

## PARTAKERS OF THE DIVINE NATURE

2 Peter 1:1-4

**Intro:** Little by little we have been looking at the details of the first four verses with which the Apostle Peter began his second epistle. We have determined that the wording of each of the four verses indicates that Peter was writing to believers, and only to believers. We have seen that at salvation we received all that we will ever need to become godly people. So the Christian life is not a matter of getting more than we have, but of understanding what we have, and, by God’s grace, using it. Further, we have seen that God’s purpose in salvation is to make us like His Son. And what got me started thinking about all of this was Peter’s comment in verse 4 about God’s “exceeding great and precious promises,” and that somehow through those promises we actually become “partakers of the divine nature.”

We learned that a promise is not something, in this case, that we do for God, but it is what God has promised to do for us. The promises may involve us in some way, but the fulfillment of the promise is God’s responsibility toward us. And the object of these promises which Peter had in mind is that we are made “partakers of the divine nature.”

Tonight I want to begin by examining the words, “divine nature,” and then look again at the word “partakers,” and then look at some of the promises which Peter probably had in mind.

So my first point is,

### I. WHAT IS “THE DIVINE NATURE”?

Perhaps we should begin by asking what is “nature” as Peter was using this word. If we are speaking of people we mean those essential characteristics which make people what they are. This is what we have in mind when we talk about *human nature*. Psychologists have a way of dividing us into different kinds of people, but that is not what Peter had in mind when he wrote about nature. He had in mind a single category which all people are in, and the Apostle Paul described it well in the first three verses of Ephesians 2:

1 And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;

2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this

world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others (Eph. 2:1-3).

By birth we are all sinners. This is what David said in Psa. 51:5, “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.” A much longer discussion of our sinful nature is given in Paul’s letter to the church at Rome in Rom. 1:18-3:20. We have a sinful nature, a nature which is at enmity with God. A nature which is incapable of pleasing God and a nature which is not interested in pleasing God. It is a condition that none of us can change, and which we don’t want to change. In fact, we feel that we are OK, and we don’t like being around anyone who tries to tell us differently. We didn’t choose to be what we are, but the fact is that we are sinners, sinners by nature, by birth, and sinners by choice. We are utterly incapable of doing anything that is pleasing to God.

But Peter was writing to people who had learned what they were by nature, God had sought them and opened their hearts to the truth about themselves, but He had also shown them what the remedy is. It is found in the Gospel, the message of the death of Jesus Christ for sinners, by which sinners are saved from their sins and made new creatures in Christ. God does not change our old nature, but He gives us a new nature.

And what is His purpose in doing that? He wants to make us “partakers of the divine nature.” What is the divine nature? It is those essential characteristics which make God God. It is God’s purpose in salvation to make us like the One Who saved us, and the One Who saved us is exactly like the One Who sent Him to save us.

Obviously to look at a person who has just been saved, you probably will not notice much of a difference right away in his behavior, but he will know that things have changed. Gradually the change that has take place inwardly will begin to manifest itself outwardly.

But now I want to focus our attention on the word “partakers.”

## **II. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A “PARTAKER OF THE DIVINE NATURE?”**

Peter's comments here will be clearer if I point out that the word "be" in verse 4 would more accurately translated by the word *become*. As we walk with the Lord, believing His promises, we *become partakers of the divine nature*. It doesn't happen all at once. It takes time.

Often which I am speaking on a text I turn to some of the books of sermons I have in my library to read what other men have had to say on the text I am working on. I have a whole set of Alexander Maclaren's sermons which was given to me by the members of a Bible Class I taught in a lady's home soon after my family and I moved to Portland. And he has often helped me. One statement had made about this part of verse 4 that we are considering is that God has not willed that we should become possessors of the divine nature, but partakers of the divine nature. What is the difference? God and Christ and the Holy Spirit are the only Possessors of the divine nature. That is why we speak of them as God, or as Deity. You and I are only "partakers of the divine nature," but we will never be Deity. However, there are many characteristics that are to be found in God which will begin to appear in the hearts and lives of those who have been born again, of those who have been saved. As we believe these "exceeding great and precious promises of God," God through those promises works in us to make us like He is, like Christ is, in a more limited way. Partakers, as I explained before, in the Greek, is a word which has the same root as the word *fellowship*. And the point is that as we have fellowship with God through His promises, we become more like He is. It is not what we are doing for ourselves because He gives us the faith to believe the promises. It is a work that God does in us as we take Him at His Word.

