

## Partakers of the Divine Nature

Sunday, November 21, 2021 at The First Congregational Church of Marshalltown, Iowa

2 Peter 1:4 "...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."

✚Introduction: what does growth as a person look like? Recently I read the November 16 article from the devotional classic My Utmost for His Highest, by Oswald Chambers. In it he mentioned that if you get to the point in your spiritual life that people see God do wonderful things through you, but they don't really pay any attention to you as a person, that is an indication that you are on the right track. That made me wonder about the indications of Christian maturity and growth. What does growth as a Christian look like, what are the indications that you're going the right way and doing well. Well, I know that John's epistles speak of "children", "young men" and "fathers" but don't go into too much detail about the characteristics of each. But then there is this amazing opening to the second epistle of Peter, written by a man who lived with Jesus, and who knew that he himself would die soon and he wrote some astonishing insights into the promise of God.. Let's take a look at the power of the promises of God and at one of the most unique text in the New Testament.

## Promises

He wrote about "exceedingly great and precious promises" of which some scholars believe number in the hundreds in Scripture and they are worth, every one, careful study and reflection. Few things can be more powerful than when someone prays the promises of Scripture. But for today I want to note one point about the word here translated "promises". It harkens back to classical Greek and it referred to promises freely given without request. The promises of Scripture God offers not because we first asked, but because it is in His nature to be generous. I recently attended a meeting of a minister with a wonderful ministry in Honduras and during his sermon he asked the congregation what they would say if God asked them, "what can I do for you?" The very word for "promise" here indicated a God so inclined. We have been given many great and precious promises.

## Partakers of the divine nature-what would God be like if God looked like you?

One of those "great and precious promises" is in 1 John 3:2, which says, "Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." When we finally meet Christ face to face, we remain our own individual selves but become just like Him in character and nature. Try to imagine if Jesus

looked like you and sounded just like you when He talked. It would be something like that. Our goal is to get as close to that as we can in this life and this passage in 2 Peter addresses this in a way found nowhere else in Scripture. By these great and precious promises we might become partakers of the divine nature. "Might" implies growth, and "partaker in the divine nature" is that phrase that is unique in the New Testament. Similar to the New Testament word for "fellowship", a partaker is involved with other people in a valuable endeavor that is ongoing but will meet fruition in the future. In his first epistle (1 Peter 5:1) Peter wrote that he was a "fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed..." In becoming more like Christ we progress toward the persons that we were meant to be in the economy of God. Progress in this life can be challenging, but the ultimate goal is assured and more wonderful than we can imagine. Like the beauties of heaven, this may be conveyed in somewhat symbolic language, but remember as I have said before, a symbol isn't a symbol unless it represents something that is real, and if heaven and our ultimate state before Christ is presented in symbolic language it is because the reality is beyond our ability to comprehend. No one, upon entering heaven, is going to be indifferent or disappointed. No one, in becoming their true selves in the presence of Christ, are going to be indifferent to what has become of them. C.S. Lewis wrote that if we could see the most unimpressive

Christian in their completed state before Christ, we would marvel at that person as if we had encountered an angel. We are given the privilege to become partakers in the divine nature.

#### Application-read verses 5-8

Happily, Peter spells out the application for anyone who wants to be proactive in participating in the nature of God, who wants the Holy Spirit to speak and work through him. In the wisdom of this elder who lived with the Lord Jesus and now imparts essential wisdom as he sees his days on earth come to a close. He gives a list of pursuits that mark the growth of the person with the promise that such people participate in the divine nature, they have the Holy Spirit work and speak through them. Here they are briefly:

Add to your faith virtue-behavior that would be honorable in the eyes of everyone

Add to virtue knowledge-both of Scripture and of experience in the Christian life

Add to knowledge self-control-be able to tell yourself “no”.

Add to self control perseverance-the natural outcome of self control, which leads people to succeed when others fail

Add to perseverance godliness-people sense the Presence of the Holy Spirit in you

Add to godliness brotherly kindness-that's pretty self explanatory

Add to brotherly kindness love-agape-the highest form of love

Verse 8-you will not be unfruitful. Jesus described it as abundant life

Verse eight promises us that such pursuits promise a fruitful life. It's literally a recipe for a successful Christian life. Jesus described it as "abundant life" when He said that He came that we might have life and have it abundantly. My understanding of abundant life is this; it is a life that is not always easy or without challenges or setbacks, but is one in which one can look back at the end of his days and say that it was worth it, it was worth it all.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, Peter, toward the end of his life, wrote about participating in the divine nature, becoming more like our Savior and useful to the Holy Spirit as we journey through the years of our lives on earth. He mentions the great and precious promises of Scripture, a study that could take us the rest of our lives all \by itself. He then outlines how we can pursue this life that gives us, not a legalistic list of rules, but guideposts in the course of emotional and spiritual growth. Look at them and ponder them often.