



LESSON TWO

The Giving of Precious and Exceedingly Great Promises

Scripture Reading:

2 Peter 1

- 1:1** Simon Peter, a slave and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have been allotted faith equally precious as ours in the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ:
- 1:2** Grace to you and peace be multiplied in the full knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord;
- 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,
- 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.
- 1:5** And for this very reason also, adding all diligence, supply bountifully in your faith virtue; and in virtue, knowledge;
- 1:6** And in knowledge, self-control; and in self-control, endurance; and in endurance, godliness;
- 1:7** And in godliness, brotherly love; and in brotherly love, love.
- 1:8** For these things, existing in you and abounding, constitute you neither idle nor unfruitful unto the full knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

QUESTIONS:

Section 1:

1. How can faith be allotted as a portion of the inheritance?
2. How is faith being produced within us?
3. How can the promises in 2 Peter 1:4 be counted among the content of the allotment this God given inheritance?

Section 2:

1. How can we live by the divine life?
2. What does it mean to partake of the divine nature?
3. How do we cooperate with God's operation for us to partake of the divine nature? Give some examples.

Section 3:

1. Explain in what way the faith is allotted to us.
2. What is grace? What is peace?
3. What is the means for grace and peace to come to us?

Section 4:

1. How do we experience 'the multiplication of grace'?
2. Explain the 'divine power' in 2 Peter 1:3 with Ephesian 1.

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Second Peter 1:1 indicates that we all have been “allotted equally precious faith.” We have seen that faith is the substantiation of the substance of the truth (Heb. 11:1), which is the reality of the contents of God’s New Testament economy. God’s economy is a matter of the Triune God dispensing all that He is into us. When we preach to others concerning the dispensing of the riches of the Triune God according to the New Testament, the Spirit will work in the hearts of the listeners, and there will be a certain kind of response. This response is produced through the hearing of the truth conveyed by our preaching. This response can be compared to the click made by the shutter of a camera in taking a photograph. As a result of this response, this click, faith is produced. Then faith substantiates the substance of the reality of the contents of God’s New Testament economy.

We need to have a clear understanding of what faith is. It should become easy for us to say that faith is the substantiation of the substance of God’s economy, and God’s economy is to dispense Himself into our being as our life and life supply. We need to know this, experience it, enjoy it, and practice it continually.

OUR PORTION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT INHERITANCE

Such a faith has been allotted by God to all believers in Christ as their portion. Faith has become our portion of the New Testament inheritance. In 1:1 why is it that Peter does not say that God has allotted us a portion of the inheritance, but instead says that God has allotted faith to us? How can faith be allotted as a portion of the inheritance? In order to answer these questions we need to see that faith is not merely a means; it is also a portion. A means is an instrument through which we obtain something, but the portion is the very thing we obtain. In 1:1 faith is not a means; rather, it is the very thing, the object, we receive. Therefore, in this verse faith equals the inheritance. Faith is an allotted portion of the New Testament inheritance. Yes, according to the New Testament, faith in a certain sense is a means. In particular, faith is the means by which we receive salvation and eternal life. But in 1:1 Peter does not consider faith as a means. He considers faith an allotment, a portion of the New Testament inheritance allotted to us by God.

We still need to see how faith in 1:1 is equal to the New Testament inheritance. 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.

Faith and Christ are one. The faith which is the response to the content of the Word is actually Christ. This means that the response is one with that to which it is responding. In other words, faith (our response) and Christ are one. When in our experience our response and the Christ conveyed to us through the preaching of the Word become one, faith is produced within us.

It is very difficult to define what this faith is. It is hard to analyze it or explain how much of it is Christ and how much is our own believing. Actually, our faith and the Christ who is the

object of our faith are one. This is the portion of the New Testament inheritance God has allotted to us.

