

**Book:** 2 Peter  
**Series:** *True Faith vs. False Teaching:  
Add To Your Faith, Knowledge*  
**Lesson 2:** *Our Precious Faith*  
**Text:** 2 Peter 1:1-4  
**Date:** Sunday, September 2, 2012

Colonial Hills  
**ABE**  
Baptist Church

#### Key



= Teacher Information



= Discussion Starter

**Book:** 2 Peter  
**Series:** *True Faith vs. False Teaching:  
Add To Your Faith, Knowledge*  
**Lesson 2:** *Our Precious Faith*  
**Text:** 2 Peter 1:1-4  
**Date:** Sunday, September 2, 2012



#### TEACHING TIP

Read through the text and this lesson a few times. Then, use the handout at the end of this lesson to write the study thoughts in your own words. Teach from that handout. This will help you cover this content in your own personality and style and with your own emphases and burden.

#### NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

2 Peter 1:5-11 – *Our Productive Faith*

#### INTRODUCTION

To discern counterfeit money, you have to know real money. Likewise, Peter starts his epistle to expose false teaching by revealing the nature of true faith.

#### THE SOURCE OF OUR FAITH (v. 1b-c)<sup>1</sup>

The first distinguishing characteristic of these believers' precious faith was its source.

#### 1. *Our faith is given by God.*

Peter states in verse 1 that these believers had “obtained” this precious faith. This word (Gk. *lagchano*) means “to receive by lot” which eventually became synonymous with “to receive by divine will” (BDAG). Lots were used by people of faith to determine God’s will, for since man could not manipulate the outcome of the lot, it was a means of discerning God’s will clearly, and God used it that way (cf. Proverbs 16:33; Jonah

<sup>1</sup> Excluding the last point, our outline is borrowed from John F. MacArthur, Jr., *2 Peter and Jude*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2005).

1:7; Luke 1:9; Acts 1:23-26). The word “clearly refers to something not obtained by human effort or based on personal worthiness but issued from God’s sovereign purpose.”<sup>2</sup>

Peter’s choice of this word underlines the precious reality that our faith<sup>3</sup> was given to us by a gracious God who chose us for this inheritance. In His sovereignty, He willed to give us saving faith! This is the consistent teaching of Scripture—Acts 3:16; 11:21; 16:14; Romans 12:3; 1 Corinthians 2:5; Ephesians 2:8-9; 6:23; Philippians 1:29.

Thus, both the result of faith (i.e., full salvation) and the faith itself is a gift of God’s grace. This kind of faith *must* be given, for while humans can exercise faith of themselves (e.g., faith to drive a car, fly in an airplane, sit in a chair), saving and redemptive faith proceeds only from God alone (cf. Romans 10:17; Ephesians 2:1-10).

So, “faith is simply breathing the breath that God’s grace supplies. Yet, the paradox is that we must exercise it and bear the responsibility if we do not (cf. John 5:40).”<sup>4</sup> In 1 Peter, he writes to those who are “elect” (1:1-2); in 2 Peter, he writes to those who have received faith (1:1)—both are true of all believers: “we’re chosen by God but not without faith. But that faith is a gift.”<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup>MacArthur, *2 Peter and Jude*, 20.

<sup>3</sup>We know that the “faith” Peter speaks of here is not objective faith (i.e., the doctrines of the Christian faith), but subjective belief in the message of the gospel. Since the gospel message has no equal, it goes without saying that this message alone is needful for personal faith (cf. Romans 10:17). In other words, there is no objective body of faith that is less valuable; there is only one body of Christian faith and doctrine. If Peter was referring to objective faith, we would have to respond, “Of course it’s like precious faith—there isn’t nay other!” Furthermore, that the word is used here without an article (i.e., “faith” not “the faith”) also evidences that Peter speaks of a subjective faith or belief in the gospel.

