**Participate in the divine nature by God’s divine power**

(Live a holy and godly life)

December 30, 2016

2 Peter 1:1-21

Key Verse 1:3-4 “His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.”

Have you ever stopped and wondered what it means to be a Christian? Why did God call and choose us to become his children? What really is God’s will for our lives after we believe in Christ? If you are unsure about how to answer these questions, then you are in the right place. I pray that you will listen and pay close attention to this message on 2 Peter.

Have you heard of the term “imposter syndrome”? I have and let me try to explain. When I started my PhD program, I felt like an imposter. My advisor and classmates described me as one. I thought and acted like I didn’t deserve to be in the program. I was nervous, afraid and insecure because I didn’t feel qualified or deserving to be there. I wasn’t confident and sure about my position. I thought of myself less than a PhD student and acted accordingly. Only after my close classmate rebuked me to stop feeling and acting like an imposter did I learn to become more confident and certain about myself and my position! She encouraged me to claim my status as the one qualified to be there and to act according to what I have been called to do.

Perhaps, many of you might feel the same way about your calling as God’s chosen children: you don’t fully understand the significance of God’s calling or you still feel like sinners undeserving of this grace. Perhaps, you are unclear about what was supposed to happen after you receive God’s calling. Or you do not know that you are supposed to continually grow in Christ, living a holy and godly life. The good news is that you don’t need to do anything in your part to be called and chosen by God. By his grace, God has one-sidedly called and chosen you to become his beloved children. Our only part is to believe in God’s sovereign election and make

effort to follow in his calling of us to live as his holy children.

In this letter, Peter writes to the believers about making sure of their calling and election by God. Peter had received both a calling and an election when Jesus appeared to him and told him, “come, follow me!” Immediately, he left his fishing job and followed Jesus. From that moment on Peter was called to belong to God. He was made to be one of God’s elect. In the same way, the believers he was writing to have been called to belong to God. They had received a precious faith and were called to participate in “the divine nature”. They were no longer who they had been. God called us to live a holy and godly life. Peter explains that God’s calling and election is about continually putting aside one’s past self and adding to one’s faith. He mentions many different qualities (characteristics) that the believers should grow into. All of these characteristics Peter mentioned can be summarized as Christ’s image. When we make sure of our calling as God’s chosen children who should continually grow in Christ’s image by living a holy and godly life, we become a source of life and blessing for others.

**First, make sure of one’s calling and election by God.** *In verses 1 and 2, Peter writes, “Simon Peter, as servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours: “Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.”* Peter introduces himself as Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ. Before meeting Christ, Peter was known as Simon, a fisherman who lived a simple life. He was a normal guy, doing the things that Galileans did back in that time. After meeting Christ, however, Jesus gave him a new name, Peter, that stood for the rock on which Jesus would build his church. From that moment onward, Simon began to change into Peter, a servant and apostle of Christ. In other words, Peter was just a normal guy called to follow Christ. Likewise, this is true for anyone called to follow Christ. Part of this truth is considering yourself to be servant and an apostle of Jesus like Peter did. And to be a servant and apostle of Christ means to be a shepherd of God’s flock, like Peter was. He encouraged the believers in their difficult situation, reminding them of the one who had called them—God himself. *In verse 2, Peter mentions “grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord”.* The knowledge of God and of Jesus the Lord is what Peter received when he met Jesus Christ. Even though he was a Jew he didn’t personally know God. But through being with Jesus and following him he came to know God. It was through meeting and getting to know the person Jesus that grace and peace came to Peter. And it was through this experience that Peter and the believers were given everything that they needed for life and godliness.

**Second, participate in the divine nature by God’s divine power.***In verses 3–4 Peter writes, “His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.”* Peter makes a bold claim when he writes that we have been given everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Jesus Christ. Truthfully speaking, the believers had nothing after Jesus was crucified, raised from the dead and ascended to heaven. No tangible proof or artifact of Jesus’ resurrection. The person that they had become attached to left them in the world to fend for themselves. At least this is how it appeared to everyone looking from the outside. This is probably why many people looked down on the Christians because they seemed foolish in the eyes of people of this world. But they were given the promise that Jesus the person that they had known would continue to be with them and would continue to help them. Specifically, they were given the promise that the Holy Spirit would come to them after Jesus’ resurrection. *Acts 2:1–4 reads, “When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.”* When the Holy Spirit came to them, they received everything they needed to live the lives that they were called to live in the gospel. Peter’s words help us to see that the believers were not called to live new lives by themselves but to live new lives of participating in the divine nature. It is the Holy Spirit, God’s divine power, who has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him.

**Third, grow in the images/characteristics of Christ.**

In order to make their calling and election sure, Peter encouraged the believers to grow in certain characteristics. *In verses 5-7 Peter writes, “For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.”* In these verses Peter lists many different characteristics that the believers should add to their faith. Some may think it is unreasonable for Peter to ask the believers to add all of these things to their faith, especially when they already have a hard time keeping their faith under severe persecutions. As a matter of fact, Peter was not being unreasonable because possessing these qualities will keep them from being ineffective and unproductive. V*erse 8 says, “For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* We might wonder what Peter is talking about when he says “being ineffective and unproductive”. These terms are popular and often used in the business world to make people work hard, produce more in a timely fashion. As a student and an employee, these are the words I dread, but I have to live by it at the same time. I often measure my self-worth based on my productivity and effectiveness. As I am preparing this message during the holidays, I even viewed myself as being ineffective, inefficient and unproductive.

