

PARTAKING OF THE DIVINE NATURE

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Second Peter 1:3-4 says, “According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”

These two verses teach us the overall purpose that God has for mankind, and also how God’s word is designed to enable us to achieve that purpose.

The divine nature and spiritual perfection

According to 2 Peter 1:4, God’s purpose for man is for him to be a partaker of the “divine nature.” This is the exact same purpose described in Ephesians 3:19 as being “filled with all the fullness of God.” God’s nature, His fullness, is expressed by the word *love*: “God is love” (1 John 4:8,16). To be a partaker of God’s nature is to have His love *perfected* in us (1 John 2:5; 4:12,17-18). This is the ultimate purpose that God has for man as taught in many, many scriptures (see Matt 5:48; 10:25; Luke 6:40; Rom 8:28-29; 2 Cor 13:11; Eph 4:11-13; Php 2:5-8; Col 1:27-28; 3:10; 2 Tim 3:16-17; 1 Pet 2:21; 4:1-2; 5:10). “Perfect” literally means “complete.” In the Old Testament, only a “perfect” (complete) animal could be offered as a sacrifice to God. A complete animal was one who had nothing “superfluous or lacking in his parts,” speaking of body parts (Lev 22:21-23). That is physical perfection. Spiritual perfection also means not having anything “superfluous (extra) or lacking in his parts.” But rather than talking about body parts, spiritual perfection means being complete in God’s love. God’s love has parts (1 Cor 13:4-7), such as kindness, humility, longsuffering, forbearance, meekness, patience, etc. (see also Gal 5:22-23; Eph 4:17-5:12; Col 3:10-15). It also includes loving one’s enemies (Matt 5:43-48). The things that God’s love is *not*, such as envy, pride, wrath, and all forms of wickedness (1 Cor 13:4-6; Gal 5:19-21; Col 3:5-9), must be purged out of our hearts, and we must have all the parts of God’s love formed in our hearts (Matt 5:43-48; Luke 6:27-36; Acts 15:9; Eph 3:17-19; 1 Thes 3:13; 2 Thes 3:5; 1 Tim 1:5; 2 Tim 2:22; Jas 4:8; 1 Pet 1:22, 3:3-4). We must have all of the parts, none extra and none lacking. That is spiritual perfection as defined by God.

The role of God’s promises in fulfilling His purpose

The New Testament is a “better covenant” based upon “better promises” (Heb 8:6), and gives us the “better hope” of becoming perfect (Heb 7:19). All of God’s promises in Christ are “yes” (2 Cor 1:20), meaning that all of them will be fulfilled, as God cannot lie (Titus 1:2; Heb 6:18). The “exceeding great and precious promises” of the New Testament are given to help us all become partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet 1:4), to attain the purpose God has called us to. The certainty of God’s promises (Heb 6:17-18) gives us “*a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters into that*

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(continued)

within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek” (Heb 6:18-20). Similarly, Hebrews 10:23 says, “Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised).” There are numerous examples of great promises that should comfort, anchor, and stabilize us. God has promised to provide our physical necessities if we seek first His kingdom and righteousness (Matt 6:25-34; Luke 12:22-31). Therefore, we are free to concentrate on doing God’s will without having to worry about what our body needs. God has also promised to give us wisdom (Jas 1:5-8). We can be completely confident that God will provide everything we need spiritually (Eph 1:3). We can also confidently face Satan because of God’s promise to provide a way of escape from every temptation (1 Cor 10:13), and His promise that the weapons and armor He has given us will enable us to overcome all sin (2 Cor 10:3-5; Eph 6:10-18). The resurrection of the dead is one of the greatest promises that we hope for (Acts 26:6-8). This hope assures us that our labor and all that we endure as Christians is not in vain (1 Cor 15; 1 Pet 1:3-5), and this also gives us the confidence and willingness even to die for our faith (2 Cor 4:12-5:10). Related to this is God’s promise to never leave us nor forsake us so that we do not need to fear what man may do to us, including kill us (Heb 13:5-6; Matt 10:28; Luke 12:4-5; Job 13:15). We do not need to fear persecution or any circumstances that we may face in this life because God has promised to work all thing together for our good if we love Him and are the called according to His purpose to be conformed to the image of His son (Rom 8:28-29). God has promised to be our Father and to dwell in us, and these promises should motivate us to “cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Cor 6:14-7:1). These promises and the hope that we gain from them are based on what is the ultimate promise that God has made to us: “And this is the promise that he has promised us, even eternal life” (1 John 2:25). By faith, Christians are heirs of the promise of eternal life (Rom 4:13-5:11; Gal 3:16-4:7; Eph 3:6; Titus 1:2; Heb 4:1; 9:15; Jas 1:12; 2:5; 2 Pet 3:13). The promise of the remission of our sins is one of the greatest promises of the New Testament (Matt 26:28; Acts 2:38; Heb 8:12), and this promise serves as a condition for receiving other great promises. By Christ’s death, we receive the forgiveness of sins, so that we might “receive the promise of eternal inheritance” (Heb 9:15). Finally, the promise of Christ’s coming, the end of the world, and of the eternal judgment should motivate us to prepare ourselves and get ready for the next life (2 Pet 3:1-14; Heb 9:27; 2 Thes 1:7-10; Acts 24:25). “Cast not away therefore your confidence, which has great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul” (Heb 10:35-39).