

STUDIES IN 2 PETER (4)

Partakers of the Divine Nature

2 Peter 1:3-4

As we continue our study through 2 Peter, we have been discussing His greeting to his audience. We have noted that he is writing to those of “like precious faith” and how through the knowledge of Jesus, we have “all things that pertain to life and godliness.” Today, we want to focus on vs. 4 which notes that we have been given “*exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature...*” What does it mean that we are partakers of “the divine nature” of God?

I. The context

- a. He has divinely given us “*all things that pertain to life and godliness.*” We addressed this in our last lesson noting that we have everything we need to obtain and retain salvation. It is related to living a godly life (a life wherein we show Him the honor and reverence He is due).
- b. *By which we have exceedingly great and precious promises* – This is an expression that reminds us that there is hope associated with living for Him. That brings back our understanding of 1 Peter where he continually encouraged them to endure. Concerning these “promises”, several suggestions have been offered:
 - i. Some consider the promises made throughout the Old Testament – promises that would lead to redemption. These are now fulfilled and ready to be received by faithful believers.
 - ii. Anticipated promises yet to be fulfilled – Jesus was going to return, the ungodly (who persecuted and deceived) would be justly judged, and ultimately the reward of eternal life would be realized.
 - iii. Associated with our life in Him – the forgiveness of sins, spiritual blessings found in Christ, access through the Father through Jesus who is our Mediator, etc.
 - iv. Could it involve ALL of these? Past, present and future promises all serve to strengthen the Christian and give us hope as we endure this life and resist error.
 - v. Exceedingly great and precious – these are terms that describe the superior quality of these promises. They are of greater magnitude and of high value. Contrast this with the temporal promises of pursuing this world’s lures - Consider 1 John 2:15-17. His promises are many and they ought to be precious (of high value) to us.
- c. Through such, we can be *partakers of His divine nature* – our emphasis in this lesson.
- d. Available because *we have escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust* – this WILL be tied to being partakers of His divine nature. It is WHY we can partake of it. It is an expression that is likely related to obeying the gospel. Consider 2 Peter 2:20ff – have escaped the pollutions of the world.... We will have much more to say about this as we progress through this book.

II. Partakers of His divine nature

- a. The word for **partakers** is a form of the same Greek word usually translated *fellowship*. The word is translated “partners” in a couple of places (Luke 5:10 – of Jesus’ 4 fishermen, 2 Corinthians 8:23 – Titus was Paul’s partner, and Philemon 17 – Paul asked Philemon to consider him a partner). This expression is about sharing with or being in fellowship (partnership) with God. This also gives us some insight into what the *divine nature* is.
- b. *Divine nature* would be a reference to God’s nature.
 - i. If something is “divine” (θεῖος, theios). it is related to God’s nature. In fact, it is a form of the word for God (θεός, theos). This form is only found 3x in NT – Vs. 3-4 (divine power, divine

nature) and Acts 17:29 where Paul noted that we ought not to think of the Divine Nature is like silver or gold...

- ii. Thus, it is a reference to qualities that make God AND that He possesses. There are qualities that make God – God, such as eternity (including that He has always existed), omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, sovereignty, etc. These are qualities we do not and cannot possess.
- iii. Thus, we must understand that we are NOT God, nor will we become gods. We are NOT deity in any sense of the word.
- iv. Contextually, the expression means that we share or participate in characteristics that are manifest in Him. *Sharing with* does not mean you are the one you share with, it just demonstrates something you participate in together.
- v. So how are we partakers of the divine nature? Some plausible suggestions include:
 1. Genesis 1:26-27 notes that we are made in His image. Some have suggested this is a reminder that we are to be what God originally created us and intended us to be.
 2. Since we have obeyed the gospel, we are now Christians. By definition, Christians have “put on Christ” and thus we now live for Him and like Him (cf. Galatians 2:20, 3:27). Romans 13:14, *But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.* Philippians 1:21, *“For to me live is Christ, but to die is gain...”*
 3. Related this #2, it could be a simple reminder of who we are in Him. There are many scriptures that, when we obey the gospel and continue to live faithfully, describe a relationship or “sharing” with Him. Consider:
 - a. John 1:12 – as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.
 - b. 1 Peter 1:23 - we are *“born again, not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever...”* “Born again implies that we are “begotten” (KJV) meaning we belong to Him.
 - c. Colossians 3:10, *and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him*
 - d. John 14:23, *Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.*
 4. Philippians 2:5 reminds us to *“let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus our Lord...”* We ought to be doing our best to be like and think like our Lord. This might be akin to the proper application of WWJD.
 5. An anticipation of our future home in heaven with Him, where we will once and for all time be in His presence and likely share in His glory (1 Thessalonians 4:17).
 6. ALL of these manifest true principles. But considering the context which ties our being partakers of the divine nature to having escaped the corruption and lusts of this world, is best understood in light of how we are living NOW because we have become Christians.
 7. As Christians, can we continue to live like the world? NO! Consider Romans 6:1-6 & 1 John 3:6-9.

III. **Some characteristics of His divine nature that we can share with Him**

- a. SINCE, we are to be partakers of His divine nature, it worth considering some qualities God possesses that we also ought to possess. Ephesians 5:1 says, *Therefore be imitators of God as dear children.* So what are some ways we are to imitate God?

- b. **Holiness** – 1 Peter 1:15-16 reminds us to be holy even as He is holy. Hebrews 12:14 reminds us to *Pursue peace with all people and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord*. Holiness means living purified and sanctified (separated from the ways of the world) lives.
- c. **Love** - God is love. 1 John 4:7-8 calls for us love one another. How we love one another is related to how we know God, *“for God is love”*. He is the ultimate example of what the love we ought to be striving to achieve involves. 1 John 4:16, *And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him*. Ephesians 5:2 describes how we walk in love as Christ also loves us....
- d. **Perfection – or completion**. Certainly, God is perfect in every quality we are discussing. AND, we are not, but in Matthew 5:48, dealing with loving even our enemies, Jesus challenged His followers to be perfect (or complete) even as God is. This is something we are continually striving for and hope to achieve after this life.
- e. **Merciful** – Luke 6:36 - *Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful*. Matthew 5:7, Jesus declared that the merciful would obtain mercy. We need to learn to show mercy to others, if we want God to be merciful to us.
- f. **Forgiveness** – Matthew 6:14-15 – how you forgive others is how God is going to forgive you. On another occasion Matthew 18:21ff, Jesus taught a parable about this when Peter asked Him how often we should be willing to forgive others. We learn so much from God’s forgiveness of us (how many of us can out-forgive God concerning our own sinfulness?) and we ought to be willing to forgive others in return.
- g. **Righteousness** - Matthew 6:33 calls for us to *“seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness...”* Why are we seeking His righteousness? Because that is the pattern we strive to imitate. Romans 1:16-17 – within the gospel we find the righteousness of God revealed *“from faith to faith”*. We are then called to *“live by faith.”*
- h. **Goodness** – We read of the goodness of God in passages like Romans 2:4. 3 John 11 states, *Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God.*
- i. We will likely never achieve these qualities to the degree that God possess them, but we ought be striving to draw closer to that end.

And thus we can see Peter’s encouragement to these brethren. They have had to deal with suffering for the cause of Christ (1 Peter). Now, they need to be strengthened so that they would not be led away by false teachers and their errors. In these opening remarks, Peter has shown his confidence in them and encouraged them put their trust in God – both now and in the future. Like them, we need to pursue the likeness of God in the way we live our lives. What about you? Are you a partaker of His divine nature? Think about it!