



Answer

Question:

What does it mean to be partakers of the divine nature in II Peter 1:4-11?

Answer:

"Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as 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, 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" (II Peter 1:2-4).

Peter states that through the knowledge of God (that is, through the Bible) we were given information concerning everything related to life and godliness. By that same knowledge we have been called to glory and virtue, and we have been given great promises -- a reference to God's promises of salvation and a home in heaven with him.

Through all these things which come from the knowledge of God, we become partakers of the divine nature. Notice that "partakers of the divine nature" is compared to "escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." Therefore, the divine nature and worldly corruption are opposites.

The Greek word for "nature" is *phusis*. Like our English word, it has a range of meaning which must be determined from the context. It can mean:

1. **An object's natural condition**; that is, what it is without external intervention, such as "*We who are Jews by nature*" (Galatians 2:15) refers to naturally born Jews.
2. **An object's disposition or natural characteristics**, such as "*that through these you may become partakers of the divine nature*" (II Peter 1:4) refers to sharing some of the characteristics of God.
3. **The natural order of things**, such as "*For their women changed the natural function into that which is against nature*" (Romans 1:26) refers to going against the way people were made.
4. **A species**, such as "*For every kind of animal, bird, creeping thing, and thing in the sea, is tamed, and has been tamed by mankind*" (James 3:7) where "kind" is the word *phusis*.

In other words, what Peter is referring to is the same thing he discussed in his earlier letter. *"Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy""* (I Peter 1:13-16). As a Christian learns and lives by God's teaching, he takes on the characteristics of his teacher.

To encourage that transformation, Peter lists out examples of things Christians ought to both have and grow in: faith, moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. *"For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (II Peter 1:8).

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