

A MYSTICAL PARTNERSHIP

II PETER 1:3-11

GOD HAS PREDESTINED US TO DO GREAT THINGS. WE MUST STEP UP AND ACCOMPLISH ALL THE GOOD WORKS THAT HE HAS PREPARED FOR US IN ADVANCE.

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A MYSTICAL PARTNERSHIP

II PETER 1:3-11

The first letter of Peter's was a little difficult to preach, not because the wording or the concepts were difficult, but because even though we all suffer, it is difficult for most of us to understand what it means to be physically persecuted, tortured, and killed for believing in Jesus. I hope I did justice to Peter's letter as I preached through it. I know I personally learned a lot about life from it.

This second letter of Peter will be much easier for us to relate to. False teachers with bad theology and false teachers who tried to mix philosophy with biblical Christianity were threatening to destroy the church. To be sure, these false teachers and philosophers were popular and their teaching sounded authoritative and reasonable. The problem is that even though their teaching appealed to people, the teaching was false and could only lead people to the bondage of sin, death, and ultimately hell.

We have such easy access to television. We see preachers who appeal to us because they sound and act so authoritative and sincere. They demonstrate power and often tell us what we want to hear. The problem is that their doctrine is false.

I know ministers and priests who believe that Jesus didn't rise from the dead. They believe that the body of Jesus is somewhere in the ground in Israel . I know ministers and priests who believe that Jesus wasn't born of the Holy Spirit and Mary. They believe that Jesus had a human father.

Many people are all impressed by *The Davinci Code*. I think that most Christians who are living healthy and authentic Christian lives hold to the basic tenants of the historic faith spelled out in the Apostles' and the Nicene Creeds. In other words, the basic doctrines that one must believe to be a Christian headed for Heaven are that there is only one God: and He exists in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and Mary. Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary. Jesus suffered and died for our sins. We cannot be saved by being or doing good. We can only be saved by grace through faith. Jesus rose from the dead. He will come again to judge the living and the dead. We believe the Holy Spirit inspired men and women to write and compile the Bible. Therefore the Bible is without error. We believe that we belong to the universal church: with all those who confess Jesus as Lord and Savior.

These are basic doctrines that everyone must believe in order to be saved. However, there are theological debates that surround other doctrines. They have gone on throughout the centuries. It always amazes me how theologians and even students can argue with such viciousness. In my opinion, the mistake most of these people make is that they start from a particular school of theology, and then interpret the Bible based on their theology. I think we would be better served to read the Scripture and let it inform our theology rather than visa-versa. And we should be humble enough to realize that there are people far smarter than us who have defended all sides of these arguments.

I'm glad Peter was a blue-collar guy. He leaned heavily on God's grace while at the same time, pursuing holy living with all his might.

That's what I like about most blue-collar people. They usually don't try to impress anyone or pretend they are more holy than they are, and they usually just speak out what's on their mind.

Let me give you an example. I used to pastor a church that had a lot of blue-collar people in it. We were taking up an offering to help a family whose house burned down. Since it was a pretty small town, word got out that we were taking a collection.

The town saloon owner came that Sunday, got up and said, "I'd like to donate \$5,000

preacher.”

I was kind of in a catch 22. I responded, “Thank you. That is very generous, but I’m not sure if I can accept money that comes from a bar.”

I was confused, until one of my deacons in the back stood up and said, “Go ahead and take the money pastor, that’s our money anyhow.”

Peter is going to say what he has to say straight out. He has no clue that it may seem contradictory. He is just going to state the truth he received from the Holy Spirit.

I can’t tell you how many philosophy and theology conferences I have attended over the years dealing with the concepts we are studying this morning. I have done extensive reading on the subject, and I have to say, I’m not going to solve this problem this morning.

Oh, did I say problem? You see, it’s not a problem unless we want to construct some system. If we just submit to the truths presented here, there is no problem at all. You see, theologians say that God’s sovereignty and predestination and our free will present a problem. And so when each school is presented with Bible passages that seem to derail their philosophy or theology, they try and interpret the passage in a way that fits into their system.