ALL THINGS RELATED TO LIFE AND GODLINESS

This allotment contains all things related to life and godliness, including the divine nature and the precious and exceedingly great promises. But how can these promises be counted among the content of the allotment? Let us use the illustration of a will in answering this question. Suppose your father's will says that you have a certain inheritance. Your inheritance is what is written in your father's will. The will not only tells you about certain things; it tells you that these things are your portion. Furthermore, this will is a fulfilled promise. Therefore, the will, a fulfilled promise, includes all the items of your inheritance. In this sense, the will, the promise, and the inheritance are all one. In like manner, concerning the things related to life and godliness, including the divine nature, the promises actually are the will. The New Testament is a testament, not merely a covenant. In today's terms, it is a new will. The twenty-seven books of the New Testament are a will telling us of the items of our rich inheritance. Hence, the will and the inheritance are one.

An inheritance without a will would be lacking something very important. If we did not have the New Testament, which is a new will, how would we know what God has promised us concerning our inheritance? The allotted faith, our portion, includes all things related to life and godliness. As we have seen, it also includes the divine nature and the promises. All this is included in the allotted faith, in the portion God has allotted to us.

THE GIVING OF PRECIOUS AND EXCEEDINGLY GREAT PROMISES

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. The Greek preposition rendered "through" in verse 4 is in the instrumental sense becoming causal. For this reason, some versions render the Greek word "because of." This means that because of the glory and virtue God has given us the precious and exceedingly great promises. Because we all have been called to glory and virtue, God has given us promises in order that He may work out this virtue and glory for us.

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According to verse 4, God has given us precious and exceedingly great promises so that through these we may become partakers of the divine nature. We already have the divine life. When faith was produced in us at the time we believed in the Lord, the divine life was imparted into us. Although we have the divine life, a long process is necessary for us to enjoy the divine nature.

There is a difference between life and nature. The divine nature is what God is. We enjoy the divine nature by living the divine life. How can we live the divine life? We live the divine life by God's promises. We need to live by the divine life so that we may be partakers of the divine nature. To partake of the divine nature simply means to enjoy the divine nature.

After we experienced the "click," all things pertaining to life and godliness were imparted into us. Now we have the divine life. This divine life is for us to live a life that expresses God. We express God as our godliness. Godliness is simply God expressed by us in our living by the divine life.

The impartation into us of all things which relate to life and godliness is through the full knowledge of God, the One who has called us by and to His own glory and virtue. How can we live a life that expresses God as our godliness? We live it through our knowing of Him. Therefore, we need to know the One who has called us by His glory and virtue and to His glory and virtue. Furthermore, through this glory and virtue He has granted to us precious and exceedingly great promises.

Because of the glory and virtue, God has given us the promises. This also means that God has promised us that He will carry out His glory and virtue for us. Hence, His promises were given through the glory and the virtue, that is, because of the glory and virtue.

As we have seen, the word “through” in verse 4 is first instrumental and then causal. It is first a means, and then spontaneously it becomes a cause. The Greek preposition translated “through” also means on account of, on the basis of. Because of, on account of, on the basis of, the fact that God has called us to His glory and virtue, He has given us promises. By these promises He assures us that He will work out the virtue so that we may reach His glory.

PARTAKING OF THE DIVINE NATURE

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.

We have seen that the divine nature denotes all that God is. We may use eating food as an illustration of partaking of the divine nature. When you eat chicken, you partake of the chicken nature. What the chicken is becomes your nourishment. When you eat chicken, you are actually eating the chicken nature, which includes various nourishing elements. These elements or ingredients are the constituents of the nature. The principle is the same with the divine nature. Through God's promises, we are partaking of God's nature with all the divine ingredients. Just as we do not eat food once for

all, so we do not partake of the divine nature once for all. We eat food daily, and for eternity we shall be partaking of the divine nature. This is portrayed by the tree of life and the river of water of life in Revelation 22. To eat the fruit of the tree of life is to partake of God's nature. God's nature is holy, loving, righteous, kind, and pure. Actually God's nature is all-inclusive. The more we partake of the divine nature, the more we have holiness, love, righteousness, kindness, and all manner of divine attributes. These attributes then become our virtues, which eventually will consummate in God's glory.