<sup>4</sup>John MacArthur, *Ephesians*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary [Chicago: Moody, 1986], 60–61 quoted in *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>5</sup>John MacArthur, “Our Precious Faith, Part 1” (a sermon on 2 Peter 1:1 given April 22, 1990). <http://bit.ly/UbR7iY>

## 2. *Our faith is equally privileged.*

Peter states secondly that these believers’ faith was “like precious” (v. 1). This phrase translates one Greek word (*hisotimos*), which means “of the same kind/value/[honor]” (BDAG) or “equally valuable/privileged.”<sup>6</sup> In other words, the faith that you’ve received is the same valuable, honored, precious, privileged faith as any other believer—there are no first-class Christians and no second-class Christians. “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female—for ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28). God is no respecter of persons!

Some interpret Peter here to be referring to the same faith as the apostles. Although they are uniquely called by God, have seen the resurrected Christ, have enjoyed unique experiences with Christ, have even been given direct revelation from God, and are invested with unique power from on high, their faith is the same as ours—divinely given, equally privileged, and perfectly sufficient! And that is absolutely true!

On the other hand, it’s more likely that Peter is referring to the Gentile/Jewish distinction. After all, he’s writing to believing gentiles scattered across the known world (1 Peter 1:1), and Peter had been given a unique ministry by God among the gentiles (cf. Acts 10). This interpretation is substantiated by Peter’s regular awe at this reality throughout Acts.

For example, he reports to the apostles and believers in Jerusalem, saying, “Forasmuch then as God gave [the gentiles] the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, what was I, that I could withstand God?” (Acts 11:17). Then, in Acts 15:8-11, “And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us and put no difference between us and them, purifying

---

<sup>6</sup>MacArthur, *2 Peter and Jude*, 21. Also, “It’s used in a political sense, it means equal in rank, equal in position, equal in honor, equal in standing, equal in price in the economic usage, equally valuable, equally precious, equally honored, equally privileged” (MacArthur, sermon).

their hearts by faith....But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.” Cf. Acts 13:39; Romans 10:12-13; Galatians 3:26, 28; Ephesians 4:5.

The breaking down of the dividing wall that Paul wrote about in Ephesians 2:11-18, Peter witnessed in Acts 10 (cf. 10:34), and he never got over the wonderful reality that gentiles now were full recipients of a privileged faith—“Christ in you, the hope of glory” (cf. Colossians 1:24-27).

**Illustration:** “This word again, *hisotimos*, was particularly used in the ancient world with strangers and foreigners who were given equal citizenship in a city. Josephus, writing about Antioch, says that in Antioch the Jews were given all the rights of citizenship, and they were called *hisotimoi*. They were called equals in honor and privilege with the Macedonians and the Greeks who lived there.”<sup>7</sup>

Likewise, gentile believers have been graced by God to be *hisotimoi*—those who are equally privileged by God in their standing in Christ.

### 3. ***Our faith is accompanied by righteousness.***

Peter mentions thirdly that our precious faith is “through the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ” (v. 1). God’s gift of saving faith is only available to us because of the “righteousness” of Jesus Christ—our God and Savior. This verse underlines Christ’s deity, for the Greek grammar here demands that both preceding modifiers (i.e., “God” and “Savior”) refer to the following proper noun (i.e., Jesus Christ).<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> MacArthur, sermon.

<sup>8</sup> The terms “God and Savior” both refer to the same person, Jesus Christ. This is one of the clearest statements in the NT concerning the deity of Christ. The construction in Greek is known as the Granville Sharp rule, named after the English philanthropist-linguist who first clearly articulated the rule in 1798. Sharp pointed out that in the construction article-noun-καί-noun (where καί [kai] = “and”), when two nouns are singular, personal, and common (i.e., not proper names), they *always* had the same referent. Illustrations such as “the friend and brother,” “the God and Father,” etc. abound in the NT to prove Sharp’s point. In fact, the construction occurs elsewhere in 2 Peter, strongly suggesting that the author’s idiom was the same as the rest of