I think that we should let Scripture speak for itself. I think the Bible clearly teaches both concepts and never tries to reconcile what appears to be a problem to us. God is sovereign. His plans will not fail. We are completely free. We can choose to follow God or rebel against God. The main idea of this morning’s text is this. **GOD HAS PREDESTINED US TO DO GREAT THINGS. WE MUST STEP UP AND ACCOMPLISH ALL THE GOOD WORKS THAT HE HAS PREPARED FOR US IN ADVANCE.**

Since there are so many false teachings out there, let me give you one clear and absolute principle. When people quote verses to defend their particular point, make sure you go back and look at that quote in context.

I hear popular preachers constantly defining the abundant life as having an abundance of health and wealth. But if one were to read and study through the Bible from cover to cover, we could see that for the most part, those closest to God suffer the most. So if I or anyone else quotes you verses, please go back and look at them in context. That is the reason that early on in my career I decided to preach through entire books of the Bible. It is pretty difficult to preach something out of context that way.

Over the past 15 years I have exposed you to all sorts of biblical literature; Old Testament historical books, New Testament historical books, Old and New Testament wisdom and poetry, Old and New Testament prophetic books. By now, if you have been intently listening and studying, you should have a pretty good feel for whom God is, what He promises, and what He expects from us.

I. ALL THE RIGHT TOOLS

We Are Already Seated In Heaven With Christ.

Let's get into this morning's text. In verses 3-4, Peter tells us that we have been given all the right tools. In other words, **WE ARE ALREADY SEATED IN HEAVEN WITH CHRIST**. Let me just take a quick moment to explain that Peter uses a lot of "spiritual" words that a lot of false religions and philosophies used. Some of those words are *knowledge, divine, virtue, self-control, and power*.

Try to think of our culture where Oprah and other celebrities talk about spirituality, angels, forces, power, wholeness, healing, and salvation. They use all these words that Christianity uses. However, they certainly don't mean what we mean by them. Peter is going to use these loaded words, and then define them clearly from an authentic Christian perspective.

A. POWERFUL GIFTS (3)

In verse 3, Peter describes some powerful gifts. Verse 3 starts out, "His divine power has given us." In verses 1-2 Jesus is identified as God. In other words, Jesus is God. In those two verses, Jesus is also described as different from God the Father. When

Peter uses the pronoun *His* here, the nearest person mentioned to it is Jesus. This distinction doesn't make all that much difference. In receiving something from God, we are receiving it from Jesus. In receiving something from God the Holy Spirit, we are receiving it from God. This passage will involve all three persons of the Trinity.

The word *divine* is a pretty common word in Peter's culture. All religions and philosophies talked about the divine. But Peter has identified this particular divine power as directly related to Jesus, Who by the power of God was raised from the dead. Peter is talking about the same divine power that raised Jesus from the dead. This is resurrection power. Peter says that in this power we have everything we need. Let me just make an aside comment here. Peter says that the power of God has given us everything we need, not everything we want.

He has given us everything we need for life. We were born physically alive, but spiritually dead. We only become spiritually alive when we surrender our lives to Jesus in faith. At that moment, the Holy Spirit enters our lives and breathes life into our spirits. We then become physically and spiritually alive. We become whole human beings. God gave us life by creating us. Jesus gives us life by recreating us through salvation. As believers, we now have the capacity to receive the abundance of grace and peace described in verses 1-2. We have no excuse not to receive these. We have the power to experience God's gifts in everyday life.

His divine power also gives us everything we need to live successful supernatural lives. The word used here for *godliness* is another common word of the day. It referred to generic religion and the things good religious people do, like feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, welcoming the poor, etc. There is no reason why we are not witnessing to unsaved people in our workplace, at school, or anywhere else in our daily lives. There is no reason why we are not ministering to people's physical and spiritual needs. We have the resurrection power of Jesus to live as living testimonies of God's abundant grace, peace, power, and goodness.