OUR COOPERATION WITH GOD'S OPERATION

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.

God has allotted to us a portion that includes the divine life and all things pertaining to life and godliness. Based upon the fact that God has called us to His own glory and virtue, He has given us promises. He has promised to operate within us in order to carry out His virtue and glory. But God's operation needs our cooperation. We cooperate with God's operation by abstaining from fleshly lusts. For example, in the matter of shopping we need to escape the corruption that is in the world through lust. When we need a particular thing, we should go to the store and buy it. But there is no need for us to spend time in the store looking around at other things. That would be to live according to our lusts. If we live according to the lusts of the flesh, we cannot become those who enjoy the

divine nature. We cannot enjoy the divine nature if we indulge in certain worldly entertainments. In order to become partakers, enjoyers, of the divine nature we need to fulfill the condition of escaping the corruption that is in the world by lust.

HAVING THE LIFE AND NATURE OF GOD

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...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.

We need to come back to the pure Word of God and tell others that whoever believes in the Son of God is born of God and has the right, the authority, to become a child of God. As such, he has the right also to partake of, to enjoy, the nature of God. Therefore, we have God's life, we are enjoying God's nature, and we have the position of God's children. But we definitely do not have the position of the Godhead, the position to be worshipped by others as God.

Daily we should partake of the divine nature and enjoy what God is, the contents, the ingredients, of His being. By what way do we enjoy the divine nature? First, we enjoy the divine nature by the full knowledge of the One who has called us by His glory and virtue and to His glory and virtue. Because of this, He has given us many precious and exceedingly great promises. Second, we need to escape the corruption that is in the world by lust; that is, we need to abstain from lustful living. Indulging the lusts of the flesh annuls our right to enjoy God's nature. But if we escape the corruption that is in the world by lust, we shall cooperate with the God who is now operating in us according to His promises to carry out His virtue and glory. If we cooperate with God's operation, we shall become those who enjoy the divine nature.

We have the position, the ability, and the provision to become partakers of the divine

nature. As we enjoy God's nature, a part of this nature becomes our holiness, and other parts become our humility, love, kindness, and other virtues. These excellent virtues will eventually consummate in glory. What a marvelous privilege this is! We do not have the language adequate to describe it. Praise the Lord that we human beings can have God's life, enjoy God's nature, live as God lives, express Him as our godliness, and have all the excellent virtues that will consummate in glory

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FAITH AND THE INHERITANCE

Verse 1 says, "Simon Peter, a slave and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have been allotted faith equally precious as ours in the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ." In this long verse we all need a definite and clear understanding of two crucial points. The first concerns the allotment of the New Testament faith. This faith, which is the "equally precious faith," is the same as the New Testament inheritance. The New Testament inheritance is nothing less than the Triune God Himself, the One who has been processed and has become the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit. Hence, the Triune God as the life-giving Spirit is the New Testament inheritance. Faith is actually the reflection of this inheritance. Therefore, faith is one with the New Testament inheritance. If we have faith, we also have this inheritance. Faith is the substantiation of the substance of the inheritance. Therefore, the New Testament faith and the New Testament inheritance are one.

If what God had done was merely to allot a New Testament inheritance to us, we would have something that is too objective, something not only outside of us but also far beyond us. It would, of course, be something that is for us, but it would not be able to reach us, and we would not be able to reach it. For this reason, there is the need of substantiation, and this substantiation is a matter of faith.

Faith is not initiated by us, and it is not something that is out of us. On the contrary, faith is out of God, it is initiated by God, and it is allotted to us by God. In what way is faith allotted to us? Faith comes to us by the word in God's revelation. When this word is preached to us, it conveys the reality of the New Testament inheritance. Furthermore, as this word is preached to us, simultaneously the Spirit works

with it. Actually, according to the Bible, the word and the Spirit are one. In John 6:63 the Lord Jesus said, “The words which I have spoken unto you are spirit and are life.” The word and the Spirit are one. The word is the Spirit, and the Spirit is the word (Eph. 6:17). Therefore, through the spoken word and by the working, the inspiring, of the Spirit, faith is produced within us. This is the way God allots to us the equally precious faith. Through the spoken word and by the inspiring Spirit, God infuses faith into our being. Once this faith has been imparted into us, we have our portion of the New Testament inheritance.

