

## Fact Sheet for “Partakers of the Divine Nature” 2 Peter 1:1-11

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We have been considering 1 Peter for the past several weeks and have found it a go-to book when Christians are suffering unjustly. Peter encourages our faith in those tough times. But now we come to 2 Peter. It has a very different message, and is almost like an independent book. In fact, this has caused most liberal scholars to doubt that it is authentic... that Peter actually wrote it. But conservative scholars stand behind the authenticity of 2 Peter and its place in the NT canon. We have what appears, at first glance, to be a common introduction.

ESV <sup>1</sup> ¶ Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ: <sup>2</sup> ¶ May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

The word “obtained” is a word that means “received by divine will”. We have a faith of equal standing with the apostle Peter, a faith that we have received by God’s will. Peter will later talk about our calling and election in verse 10.

When Peter says in verse 1 “our God and Savior Jesus Christ” his Greek grammar clearly indicates that “God” and “Savior” are one person, not two. That same Greek grammar is in verse 2 with “of God and of Jesus our Lord”. (*It’s called the Granville Sharp’s rule. More can be read about this rule at <http://www.theopedia.com/granville-sharps-rule>.) Here are two clear verses among several others (Matthew 16:16; John 1:1; 20:28; Titus 2:13) that plainly teach Jesus Christ is coequal in nature with God the Father.*

And there is more. Peter has already begun to develop his theme. Peter mentioned in verse 1 that we have obtained our faith by the righteousness of Jesus. He also mentioned the knowledge (*full knowledge*) of Jesus (verse 2) that comes with our faith. We know his righteous character. We will come back to these verses shortly, but I want to go on to verses 3 and 4 first.

<sup>3</sup> ¶ His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him (see verse 2) who called us to his own glory and excellence (“excellence” – moral virtue, uprightness, goodness), <sup>4</sup> by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises (Without Christ’s 100% righteousness there would have been no salvation for us.), so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

Now the work of translation from one language into another is a difficult task. Translating these verses from the original Greek into English is not easy. With the first four verses of this letter there is a challenge in sentence structure. What makes good Greek makes awkward English. Verses 1-4 are actually one very long and complicated sentence. Verse 3 really begins with the word “as”. The NKJ translates verse 3 this way, but most other translations begin verse 3 as a new sentence. You may be saying

to yourself, “So what?” Well... here’s the “what”. Read these four verses again, but this time as one sentence, beginning verse 3 with the word “as”. See if you can catch Peter’s core thought. Peter is asking his readers, and us, to become partakers of the divine nature by choosing to be righteous. This is most of the core theme of Peter’s second letter. It is very different than the theme of his first letter.

Recognizing Peter’s theme makes perfect sense with the following verses. One writer has put it this way. “In this beautiful paragraph Peter orchestrates a symphony of grace. To the melody line of faith he leads believers to add harmony in a blend of seven Christian virtues which he lists without explanation or description.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>5</sup> **For this very reason, make every effort** (this translates two words meaning “bring to bear all eagerness, enthusiasm, diligence, zeal”) **to supplement** (an imperative, a command) **your faith with virtue** (the same word as “excellence” in verse 3, meaning moral excellence), **and virtue with knowledge,** <sup>6</sup> **and knowledge with self-control** (especially in matters related to sex), **and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness,** <sup>7</sup> **and godliness with brotherly affection** (a practical caring for others), **and brotherly affection with love** (agape).

Note that this is just a sampling of those qualities that Peter could have included here.

<sup>8</sup> **For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge** (full knowledge) **of our Lord Jesus Christ.** <sup>9</sup> **For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted** (We get our word “myopia” from this word.) **that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.**

“If these qualities are yours and increasing” indicates that a believer should grow in grace. Unfortunately too many Christians lack this determination to grow in grace (1 Corinthians 3:1; Hebrews 5:12-13).

<sup>10</sup> **Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall.**

A believer hardly has the authority to tell God, “I am certainly saved”. Instead, confirming our calling and election focus on the confidence we as Christians have about our own standing with God, when our actions are consistent with His nature.

<sup>11</sup> **For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.**

This verse shows the second part of the core theme of Peter’s second letter. We are to make every effort to become partakers of the divine nature... as we look toward eternity. These verses from 2 Peter provide a very different standard for behavior than the one provided in our own culture. Take a moment to think of the current news reports of sexual issues, rights, and violence.

Peter gives us an entirely different ruler for life. Become partakers of the divine nature!

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<sup>1</sup> Kenneth O. Gangel, The Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament, p. 865.