The second half of this verse informs us that we appropriate all this incredible power through our knowledge. There is one of those loaded religious words in Peter's day. There were people who taught that people had to receive secret knowledge to be powerful and saved. But Peter makes it clear that there is no secret knowledge. The

Gospel of Jesus Christ was well known and easy to understand. It was for rich and poor, religious and non-religious, for educated and uneducated alike. The Gospel message breaks all ethnic, racial, cultural, and gender barriers.

The knowledge Christians must seek, take in, and internalize comes from Jesus who called us. For us, we don't need to go try some mystical stuff or look for some mystical power. We have been given the Bible. Read, study, and memorize the Bible. We already have the resurrection power of Jesus living in us. We don't have to go anywhere to find power and knowledge. We have it available to us right here, right now. Don't be confused by all these popular repackaging of ancient philosophies and religions. There is nothing new under the sun. And please don't feel as if you have to send money into some "ministry" or travel to some particular teacher or preacher in order to receive a miracle.

Jesus called us by his own glory. The words "his own" literally means unique and *glory* means reputation or a powerful manifestation of presence. Jesus called you and me in His own unique way. He stakes His reputation on it.

Not only did a powerful God call us, a good God called us. We must grasp both God's presence and goodness in our lives. God's calling on our lives is good. That word for goodness is a very rich and interesting word. It is not the typical word for goodness. It can be translated as virtue or excellence. The word refers to something that is the best at what it is and does. For example, an extremely fertile piece of land could be referred to by this word. We could say the land is virtuous, excellent, or good. An extremely powerful and skilled horse could be referred to as a virtuous horse. An excellent sword could be referred to as a virtuous sword. Jesus' calling is the best. There is no calling, no power for living, no knowledge about life and the supernatural, like that of Jesus. We appropriate all these gifts through knowledge: the intellectual knowledge of the truths spelled out in Scripture and the interpersonal relationship with Jesus. In other words, we must know about Jesus and we must know Jesus. Both types of knowledge are critical.

B. POWERFUL PROMISES (4a)

Next, in the first half of verse 4 we see some incredibly powerful promises. Please

notice how connected this passage is. God's divine power has given us everything we need for life and holiness through the knowledge of His calling which is His own unique brand of excellence, power, and presence. Now in verse 4 Peter links the promises to all of these. God has given us incredible promises. I don't think we could over exaggerate the magnitude of these promises. Peter says that are very great. The word he uses is the word we get mega from. These are mega promises. The second word he uses to describe these promises is *precious*. This word means honor, wealth, value, prestige, and status. These are mega valuable promises. Here is another bible principle. Whatever God promises, He will be sure to do it.

C. POWERFUL PARTICIPATION (4b)

That promise is described in the second half of verse 4 as it describes this powerful participation. There are a lot of spiritualities floating around today that are just old Pantheism dressed up in new clothes. This type of spirituality says that god is in everything and that we ourselves are part of god. In other words, we are literally, physically, and ontologically one with god.

All kinds of these philosophies were around during Peter's time. Further, people taught that one could become divine by gaining special knowledge. It became so intricate that certain foods had certain amounts of god stuff in them. Many religions today teach us that we can determine our own futures and destinies. In other words, we are gods.

Practically, in the United States we have come to believe that whatever we choose to believe and follow is true, genuine, and acceptable. In other words, we are gods who make up our own rules for living.

Peter wants to make two things clear. First of all, we are not gods, nor do we have any potential to be gods. There is only one true God. Secondly, there are not many ways to peace with God. There is only one way to find forgiveness of sins and a life filled with an abundance of grace, peace, and power. Many of the false teachers and preachers were preaching that since the flesh was passing away and that our souls were what were important, that they could live sexually immoral lives. That is certainly the case for us today. I can't begin to tell you how shocked I am to read the statistics

of immorality among so-called born-again-believers. And I am really shocked to see how many pastors are involved in extramarital affairs.