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF OUR GOD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST

The second crucial point in verse 1 is related to the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ. According to 1:1, the precious faith has been allotted to us in the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ. The Greek preposition translated “in” here means in the sphere of or by means of. In what sphere, or by what means, has this wonderful faith been allotted to us? It has been allotted to us in the sphere of the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ. This righteousness implies the righteous deed, the righteous act, of the Lord Jesus (Rom. 5:18). The Lord’s righteous act was His death on the cross. The Lord’s death on the cross was in absolute obedience to God and fulfilled all the requirements of God’s righteousness. Therefore, His death is a righteous deed highly valued by God according to His own righteousness. Christ’s righteous deed of dying on the cross in obedience to God fulfilled God’s righteousness and gave Him, the righteous God, the legitimate position to justify all those who believe in this righteous deed of Christ. This righteousness, the righteousness of God and our Savior, Jesus Christ, is the sphere in which and also the means by which God has the liberty and position to allot Himself to us as our portion. This is the reason Peter says in verse 1 that we have been allotted the equally precious faith in the righteousness of our God and Savior.

GRACE AND PEACE

In 1:2 Peter says, “Grace to you and peace be multiplied in the full knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.” In this verse there are also two crucial points. The first is related to grace and peace. Because a wonderful portion—the Triune

God Himself—has been allotted to us, grace and peace have come to us. Grace is our enjoyment of our portion of the New Testament inheritance, which is actually the processed Triune God. In simple terms, grace is the enjoyment of the Triune God. What, then, is peace? Peace is the condition that results from, issues from, grace. To have grace and peace is to have the enjoyment of the Triune God and the issue of this enjoyment. When we enjoy the Triune God, the result is a tranquil condition or situation with both God and man.

FULL KNOWLEDGE

The second crucial point in verse 2 concerns the words “in the full knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.” As in verse 1, the preposition “in” here means in the sphere of or by means of. According to verse 1, the allotment of the precious faith was given to us in the sphere of a twofold righteousness and by means of this righteousness, the righteousness of our God and our Savior, Jesus Christ. Now in verse 2 we see that grace and peace also come to us in a sphere and by a particular means—the full knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. In verse 1 the sphere is a twofold righteousness, and in verse 2 the sphere is the full knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. The full knowledge of the Triune God is for our participation in and enjoyment of His divine life and divine nature. It is not a mere doctrinal knowledge; it is an experiential knowledge, a knowledge that is full.

The Greek word rendered “full knowledge” is composed of the word *gnosis* plus the prefix *epi*, which means upon. This word indicates a thorough, experiential knowledge. This kind of knowledge is not superficial or general. Rather, it is a knowledge that is deep, thorough, and experiential. As we have pointed out, this is not simply a mental knowledge; it is experiential knowledge in our spiritual understanding and apprehension. The full knowledge of God and of Christ is a deep, practical, thorough, and experiential knowledge of God and our Lord. This full knowledge is both the sphere in which and the means by which the Triune God can be enjoyed by us in order that we may have a peaceful situation with Him and with all men.

THE MULTIPLICATION OF GRACE AND PEACE

In verse 2 Peter does not say simply that grace and peace will be added to us; he speaks of grace and peace being “multiplied in the full knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.” In his Epistles Paul does not say anything about grace and peace being multiplied to us. The words “to you” in this verse indicate that grace and peace come to us. After grace and peace come to us, they will be multiplied in the sphere of the full knowledge of God and our Lord and by the means of this full knowledge.

Grace and peace have come to us through the God-allotted faith, which substantiates the New Testament inheritance. This faith has been infused into us through the word of God, which conveys the full knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. In the sphere of and by means of this full knowledge, the increasing and increased knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, the grace and peace which we have received will be multiplied.

