

2 Peter 1:3-11 “Partakers of the Divine Nature” 8/11/24

As we begin to look at 2nd Peter, the apostle exhorts us to be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption of this sinful world¹ - The dictionary² defines “partaker” as: A person who consumes or indulges in something - For example, “a partaker of dark chocolate”

So, like eating dark chocolate requires us to pick up and eat the chocolate, so does being a partaker of the divine nature of God require us to do something

According to Warren Wiersbe, “The new birth is not the end; it is the beginning. God gives His children all that they need to live godly lives, but His children must apply themselves and be diligent to use the “means of grace” He has provided. Spiritual growth is not automatic. It requires cooperation with God and the application of spiritual diligence and discipline”³

Our new life in Christ Jesus begins the moment we accept Him as our Savior - But that should just be our very first step in our walk with Him - After being born again, we are to be diligent to use everything God has provided to become a mature Christian

Peter spells out some of those steps in today’s passage - 2 Peter 1:5-7 “For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love”⁴

The first of these steps is translated “virtue” here in the English Standard Version, because that’s what the original Greek text says - But several modern language versions use “moral excellence” or “goodness” here

¹ Adapted from 2 Peter 1:4

² Google’s English dictionary, provided by Oxford Languages, © 2024, Oxford University Press

³ Warren Wiersbe, Be Alert, 2 Peter, 2 & 3 John, Jude Commentary, David C Cook Publishing, Kindle Edition

⁴ Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quoted has been taken from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, © 2001 by Crossway (Good News Publishing, Wheaton, IL)

The original Greek word means that believers are divinely enabled to excel in heroic, courageous deeds - It is an outstanding virtue in someone's life, for the fulfillment of a task or duty

At the heart of moral excellence is knowledge - Knowledge refers to the divine truth that is the foundation of spiritual discernment and wisdom - It is something we should gather as we journey through our lives

My sermon illustration service shared a few humorous and occasionally serious bits of knowledge that many of us have probably already gathered

- The first, "Anybody who sleeps like a baby probably doesn't have one" - That's a fact that those of us who are parents quickly learn
- The next adage seems to fit me well, "I've seen it all, heard it all, and done it all, but now, I just can't seem to remember it all"
- I think this next one is the best of the lot, "There are 3 kinds of people: those who can count and those who can't"
- And "some minds are like concrete, thoroughly mixed up and permanently set"
- Finally, "People are more likely to protest the use of fur than to protest the use of leather because it's safer to harass rich women than it is to harass a motorcycle gang"⁵

I offer the last one because it struck me as humorous - But the wearing of animal skins cannot be sinful, because if you look at Genesis 3:21 you find God making Adam and Eve garments of animal skins

And on a more personal level, I like a good steak - And leather makes good use of another part of the steer - Plus, I grew up very near a mink farm - And those little beasts are so nasty, that I cannot imagine God creating them for anything other than their amazing fur

In the context of today's passage, the knowledge we gather has little to do with motorcycle gangs, babies, the ability to do arithmetic, or whether we are vegan - Peter is referring to the knowledge gained with time in God's Word

⁵ Steven Simala Grant, Laugh and Play, 2010, SermonCentral.com

It is about enlightening our minds with the truth of Scripture - It involves diligent study and meditation on it - Our goal as we spend time in the Word is to listen for God's direction, to learn God's ways, to hear God's voice, and to become more like Jesus

Later in this epistle, the final verse, 2 Peter 3:18 exhorts us, "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen"

If we are obedient, we will grow in grace and knowledge - The only way we can avoid being easily led astray, is by growing spiritually - And to do this, we should avail ourselves to the means of grace

John Wesley said, "The chief of the means of grace are prayer (whether in secret or in the great congregation); searching the scriptures (which implies reading, hearing, and meditating thereon); and receiving the Lord's Supper (eating bread and drinking wine in remembrance of Him). These we believe to be ordained of God as the ordinary channels of conveying His grace to the souls of men and women"⁶

The third virtue is self-control - According to My Life Application Bible, "We are saved so that we can grow to resemble Christ and serve others. God wants to produce His character in us. But to do this, He demands our discipline and effort. As we obey Christ, who guides us by His Spirit, we will develop self-control"⁷