Through God's divine power, His glorious, personal, and excellent calling, we receive His Holy Spirit. Through the Holy Spirit we receive fellowship with God. Notice, we do not become God. We have fellowship with God's divine nature. This fellowship with the Holy Spirit enables us to pray effectively, to understand the truths of the bible, and gives us strength to fight against our lusts that are excited by this corrupt world. The New Testament makes it clear that Jesus is now in Heaven. Yet, through the presence of the Holy Spirit in us, Jesus lives on earth through us. The Bible is equally clear that through the Holy Spirit, we are seated victoriously with Christ in Heaven.

The incredibly powerful tool we receive in salvation is the Holy Spirit. When we gave our lives to Jesus in faith, submission, and obedience, God the Holy Spirit came into our lives. He leads us. He intercedes in prayer for us, He convicts us of sin. He gives us power to live holy lives. So even though we live here on earth, we have supernatural power to live above our circumstances. In other words, **WE ARE ALREADY SEATED IN HEAVEN.**

II. ALL THE RIGHT USES

Since We Have Already Been Given The Fruit Of The Spirit, We Must Own Them And Develop Them.

So it becomes clear that God has predestined us to live in Heaven with Him for eternity. He has given us His Holy Spirit. But verses 5-9 clearly warn us that if we want to be successful, we must put our tools to all the right uses. This is critical for us to understand. **SINCE WE HAVE ALREADY BEEN GIVEN THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT, WE MUST OWN THEM AND DEVELOP THEM.**

Did you ever say things like, "I need patience. I need self-control. I need peace or joy, etc.?" I have talked like that. But it seems to me those kinds of statements are based on wrong theology. If we are believers then we have received this incredible divine power, the Holy Spirit. And since we have the Holy Spirit, we have all that He

brings with Him into our lives. Therefore, we have patience. We have self-control. We have peace and joy. They are fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Verses 5-7 give us some insight into the way we are to interact with spiritual fruit. If we look at the list in these verses, we immediately see that it is very close to the spiritual fruit listed by the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Galatians. Based on verses 3-4, we see that since we received the Holy Spirit, we have already received these from God. In other words, we already have love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control. And we also know that the Spirit enlightens us and empowers us to complete all the good works God has prepared for us in advance. So God has already given us all these qualities listed here.

A. INTERACTING WITH SPIRITUAL FRUIT (5-7)

Now look at verse 5. Peter says, “For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith” the following things. Let’s deal with the phrase “For this reason.” Because God has already given us these things, because God has called us, empowered us, and equipped us, is the sense here. In other words, along with everything God has done, Peter exhorts us to “make every effort.” This too is an interesting word. It means that we are to bend ourselves. We are to apply every bit of power and determination we can muster up to “add to our faith” the list of characteristics he goes on to mention.

Now the phrase “to add to,” literally means to equip. The root word is the word we get *chorus* from. Ancient Greece and Rome were known for their extravagant theatre. Their plays required large choruses and many actors to produce. As you can imagine, it cost a lot of money. In order to bring theatre to a town, wealthy patrons would donate money to fund the productions. Naturally they wanted the best companies to come to their towns, so they didn’t skimp on the funding. This word means that they richly and extravagantly funded these companies. Peter is saying that we should use every ounce of energy to lavishly fill our faith with these qualities. In other words, it takes simple faith to become a Christian. But God expects much more. He expects our lives to manifest faithfulness, goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, patience, virtue, kindness love, joy, and peace.

Let’s say that I am struggling with a problem that requires self-control. We could

apply this to any addiction; work, alcohol, drugs, pornography, or any other addiction. Let's take one that I'm sure I'm not alone in. I am supposed to be on a very strict diet for health reasons. For the most part, I'm usually pretty good. But there are times that I am just out of control. My first inclination is to pray for self-control. But I'm praying for something I already have. I have self-control because I have the Holy Spirit.