The punctuation of 1:1-4 indicates that these four verses make up one long sentence. In verse 3 we have the continuation of the thought in verse 2: “As 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 to His own glory and virtue.” Verse 3 begins with the word “As.” ... The pronoun “His” is singular, but in verse 2 there are two antecedents of this pronoun—God and Jesus our Lord. If we study the Word carefully and properly, we shall pay attention to the fact that in verse 2 we have two antecedents for the singular pronoun “His” in verse 3. This indicates that our Lord Jesus is God Himself and that our God is actually the Lord Jesus. Otherwise, Peter would have said, “As Their divine power has granted to us all things.”

We have seen that grace is multiplied as, or according as, His divine power has granted to us all things which relate to life and godliness. Life is within for us to live, and godliness is without as the outward expression of the inward life. Life is the inward energy, inward strength, to bring forth the outward godliness. All things relating to life within and godliness without have already been given to us by the divine power. Now grace

must be multiplied according to the giving of this divine power.

In addition to this, we have been given “precious and exceedingly great promises” (v. 4). The New Testament contains many promises. Through regeneration, we have the divine life with the divine nature. Furthermore, all things pertaining to life and godliness have been given to us by the divine power. In addition, we have the promises in the New Testament. It is by these promises that we may become partakers of the divine nature.

EXPERIENCING THE MULTIPLICATION OF GRACE

Now we can know the way to experience the multiplication of grace. We need to realize that all things which relate to life and godliness have already been given to us, and that inwardly we have the divine life with the divine nature. Through the promises given in the New Testament, we can become partakers of the divine nature. We simply need to open the Word and pray-read the promises. If we take the Word in this way, we shall experience the multiplication of grace.

It is not sufficient simply to learn about the multiplication of grace. We need to partake of the divine nature through the precious promises. Then grace will be multiplied to us. If we are faithful to take in the Word by drinking it as pure milk (1 Pet. 2:2), we shall experience an inward spiritual multiplication of grace. This is growth in grace.

The proper way to take the milk of the Word is to drink it. When we drink in the milk of the Word, it will then be digested and assimilated into our being. In this way, it will become part of us, and grace will be multiplied in us. The Lord is rich to all who call upon Him (Rom. 10:12). If we would partake of the riches of Christ, we need to call on His name and pray His Word into us. In this way grace will be multiplied within us.

Everything pertaining to life and godliness has been given to us by the divine power, and the precious promises have also been given to us. If we simply call on the name of the Lord and pray-read the word of His promises, eating and drinking of Him, we shall experience the multiplication of grace. This is the way to have a

true Christian life which produces the genuine church life.

THE POWER OF THE DIVINE LIFE

We have pointed out that the divine power in verse 3 is the power of the divine life related to the divine nature. It is beyond our ability to measure this divine power. In the realm of human power we are impressed by the kind of power it took to land a man on the moon. But how much more power was necessary to raise Christ to the third heaven, to the center and height of the universe!

Paul speaks clearly of this divine power in Ephesians 1 when he prays that we would know “what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the operation of the might of His strength, which He wrought in Christ in raising Him from among the dead, and seating Him at His right hand in the heavenlies” (Eph. 1:19-20). This divine power has exalted Christ over all and has put everything under His feet. Now Christ is seated on the highest peak of the universe, far above everything on earth and “far above all rule and authority and power and lordship, and every name that is named” (Eph. 1:21). In Ephesians 1 Paul goes on to indicate that this divine power has been applied to us (v. 22). Hallelujah, the very power, the divine power, that raised Christ from among the dead and seated Him at God’s right hand in the heavenlies, far above all, has been applied to us!

In 2 Peter 1:3, Peter says that this divine power has granted us all things which relate to life and godliness. This means that all these things have been imparted, infused, and implanted into us by the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit, who has regenerated us and now indwells us (2 Cor. 3:6,17; John 3:6; Rom. 8:11). Praise the Lord for what He has infused into us and implanted into us!