

Sharing The Divine Nature

II Peter 1:4

Need: The New Birth

Proposition: By receiving the Gospel promise by faith we can actually share
the nature of God.

Objective: To lead persons to experience the New Birth.

Introduction:

There is more to being a Christian than we will ever understand. It is a miracle every time a person becomes a member of the family of God. When you consider that a Christian actually shares the very nature of God, you begin to understand just how much of a miracle it is.

Look around you! Every true believer in this room is a miracle of God's great power. Everyone is ready to admit that Jan Payne and Gilbert Herrera are such miracles, but they do not understand that their own children are also such miracles. I remember a dear little mountain lady saying to me when I was a young pastor, "D. L., I don't know what you will preach in the years ahead. You grew up in the church and have always been such a good boy, you really don't have any testimony to share." She could not have been further from the truth. It is just as much a miracle that I am in the family of

God as it is that Gilbert Herrera is in the family. It is just as much a miracle when one of our children is saved as when someone like Jan comes to know the Lord. In both cases the nature of God is imparted. It is the impartation of the nature of God that makes the eternal difference.

I. THE MEANING OF THE SHARING OF THE DIVINE NATURE.

Since an expression like this is open to so much misunderstanding, we need to spend some time making sure that we understand what Peter is affirming.

What does it mean to share in the divine nature?

1. It does not mean that we are divine.

I heard this week about a man in Boston who said on a talk show that he looks in a mirror each morning, and sees God. He believes himself to be a god. Ever since Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit in the garden, depraved humankind has been attempting to become gods. This is a primary thrust of the New Age movement across the land. Some of you have heard some of the stars of Hollywood declare themselves to be god. Poor deceived souls! They have been deceived and blinded by the god of this age and this is only a sign of the deception. This is one the errors taught by the Mormon Church---they too see human beings becoming gods.

You do not need to be god, but you do need to share in the divine nature.

2. It does mean that you have the Holy Spirit living in you.

How does God impart His nature to us? He does this in what Jesus called “the New Birth”. Technically we call this regeneration, or a work whereby the Holy Spirit comes to live in the life of the person. In doing this the Holy Spirit imparts new life, the very life of God to the believer. Of such a person it can be said that they share in the nature of God.

In other places in the New Testament we are told that this means having the life of Christ in us. There is really no difference between having the Holy Spirit in you, having Christ in you, and sharing in the divine nature.

Are you aware of the life of God in you? Are you aware of this divine nature in you? Are you aware of Christ living in you? It is nothing less than miraculous that such life is in you. No one naturally shares in the divine nature. We are naturally the children of wrath rather than the children of God. Naturally it is our nature to resist God, to seek to avoid God, to despise God, to blaspheme God, and to rebel against God. The only way this can be changed is for God to do this work of regeneration whereby He imparts to us the divine nature.

II. THE MEANS OF SHARING THE DIVINE NATURE.

This is where our text begins. “Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature.” So the means of our sharing in the divine nature is “His very

great and precious promises.” This is another way of referring to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Word of God.

1. The Gospel involves great promises.

Have you ever considered just how great the promises found in the Gospel are? Let us just review a few of them so that we can be reminded of their greatness.

Consider the greatness of the promise of forgiveness. God has promised that He will forgive all our transgressions and iniquities. That He will cleanse us from all of the defilement left by sin. Is this not a great and generous promise on the part of God? All! It does not matter how many there are in number or the character of the sin. God has already committed Himself that He will forgive.

Consider the greatness of the promise of eternal life. God has promised to give eternal life freely to anyone who will place his or her faith in His only begotten Son. Eternal life is the very life of God Himself. This is His promise to you---you can live with God eternally.

Consider the greatness of the promise of God’s abiding presence. God is on record promising that He will never leave nor forsake His own. He promises to be with us always even to the end of the age. What a promise!

Consider just one other of His great promises; the promise that nothing will ever separate us from His love. Nothing that ever happens to us, or nothing we can ever do will cause God to cease loving us. His love is an everlasting love. Can you imagine a greater promise than this?

There are more promises! I have selected only a few to remind us of just how great the promises are.

2. The Gospel involves precious promises.

This is the other word that Peter uses in referring to the promises. What would make a promise “precious”?