Some interpret this verse to refer to the “rightness,” “fairness,” or “equity” of God, by which faith is given. This interpretation is legitimate and highlights what we’ve already learned from this verse—that God is not a respecter of persons—but this is probably not the best interpretation. Especially since Peter refers to this “righteousness” as that of our “God and Savior Jesus Christ,” it is best to interpret this as saving, imputed righteousness. After all, the name of God’s Son (i.e., Jesus = “salvation”—cf. Matthew 1:21 compared with Isaiah 43:3, 11; 45:15, 21; 60:16) promised salvation and the work of God’s Son accomplished salvation (through righteousness, cf. Matthew 3:15; Romans 5:12-21) for all who would believe (cf. Acts 2:21). 2 Corinthians 5:21 underscores the effectual work of our Jesus by teaching the important doctrine of imputed righteousness, a doctrine loved and regularly taught by the apostles, including Peter: “[God] made Him who knew no sin [i.e., Jesus] to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (NASB—cf. Acts 13:38-39; Romans 3:26; 4:4-8; 2 Corinthians 5:18-19; Philippians 3:8-9; 1 Peter 2:24; Isaiah 61:10). Because Christ has earned and credited us His righteousness, God grants us faith to believe.

**Illustration:** We sing,

*Not what my hands have done can save my guilty soul;  
Not what my toiling flesh has borne can make my spirit whole.  
Not what I feel or do can give me peace with God;  
Not all my prayers and sighs and tears can bear my awful load.*

the NT authors’ (cf., e.g., 1:11 [“the Lord and Savior”], 2:20 [“the Lord and Savior”]). The only issue is whether terms such as “God” and “Savior” could be considered common nouns as opposed to proper names. Sharp and others who followed (such as T. F. Middleton in his masterful *The Doctrine of the Greek Article*) demonstrated that a proper name in Greek was one that could not be pluralized. Since both “God” (θεός, *theos*) and “savior” (σωτήρ, *sōtēr*) were occasionally found in the plural, they did not constitute proper names, and hence, do fit Sharp’s rule. Although there have been 200 years of attempts to dislodge Sharp’s rule, all attempts have been futile. Sharp’s rule stands vindicated after all the dust has settled” (NET Bible note #5 on verse 1). Cf. Romans 9:5; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 1:8; Colossians 2:9.

*Your voice alone, O Lord, can speak to me of grace;  
Your power alone, O Son of God, can all my sin erase.  
No other work but Yours, no other blood will do;  
No strength but that which is divine can bear me safely through.*

*Thy work alone, O Christ, can ease this weight of sin;  
Thy blood alone, O Lamb of God, can give me peace within.  
Thy love to me, O God, not mine, O Lord, to Thee,  
Can rid me of this dark unrest, And set my spirit free.*

**Application:** Salvation is God's gift from first to last in every sense! Faith, righteousness, forgiveness, etc.—all of it comes to us through the person of His Son, our God and Savior Jesus Christ!

Therefore, boasting is excluded (Romans 3:27) and spiritual piety must be spurned! What do we have that we did not receive (1 Corinthians 4:7)?

We are good to practice what we sing,

*Christ, only Christ; no self important bearing;  
Christ, only Christ; no trace of "I" be found.*

And again,

*Naught have I gotten but what I received;  
Grace hath bestowed it since I have believed.  
Boasting excluded, pride I abase—  
I'm only a sinner, saved by grace!  
This is my story, to God be the glory—  
I'm only a sinner, saved by grace!*

Yes, let unbridled worship and humility pour from our hearts and lips:

*I bless the Christ of God; I rest on love divine;  
And with unfaltering lip and heart I call this Savior mine.  
His cross dispels each doubt; I bury in His tomb  
Each thought of unbelief and fear, each lingering shade of gloom.*

*I praise the God of grace; I trust His truth and might;  
He calls me His, I call Him mine, My God, my joy and light.  
'Tis He Who saveth me, and freely pardon gives;  
I love because He loveth me, I live because He lives.*

**Transition:** Having considered the unique source of our faith—a source frequently undermined or rejected by false teachers—Peter now speaks about the substance of our faith.

## THE SUBSTANCE OF OUR FAITH (v. 2)

Consider Peter's points as he teaches on this important point.

### 1. *Our reality*

Because of our divinely given faith, we have and can experience God's grace and peace—this is our reality now! Cf. Romans 5:1-2.

"Grace" is God's free, undeserved, unmerited favor that grants to us complete forgiveness through Jesus to those who believe the gospel (Romans 3:24; Ephesians 1:7; Titus 3:7). It is further evidenced by God's strength and enablement (cf. Psalm 84:11; Acts 4:33; 2 Corinthians 9:8; 12:9; Hebrews 4:16).