I think what Peter is saying here is that I should apply every ounce of determination and strength to draw on this power I have. I need to acknowledge that I have self-control. God has equipped me with it. Now I must own the quality and ask God to manifest that quality in me. He can't give it to me. I have it. Now I must apply myself in owning it and letting God develop it in me.

It's work. These words that Peter uses indicate that it is hard work and takes diligence and determination to pull it off. God expects us to make every effort in manifesting these qualities in our lives. And look at one of these qualities near the end of verse 6. Perseverance is a word that means to push on even through the most difficult situations and suffering. The Christian life is not easy.

Now the order of the list is not all that important because this was a common technique used by the Hebrews and the Greeks to teach virtue and other topics that occurred in lists. But what is remarkable is that Peter starts the list with faith and ends with love. So it seems that love is meant to be the logical end of a love lived in faith. Paul started his list of fruit with love, indicating that love is the fundamental way Christians are commanded to live. And Jesus made it clear that the Christian life could be boiled down to loving God and loving one another.

It is imperative that we understand this because verse 8 reminds us we are to be using these gifts as we interact in relationships. Let me start with the last phrase in verse 8. Remember what we have already said about knowing Jesus. First of all, notice that Peter calls Jesus our Lord. This is for sure knowing who Jesus is. But it is much more. It is knowing Jesus personally and acknowledging Him in word, and in the way we live, as Lord. If we work on being faithful, good, insightful, self-controlled, patient, godly, gentle, kind, and loving in all our relationships because of our love for and personal relationship with Jesus, we will bear much fruit.

Look at the words *ineffective* and *unproductive*. Ineffective means idle, stuck, not moving forward. Unproductive literally means without fruit. Just because we have all these qualities doesn't mean we are manifesting them.

B. INTERACTING WITH RELATIONSHIP (8)

Now look at the very first phrase in verse 8, "If you possess these qualities in increasing measure." *Possess* means that we take hold of them. We own them. They belong to us. We need to grasp them and take possession of them. The word for increasing measure means that we own them and take hold of them to the point we are overflowing with them. There is no limit. Could people who come in contact with you, especially those closest to you say that you your love, joy, peace, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control is spilling out all over on them? Or would they say that something else coming from you is spilling out on them?

It's an incredibly important question because if anger, sarcasm, judgmentalism, hate, indifference, sexual immorality, and other things are spilling out from our lives then we prove that we are interacting with worldly lusts. We must be moving forward in moral purity and daily becoming more loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, good, gentle, faithful, holy, knowledgeable, and self-controlled.

C. INTERACTING WITH WORLDLY LUST (9)

If we are not, then Peter says in verse 9 that we are nearsighted and blind. The word for blind can mean blinking or shutting one's eyes. I think what Peter is saying is this. We must acknowledge that God has given us His Holy Spirit. And by receiving the Holy Spirit we have a divinely powerful resource to incorporate all these qualities and fruit of the Holy Spirit in our lives. We must then use every ounce of determination and energy to bring these qualities to the surface in our lives. If we don't, then we are willfully shutting our eyes. If we insist on hanging on to anger, bitterness, grudges, then we are purposely disobeying God. If we refuse to work on controlling bad behavior, and if we continue to be sexually immoral, then we are willfully disobeying God. If we are not becoming more kind and gentle and loving each day, then (look at the last phrase in verse 9) we have actually forgotten who we are. We have forgotten that we receive salvation at great expense to God. If we refuse to cooperate with God in

manifesting all this fruit, then we are just like unbelievers.

We think we are so smart. The word *forgotten* is the opposite of true knowledge. Peter is going to argue against people who think they are saved because they have obtained secret and mystical knowledge. People who do not pursue holiness with all the qualities we have talked about so far, have forgotten about or don't even understand the biggest truth in life; we are saved by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. To be sure, we will not always be successful. God's grace and predestination will handle all of that. But it is equally true that we must use every ounce of determination and energy to get up and press on. **SINCE WE HAVE ALREADY BEEN GIVEN THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT, WE MUST OWN THEM AND DEVELOP THEM.**

III. ALL THE RIGHT INTERACTION

Fulfilling Our Destinies Here On Earth And Successfully Completing Our Journey To Heaven Is A Mystical Partnership Between God And Us.