Now I want to ask, and hopefully answer,

### **III. WHAT ARE SOME OF THESE PROMISES?**

Let me say, first of all, that they are all in one book, the Bible. God has not added to His Word since the Apostle John finished writing the five books of his that we find in our Bibles. So stay away from people who claim to have added revelations of what God will do for us. Every promise that we will every need to become partakers of the divine nature are right here in this book.

Secondly, remember not every promise in the Bible is for us. God made promises to Abraham that are not for us. He made promises to Israel that

are not for us. He has promised to meet our needs, but He has not promised to feed us with manna, or with quail. He has promised to guide us, but we don't have a pillar of cloud by day, or a pillar of fire by night. The promise to Mary that she would have a child even though she was not married was unique. No other virgin has ever had a child like Mary did. The Lord promised the disciples that they would be able to perform all kinds of miracles, but He has not given those promises to us. And anyone who says that He has, is deceived. I hope you see what I mean.

We used to sing a chorus, "Every promise in the book is mine . . ." I know what the writer meant, but the song just is not true. They are not all mine. Perhaps most of them are, but not all of them.

So, although I don't need to emphasize this with those of you who are here tonight, let me say nevertheless,

**A. The promises Peter was talking about are all in our Bibles.**

The basic promise by which we are to become partakers of the divine nature is:

**B. The promise of salvation.**

It is absolutely impossible for any person ever to become a partaker of the divine nature who is not saved.

John 3:16 is such a promise. Rom. 1:16 is such a promise. Rom. 10:9 and 10 is such a promise. Titus 2:11 and 12 is such a promise.

But let me mention a part of salvation which is very important for us to understand if we are to become partakers of the divine nature. In saving us God not only delivers us from the penalty of our sin, but He gives us life, eternal life, divine life. Before we are saved we are "dead," spiritually dead. But when we are saved we are born from above. See John 1:11-13. We can refer here again to John 3:16. In this wonderful verse we are told not only that we have everlasting life, but that we will never perish. Once we have eternal life, we have God's promise that we will never lose it. At salvation we are joined in a living relationship with Christ. He is our life. See Gal. 2:20. See also Col. 3:1-4.

But let me mention another promise,

### **C. The promise of the Holy Spirit.**

There can be no progress in becoming a partaker of the divine nature without the help and blessing of the Holy Spirit. Cf. the Lord's promise in John 14:16-17. And then read John 14:26. And then add to those verses John 16:12-15.

Look at how the old nature and the new nature are contrasted with reference to the Holy Spirit in Gal. 5:16-26. The fruit of the Spirit is the way we become partakers of the divine nature.

There are many other verses we could go to. Romans 8 is especially important in teaching us about the Holy Spirit.

Let me mention two more ways that we become partakers of the divine nature.

### **D. By prayer.**

There are many prayer promises in Scripture so that we will know that God answers prayer. John 14:13 and 14 are two verses on prayer. John 15:7 is another. Add to those John 16:23-24. And then we have 1 John 5:14-15.

Now take those promises, and employ them in the exercise of prayer, not only for ourselves, but also for others. We have wonderful examples of prayer for spiritual growth in Ephesians and Colossians, just to mention a few. (See Eph. 1 and 3 and Col. 1.)

### **E. The commandments of Scripture.**

Often promises are linked with obedience to the Word of God. Cf. John 14:21 and 23.

### **F. Church fellowship.**

One of the strongest messages of the NT has to do with the importance of the local church – the importance of the whole body of Christ, to be sure, but from a practical standpoint, the importance of the local church. I

don't believe that any Christian can truly make the kind of progress that needs to be made in partaking of the divine nature who does not regularly participate in the fellowship and ministry of a true NT church. Cf. Heb. 10:19-25. And if you go on to read the rest of Hebrews 10 you will find that it has to do with avoiding sin, and ultimately receiving the promise of God. See Heb. 10:35-36.

**Concl:** When I started this series, I didn't expect to find all that I have found in those first four verses. I trust that the Holy Spirit has been enabling you to see what I have seen, and maybe more than I have seen. But let us remember that the ultimate promise of our salvation is that we are to be like Christ, "partakers of the divine nature." That started the moment we were saved, and it will continue until we are finally with the Lord. Cf. Eph. 1:3-6; Rom. 8:26-30; 1 John 3:1-3.

From now on let us pay particular attention to the promises of God, asking the Lord to give us the faith to believe them, and to trust Him to fulfill His purpose in us to make us like His Son.