"Peace" is the restoration to and harmony with God as a result of such forgiveness (2 Thessalonians 3:16). It also is a continued state of reality between us and our God (John 14:27; 16:33).

### 2. *Our richness*

These and other blessings are "multiplied" or "lavished" (NET) on us through Christ! This word is used to describe the rapid spread of God's Word and growth of His church in Acts (6:1, 7; 9:31; 12:24; 19:20), to characterize the Israelites' multiplication in Egypt before the Exodus (Acts 7:17), and to picture the abundance of harvest from seeds (2 Corinthians 9:10). Indeed, God lavishes us with "spiritual blessings in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3).

But, as Peter did with the concept of faith, showing both its divine and human aspects, he again does with this idea of multiplied blessings. God lavishes them on us, but through a means that we must utilize.

### 3. *Our relationship*

Every spiritual resource that is ours comes through Jesus Christ. Therefore, only through the “knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord” can we enjoy the fullness of the rich provisions of our faith. This is faith’s substance, it’s essence—a knowledge of and relationship with God!

The word for knowledge is *epignosis*, which is an intensified form of the typical *gnosis*. The word speaks of a full, rich, personal, thorough, intimate, true knowledge (e.g., the personal knowledge of sin, Romans 3:20; true knowledge of God’s righteousness, Romans 10:2; relational knowledge of God, Ephesians 1:17).

Thus, we come to saving faith through objective, rational, empirical, exact knowledge of revealed truth...more specifically, of the Persons who revealed that truth and who are revealed by that truth. It’s not through experience, it’s not through emotion, it’s not through intuition, imagination, mysticism, or visualization; it’s through a relationship alone.

MacArthur summarizes:

*The substance of one’s salvation is this kind of rational, objective knowledge of God through His Word (cf. John 8:32; 14:6; 17:17; 2 John 2). This fundamental concept of knowing was first of all an Old Testament one (cf. Ex. 5:2; Judg. 2:10; 1 Sam. 2:12; Prov. 2:5; Hos. 2:20; 5:4). Paul often used the same word in relation to divine truth (Eph. 1:17; 4:13; Phil. 1:9; Col. 1:9, 10; 2:2; 3:10; 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Tim. 2:25; 3:7; Titus 1:1)...Salvation requires a genuine knowledge of the person and work of Jesus Christ (cf. Gal. 2:20; Phil. 3:10). It involves not merely knowing the truth about Him, but actually knowing Him through the truth of His Word (cf. John 20:30-31; 21:24; 2 Tim. 3:15-17; 1 John 5:11-13).<sup>9</sup>*

Therefore, such knowledge is the beginning of salvation (2 Peter 1:2) and the continuation of salvation (2 Peter 3:18).

**Application:** Remember, this teaching on our precious faith—this truth about our salvation—is what Peter wants us to know in order to stand against false teaching. With that context in mind, how does this consideration of knowledge being the substance of salvation cut against the grain of much modern “Christianity”? *It undermines the growing emphasis on mysticism, supernaturalism, experientialism, visualization, and transcendentalism within the Charismatic and New Age movements.*

Evaluate your own heart and habits in light of Paul’s life-long passion: “More than that, I now regard all things as liabilities compared to the far greater value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things—indeed, I regard them as dung!—that I may gain Christ....My aim is to know Him, to experience the power of His resurrection, to share in His sufferings, and to be like Him in his death” (Philippians 3:8, 10).

Work backwards. Remember,

*As the true genuine intimate knowledge of the truth of God and Christ grows through the Word there is the multiplication of the blessings of grace and peace—more grace for every sin, more grace for every weakness, more peace for every temptation, more peace for every trial.<sup>10</sup>*

**Transition:** A third distinguishing mark of true faith versus false teaching is discovered in the sufficiency of our faith.

---

<sup>9</sup> MacArthur, 2 Peter and Jude, 24.

---

<sup>10</sup> MacArthur, sermon.

