pastor Cho assures us that he learned this from the Holy Spirit when he asked in prayer why occultists could do miracles just like Christians. Cho, in fact, commends the Japanese Buddhists occultists, the Soka Gakkai, for performing miracles through visualizing a picture of prosperity, repeating phrases over and over, and developing the human spiritual fourth dimension; and he scolds Christians for not doing likewise. He says they do it in the occult movement, why can’t we do it? He believes that you can create your own reality.

Further, although he probably does not realize it, “Pastor Cho,” says Dave Hunt, “has laid out basic occult theory, an apologetic for nature religion or witchcraft. He states that because God includes the entire physical universe, He can therefore create matter out of Himself. How does He do it? By incubating, which is Cho’s term for visualizing.” The Bible never suggests, much less teaches, that God creates through any technique, visualizing or other. This sets up for the delusion that if we can somehow use the same technique, we can do what God does. Thus the next error in Cho’s reasoning process is, if possible, even worse than its predecessor: that because man is also a fourth dimension spirit being, we too can visualize, incubate, and create reality, just like God. In his sequel to *The Fourth Dimension*, Pastor Cho writes, and I quote, “We’ve got to learn how to visualize and dream the answer as being completed as we go to the Lord in prayer. We should always try to visualize the end result as we pray. In that way, with the power of the Holy Spirit, we can incubate that which we want God to do for us. The main thing is that we should know the importance of visualization.” Now, that’s the end of the quote.

When you look at those people over there in Korea – and we are so amazed at their long involved times of prayer – realize, dear friends, they do not pray in the manner that you and I pray to God pursuing His will. They pray in the process that is very much occultic; a visualizing and attempting by visualization to create their own reality, to make themselves God. If visualization was so important, you’d think the Bible would say something about it. It says absolutely nothing about it. It’s mystical. Now, one who follows Cho’s fantasy approach and its confusion has become very prominent. His name is John Wimber. He started out teaching a class at Fuller Seminary on healing techniques and things like that; founded a group of churches known as Vineyard Fellowships. He is criss-crossing the world at this time – you can catch him on channel 40 in our area. He is leading the movement back to mysticism – clairvoyants, extrasensory perception, mind power, trances, mass hypnosis, visions. All those are techniques of Eastern healing cults, and they are all finding a place in the new Charismatic Renewal Movement, particularly in the methodology of this American healer by the name of John Wimber.

The Reformation gave people back their minds. The Roman Catholic Church during the Dark Ages became very mystical. The Reformation gave people back their minds. The Reformation swept away superstition. The Reformation abolished mysticism and reestablished rational thinking. And the new Charismatic Movement is bringing back the confusion, and the bondage, and the anti-intellectual, non-rationalism of mysticism. Jonathan Edwards once wrote, quote: “Beware of living your life by impressions,” end quote. And that is precisely what such charismania advocates. John Wimber, et al, and others in the Movement, believe they can all relive the miraculous days of the apostles and Jesus. But the fact is they have fallen into a very non-apostolic and sub-Christian mysticism, vulnerable to Satanic deception and closer to Hinduism than to the Bible. Let me be specific. John Wimber acknowledges that sinners must hear some rational presentation of the gospel to be saved, yet he believes the power that will actually sweep people into the Kingdom is not the Holy Spirit

invisibly attending the Word as it comes to people's minds. The power that produces salvation comes rather in the experience of God's presence as Christians exercise supernatural powers and do signs and wonders.

Listen to that. That is at its core, of course, Arminianism, the belief that people come to salvation because of their own being convinced, rather than because of some divine operation. And what he is saying is that salvation, the power in salvation is not the Spirit working the Word in the heart; the power in salvation is the speaker being so convincing, and so dramatic, because he can do all these miracles, that that overpowers the people. Sinners' resistance to the gospel message is removed, he says, by encounters of power. So he calls it *Power Evangelism*, that's the name of his book. And these power encounters literally shock people, blow them away. They transcend the mind. They are inexplicable. They are non- rational. And so salvation is not the Spirit illuminating the mind as it receives the truth, but rather the power exploding on people something that is irrational, inexplicable, miraculous. And that is much more effective. In fact, that's what does it. That's why they say the simple gospel is not enough. You have to have signs and wonders, because they do not affirm that the truth in the power of the Spirit changes a heart. They believe while the truth has to be there, it's the energy in the messenger that affects the drama that makes people convinced. The power that makes evangelistic preaching effective, then, comes from the miracles that accompany the Word, and not the Word itself. Mysticism, then, says people are saved by power encounters with miracles.