The fourth essential virtue that Peter would have us pursue is steadfastness - Which is patience and endurance in doing what is right - Steadfastness is the ability to resist temptation and endure during trials and difficulties - The New Testament uses the word frequently to refer to remaining strong in unwelcome toil and hardship

⁶ Renew My Heart, John Wesley, © 2010 (Barbour Publishing, Uhrichsville, OH)

⁷ Life Application Bible, © 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 2012 (Tyndale House Publishers, Wheaton, IL)

Rev Tim Huie tells of Jimmy Houston, who is a professional fisherman - In our area of NJ, we know about, and may even know personally, commercial fisherman - That's someone who heads out to sea every day possible and returns with a boatload of seafood

Jimmy is a different type of professional fisherman - He makes his living fishing on the Bass Angler Sportsman Society circuit - Instead of selling fish, his income comes from prize money - He is also a devout Christian and belongs to the Baptist Church in Keys, Oklahoma

One year, that sportsman society made a ruling that to be eligible for the \$100,000 fisherman of the year award, you had to wear the patch and decal of a prominent sponsor, Busch Beer

Jimmy Houston refused to do it, thereby forfeiting his chance at the \$100,000 - A fellow Christian fisherman on the circuit asked him, "Jimmy, have you prayed about that?"

Jimmy replied, "I don't have to pray about it. There is no decision for me to make. God has already made the decision in His Word when He said not to do anything that would damage my testimony as a Christian"

Pastor Huie shared that Jimmy was saying to this fisherman, "This is not a part of God's will"⁸ - Are we also able to be steadfast in our faith? - Even in the face of losing \$100,000?

At the heart of all our spiritual pursuits should be the fifth virtue, Godliness, which is reverence for God - It conveys the idea that one who is Godly properly honors and adores God

The companion of loving God is loving others, or as our text says, "brotherly affection" - Our devotion to one another flows from the highest virtue of all: the gift of love

⁸ Tim Huie, "The Truth about Pleasing God" 2009, SermonCentral.com

John MacArthur writes that, "For believers, love for others (especially fellow believers) has always been inseparable from love for God"

Matthew 22:35-40 records a time when Jesus was challenged to name the greatest commandment - You probably already know what He said - Those verses say,

"And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.

This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets" - The believer is to love God and to love others - These are the two greatest commandments according to Jesus

Peter tells us that these virtues in today's passage are essential for our walk of faith - He writes, "For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ"

We are called to have these virtues ever increasing in our lives - They strengthen our walk of faith - Draw us closer to Jesus - And help us relate to others in this world in a godlier fashion

These virtues do not come automatically - But they require hard work - They are not optional either - All of them must be a continual part of our walk of faith - We don't finish one and start on the next, but we work on them all together

God empowers and enables us, but he also gives us the responsibility to learn and to grow - God has given us a way out of the sinful mess that this world is in, so that we can grow to be more like Christ and serve others

But to grow to be more like our Jesus will require some effort - Our faith is to go beyond what we believe and become a dynamic part of all we do, resulting in good fruit and spiritual maturity

Salvation does not depend on good deeds, but it results in good deeds - A person who claims to know Jesus while remaining unchanged does not understand the faith or what God has done for him or her

Or to use Peter's words, "For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins"⁹

Today's passage calls us to have a plan - We are to grow in the faith - Spend time in God's Word, time with other believers, time in prayer and devotion - We are to serve God and others - And we are to be people of integrity, not willing to compromise

In closing, hear again verses 5-9, but this time in the modern language Contemporary English Version, "Do your best to improve your faith by adding goodness, understanding, self-control, patience, devotion to God, concern for others, and love.

If you keep growing in this way, it will show that what you know about our Lord Jesus Christ has made your lives useful and meaningful. But if you don't grow, you are like someone who is nearsighted or blind, and you have forgotten that your past sins are forgiven."¹⁰

⁹ 2 Peter 1:9

¹⁰ The Holy Bible, Contemporary English Version, © 1995, (American Bible Society, NYC, NY)