## THE SUFFICIENCY OF OUR FAITH (vv. 3-4)

To underline the importance of these verses to ground believers in the face of false teaching, MacArthur writes:

*But in spite of God’s revelation of His tremendous generosity (cf. 1 Chron. 29:10-14), Christians often think He was somehow miserly in dispensing His grace. He may have given them enough enabling grace for justification (Rom. 3:24), but not enough for sanctification. Or some believers have been taught that they received enough grace for justification and sanctification, but not enough for glorification, and thus fear they may lose their salvation. Even if they believe there is enough grace for final glorification, many Christians still feel there is not enough for them to handle life’s problems and trials. But there is no reason for any believer to doubt the sufficiency of God’s grace or to look elsewhere for spiritual resources (cf. Ex. 34:6; Pss. 42:8; 84:11; 103:11; 107:8; 121:1-8; Lam. 3:22-23; John 1:16; 10:10; Rom. 5:15, 20-21; 8:16-17, 32; 1 Cor. 2:9; 3:21-23; Eph. 1:3-8; 2:4-7; 3:17-19; [Col. 2:8-10;] 1 Peter 5:7).<sup>11</sup>*

Peter demonstrates the sufficiency of our faith by sharing five essential components:

### 1. **Divine power (v. 3)**

Peter again highlights the undeserved nature of our faith. We didn’t merit it or earn it—it is derived from God’s divine power alone!<sup>12</sup> The almighty power of Christ<sup>13</sup> alone is sufficient to save our souls in justification, sanctification, and glorification. This is the power of His resurrection (cf. Romans 1:4; 1

<sup>11</sup> MacArthur, *2 Peter and Jude*, 25.

<sup>12</sup> The word “given” means “to present something as a gift or confer a benefit” (BDAG). It occurs in the perfect tense, denoting that these gifts were given in the past and are unceasingly offered.

<sup>13</sup> The word “divine,” like “glory” later in this verse (cf. Luke 9:27-36; John 1:3-5, 14), further highlights Jesus’ deity. “Virtue” refers to Jesus’ moral excellence (cf. Matt. 20:28; Luke 2:52; 22:27; 2 Cor. 8:9; Phil. 2:7; Heb. 2:17; 4:15; 7:26; 1 Peter 2:21-23; 1 John 3:3) emphasizes His perfect humanity. Thus, the recognition of both Jesus’ deity and humanity are necessary for a sinners’ salvation (i.e., “called us by His own glory and excellence”—NASB).

Corinthians 6:14; 2 Corinthians 13:4; Ephesians 1:19ff; Philippians 3:10-11; Colossians 2:12), a power that has ability in our lives beyond our comprehension (cf. Matthew 19:26; Ephesians 3:20; 1 Timothy 1:12-16). Peter had been an eyewitness of this power (cf. v. 16), so he knew what he spoke of when he encouraged his readers in this way.

### 2. **Divine provision (v. 3)**

We’ll again let MacArthur demonstrate the need for this point, by rehearsing some contemporary false teachings that miss this point:

*Because of their constant sins and failures as Christians, many find it hard not to think that even after salvation something is missing in the sanctification process. This faulty idea causes believers to seek “second blessings,” “spirit baptisms,” tongues, mystical experiences, special psychological insights, private revelations, “self crucifixion,” the “deeper life,” heightened emotions, demon bindings, and combinations of various ones of all those in an attempt to attain what is supposedly missing from their spiritual resources. All manner of ignorance and Scripture twisting accompanies those foolish pursuits, which at their corrupt roots are failures to understand exactly what Peter says here.<sup>14</sup>*

Peter exclaims that Christ in His power has bestowed on us “everything necessary for life and godliness” (NET). The word for “every” or “all” stands at the beginning of this sentence in a place of emphasis to convince us that “in Christ” and the true faith we’ve been given, we are sufficiently supplied for our Christian “life.” The term “life” accompanied by “godliness” (i.e., reverential worship accompanied by obedience—that alone is true godlienss) depicts the entire Christian experience from the moment salvation starts to when it is culminated (John 3:15-16; 5:24; 6:47; Titus 3:7; 1

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 27.

John 2:25). In practical terms, then, Christ has made us entirely complete for sanctification (Romans 8:29-30; Philippians 1:6; Colossians 2:8-10).