But what does the Scripture say? Just the opposite. All you have to do is go back and look at the life of Christ. He went through Palestine, did miracle after miracle after miracle after miracle after miracle. At the end of it, what did they do to Him? Killed Him. John 2:23, "When He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name." Why? "Beholding His signs which He was doing." Sure, they were attracted by the signs. They believed that He was from God. "But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, and because He didn't need anyone to bear witness concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man." Sure, they believed; but they didn't believe unto – what? Salvation. Sure they said, "Oh wow, that's supernatural. He's from God." That didn't save them. They had no other explanation. It was a superficial belief, it wasn't salvation. Look at John 4, verse 48 – Jesus condemns them. He says, "Unless you people see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe." Same kind of shallow, non-saving faith. You've got to see the signs and wonders. But it didn't change their hearts, because only the Holy Spirit can change the heart.

Look at John chapter 6, verse 2, "A great multitude was following Him, because they were seeing the signs He was performing on those who were sick." Sure, it attracted a crowd. Verse 28, after seeing these signs and wonders and the miraculous way in which Jesus fed them all, they said to Him – verse 28 – "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" What do we do to do these things? This is fantastic. He said, "'This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.' They said therefore to Him, 'What then do You do for a sign, that we may see, and believe

You?'" That is an incredible statement. This is the same crowd saw Him healing people all day long. This is the same crowd that just ate the food He created. And they said, "Do another sign, so we can believe You. What work are You going to perform?" It's unbelievable. No, signs produce a very superficial curiosity, and they may convince that this is a supernatural being. The sign itself cannot save. In fact, to show you the character of these people, go all the way to the end of the chapter, verse 66. Some of them started to follow Him. When it became apparent what His message was, verse 66 says, "Many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore."

Verse 63 sums it up. "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken unto you are spirit and are life." That's objectivity, my friend, that's revealed, rational truth. You might be interested to know that John the Baptist did no miracles, and John the Baptist was the greatest prophet who had ever lived up until his day. He did no miracles – none. Miracle power is not saving power; that we must understand. The passage that I was looking up, John 10:41, says John the Baptist did no miracles. Now, how is a person converted then? Look at Romans 10:17, Romans 10:17. Listen to this, "So faith" – saving faith – "comes from miracles." Is that what it says? "Comes from signs and wonders." No, it comes from what? "Hearing, and hearing by" – what – "the Word of Christ. But I say, surely they have never heard, have they? Indeed they have; 'Their voice has gone out into all the earth, their words to the end of the world.'" They have to hear. Go back to verse 13. "Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved. But how are they going to call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how will they believe in Him whom they have not" – what – "heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?" They need a preacher, not a miracle worker.

Now, listen to me very carefully, what I say. The miracle- working power of Jesus, and the miracle-working power of the apostles, was not for the purpose of saving people. That is the miracle work of the Spirit in regeneration. That's a whole different thing. Listen carefully. The miracle-working power of Jesus, and the miracle-working power of the apostles was not for the purpose of saving people, but of authenticating the preacher – very, very important. You've got ten people coming into town, and they all say "I speak for God," who do you believe? You believe the one with miracle power, but it is the truth he preaches that saves. The miracle is simply to convince you that he speaks the truth, because in those days there was no Bible to test him by. That's why today we don't need miracles. I'll tell you by listening to a person whether he speaks the truth. I don't need a miracle. I just have this book; I'll compare him with this, right? Miracles were never intended to save people. Miracles were intended to authenticate messengers. And messengers are now authenticated by whether they square up with the Word of God, which is a very interesting situation.

You've got a person like John Wimber, who is out there trying to authenticate himself by miracles, while violating the only authenticating source there is, the Bible. Signs were never to make the gospel work in someone's heart. They were never intended to activate saving faith. That is the work of God. They were to authenticate the preacher, so they could know he was from God and could be believed. Jesus didn't come to heal people in order to get them saved. He came to heal people to authenticate

Himself as God's messenger. We don't need repeated authentication; all we need is to preach the authentic Word. So all of that healing business, that is supposedly absolutely necessary if we're going to gets people saved, misses the whole point. Furthermore, John Wimber belittles rational truth. He belittles knowledge. He belittles thinking. Let me tell you why. He says that western thinking is too rationalistic, and we must adopt the Eastern way of allowing for the more mystical and spiritual. He calls us to a third world paradigm, is a term that he and Peter Wagner at Fuller Seminary use. We must remember, he says, quote: "That the Bible was written in the Middle East, not with a rational assumption, but an experiential assumption," end quote. That is not true. That is absolutely not true. The Bible was written in the Middle East, but are you saying that everybody in the Middle East and those who were inspired by God were operating on a mystical basis? Ridiculous. The Bible was not written on an experiential assumption, it was written on a rational assumption. The Middle East was not mystical. Neither is God, and neither were the writers of Scripture.

