

# Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

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## Escaping Corruption

by Dan Trygg

“His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us to His own glory and excellence, <sup>4</sup> by which He has granted to us His precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, escaping from the corruption in the world by craving.” II Peter 1:3,4

This is one of my favorite passages. I remember the first time I worked through it in the Greek. I wrote it out on a love-note napkin for my future wife. (I know, not very romantic, ...but *very* exciting! So exciting I *had* to share it! See what she's had to put up with?) This is radical stuff! It certainly wasn't what my church at the time was preaching, at least they did not focus on passages like this one. **Most of the preaching I had heard dwelt on the fact that we were sinners that needed forgiveness, and that Christ had come to make that available to us.** We were expected to try to be good, but it was also tacitly expected that none of us would ever really become *very* Christlike. **It was kind of thought that we would clean up our act, and be better than we are, but we would never really become like God.** After all, we are *sinners*, right? We were doomed to “fall short”, at least until Jesus returns. Then, we will be radically transformed, and become righteous like Christ.

**That kind of teaching is nowhere near what Peter is telling us in this passage. He is saying that now God has given to us everything we need for life and godliness.** It comes through an experiential-knowledge of Him, and through the promises He has given to us. Notice what it says, “...who has called us to His own glory and excellence”, and “so that... you may become partakers of the divine nature”. **The goal, ...the opportunity,... no, the calling is to become like Him. Even more than just imitation, however, we are actually to share in His glory and excellence, just as we are to come to be sharers of His very nature.**

As I said, this is mind-blowing, radical stuff, isn't it? In fact, **this teaching is so radical that translators have often tried to soften or redirect what it actually says**, because they can't relate to it. **For example, instead of saying that God has called us “to” His own glory and excellence, some translators say He has called us “by” His own glory and excellence.** That is technically an allowable choice, but it certainly misses the flow of thought in the next verse, which plainly tells us that we “might become partakers of the divine nature”. You can't escape *that* clause. The two ideas are parallel in the two side-by-side verses. **The more natural translation would be “to”, not “by”.**

**Another translational issue is that most Bible versions render the end of verse 4 as “having escaped the corruption of the world”.** The “having escaped” is technically *not* what the Greek is indicating. It is not a past tense, but describing a type of action. It is actually saying, “escaping”. The word used here is quite strong. More than just “escaping” it is a compound verb, meaning “to flee away from”. **A better translation would be “fleeing-away-from the corruption of the world”.** This seems to imply that we *want* to get away. The tense of this word emphasizes a “point of time” kind of action. This is also the tense of the verb “come to be”. These two phrases seem to be related. It seems to be two sides of the same coin. *When* you become a partner or sharer of the divine nature, you are escaping the corruption of the world, or *when* you flee away from the corruption of the world, you can become a partaker of the divine nature. I think the “point in time” aspect has to do with an episodic event, not the future return of Christ. **The whole tenor of the passage emphasizes present opportunity**, not just pie-in-the-sky. **Peter is emphasizing a moment-in-time kind of choice. In other words, when we ‘share in the divine nature’ we ‘flee-away from the corruption of the world’.** I think the apostle Paul would put it this way, “when we walk in the Spirit, we will not carry out the lusts of the flesh” (Gal. 5:16).

**Let's talk for a moment about this “corruption of the world”.** The Greek word means “decay, decomposition, dissolution, ruin, destruction, and moral depravity”. The literal meaning is that of the physical decomposition of a dead body. Metaphorically, it refers to the ruin and destruction of a person's life as they slowly degenerate, lose their health and become run down, worn out and lose their health. **Morally, it describes the degradation of a person's moral innocence and purity as they compromise in response to the pervasive and seductive pressures of the world around them.** It affects their thinking, so that they begin to experiment and dabble in things that previously would have been outside their comfort zone. They begin to justify things that they previously thought were wrong. Eventually their thinking becomes so distorted that they actually advocate and encourage others to join them in their foolishness (Rom. 1:18-32).