### 3. *Divine perception (v. 3)*

The disconnect is that we recognize this truth, but don't seem to experience its reality in our lives. Why is that? Or, how can we experience those "all things" to their fullest?

Peter reiterates the same point we made in subpoint 3 of our previous main point—these "things necessary for life and godliness" are bestowed "through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence" (NASB). As we learned below, this is more than a superficial, intellectual knowledge (cf. Matthew 7:21-23; Luke 6:46). The term Peter uses again here refers to a true, intimate, exact, personal, full knowledge of Christ—it highlights a relationship and the full knowledge between the individuals in that relationship.

Furthermore, the following phrase—"who called us by His own glory and excellence"<sup>15</sup>—also demonstrates the personal and relational knowledge in mind here, which is the source of such lavish spiritual bestowment. God offers both a general and specific call. Generally, He calls all people to repent and believe the gospel (Mark 1:15; cf. Isaiah 45:22; Matthew 11:28; 28:19-20; John 7:37). God's special call extends to those whom He has chosen and it will be effectual in leading them to saving faith (cf. John 3:27; Romans 1:6-7; 2:4; 8:30; 1 Corinthians 1:9, 26; 4:7; 2 Peter 1:10). That Peter refers here to the effectual, special call of God is evident because he's addressing believers (1:1), he acknowledges that they were called by Christ's "glory and excellence" (1:3), and he always

refers to this specific and effectual call to salvation in his epistles (1 Peter 1:15; 2:9; 2:21; 3:9; 5:10).

So, if God's grace, peace, etc. in sanctification is not being enjoyed, it is not because His gifts are deficient; it is because we are not utilizing the means or channel of those graces. We must know Christ through the ministry of His Spirit in His Word!

### 4. *Divine promises (v. 4)*

Through Jesus' unique Person—the God-Man (i.e., "glory and excellence")<sup>16</sup>—He has "given"<sup>17</sup> us "exceeding great and precious promises." These "precious" (valuable or Gk. *timios*) and "great" ("greatest," lit. or "magnificent," NASB or Gk. *meGas*):

*These words include all the divine promises for God's own children contained in the Old and New Testaments (cf. 2 Cor. 7:1), such as: spiritual life (Rom. 8:9-13), resurrection life (John 11:25; 1 Cor. 15:21-23), the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:33; Eph. 1:13), abundant grace (John 10:10; Rom. 5:15, 20; Eph. 1:7), joy (Ps. 132:16; Gal. 5:22), strength (Ps. 18:32; Isa. 40:31), guidance (John 16:13), help (Isa. 41:10, 13-14), instruction (Ps. 32:8; John 14:26), wisdom (Prov. 2:6-8; Eph. 1:17-18; James 1:5; 3:17), heaven (John 14:1-3; 2 Peter 3:13), eternal rewards (1 Tim. 4:8; James 1:12).<sup>18</sup>*

Peter's not done, though, for he finally tells us why God has bestowed these promises upon His children.

---

<sup>15</sup> The dative case here can be translated (1) "to His own glory and virtue," stating the goal of His calling and election; (2) "for His own glory and virtue," indicating the glory that will resound to God because of this; or (3) "by His own glory and virtue," showing the means or instrument that He used to attract us to Himself. The last option is to be preferred (cf. MacArthur, 2 Peter and Jude, 29-30; Michael Green, vol. 18, 2 Peter and Jude: An Introduction and Commentary, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987], 82; NET note #16 in 1:3).

---

<sup>16</sup> See footnote 13.

<sup>17</sup> See footnote 12 above.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 30. Also, "The promises of God... show us God's intentions for us. They set forth what He wants to do on our behalf. Furthermore, the promises of God show us God's disposition toward us. If He did not care for us, He would not bother to help us" (Dr. Jim Berg, *Essential Virtues*, p. 17). "The future is as bright as the promises of God" (Dr. Bob Jones Sr.). Cf. Romans 4:20-21.

