

Partakers of the Divine Nature

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References: **2 Peter 1**, 2 Peter 1:1-4; 1 Corinthians 3:1-3; 2 Peter 1:14; 2 Peter 3:1-2; 2 Corinthians 12:9; Ephesians 1:19-20; 2 Peter 3:18

Introduction

Peter—2 Peter, chapter 1. Reading from verse 1:

[2 Peter 1:1-4 NKJV]

¹ Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ: ² Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, ³ as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, ⁴ by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

1 Corinthians 3:1-3. That's quite a mouthful from a fisherman, Peter, of course, being a fisherman. The Pharisees, they kind of scoffed at him; they said he's unlearned. But then they took note that they had been with Jesus. And this little introduction that we have to this epistle, if you've tried to follow the argument through that, you probably got lost like I have. And so tonight we'd like to maybe look at this and pull the threads out and take a look at these first four verses of the book of 2 Peter.

Before we do, let's just ask the Lord's help for us tonight.

O gracious God and Father, we are dependent upon You to unload this teaching here, those grand concepts as they are linked together. And as they bring us into a knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ and to a life of godliness, we pray, Father, that we may be able to understand the concepts put together. And, Lord, we might be able to apply them this evening to our lives. We thank You for Your great grace to us then. Help us by Your Holy Spirit. In the name of our Lord Jesus, Amen.

Peter, I see you've got the wrong glasses. I'm going to have to just do without this evening.

The reason for Paul—or for Peter, rather—to write, we find in chapter 3, verse 1. The reason he's writing: they are his beloved, and he addresses those that he's writing to over and over again as beloved. This is the aged Peter. This is a Peter that is soon to depart from this world; his martyrdom is very, very near. Verse 14, first of all, of chapter 1, he says:

[2 Peter 1:14 NKJV]

knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me.

"I must put off this tent," he says. His days, he knows, are numbered. These are the last words of Peter. I don't know if you were here a few weeks ago when I spoke on Peter the man—little biographical notes on the man Peter. Now, tonight we're going to look at some of the thoughts that he had that he wanted to pass on as his last words. These are his last words; this is the last epistle that he wrote.

In chapter 3, verse 1, as I started out to say, this is the reason why he wanted to write this letter to them:

[2 Peter 3:1-2 NKJV]

¹ Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), ² that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior,

Stir up your mind. Writing to remind them of things that they already know. And that's going to be true tonight; it is the things you already know, the things that I'm going to speak about tonight.

But in this introduction, he writes here concerning our great blessings, where he talks about the precious faith. He talks about divine power. He talks about all things that pertain to life and godliness. He speaks of those who are called by glory and virtue, and he speaks of great, exceeding great and precious promises, and having escaped the corruption that is in the world because we are partakers of the divine nature.

That's a lot of theology there—very **thick** theology. And it's like trying to drink thick cream. I've told the story, of course—we used to have Guernsey cows, and we separated the cream from the milk, from the skim milk, and we'd sell the cream. And that cream was so thick that you could hardly pour it out. It was so thick you wouldn't want to drink it; a little sip is all you would need to satisfy yourself. And that's like this; this is like thick cream as far as theology is concerned. So we're going to try to simplify it if we can and go through it in a way that we might be able to have a better understanding of it.

Now, another thing too: Peter's viewpoint. Paul, in writing in the book of Ephesians, his view was that all our blessings are in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. It was an upward view. Their blessings were there, their warfare was there, and so on. But Peter, he writes—and these two letters that he wrote are linked together, as we've looked at—but he writes them, in the introduction to his first epistle, addressing them to pilgrims. He has, instead of a heavenly view of the blessings, an earthly view as sojourners, as pilgrims, as strangers walking through a wilderness, but having all the blessings given to us while we walk on the pilgrim pathway down here below. So Paul has that opposite view; Peter concentrates on our walk **here**.

Like Precious Faith

So who is he writing to? Well, it says there in verse 1, "to those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ." Those who have obtained like precious faith. It's a precious faith because it reminds us not only of how precious it is to ourselves, but precious in the sight of God and the cost—the **cost** of that faith, the cost of being able to offer faith to us. It cost a lot. We think, "Oh, that's wonderful. Faith is wonderful." But it cost God an awful lot to allow us to even exercise faith, to have an object of faith. That's why it's a like precious faith.

How did they get it? Well, he says he got it with us "by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ." Well, reading Paul, we have those concepts reversed, right? The righteousness of God is given to us by faith. But here, our faith is by the righteousness of God. If you read that carefully, and if you read your Bibles slowly and meditate on it, you'll find that seems to be reversed. But in actual fact, Paul and Peter dwell on different aspects of that righteousness. Paul's theme was the righteousness of God by faith; Peter says that precious faith by the righteousness of God.