Further, he said in a tape, "When are we going to see a generation who doesn't try to understand this book, but just believes it?" Now, that is a statement of mysticism. You don't have to understand it, you don't have to deal with it rationally, you just believe it mystically. The Bible is then surveyed to find texts to affirm their experience and their mysticism. At the Evangelical Theological Society meeting, John Wimber said, "We're just now developing a theology for the things we do." You see, truth rises from intuition, and you've got all of this experience and intuition floating around, and we're trying to figure out how to pull it together into a theology. It's totally reverse – you start with Scripture, you interpret Scripture, Scripture gives you a theology by which you evaluate experience. John Wimber belittles preaching; we would assume he would, because it's cognitive. In *Power Evangelism*, Wimber goes beyond merely suggesting that some preaching is dull, he rejoices openly that the Charismatic Movement has toppled preaching from its central role in worship. Wimber, as a professional jazz musician before his conversion, repeatedly affirms how pleased he is to see dance, theater, innovative hymnody, and singing in tongues diminish the place of preaching. Of course, because preaching is fact, preaching is content. The power evangelist further claimed that church growth rarely occurs through preaching alone, either in biblical times or subsequent church history. Signs and wonders are the catalyst for evangelism, and they're back to that.

In addition to these imbalances, power evangelists share with other Charismatics an uncritical attitude toward people who claim to be God's prophets today. And this leads to another problem. If you take this as your approach to truth, then who can you question, right? 'Cause if this guy over here says, "I saw a six-foot Jesus dressed in robes who told me to start a religion where your sins are absolved by sex," on what basis do I say that man's wrong? That's his experience. In fact, John Wimber said, and I quote, "I'm sort of a have experience, will travel person." That's a very dangerous thing, very dangerous. The rapid growth in this Movement is another part, I think, of the cultural reaction to naturalism, a reaction that's producing a new fascination with the supernatural. The New Age is capitalizing on this, and these poor sad people are falling prey to it. They've adopted occultic inner healing, mystical experience, they even link up sometimes with Roman Catholics who are into the

same thing. An interesting quote from E.V. Scott in *Passport* magazine: “If Catholic inner healers are having remarkable success having people visualize the Virgin Mary, why bother with Jesus?” R.C. Sproul calls this “sensuous Christianity,” quote: “The new sensuous Christian doesn’t need to study the Word of God, because he already knows the will of God by his feelings. He doesn’t want to know God, he wants to experience Him,” end quote.

It is pretty much characteristic of the Charismatic Movement while on the one hand, they affirm the truth of Scripture, and there are many scriptures they understand and believe, that they also generate their perception of interpreting that revealed Word, and they also generate their perceptions of life, from out of their own experience. And as I said in the beginning, the line is erased, and so the thing is blurred. Wimber himself campaigns for a perception change, transforming the outlook from historic Christianity to Eastern mysticism. And again, this is a new gnostic pagan mysticism, dethroning reason, they say, so the soul can be free. But what does God say? Well, all of that to take you back to verse 2 of 2 Peter 1. And if you don’t understand this verse now, you haven’t been listening. “Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the experience” – is that what it says? In the what? “In the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.”

We return to our first thought. Grace and peace come in unending, large, abundant streams to those who know God, and who know Jesus our Lord. Listen, Peter, remember, is teaching us how to face false teachers. In chapter 2, he presents those false teachers. In chapters 1 and 3, he talks about our defenses. The first defense is to know our salvation, and that’s what he’s into here in chapter 1. Last time, we talked about the fact we need to know the source of our salvation; it’s God. Now in verse 2, we need to know the substance of our salvation – the substance of it. Let’s begin at the end and just go back through that verse. “In the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.” “In” could be “through.” In the knowledge, or through the knowledge, indicating the sphere. The word “knowledge,” listen carefully, is *epignsis*; it is a strengthened form of *gnsis*. It implies a personal complete knowledge. It’s the strongest of the two words. We could say *gnosis* would be sort of basic information, *epignsis* would be full, exact, rich, intimate knowledge. Sometimes *epignsis* appears to have a very special, unique meaning, but you cannot ascribe it to necessarily salvation. For the knowledge mentioned in Hebrews 10:26, and 2 Peter 2:20, was knowledge that did not save, and in both cases it is *epignsis,* so you don’t want to make too much out of this word.

