

Great and Precious Promises 2 Peter 1:3-9

2 Peter 1:2–4 (NKJV) ²Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, ³as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, ⁴by 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.

Grace and peace are multiplied to us in the knowledge of God.

God created us in His image and in His likeness. But, the evil one deceived us and we thought that we could become like God. However, while we bear His image, God is infinite and we are finite; God is all-powerful and we are weak; God is present everywhere, and we are in one place at a time, and God knows everything, and we know very little. God tells us that as the heavens are higher than the earth, so His ways are higher than ours. (Isaiah 55:9)

Our determination to be like God led to sin and sin to death. Because of sin, we were blind, poor, and naked. Ephesians 2 tells us that we were dead in our trespasses and sins. But, as Peter tells us, God's divine power has given us everything pertaining to life and godliness. Ephesians 2 makes the same point when it says:

Ephesians 2:4–6 (NKJV) ⁴But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

Because of His great love, God used His power and wisdom to provide a way for us to be restored to a right relationship with Him. Ephesians 2:5 tells us that God made us alive together with Christ. On this subject, Jesus told Nicodemus that we must experience a new birth to enter the kingdom of God. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead is the power that makes us alive in Him, and this is the rebirth Jesus spoke of. Believing in the Lord Jesus is simple enough for a child to understand, and at the same time, it is a great mystery. We cannot understand how Jesus can be both God and man and a member of the Trinity, one with the Father and the Holy Spirit. When Peter says that His divine power has given us everything

that pertains to life and godliness, He is speaking of the mysteries of our salvation. He is teaching concerning how God works for our benefit.

Peter's next subject is what God has done for us in what we term "salvation." After Peter reminds us that we are given everything we need through the knowledge of God, He says:

2 Peter 1:4 (NKJV) 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.

The exceedingly great and precious promises are those things that come with "salvation." Of course, among these promises are the forgiveness of our sins and a home in heaven, but we are also given much more. Peter focuses on two of these great promises. First, we are made partakers of the divine nature.

This happens through the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. The Holy Spirit makes us alive together with Christ and is the power of God in our lives. The Spirit gives us the mind of Christ, whereby we understand the word of God. In addition, the fruit of the Spirit in our lives reflects God's "virtue" (nature). The Apostle John explains this concept in relation to the love of God in our lives.

1 John 4:7-8 (NKJV) ⁷Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

God, who called us by His own glory and virtue, has made us partakers of His nature so that we will reflect His glory by showing His virtue. (Virtue means goodness.) This brings us to the second great promise that comes with Salvation. Let's look at 2 Peter 1:4 again.

2 Peter 1:4 (NKJV) 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.**

We have escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

Corruption and death are in the world because of lust. "Lust" in this context means "desires of the flesh." Romans 8 gives an excellent explanation of the problem with our fleshly desires.

Romans 8:4-8 (NKJV) ⁵For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. ⁶For to be carnally minded is death, but to be

spiritually minded is life and peace. ⁷Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. ⁸So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

In these verses, we learn that the carnal (flesh) mind is God's enemy. This is the part of us that wants to be like God (large and in charge). Remember, this desire is what brought sin into the world in the first place. According to Peter, God has delivered us from the corruption that is in the world through lust.

God reminded the nation of Israel of their escape from slavery in Egypt by establishing the Passover as an annual festival. He also uses the celebration of communion to remind us of our escape from slavery to sin.

Israel's slavery in Egypt and our slavery to sin are parallels. Sin is a horrible taskmaster that seeks to destroy us. Romans assures us that sin leads to death. (Sin always leads to death.)

Romans 6:23 (NKJV) For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Sin leads to death but look again at how that corruption comes into our world.

2 Peter 1:4 (NKJV) 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**.

Here is a question for all of us: "If God has delivered us, why do we choose to live according to our lusts?"

We forget that living for our flesh (appetites) brings death and corruption. Peter writes to encourage us to live in a way consistent with the great grace God has given to us. He shows us a path to godliness. This is not about legalistically keeping rules. No, we are talking about living free in Christ, free from the corruption that is in the world through lust.

We are not saved or delivered from sin by any works that we do, but since we have been made partakers in the divine nature, we are called on to add things to our faith. The things that we are called upon to add to our faith are all virtues. In other words, they are all good things.

Peter does not say, "Please do these things." Look at what he says.

2 Peter 1:5, NKJV But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue,

The reason Peter is talking about here is the fact that we have been made partakers in the divine nature. And, what we are to do is apply all diligence. Many translations say, “Make every effort,” instead of “Giving all diligence.”

This is the paradox of our faith. The Holy Spirit is given so that we can live godly in Christ Jesus, and it is impossible for us to live godly lives without the Holy Spirit. And yet, we are to make every effort, apply all diligence to live in a godly manner. In our flesh, we can do nothing good, but we can do all things through Christ, who gives us strength.

Look at the virtues (good) we are to add to our faith.

2 Peter 1:5–7 (NKJV) ⁵But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, ⁶to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, ⁷to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.

The qualities listed here are for everyone. (Virtue can be translated as goodness.) So, here is the list: 1) goodness, 2) knowledge, 3) self-control, 4) perseverance, 5) godliness, 6) brotherly kindness, and 7) love.

As we’ve begun this series, we’ve seen that we are made partakers of the divine nature through our knowledge of God. The knowledge that is listed among these virtues is not the same kind of knowledge. The knowledge that leads to salvation is a personal experience or contact knowledge. The knowledge that we are to grow in as a virtue is understanding. The word Peter uses is different from the word he has been using this far. He uses the common word for knowledge. In other words, remaining ignorant is not a virtue.

We must grow in our knowledge of Scripture and doctrine. We must grow in our knowledge and understanding of life in general. This knowledge would include science, history, literature, culture, and whatever is of benefit.

The list is easy to understand but harder to put into practice. Therefore, Peter explains to us the importance of building these things in our lives. He says:

2 Peter 1:8–9 (NKJV) ⁸For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹For

he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.

Here we are given a positive and a negative reason for building these virtues in our lives.

First, they will make us fruitful. Even if we suffer for being good, in the end, it will benefit us. There is no downside to being good.

Second, if we lack these virtues, it reveals that we are shortsighted.

Going back to the question I asked: “If God has delivered us, why do we choose to live according to our lusts?”

Have we forgotten?

Romans 8:13 (NKJV) For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

Choose life. We have been delivered from the corruption that is in the world through lust. So, why do we choose to live controlled by the desires of our flesh?