Okay, so what does that mean? Well, Paul's theme was that by faith, God's righteousness—faith in His Son, the Lord Jesus—our righteousness is given to us by faith. That's imputation. The righteousness is imputed or credited to the believer by faith: God's righteousness.

But Peter, he writes differently. His thoughts are different. The thought here is that God has demonstrated His righteousness. What He's done, since Christ has died for all, is that God in His righteousness opens up the door then to faith, to all. So that now, through that righteousness of God, we have access by faith. So therefore, He's opened up the door to righteousness for us through faith.

Grace and Peace Multiplied

Verse 2: "Grace and peace be multiplied." Now both Peter and Paul and John, I believe they used those terms: grace and peace. Always in that order: grace and then peace. You can never have peace without grace. Grace is that God-ward gifting that man cannot work for; it's unmerited. And as a result of us receiving that grace, we have inner peace. So the grace is from without; the peace is a result within. We receive the grace of God, and we have peace with Him.

And this peace—how is that peace and grace given? Is it meted out just enough for the time being? Will there be enough? Paul said:

[2 Corinthians 12:9 NKJV]

And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Here, Peter says it's **multiplied**. "Grace and peace be multiplied to you." But there is a condition. It says, "in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord." It's not just enough to get by; it's multiplied, but it comes by the knowledge of Jesus our Lord.

Quite a few times now in this opening passage, he talks about the knowledge of God, the knowledge of Christ growing, and he ends his epistle by saying:

[2 Peter 3:18 NKJV]

but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.

That's how he ends his epistle, the benediction. There's a knowledge. What does it mean, "the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ"? This is not gained through intellectual

achievement or much study. This is Peter's knowledge; it was gained through first-hand experience. Where did they have such power before the Sanhedrin? They took note that they had been with Jesus. They had full knowledge of Him.

How much time, I guess, do we spend with Jesus? You know, it's more than just in prayer; it's more than just Bible study. It's a communion—an actual fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ. You know the song, "He walks with me, he talks with me, he tells me I am his own." How much of that is a reality in our lives? Or is it that we live an outwardly sort of proper Christian experience and life, without a true knowledge of Him? That's the question that is raised here, because grace and peace is multiplied through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

Called by Glory and Virtue

Verse 3. Verse 3 is a heavy one: "as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue." Now, to unpack that, it might be helpful to take these three things in reverse order—just back up those three things: the divine power, the knowledge of Him, and the calling.

He has called us—the first one. What draws us to the Savior? Recently, I heard of a young man I've known since he was a boy. He didn't grow up in a Christian home, but he was the grandson of a friend of mine. And one day he spoke to his grandfather by saying, "Grandfather, I am sick of this world. I just want some righteousness. I want something good. I'm finished with this world."

He calls us by glory and virtue. Now, what that means, on the reverse side of that, is that we recognize that we are absolute sinners and that we need something more than that.

Abram, he was called by the God of glory; God called Abram out of Ur of the Chaldeans. Now, Ur of the Chaldeans—Ur is the Chaldean word for light. That city was known as the City of Light; it was a great civilization in Ur. But he left there. It says he looked for another city that had foundations. He had a vision of a city in glory, something that was not of this world. He was sick of that world. God called him, and he left.

How many other men in Ur of the Chaldeans did God call? Was he the only one? I don't think so. How many left? Oh, we only know one. He took a few with him, but it was Abram. It was a God of glory that called him. And it's a sense in which, too, as sinners, we long for something beyond ourselves, our sinful selves, and we're seeking for glory. So as Peter says, He's called us by glory and virtue.

Virtue. Virtue is all that is good and wholesome. It's, you might say, almost a synonym of godliness, which is another theme of this book: godliness. Now, the contrast there is found in verse 4: "the corruption that is in the world through lust." Lust—that lust there is the opposite of virtue. It's a desire; it's the evil desires of the old nature, the lusts. So He's called us by glory and virtue: a longing for another home, a longing for a pure life, something to get away.

Now, so that concept then: He's called us by glory and virtue, by which he says, "through the knowledge of Him." As Abram was called out from Ur of the Chaldees, that wasn't the end of his journey; that was only the beginning. Our calling is only the beginning. The end of that beginning was to enter into the promised land that God had promised him, "to a land that I will show you." So the reason or the purpose for God calling us is that we might know Christ, that we might get to know Him—not just about Him from a theoretical point of view, but to know Him personally through the knowledge of Him.

And through the knowledge of Him, we grow in the knowledge of Him. We understand that He is the one who was raised from the dead. Therefore, we come to this third point as we move back up through that verse: He's given to us, as His divine power has given to us, all things that pertain to life and godliness.