Peter will now affirm that we are elected, called, and saved by God. He will also affirm that we are required to use all our energy pursuing holiness. Both statements are true and both are necessary for salvation. Verses 10-11 illustrate all the right interactions. **FULFILLING OUR DESTINIES HERE ON EARTH AND SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETING OUR JOURNEY TO HEAVEN IS A MYSTICAL PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN GOD AND US.**

A. OUR EAGER DEDICATION TO GOD (10a)

In the first half of verse 10, Peter reminds us to remain eager in our dedication to God. Verse 10 starts out, "Therefore." Because of God's empowerment we are not to remain willfully ignorant and disobedient. He sums it all up here. He says, "Brothers and sisters, be all the more eager." There is that word eager again. It means that we are to muster up every bit of determination and energy to manifest all the holiness, purity, and qualities God has already filled us up with. In other words, we are to use every ounce of energy imitating Jesus. We are to submit to Jesus as Lord and conform

ourselves to His image. We are to become more Christ-like every day. That is our job in life; to pursue holiness. We do this because of our love for God in response to all that He has already done for us.

B. GOD'S EAGER DEDICATION TO US (10b-11)

Now look at the last half of verse 10 and verse 11. We are to eagerly work to confirm our call and election. Those are two words that refer to God's predestination. God called us, He saved us, He is perfecting us, and one day He will glorify us in Heaven. In God's mind, it is a done deal. He is waiting to receive us in Heaven. When we get there, Jesus will put His hands on our shoulders, look us in the eyes and say, "Well done good and faithful servants." That's what we are to devote all our energy to; living lives that will warrant Jesus to say those words to us. Do you see the words receive a rich welcome at the beginning of verse 11? It is the same word that referred to patrons richly providing for the choruses. Just as we are to richly fill up our faith as we own, use, and manifest the fruit of the Holy Spirit, Jesus will richly and extravagantly welcome us to Heaven. It will be a party like we have never seen or experienced here on earth. It will be a celebration, a real event.

As we draw on the power of the Holy Spirit, we will never stumble and fall to the point we can't get up. We will keep moving forward. In other words, Peter already told us that if we continue to manifest the fruit of the Spirit, we will not be unfruitful, permanently stuck, or down and out. No matter how many times we get knocked down or stumble, we will get up and finish the course of life successfully.

FULFILLING OUR DESTINIES HERE ON EARTH AND SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETING OUR JOURNEY TO HEAVEN IS A MYSTICAL PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN GOD AND US.

Making it safely and successfully to our permanent homes in Heaven is a joint effort between God's predestination and our dedication to pursuing holiness. **GOD HAS PREDESTINED US TO DO GREAT THINGS. WE MUST STEP UP AND ACCOMPLISH ALL THE GOOD WORKS THAT HE HAS PREPARED FOR US IN ADVANCE.**

IV. EPILOGUE

In his commentary on II Peter, William Barclay puts it this way:

“Let us take an analogy, which, although not perfect, may help us to understand. Suppose someone offers financial assistance and the chance of a university education to a young student. The benefactor is giving that person something which could never have been achieved without help; but the student cannot make use of that privilege without being prepared to work, and the harder he or she works the greater the effect of the privilege offered will be. The gracious free offer and the personal hard work have to combine before the privilege becomes fully effective.

It is the same with us and God. God has called us in his free mercy and his unmerited grace, but at the same time we have to make every possible effort to toil upwards and onwards on the way. ...

If we set out upon this upward and onward way, the effort will be great, but God’s help will also be great; and, in spite of all the toil, he will enable us to keep going until we reach our journey’s end.”