Peter was not talking about the gospel for some practical benefit. Rather, he was talking about life. When he wrote to the believers to add all of these different characteristics to their faith he was encouraging to them to become even more life giving. If they added to their faith characteristics such as goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and love they would bring life to others in the same way that Jesus did. Life would flow through them. If they didn’t add these things to their faith or grow in their calling then life wouldn’t flow through them. The list is surprisingly similar to the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23. These are the qualities of a holy and godly life—a life led by the Holy Spirit. Peter encouraged them to participate in the divine nature by the divine power and bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Verse 9 states, *“But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.”* When we receive the gospel and are cleansed from our sins it is the beginning of a life giving process. We do not stop at the forgiveness of our sins but start from there. Only when the believers did this could they really begin to live their new life and not be afraid of falling down. Verses 10 and 11 read, *“Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”* Peter knew that his time was short and that shortly after writing this message he would be crucified. Yet he wrote that he would always remind the believers of the truth of their calling. He knew that they knew the things he was saying and that they were firmly established in the truth. Yet he still wanted to make every effort to see that after his departure they would always remember these things. The knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ that Peter reminded them was not factual information that they could memorize. It was rather something that they were called to continually grow in—something that was ongoing, not static. Therefore, as Christians being sure of calling and election by God, we should make every effort to grow in these images of Christ, and live a holy and godly life led by the Holy Spirit.

**Fourth, listen to the apostles’ eye witness testimony and the scriptures.**

Peter used two forms of testimony: eye-witness account and the scriptures to remind his recipients of his faith in Jesus Christ. Peter reminded them of his own experience of God’s glorious calling on the sacred mountain and of the scriptures they already heard.

In verses 16–18 Peter points out that he wasn’t persuading them to accept his own ideas. He was not even trying to persuade them to accept a more clever person’s ideas. Peter had witnessed the things that he wrote about and he saw that it was confirmed in the scriptures. *Verses 16 –18 read, “We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.”* The time that Peter was referring to was the time that Jesus took Peter, James, and John up a high mountain.

Mark 9: 2- 4 read, *“After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus.”* At this time Peter did not understand the significance of what he saw. He suggested that shelters be made for Moses, Elijah, and Jesus. But this was not the point for after Peter said this a loud voice spoke to Peter and the other two disciples saying, “This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!” It was God’s voice that Peter heard on the mountaintop. Looking back on this, Peter stood in amazement at what God had revealed to him and the other disciples. They just couldn’t come up with this idea by themselves. *Verses 19 to 21 read, “And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”* The believers were suffering, but Peter really couldn’t do anything for them. He knew that things were dark for them and that they needed practical help. But more importantly, they needed the light of Jesus shining in the darkness. Peter was in no better situation than they were from a practical point of view. In fact, he was in a worse position because he was about to die. But his words in today’s passage show that he really did have everything he needed in the gospel. He recognized that he was no longer living his old life apart from God. Rather he was being carried along by the Holy Spirit speaking from God. Whatever was going to happen, this was his truth as long as he continued to grow in his calling and election. The question is, how can we do this for ourselves?

Peter’s encouragements to the believers in this message is exactly what I need to hear and be convinced of especially at this time of my life. First, I want to become certain of God’s calling and election of me as his child, chosen servant of Christ and to participate in his redemptive work by his divine power. With no doubt, God enabled me to come to know Jesus personally as my Lord and Savior through the Bible study. Though I was born into a Christian family, I didn’t know what it means to be a Christian, understand how to grow in the images of Christ, or become assured of God’s calling to me personally as his servant and co-worker in this campus ministry. I was a nominal believer who enjoyed my Christian tradition, but lacked conviction and assurance of God’s specific calling for my life. I wanted to serve God by attending a seminary, but when the door was closed after my high school graduation I quickly forgot about this conviction. Nevertheless, God who has called and chosen me is faithful even when I am not. He mysteriously prepared everything for my future in Canada including one-to-one Bible study and discipleship training through this campus ministry. In 2011, after I graduated from my Master program, I became convinced of God’s calling and election of me as I reflected on how much God has prepared everything and blessed me in every area of my life. *John 15:16 says, “You did not choose me, but I chose you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last to eternal life.”* I feel inferior, inadequate and insecure about my qualifications to serve God. I have no practical talents to serve God in the ministry such as singing, playing guitar, or encouraging others. I want to grow as a good speaker and a powerful messenger, but I think my speaking and presentation skills aren’t very good. Nevertheless, I am confident in God who called me because, as Peter says, he has given me everything I need to live a holy and godly life. He has given me his Holy Spirit as my Helper, Counsellor and Comforter. His Holy Spirit is a guarantee of my salvation and he will help me to grow into a servant of Christ that God has called me to become. Also, the scriptures which I have received and learned will remind me of God’s faithfulness to carry out his will and fulfill his promises in my life. I especially thank and praise God for providing a godly man for me to establish a household of faith together. We are very thankful that thus far he has been with us and blessed us abundantly in this marriage. Our main prayer and desire is to grow deeper in our relationship with God by putting God’s words that we learn into practice and by allowing God’s words to transform us into the likeness of Christ, one day at a time, through many struggles in our marriage. I want to grow in the images of Christ, which will keep me from being ineffective and unproductive in my Christian life. I want to live a holy and godly life that flows from an intimacy with Christ through the words of God and prayers.

The godly qualities that characterize a holy life of children of God, which Peter encourages the believers to grow into, can be overwhelming if we need to make them happen by our own effort and power. Yet, we need to remember that His divine power, the Holy Spirit, enables us to grow into what God has called and chosen us to become. We can never grow into these characteristics by our power, will or strength. May God help us to grow in these qualities of a holy and

godly life, especially in our love for Jesus, so that we can make our calling and election sure and we can be effective and productive in our life serving Christ, our Lord. Amen!