

"PARTAKERS OF THE DIVINE NATURE"

2 Peter 1:4

Need: New Birth

Proposition: Through the Gospel of Jesus Christ it is possible for us to be a partaker of the divine nature.

Objective: To call on men to act on the promises of God that they might be a partaker in divine nature.

Introduction:

Spiritually there are only two kinds of people in the world. Both kinds can be found in this congregation this morning. There are those who are alienated from God, and are strangers to the presence of God in their lives. Then there are those who have been made part-takers of the divine nature. They are privileged to have the very life of God dwelling in them. This makes them to be the sons of God.

Which group would you consider yourself to be in? Maybe a careful study of our text for the morning will help you be sure about where you stand. Peter sets this truth before us in a very helpful way. "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lusts."

I. THE POSSIBILITY OF PARTAKING OF THE DIVINE NATURE

Peter indicates that our being partakers of the divine nature is the very purpose of God. Everything involved in the precious promises had as its purpose our sharing in the divine nature.

This indicates something to us about the nature of man. In the Biblical account of the creation of man, we discover that man is a special creation of God. Man alone was created in the image of God. Man alone was created with the capacity to know and have communion with God. This involved man being capable to being a partaker of the divine nature. However, the Bible tells us that when man fell into sin, something radical happened to man's relationship with God. Whatever knowledge of God he had before the fall became perverted. Whatever communion with God he had known was ended.

But this reference of Peter also tells us something about God. While the God revealed to us in the Scripture is One seen as totally other than man, still He is one who reaches out to man. Just to consider what we learn about the divine nature in the Bible makes this statement a marvel. The God revealed in the Bible is by nature eternal. He is without beginning and without end. In contrast man is very much a creature of time. He definitely has a beginning and will have an end. God is by nature Almighty. He is the possessor of all power and authority. Man is by nature weak. He is flesh! God is by nature omnipresent, but man is by nature limited in every way. God is by nature omniscient, that is, He knows all things, but man is by nature very limited in knowledge. God is infinite, but man is finite. On and on we could go with the contrast, but it would always emphasize the vast difference between God and man.

All of the contrast that we have considered has omitted one important thing about God. Above everything else God is love. This prompts God to want to share His ever-blessed self with others. This moves Him to share Himself with His creature man. He wants to bestow upon man His own nature. It is out of this love being present in God that the possibility of your partaking of the divine nature arises.

But how far does this possibility go? Does this mean that it is possible for man to become God? No! Rather it means that it is possible for man to have a special relationship with

God, and special knowledge of God. It is possible for man to be indwelt by the very presence of God. But even when this relationship is established God will still be God, and man will still be man.

Jesus spoke of this as being "born again." He declared that man must be born again or he could never participate in the kingdom of God. Paul spoke of it as being a new creation. But the wonderful thing I want you to see is that this is a possibility for you. It is possible for you this very morning to be a partaker of the divine nature. It is possible for the presence of God to be very real in your life, and for you to share in the very inner disposition of God in your life. This creates the possibility of a new moral lifestyle in your life in an evil world like this.

II. THE PROMISES THROUGH WHICH WE BECOME PARTAKERS.

"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises." The Apostle traces these promises back to their point of origin. He traces them back to the God who gave them through His Son. The promises are divine in origin. They are "given" to us. This is that same word used in the previous verse for giving. It calls attention to the generosity of the gift. The tense of the verb also calls attention to the fact that the promises have already been given and they are there for our claiming. We do not have to wait on God to do anything more.

Peter describes the promises as being "exceeding great and precious." Since the Bible is very careful about the use of descriptive words, we must take these seriously. You can comprehend the greatness of the promises, and their precious value only as you consider what the promises cover. What are the promises that God has given that creates this possibility of us partaking of the divine nature?

Clearing the promises are those found in the New Covenant. They include the promise of a full forgiveness for our sins. Surely something must be done about our sin if we are to ever know anything of the divine nature. God promises that He will forgive all of our sins based upon the death of Christ upon the Cross. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin. The New covenant promises the gift of the Holy Spirit. Under the Old Covenant only a few saints knew about the Holy Spirit in a personal way; in the New Covenant each participant in the covenant receives the gift of the Holy Spirit. He comes to make His home in the life of each believer. The promises include the promise of a new heaven and a new earth. The Old Covenant concerned itself primarily with an earthly land, but the New Covenant focuses our attention on a new Heaven and new earth which be given to us when our Lord comes again. This is one of the promises that Peter will discuss more fully in this letter. The promises include that of being adopted into the family of God. Through the Lord Jesus Christ and the indwelling Spirit we are placed in the family of God as fullgrown sons. We are made to be heirs together with Christ of the riches of the heavenly Father.

Do you begin to see why the Apostle calls these "exceeding great and precious promises?" They present things to man that would never come to him apart from the love and mercy of God. They could as an expression of the grace and generosity of God. God has given.

These promises, however, do not assure you of being a partaker of the divine nature. They only assure you of the possibility. For a promise to ever become valid, it must be claimed. The thing promised must be received. The differences between people in the world comes as this very point. Those who are partakers of the divine nature are those who have accepted as a free gift what God has promised. They have asked for and have received the forgiveness of sins. They have received the gift of eternal life. They have received a place in the family of God. They are confidently looking forward to the new heaven and the new earth by faith. The promises are yours--if you will claim them by faith--if you will act on them in trust.

III. THE POWER FOR THOSE WHO ARE PARTAKERS OF THE DIVINE NATURE.

"Having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." This is a consequence that comes with being a partaker of the divine nature. Man is naturally enslaved by the lusts of the flesh, and is being victimized by the corruption that is in the world. Usually he is blind to what is really happening, and it is only after that he has escaped that he realizes just how desperate his situation really is.

There is only one way to escape the destructive domination of the desires that controls the world. You must have imparted to you the very life of God that enables you to overcome the world. It is only as God lives in you by His Holy Spirit that it is possible for you to break away and establish a new and healthy life style. Then it is true that "Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world."

Some of you are aware of this destructive domination of the desires this morning. Some of you know that your desire for strong drink is slowly destroying your health, your family, and everything that you value--yet you are so dominated by that desire that you cannot break free from it.

Some of you know that your desire for material things has too much control over your life. You want to be free, but you have not found a way to escape. The more you struggle against it the stronger the desire seems to become.

Others find themselves under the destructive domination of sexual desires. You have developed desires in this realm that are destroying you. They are destroying your peace of mind, your relationships with others. You have tried to break free, but you have found escape impossible.

These are only a few of the desires that are at work in the world. We could add the desire for revenge that dominates so many. It eats away life so destructively. Escape seems to be impossible.

But Peter declares that those who respond to the promises of God, and become a partaker in the divine nature, find in themselves the strength of escape. This is one sign of the new nature within--there is a new power to deal with the old desires that have dominated. This new life within produces a new walk before others.

Conclusion:

Does this sound like something that has been happening in your life? Do you know for sure that you are a partaker in the divine nature? Have you been born again? This involves so much more than just being religious. Interestingly Jesus presented this truth to a very religious man. His efforts at religion had not brought to him the privilege of partaking in the divine nature. This could come to him only as he received the promise of God.

I want to urge you to accept the promise of God this morning. You can know in your life the very reality of the life of God this very morning. Won't you do it right now?