But it does tend to convey the idea of a full knowledge. Most of its uses have to do with a saving knowledge. Generally it has the idea of a real, complete, thorough knowledge, involving some intimate understanding. Paul loves to use it in the pastoral epistles, and he uses it with relation to the truth. In 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus, he talks about the knowledge of the truth, the knowledge of the truth. One, two, three, four, five times – the knowledge of the truth, the knowledge of the truth; the substance of our salvation, beloved, is the knowledge of the truth. It is empirical, it is objective, it is rational. “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” You cannot become a Christian until you hear the truth about Jesus, Romans 10:17. The Bible says your heart will lie, your heart will

deceive you, your emotions will deceive you, the truth is not in us. The truth is outside us. A man is a fool, and not only does he not understand the objectives and the power of salvation, he doesn't understand depravity, if he thinks that man can create divine truth out of his own fallen heart. Salvation's substance is not based on intuition, it's not based on emotion, it's not based on experience, it's based on the revealed truth, the knowledge of the truth.

But Peter goes further. Truth does not come from non- rational urges. He says it's not only the knowledge of the truth, as Paul called it, but here he says it's the knowledge of a person, two persons, "God and Jesus our Lord." The substance of our salvation; we know God through knowing Jesus, right? It is knowledge. We know the truth, and we know the person who revealed the truth. I'm sure Peter got this wonderful phrase, "the knowledge of God," from his Old Testament learning. The Old Testament uses the concept of knowing the Lord over and over and over. Pharaoh is quoted in Exodus 5:2 as saying, "I do not know the Lord." Judges 2:10 speaks of a whole generation of people who didn't know the Lord. First Samuel 2:12 describes the sons of Eli as corrupt because they didn't know the Lord. Hosea describes the people as possessing the spirit of harlotry, and they didn't know the Lord. Hosea records that God said, "I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness, however, and you shall know the Lord." Proverbs 2:5 says, "You will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God." That's an Old Testament concept. Man's relation to God is not only described as knowing the truth about God, but it's knowing God through His truth. I wish I had time to fully develop that. That's why at the end of this epistle, in 2 Peter 3:18, he says, "Grow in grace and in the" – what – "the knowledge – the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." Beloved, the substance of our salvation is not mystical. The substance of our salvation is knowing the God of truth, the Christ of truth, and the truth they revealed. There's no place for a passive mind. There's no place for mysticism, imagination, visualization, any of that other stuff.

Continuing our backward trip through the verse, "In the knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord, grace and peace are multiplied to us." That's the reality. We live in grace. Romans 5 says in the sphere of grace we have peace with God. Grace, that's *charis*, free, unmerited favor for sinners, giving them full forgiveness through Jesus Christ forever. Did you hear that statement? Grace is free, unmerited favor for sinners, giving them full forgiveness in Jesus Christ forever. Peace, *eirn*, is the effect of grace. It is the state of blessing flowing out of the forgiveness that Christ has given. "Be multiplied to you" is a wish. My wish for you, and it is a reality, is that in an ever-increasing, greater abundance, grace and peace will be multiplied to you. As the true, genuine, intimate knowledge of the truth of God and Christ grows through the word, there is the multiplication of the blessings of grace and peace. More grace for every sin, more grace for every weakness, more peace for every temptation, more peace for every trial. And so, beloved, we must understand our salvation. If we're going to stand against false teaching, like the stuff floating around, you've got to know the source of your salvation is God, and the substance of your salvation is knowledge – knowledge. That will help you put on what Paul, in 1 Thessalonians 5:8, calls the helmet of the hope of salvation. Shall we bow together in a word of closing prayer?

Father, we have had an interesting journey of thought tonight, all the way from what is wrong to what is right. We thank You that You've given us a clear Word, and You haven't left us to the deceptions of our own heart, which is deceitful above all things, as Jeremiah said; that You revealed Your truth. And then You not only revealed Your truth, but You gave us a resident truth teacher in the Holy Spirit. Father, may we build our lives on the truth, and in the knowledge that is the substance of our salvation, the knowledge of the truth, and the God of truth, and the Christ who said He was the truth. May we know the abounding multiplication of all grace, and all peace, and so in understanding our salvation, be able to stand against the errors of our time. We'll thank You in Christ's name. Amen.

Available online at: http://www.gty.org
COPYRIGHT (C) 2015 Grace to You
You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright).