

**Excerpts from Life-study of Second Peter,
Message 3**

THE DIVINE PROVISION (3)

Bible Verses:

2 Pet. 1:3 Seeing that His divine power has granted to us all things which relate to life and godliness, through the full knowledge of Him who has called us by His own glory and virtue,

2 Pet. 1:4 Through which He has granted to us precious and exceedingly great promises that through these you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world by lust.

Our portion is Christ, and Christ is the embodiment of the Triune God. Therefore, our portion is Christ as the embodiment of the Triune God. This Christ is revealed in the New Testament, and He is conveyed to us through the New Testament. The entire New Testament is a container of the Christ

who embodies the Triune God. Eventually, this container also conveys Christ to us. By what way is Christ conveyed to us through the Word? Christ is conveyed mainly by the way of the preaching or teaching of the Word. The preaching and the teaching of the apostles always conveyed Christ to others. This means that Christ came to the listeners through what was preached and taught by the apostles.

The Triune God is embodied in Christ, and Christ is contained in the New Testament. Then this Christ is conveyed to us through the preaching and teaching of the Word. The New Testament contains Christ, and those who preach the New Testament bring this container to us. Through this means this container conveys Christ to us. Faith, then, comes from hearing, and hearing comes from the Word. The function of the Word is to convey Christ to us. Therefore, Christ comes to us through the preaching and teaching of the word of the New Testament.

Our all-inclusive Christ is not only the Word, but He is also the life-giving Spirit. While Christ is preached to us through the Word and conveyed to us by the Word, He simultaneously cooperates with the preachers of the Word to work as the Spirit. This

means that as He is being conveyed into those who listen to the preaching of the Word, He works within them as the Spirit. Then He “clicks” within them, and faith is produced in them. The issue of the faith produced within us is that whatever Christ is according to the word of the New Testament is imparted to us. As a result, we have the reality of Christ.

Second Peter 1:4 says, “Through which He has granted to us precious and exceedingly great promises, that through these you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world by lust.” The words “through which” are difficult to understand. The relative pronoun “which” in verse 4 refers to glory and virtue in verse 3 . Through and on the basis of the Lord’s glory and virtue, by and to which we have been called, God has given us His precious and exceedingly great promises.

According to verse 3 , the Lord has called us not only by His glory and virtue, but also to His glory and virtue. The disciples saw the Lord’s glory. During the time He was with them, they saw the virtue in His conduct and daily living. They also saw His glory on the mount of transfiguration. I believe that they also saw the Lord’s glory at other times, for example, when

He fed the five thousand and when He called Lazarus out of the tomb. Having seen the Lord's glory and virtue, the disciples were attracted. This means that they were called by the Lord's glory and virtue. After the Lord's resurrection, on the day of Pentecost, Peter was full of glory and virtue. The disciples were in a situation that was full of glory and full of virtue, the very glory and virtue to which they had been called.

Through this glory and virtue God has given us promises.

God has given us these promises so that through them we may become partakers of the divine nature. He has called us to His glory and virtue and He has given us the promises for the purpose that we may enjoy the divine nature. To have eternal life is a matter once for all, but to partake of the divine nature is a continual matter. Although we have the divine life once for all, we cannot enjoy the divine nature once for all. During the entire course of our Christian life on earth and even in eternity, we shall still be partaking of the divine nature.

Becoming a partaker of the divine nature has a condition, and this condition is that we escape the corruption which is in the world by lust. Lust is a

barrier that keeps us from enjoying the divine nature. Christ died to redeem us from the vain manner of life (1 Pet. 1:18-19), and now we should abstain from fleshly lusts (1 Pet. 2:11) and no longer live in the flesh in the lusts of men (1 Pet. 4:2). As redeemed ones, we should abstain from lusts. This is to escape the corruption that is in the world through lust.

God has given us promises that He will work out the virtue and glory so that we may partake of the divine nature. This is God's operation. But God's operation requires our cooperation, and our cooperation is to abstain from a lustful life and thereby escape the corruption which is in the world by lust. Then having escaped this corruption, we are ready to become partakers of the divine nature. By this we see that escaping the corruption in the world qualifies us to partake of the divine nature.

We have seen that the divine nature denotes what God is, that it includes the ingredients, the constituents, of God's being. Because we are children of God born of Him, we possess God's life and also His nature for our enjoyment. Because I have proclaimed this truth according to the Bible, some have condemned me and falsely accused me of

teaching deification. They say that I am deifying myself and teaching that the church is God and should be worshipped as a part of God. We utterly repudiate this false accusation! A child born of Chinese parents will certainly be Chinese. Then what about us who have been born of God? Through our new birth, regeneration, we have been born of God, and we are God's children. Because we have been born of God, in life and nature we are the same as God. In this sense, those who are born of God are divine. But we definitely do not participate in the Godhead, and we definitely do not become an object of worship. We have God's life and nature, but we do not become part of the Godhead.

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Certain early church fathers taught concerning the deification of the believers. But they did not teach that the believers attained to the Godhead or that they would ever be worshipped as God. Rather, they meant that Christians, those who have been regenerated of

God, have God's life and nature. We, the regenerated ones, are the same as God in life and nature, but we are not the same as God in position in the Godhead. Concerning this, we need to be very careful. Actually, I do not use the word deification. It would be heretical to teach deification in the sense of claiming that believers attain to the Godhead. But it is according to the Scriptures to teach that because we have been born of God, we possess the divine life and the divine nature and that, in these two aspects, we have become the same as God. We definitely cannot participate in the Godhead or have the position to be worshipped by others as God; nevertheless, through regeneration we have God's life and nature.

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Note: This version is not intended to be printed as material for pursuit during the small group gathering. Instead, it is to be used as additional reference for brothers and sisters who want to prepare in advance for fellowship on the message. We include here notes from the commentaries of the brothers in the life-study radio program. The points from these commentaries can help enrich our understanding and, eventually, our fellowship with the saints on the selected portions of the life-study message. We still recommend that, if possible, the saints still listen to the [audio message](#) in addition to reading the [life-study message](#) for personal pursuit and for preparation for small group gatherings. We also wish to point out that these notes have not been fully polished.

[Commentary]:

Introduction:

[CW:] In a very real sense, the first few verses of Second Peter encapsulate much of how God will accomplish His eternal plan or economy, beginning with the gift of faith. We have God's righteousness, the righteousness of Christ, grace and peace being multiplied in the full knowledge of God and our Lord Jesus Christ, then the divine power operating in the believers, in conjunction with their cooperation, leading to their escape from lust. Then God's own glory and virtue and our being called through them and to them. Further, we have God's precious and exceedingly great promises, all of which lead us to become partakers of his divine nature, resulting ultimately in our transformation and full salvation. What a tremendous beginning to this short, but thoroughly crucial portion of the holy word. Ron Kangas has joined us today. Ron, this is, to me, like a big sirloin steak. There's just so much here.

[RK:] That was quite an introductory word. And I would like to affirm there's no exaggeration here. It's a remarkable beginning to this epistle. Simon Peter, a slave and apostle of Jesus Christ to those who have been allotted faith equally precious as ours. What a beginning, really. He just trumpets out something so precious in the divine revelation, allotted faith equally precious as ours. And then he goes on to "Grace and peace be multiplied in the full knowledge of God." Then verse three, "his divine power has granted to us all things which relate to life and godliness." Then in verse four, he talks about our becoming partakers of the divine nature. This is high and profound revelation. This fisherman became a real god man and had a profound spiritual understanding of the Christian life, intrinsically lived under the government of God. Marvelous!

[CW:] Truly marvelous. And that's not a cliché or overused in this case, it just happens to be the appropriate description of what is here. In the first section today, Ron, Witness Lee comes back to this matter of faith, and I think develops it in a marvelous way. I'd like to add a verse. We're going to hear him refer to it. You read verse one of 2 Peter 1. Romans 10:17 says, "So faith comes out of hearing and hearing through the word of Christ." I think this will be a real helpful portion to all of our listeners on the matter of faith.

Part 1

[CW:] Ron, when we as believers are before the genuine preaching and genuine teaching of the Word with the Apostles' ministry, this is not just a light thing in which we get some instructions or some helpful spiritual pointers, is it?

[RK:] Far from it. God, actually, is not just giving us things or mere information or pointers or advice or counsel, merely. The Triune God is embodied in Christ. And through the Word, which is Christ, and in and by the Spirit, who is Christ. God is giving us Christ as our portion. The Triune God is embodied in Christ, and as typified by the allotted portions of the Good Land in the book, say... such as Joshua, Christ, the all-inclusive One is our portion, He's our Good Land, our experience and enjoyment. God is giving us this Christ, but how does He do it? Christ is conveyed

through the Word of God, and the Word of God is announced by the proper preaching of the gospel, and the teaching of the truth. As the Word is proclaimed and taught, Christ, as the life-giving-Spirit is operating to impart the Christ conveyed in the Word into our being through faith which is Christ as our believing ability infused into us. A central to understanding what it means for us to have faith allotted to us is the thought that faith is not only the means for us to receive something from God, but that faith is the very One, Christ, whom we received. So once again, Christ is everything. He is our portion. He is the One given to us by God through the Word which is Christ, and in the Spirit which is Christ, by the faith which is Christ. But in Peter's very succinct terminology, we have been allotted faith, and that expression, "allotted faith" indicates that faith itself is the allotment. But elsewhere, we have pointed out from the Word that Christ is the allotment. No conflict, no contradiction here, because Christ is our portion, and Christ is our faith, Christ is everything to us. But, there must be the faith allotted to us. So, that as we are under the teaching of the Word and the preaching of the Scriptures of truth, there is what Brother Lee terms, "the click", like the sound made by the camera, there is the click of faith. And when we experience the click of faith, then Christ becomes our portion personally and subjectively and inwardly for our enjoyment. Words fail us here, but perhaps we're, at least, somewhat approximating the marvelous revelation concerning the allotted faith, the portion of all the believers in Christ.

[CW:] I'd like to linger, but there's so much on our plate today, that we have to just kind of keep plowing on. And we're spending our time sort of reviewing again, musing over these first few verses. In verse 4 chapter 1, there's a portion right at the beginning that is frequently quoted, I think, cherished by many believers... "Through which He has granted to us precious and exceedingly great promises. But the first word there, Witness Lee will draw much attention to in this portion ahead, it is "through", which refers back to verse 3. So, let me just read the last few words of verse 3 to put this in full context. "Who has called us by His own glory and virtue, through which He has granted to us precious and exceedingly great promises." A little difficult to understand, but we're about to get some help.

Part 2

[CW:] Ron, I recall as a new believer reading the gospels for the first time after being saved, and I loved the gospels at that point because I kept seeing this attractive and attracting Person. But, He has taken us another portion to realize it's not just the virtue and the glory of Christ that attracts us, but it's also those same things into which we're being attracted, isn't it?

[RK:] This is the import of Brother Lee's exposition of those, apparently, simple words, "through which". "Through which" refers back to "glory and virtue". When the Lord Jesus was on earth from time to time, the disciples saw His glory. John could say, "We beheld his glory." And Peter, in 2 Peter mentioned, or at least referred to, the Lord's glorification on the Mount of Transfiguration. And surely at other times, such as the changing of water into wine and the feeding of the multitude with five loaves and two fishes and the raising of Lazarus from the dead, the Lord's glory was manifested. And even more so, the Lord's virtue was displayed. So, through this glory and virtue, the disciples represented by Peter were called and it's through this glory and virtue that God has granted to us precious and exceedingly great promises. So, the glory and the virtue are the instrument and the cause. But eventually, we know from other scriptures, the glory and the virtue are also the goal, especially, glory is the goal that we're called into the glory of God. So, through the Lord's glory and virtue, we are called, and we have received the promises. Through these promises, as will be forthcoming, we partake of the divine nature. That is, we partake of all that God is. As a result of this partaking the divine attributes become our virtues, and the development of these virtues in the divine life, consummates in glory. So, on the one hand, we are called through glory and virtue. On the other hand, we are called to even into glory and virtue. And through this glory and virtue, we have received

the precious promises, according to which and through which we partake of the divine nature which eventually consummates and in being in and actually our becoming the glory of God for His expression.

[CW]: Well, let's go on. We want to pick up this verse and this portion of it, and witness Lee's utterance again. Will be very, very helpful.

Part 3

[CW]: You know Ron, this verse 4, you hear a lot about the promises, very few Christian expositors, it seems, today talk about the matter of partaking of the divine nature. And it may well be because of the dangers associated with touching it in a wrong way. And I think maybe over the decade, you know better with your background and study, but over the decades, this portion has been something that people have tended to shy away from, hasn't it?

[RK]: Especially in the various Protestant traditions, to be fair, and I say this based upon limited knowledge, but I believe I am accurate. The Eastern Orthodox Church, for instance, would place great emphasis on this matter. But considering Christians as a whole, especially in the West, there is, if not an avoidance, I would say a watering down of a verse such as this. But Peter is saying not merely that we partake of the divine nature, that refers to an action, but we become a certain kind of person, *partakers of the divine nature*. And let's illustrate, if you have a good Angus steak, you are partaking of the beef. You are eating it, digesting it, assimilating it, being constituted with it. And the analogy has merit that the Lord presents Himself to us as food, the bread of life, the living bread, the bread of God. And as we partake of him by eating him, we eat, digest and assimilated and are constituted with the elements, referring to aspects of the divine nature. So, the truth is presented very accurately, but without apology, we the children of God, have been born of God. He actually is our father. As children of God, we have the life and nature of God. Since we have the life and nature of God, we are the same as God. I would even say we are God in the limited sense of possessing the life and nature of God. But we have no share in the Godhead, we do not partake of the Godhead in the sense of becoming an object of worship. So, we will speak as far as we can in faithfulness to the divine revelation and in honor of the immutable, incommunicable, eternal Godhead of the Triune God. We are we. We, the children of God, are divine in that we possess the divine life and nature. We are the same as God in that we possess the divine life and nature. We are God, in the limited sense of possessing the divine life and nature, but we are not and never will be God in the Godhead as an object of worship. In order to be faithful to the God whom we serve, the God revealed in this portion of the Word, we need to receive, believe and sound forth the full range of the truth. We are children of God. Thus, we have the life and nature of God. We are partakers of the divine nature. Thus, we are enjoying what God is in those attributes of God which can be communicated that is shared with redeemed human beings. This is far as it goes. We are the same as God in life and nature, but we are not the same as God in the Godhead. This is the truth. There is no heresy here. Instead of shrinking back from 2 Peter 1:4, we should ingest this verse, and we should immerse ourselves in this verse and enjoy our right, our bequest in the New Testament, to be partakers of the divine nature that is, enjoyers of what God is.

[CW]: Well speaking for one, I have been a partaker, and hope to remain one for the balance of this day, this program and our time together has been a real enjoyment of the divine life and nature. I appreciate your help as always, and invite you to come back whenever you're able.

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