

2 Peter 1:4-Partakers of the Divine Nature

After a wonderful salutation from Peter identifying himself as both a bondservant and an apostle of Jesus, Peter identifies his audience as fellow believers in Christ “who have received a faith of the same kind as ours”. Faith being something they received implies that it had more to do with God’s sovereign choice than their merit. Amazingly, the faith they have is of equal value to the faith of the apostles. Peter also explains the means or the basis for their saving faith. Their salvation comes through “the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.” This statement of Peter’s ranks right up there with the great passages in the Gospels about the nature of Christ. Jesus is both God and man, and His atoning work on the cross is the basis for our saving faith. Jesus has imputed His righteousness to all who believe, and our sins were imputed to Him when He died a sacrificial death for us. Peter’s audience was primarily Greek Gentiles in Asia Minor (modern day Turkey), so whether you are a Jew from Israel like Peter, or a Greek speaking Gentile in Asia, you have the same type of saving faith because it is based on Jesus’ merit and not yours.

Peter then gave his audience a blessing that can be meaningful only to fellow Christians. The blessing of grace and peace can come only through the true knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord. The word Peter uses for knowledge is epignosis which means the full and complete knowledge necessary to be saved. This is not the traditional philosophic knowledge of man, but the precise complete knowledge one needs to believe in God, and God’s plan of redemption through Jesus Christ. We need this type of knowledge to have an intimate personal relationship with Christ. This knowledge is best understood as the gospel of Jesus Christ. In succeeding passages, Peter will encourage his readers to take full advantage of this knowledge. This is very important to Peter’s letter because his purpose in writing is to warn about false teachers, and counteract their heresy through holding firm to the true knowledge of Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

Fellowship with Christ

In 2 Peter 1:3, Peter establishes that we who believe are beneficiaries of God’s divine power in giving us everything we need to live the spiritual life in a godly way. The revelation from God that was brought into the world by Jesus from heaven provides everything we need to know to follow Him now, even in this life. I often hear people say, “If God would just speak to me, just make Himself known, and let me know what He wants me to do, then life would be easier”. Peter is saying that God has spoken, and God has made Himself known through His Son Jesus Christ. This is what John said in his Gospel of John 1:14, 18, “And the Word became

flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father...No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.”

Now, Christ has called us who believe to a life of godliness. We were originally called to repent and believe that Jesus died for our sins, the Just for the unjust, and by believing in His atoning work as the only means of forgiveness, we were saved from the penalty of sin. But now that we are forgiven, and have been reconciled to God, we are called to experience the fellowship of Christ now in this life by living in concert with Him. By His “glory” and His “goodness”, He has granted to us magnificent promises pertaining to living in fellowship with Christ now. The promises that Peter wrote about in his first letter were the second coming of Christ, our bodily resurrection, and our inheritances in heaven. The knowledge and belief in these great events give us great hope so that we can persevere in a fallen hostile world. Peter had also stressed the reality of our new birth in Christ. We are new creatures, the old spiritually dead person is no more, but we are alive in Christ. Paul said it well in 2 Cor.5:17, “if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature, the old things passed away; behold new things have come.” Part of being a member of the “body of Christ” is a promise to the church that the Holy Spirit will indwell us at the time of our salvation. Through this promise we receive the help that we need in understanding the Word of God, and living the spiritual life. Therefore, with the promises of hope for the future, our present fellowship in Christ, and the leading of the Holy Spirit, we can be sure that we have everything we need to live lives worthy of our calling.

Paul also wrote of this reality in Philippians 4:19 and 2 Cor.9:8, “my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in Christ”, and “God is able to make all grace abound to you, that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed.”

One of the great promises in Scripture pertaining to life here and now is found in 2 Peter 1:4, by the promises of God “you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.” How cool is that? Rotten people like us can actually become partakers of the divine nature—here is yet another aspect of God’s grace that is beyond our imagination. While dwelling on this passage, and in particular the idea of “partakers of the divine nature”, I looked up the Greek word in the original text. It is the word that is usually translated fellowship. Therefore, Peter is not saying we can become divine like some goofy new age religion. He is saying that we can become fellowshippers (I know that is not a real word) with Christ. We can act like Him, exhibit His qualities, and He can be

revealed through our lifestyle. We can share in His moral victory over sin. We can not only wear those WWJD bracelets, but actually do what Jesus would do. Another way of looking at it is through what Peter wrote at the end of v.4, “having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.” This is the negative counterpart of being partakers. We are no longer to be dominated by the corruption and the lust that is common in the fallen world and these mortal bodies. The world’s corruption is driven by evil desires, but we have escaped that corruption through our partnership with Christ.

Keep in mind that this is no passive automatic thing. That is why Peter will stress the command in verse 5 and again in v.10 to “apply all diligence”, and “be all the more diligent”. All the resources are made available by God, but it requires every bit of attention and hard work we can muster as well as the constant faith in the promises of God to cultivate the seven virtues that Peter lists in 2 Peter 1:5-7. This is also why Peter speaks of a process, and the potential of it by using the verb tense in v.4 of “you might become partakers”. As believers cultivate and develop these seven virtues, they are working towards becoming partakers.

Peter’s expectations are that they will progress in these virtues and work towards becoming partakers, but if they are not growing, Peter has a pretty good idea why. In v.9, Peter says it is because they are spiritually blind because they have forgotten their purification from their former sins. They need to be diligent to always remember the precious blood that was shed for them—the awesome price that God paid for the forgiveness of their sin. It is common to the nature of mankind to forget all that God has done for them. We get distracted by all the stuff and frenetic activity in the world. Jesus said it well in the parable of the soils, “the man who hears the word, and the worries of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke out the word, and it becomes unfruitful.”

The Prodigal Son

This passage reminds me of the parable of The Prodigal Son. When the wayward son repented and came back to the Father confessing his sin, and asking forgiveness; he left or escaped “the corruption that is in the world by lust” (as Peter would put it). The son was restored, reconciled, and given his father’s ring signifying that he was a sharer, a participant, even a “partaker” in the family of God. Now what was left was to just live like it or experience it.

Compare Ephesians 5:18

In Paul’s letter to the church at Ephesus, Paul wrote something similar to Peter’s message in 2 Peter 1. Beginning in Eph.5:15, Paul told them to be careful how they live. Make the most of

your time living for Christ because your days are numbered. Instead of being foolish like the world around them, be wise, and understand what the will of God is. Focus on the truth from the Word of God and live according to that. In addition, we need to make sure who is in control of our lives. The rule of life for Christians is to be controlled by the Holy Spirit. Paul uses a well known popular way of losing control to illustrate the importance of being filled or controlled by the Spirit. He could have used any number of worldly pursuits, but it has always been popular to lose control by getting drunk, so almost everyone can relate to that. Therefore Paul wrote, “And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Holy Spirit.”

Philippians 2:12-13

Paul also wrote to the church at Philippi to obey the Word of God, and to “work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who is at work in you”. He was not saying work for your salvation—they were already saved. He was saying that since they were saved they needed to diligently work towards spiritual growth in great reverence of God, always remembering the presence of God’s Spirit within them changing them from the inside out. If we truly appreciate the grace of God given to us, and have a love for the Savior who died for us—Doesn’t this make sense?

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