There are no power shortages with God—none. He gives us all things that we need through that divine power. Ephesians chapter 1, Paul gives us the definition of this divine power. Ephesians 1, verse 19—this is part of his prayer for the saints at Ephesus, and he prays for them. And verse 19:

[Ephesians 1:19-20 NKJV]

¹⁹ and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power ²⁰ which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,

The exceeding greatness of His power, that mighty power that raised Christ from the dead, is that divine power that, as Peter is talking about, is through that resurrection of Christ—that power that He's given to us, all things that pertain to life and godliness. Everything we need.

Our life—we can understand that term, our life in Christ. We need power to live that life because it's not a natural life. The Christian life is a supernatural life that is only energized by the Holy Spirit, the same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead. We need that divine

power to live as Christians; we need that divine power to live a life of holiness. So he says it's given to us, all things that pertain to that. There's no lack.

Just as the children of Israel went through the wilderness, God gave them all things that pertained to their journey through the wilderness: manna from heaven, they got quail, their shoes didn't grow old, they were protected from their enemies, they were given every advantage, water from the rock—every advantage. And everything that is needed to walk a holy life, we get through that divine power of the resurrection of Christ.

But he says also this one word, too: "all things that pertain to life and godliness." Godliness is an attitude. It's a willingness to depend upon God for everything, to not lean on our own understanding. That's godliness. Number one: dependence upon God, and a desire to please Him in everything. That's godliness. It's not a hard concept. We talk about a godly man or godliness, but that's what a godly man or woman does: they're dependent upon God for everything, and they seek to please God. It isn't as though they have any special powers themselves, in themselves. They're not marked out as any different. So He's given, he says, all things that pertain to life and godliness through that divine power.

Exceedingly Great and Precious Promises

Finally, verse 4. Here now, up until now, we wonder, "Well, how do we actually get this? All these divine blessings that are promised to us by divine power?" And that is through faith. Because what God has done, as Peter writes here, is "by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises." Exceedingly great and precious promises. God can't lie; a promise of God is the fulfillment of it.

How do we obtain those promises? By faith. Those precious promises we obtained, they're given to us. You know, a person can be a homeless person living on the street and out of touch with his family, until finally one day someone tracks him down. The police are sent out to search for him, and they say to him, "Could you come down to the lawyer's office with us?" They go down to the lawyer's office. The lawyer says, "You have inherited a vast fortune, but you didn't know anything about it." Those precious promises—that's what is like a resource there.

Peter doesn't say just "these promises" by faith; he says "these **exceedingly great and precious promises**." Could he use any more superlatives than that? I don't think so. As I said earlier, those promises, just like the precious faith, the precious promises speak also of a great cost that God had to pay in order to provide us with those promises. But those

promises are—they're the very objects of our faith. And through these, he says, "so that through these exceeding precious promises you might be partakers of the divine nature."

Partakers—it's interesting, that's a word like partner. We read in the New Testament that Simon Peter and Andrew, his brother, were partners with John and James as fishermen. They were partners in the fishing business, and that's the same word here. We could read it this way: that through these promises, God has made you partners with Him of His divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through the evil desires of the old nature. Escaped! It's like we've been swept up into heaven by this phrase, to escape the corruption and the destruction of this world by those great promises that we lay hold of.

The Equation of Godliness

So this is fairly simple, I hope, but I want to try and make it even simpler. Let's see if we've got something here... not dead. We got the—I should have made sure that we had—there we go. Let's see if this one works. If it doesn't, we're closing in prayer. Okay.

This is for Gene because it's an equation. And as I know, many of you are good mathematicians, so we're going to do it—we're going to make this into an equation. Thank you.

$$\text{Power} \times \text{Promises} \times X = \text{Godliness}$$

Can you see that on the Zoom, though? Not clear? Not clear. Oh yeah, right. Well, I'll turn off these lights in a minute here.

Times... what factor do we need to multiply that by? There's another factor here. In order that we might get our—this is our answer here: godliness. So, what is X ? Solve for X . I can see... somebody's trying. I don't hear any... What is it? Power times promises times X equals godliness.

Okay, Gene, you're a mathematical genius. That's right, it's **faith**. It's obtaining. Oh my goodness, I won't write any more. Oh, I should have written... permanent marker! Oh, yeah. I'll have to scrub that off.

So there it is, the equation that I'd like you to remember: solve for X .

Let's close in prayer.

Our Father and our God, how we bless and thank You once again for Your grace and goodness to us. And we could say no more than what Peter ends his epistle by:

[2 Peter 3:18 NKJV]

but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.

To be godly, to depend upon You and to do that which is pleasing to You. Help each one of us, we pray, that as we take the divine power within us and rely upon those promises by faith, we will produce a good life that will be pleasing to You. We thank You for Your grace to us in Jesus' name, Amen.