## 5. Divine participation (v. 4)

These promises are so “that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”

First, Peter speaks positively about the purpose of these promises, writing that through them, we become participants with God in His life. MacArthur explains,

*“May become” [or “might be”] is not intended to present merely a future possibility, but a present certainty. The verb builds on all Peter has written. He has said that in salvation saints are called effectually by God through the true knowledge of the glory and excellence of Christ, and thus they receive everything related to life and godliness, as well as priceless spiritual promises. It is because of all that that believers may become, here and now, possessors of God’s own eternal life (cf. John 1:12; Rom. 8:9; Gal. 2:20; Col. 1:27). Partakers (koinōnos) is often translated “fellowship,” and means “sharer” or “partner.” Believers are in this life partners in the very life that belongs to God (Col. 3:3; 1 John 5:11; cf. John 6:48-51).<sup>19</sup>*

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 30-31. Also,

*This expression is not different from the concepts of being born again, born from above (cf. John 3:3; James 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23), being in Christ (cf. Rom. 8:1), or being the home of the Trinity (John 14:17-23). The precious promises of salvation result in becoming God’s children in the present age (John 1:12; Rom. 8:9; Gal. 2:20; Col. 1:27), and thereby sharing in God’s nature by the possession of His eternal life. Christians do not become little gods, but they are “new creations” (2 Cor. 5:17) and have the Holy Spirit living in them (1 Cor. 6:19,20). Moreover, believers will partake of the divine nature in a greater way when they bear a glorified body like Jesus Christ (Phil. 3:20,21; 1 John 3:1-3). (The MacArthur Study Bible, ed. John MacArthur, Jr., electronic ed. [Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997], 2 Pe 1:4.)*

MacArthur further demonstrates what is and is not meant by being a “partaker of the divine nature” and he does so by putting these verses in Peter’s larger contextual burden to thwart false teaching (MacArthur, 2 Peter and Jude, 30-31):

*It is noteworthy that Peter borrows from the terminology of mystical, pantheistic religion that called for its adherents to recognize the divine nature within them and lose themselves in the essence of the gods. Ancient false teachers (the Gnostics) and more recent ones (Eastern mystics and New Age gurus of all sorts) have often emphasized the importance of personally attaining transcendent knowledge. The apostle Peter, however, stressed to his readers the need to recognize that only by being spiritually born anew (John 3:3; James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23) can anyone attain true divine knowledge, live righteously as God’s children (Rom. 8:11-15; Gal. 2:20), and*

On the other hand, through God’s lavish grace, these believers would not longer be participants of “the corruption that is in the world through lust.” The effects of sin have been broken in our lives (Philippians 3:20-21; 1 John 3:2-3; cf. Titus 1:2; James 1:12; 1 John 2:25; Rev. 2:10b-11), and the presence of sin will be eradicated (Revelation 21:1-4; 22:1-5).

**Application:** To a degree, Peter has just pitted promises against lust, or in the words of Paul faith versus sight. In a word, “promises” could summarize all these rich spiritual blessings that we’ve received in the package of “true faith”—not that we haven’t already participated in these promises, but these realities still remain invisible and un-climaxed. Therefore, we must by faith pursue the knowledge of Jesus Christ so that we might wade deeper and deeper into the stream of His sufficient provision.

**Transition:** Finally, to make these considerations quite practical, we return to verse 1 and consider the sign of true faith. What is the sign or mark of those who are living out this abundant faith?

### THE SIGN OF OUR FAITH (v. 1a)

Simply by considering Peter himself, we learn that the sign of true faith in a life is evident in areas.

#### 1. Our identity

The author identifies himself as “Simon Peter.” There are nine people other than this author in the New Testament identified as “Simon,” so this complete name helps us recognize the author to be the Peter who was Jesus’ disciple.

Simon (i.e., Simon in Greek, Simeon in Hebrew) was named after Simeon, who is the head of one of the tribes of Israel. It was a very common name. Peter (i.e., Peter in Greek, Cephas

*thereby share in God’s nature (cf. 2 Cor. 5:17). The false prophets of Peter’s day believed that transcendent knowledge elevated people above any need for morality. But Peter countered that notion by asserting that genuine knowledge of God through Christ gives believers all they need to live godly lives (cf. 2 Tim. 3:16-17). (See also note #19 in the NET Bible.)*



in Aramaic) means “rock,” and he was given that name by Christ Himself.