One thing that would make a promise “precious” would be the person who made it. If the person who made the promise was less than trustworthy, then the promise might be of questionable value. When you consider that the eternal, sovereign, almighty God of truth and faithfulness made the promises of the Gospel, then you can see why the promise might be called precious. The God who cannot lie made these promises. Not only is He the God, who cannot lie, He is fully able to do everything He has said that He will do.

There is something more that will make the promises precious---what it cost the one making the promise to keep it. Do you realize that all of the promises of the Gospel are based upon the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on the Cross for our sins. The reason God can so freely forgive all of our

transgressions is that Jesus died for the sins of the whole world. The reason God can so freely give us eternal life is His Son gave His life for us on the tree. The reason God can promise to never leave or forsake us is that He forsook His Son when He was made Him to be sin for us on Cross. The reason God can so confidently promise that nothing will ever separate us from His love is that His Son died in our place and ever liveth to make intercession for us.

Now how are these great and precious promises the means of our sharing in the divine nature? We become partners in the divine nature when we hear the promises that God has made in the Gospel, and we then respond to these promises in faith. We stake everything on the dependability of the promises that God has made. When we respond to His promises in faith, then and there God births us into His family, causes the Holy Spirit to dwell in us, regenerates us, imparts to us new life, makes us a new creation in Christ Jesus, and we are then participants in the divine nature. You will never know the divine nature until you open your heart in faith to the promises of God. Embrace them in faith! Step out on His promises! He will do what He has said He will do. This almost always happens in a crisis experience. God brings us to the place that we must make a decision---will we trust Him, will we act on His word!

III. THE MARK OF OUR SHARING IN THE DIVINE NATURE.

Peter gives us at least one identifying mark of those who are sharing in the divine nature. It is found in the statement, “and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.” The exact translation of the Greek text has been something of a problem. The question in the translation concerns whether to escape is a condition for receiving the divine nature, or whether it is a consequence of the receiving the divine nature. My own understanding brings me down on the side of those who understand it as a consequence. Actually until God gives a person a new nature, they will have neither the desire nor the strength to escape the deadly world system in which we live. The flight from the world is a sure sign that God has given the person a new nature.

1. A changed attitude toward the world.

Before a person receives the divine nature, the world is their spiritual home. They love the world and the things that are in the world. They are blind to the obvious death and corruption that the world is producing. By the word “world” Peter is referring to the world system in which we live as citizens without giving God His rightful place. Someone has said that the world is to the devil what the church is to Christ, it is his spiritual bride. It is under his devilish control. Before we are made partners in the divine nature, it was

perfectly all right with us for the devil to exercise control over the systems of the world. It is only when we have received the divine nature that our attitude toward the world begins to change.

When God gives us His divine nature, we begin to see the world as God sees it. God sees the world system as deserving of full and final judgement. In fact, His judgement on the world has already begun. The changed attitude means that the Christian begins to see the world as the deadly enemy that it really is.

If you are a devoted friend of this world, then you may not have the divine nature. In deed we are told in Scripture that the friend of the world is actually the enemy of God. The life of God will begin to express itself in a changed attitude.

2. The strength to say “no” to the desires of the world.

The thing that drives the world is “evil desire”. Those who are of the world find themselves unable to escape the “evil desires”. These desires include covetousness, greed, inordinate sexual desires, inordinate desires for pleasure and entertainment, lust for power and recognition, etc. When God imparts the divine nature to a human life, the new life makes available the strength a person needs to say a decisive “no” to these evil desires, and the strength to actually flee from the corruption that is in the world.

The escape from the bondage to the desires is not automatic. A person has to make a decision to flee with the expectation that the strength will be there to make a run for it.

So you can see just how important this whole concept is. It is a reminder to us that the Christian life is a supernatural life. To be a Christian is to be changed from within---to receive the divine nature. This new life comes to us as we respond in faith to the Gospel of Jesus Christ that comes to us as great promises. When such a change takes place, it will be obvious to you and well as to those who know you best.

This truth is good news to some of you. You have doubted that your life could ever be different. You know yourself to be the slave of some desires that threaten to destroy you. You can be free from those desires---receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. This truth is also a source of encouragement to some of you. You had forgotten who you are in Christ. You had forgotten that the very nature of the Lord God himself is in you. Take heart, dear child of God, things can be different.