Of course, none of this would have any effect on us if we had no desire for the pleasures of the world. That is why Peter specifically mentions this as a key issue. **The corruption of the world gains entrance into our hearts through our own strong-desires.** James tells us that we are allured and enticed by our own strong desires (1:14). **We**

**have no control over the moral decline of our culture**, or of the slide into darkness that many of our friends and acquaintances are experiencing. **We can decide, however, how much to be involved with its seducing influences.** We can set boundaries for ourselves, and limit our exposure to its twisted messages. We must recognize that the “world” is not just our planet, or our culture, it is a spiritually manipulated propaganda machine. We must not allow ourselves to be carried away by it, or it will destroy our faith and our lives. **We do not have control of the desires we may feel awaken within us as we are confronted by beautiful, attractive or pleasurable things. We do not control the fact that the desire may arise within us, but we are responsible for how we respond to that desire.** The apostle John plainly tells us, “Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust (strong-desire) of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and *also* its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever” (1 John 2:15-17). James, the brother of Jesus, wrote, “... do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God” (James 4:4). Peter himself, in his earlier epistle, wrote, “Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul” (1 Peter 2:11). **It is clear from these passages alone that cozying up to the world system is dangerous and is incompatible with following Christ. Our desires may be stimulated by its appeals, but we are to turn away from those desires, because they will draw us away from God and lead us to spiritual ruin.**

**What is Peter telling us about finding freedom from the corruption of the world?** Let’s review what the verses at the top of this paper say to us. **(1.) God has already given to us everything we need that pertains to life and godliness.** The Greek actually says, “*all* things of His divine power that are toward life and godliness have been granted to us.” That is a lot of power! There is no limit there. ***The power and ability are in no way lacking. The only problem is learning how to tap into it.*** **(2.) It comes through the true-knowledge of Him.** The word for “true-knowledge” refers to an intense experiential insight or recognition of something. It is more than “book learning”. Often it comes through revelation from God. Note that part of this experiential insight has to do with recognizing Him as the one calling us to His own glory and excellence. He is not just God up in the heavens, a distant deity who is uninvolved in human affairs. No, He is the personal Creator and Redeemer who has a plan and agenda for us. He is calling us to share in His own radiant glory and the manifestation of His power. **(3.) Part of the things He has given us are very valuable and incredibly great promises.** These promises can be found in His word. Knowing them and claiming them *by faith* and *application* will lead us to the desired results described in these verses. **(4.) These have been granted to us in order that we might become sharers of the divine nature, escaping the corruption of the world.** This is a purpose clause in the Greek. God has given us these things because He wants us to fulfill His designated purpose. He wants us to be filled with His Spirit, to radiate His glory and moral power, to share in His very nature, and to escape the corrupting effect of the world system.

**It appears that we escape the corruption of the world as we come to experience the infilling of God’s glory, power, and the sharing of His nature.** A key part of this entire passage has to do with *what we really want*. **God has made everything available to us, purely by His grace. Are we willing to pursue it?** Are we so caught up in the malaise of the world system that we are unwilling to pursue the incredible provision of God? The world is continually bombarding us with messages regarding its values and competing for our attention and devotion. It is relentless in attempting to shape our minds and expectations. **To combat the pervasive influence of the world system requires some serious focus and devotion on our part.** Some people don’t like to hear this. They think that God’s grace means “easy”. This is hardly the case. **Being a disciple requires discipline.** If you read the next 7 verses, you will find that Peter lays out a very specific course of action to obtain growth and maturity in developing spirituality. This is his counsel on how to come into the things he described in verses 3 and 4. Check out what he advises: “Now for this very reason also, *applying all diligence*, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these qualities is blind *or* short-sighted, having forgotten *his* purification from his former sins. Therefore, brethren, *be all the more diligent* to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you” (vss. 5-11). Note that “diligence” occurs twice in these verses. **Peter did not at all think that the fact that God has given us all that we need precluded any work or effort on our part. In fact, he seems to indicate that it would require diligent effort.**

God wants to free us from the corrupting influence of this world and fill us with Himself. He has provided all we need, and is willing to work on our behalf. It is up to us to put forth effort to obtain these blessings.