A wonderfully encouraging observation can be noted here:

*There's also another note in these two names. Simon was his name before he met Christ and Peter was his name after he met Christ. Simon was his name of dishonor and Peter was his name of honor. And because he was so much Simon Peter—sin other words, he so often acted like his old self as well as acting like his new self—he never seemed to be able to shake his first name. In fact, when Jesus had caught him in his disobedience, He said to him three times, "Simon..Simon..Simon—He called him by his old name when he acted like his old self in John 21.*

*This combination, Simon Peter, occurs many times in the New Testament in referring to this man (read the book of Acts). Even the Gentiles called him Simon Peter. John who wrote his gospel in Asia Minor refers to him as Simon Peter 17 out of 22 times. So he really got stuck with both names. It would have been nice if he had just become Peter, but he so often acted like his old self that he seemed to always bear his old name. He's a wonderful picture for us because we often act like our old self, too, don't we? I guess that's why we all identify with Simon Peter.*

*Just as comparison, note that the Apostle Paul is never called Saul Paul. And he is for some reason or other not quite as real to us as Simon Peter. We're much more comfortable with the man who, while being new once in a while, acted like he was old. He is Simon when Jesus confronts him in his sin. He is Peter when he preaches with power at Pentecost. And we're all like that.*

*And so, he stands by virtue of his very name as a dramatic illustration of salvation, a fitting guy to be writing on the subject.<sup>20</sup>*

Those who have received true faith are forever marked by the tension of the old and the new, a tension that will continue throughout life until the new completely overwhelms the old in the power of Christ!

## **2. Our calling**

In a beautiful blend of honor and humility, Peter recognizes himself to be “a slave and apostle of Jesus Christ.” Likewise, believers have the authority of Christ as ambassadors for Him (2 Corinthians 5:18-21); yet we exercise the humility of slaves, recognizing that we’ve been bought with a price, therefore we will glorify God in fulfilling His mission (1 Corinthians 6:20). We are honored to serve Him, and serve Him we must in submission, duty, and obedience.

*(i) To call the Christian the doulos of God means that he is inalienably possessed by God. In the ancient world a master possessed his slaves in the same sense as he possessed his tools. A servant can change his master; but a slave cannot. The Christian inalienably belongs to God.*

*(ii) To call the Christian the doulos of God means that he is unqualifiedly at the disposal of God. In the ancient world the master could do what he liked with his slave. He had the same power over his slave as he had over his inanimate possessions. He had the power of life and death over his slave. The Christian belongs to God, for God to send him where He will, and to do with him what He will. The Christian is the man who has no rights of his own, for all his rights are surrendered to God.*

*(iii) To call the Christian the doulos of God means that the Christian owes an unquestioning obedience to God. Ancient law was such that a master's command was a slave's only law. Even if a slave was told to do something which actually broke the law, he could not protest, for, as far as he was concerned, his master's command was the law. In any situation the Christian has but one question to*

---

<sup>20</sup> MacArthur, sermon.

*ask: “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?” The command of God is his only law.*

*(iv) To call the Christian the doulos of God means that he must be constantly in the service of God. In the ancient world the slave had literally no time of his own, no holidays, no time off, no working-hours settled by agreement, no leisure. All his time belonged to the master.<sup>21</sup>*

### **3. Our Master**

Finally, those of true faith are marked by their service to a new Master. Peter was a slave and apostle of “Jesus Christ.” And although his life showed imperfect and flawed obeisance to Christ, Peter rejoiced to end his race boldly acknowledging Christ to be his Master.

This is a sign of true faith—the recognition that we are not our own; that Christ is our Master; that our whole status, security, and stewardship in life is because of our Christ. Therefore, we daily submit to His Lordship and live out His life.

**Application:** Are these signs evident in your life? They are signs of true faith, never discovered in false teaching and teachers.

### **CONCLUSION**

This is true faith—its source is God-given, its substance is the knowledge of and a relationship with God, its sufficiency is lavish and complete, and its sign is evident in a life changed. When compared with the doctrines and lifestyle of false teaching, true faith is indeed “precious”!

---

<sup>21</sup> (*The Letters of James and Peter*, rev. ed. [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976], 293; emphasis in the original in MacArthur, *2 Peter and Jude*, 19.