

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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Applying The Excellence Of God's Life Within Ours

“Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the true-knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; ³ according-as all-things of His divine power have-been-freely-given to us, ...the things toward life and good-devotedness..., [the-things-given] through the true-knowledge of the One calling-us by His own glory and excellent-virtue. ⁴ For by means of these-things He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. ⁵ Now for this very reason also, bringing-in-alongside all diligence, in your faith apply THE excellent-virtue, and in the excellent-virtue, knowledge; ⁶ and in the knowledge, self-control (inner-strength), and in the self-control, perseverance (remaining-steadfast-under-pressure), and in the perseverance, good-devotedness; ⁷ and in the good-devotedness, brotherly-love, and in the brotherly-love, *agapē*-love. ⁸ For if these things are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless (idle; unemployed) nor unfruitful in the true-knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” II Peter 1:2-8

This is an amazing few verses. There is so much promise, possibility, practical insight and application here. There are buzz-words, deep-words, mysterious-words, and straight-forward words. The writing is both profound and very practical. You know, when you read the words, that the author was referring to much broader realities that he could have expounded on at length, but he only briefly alluded to them here in passing. He moved from unfathomable mystery and promise to very practical, down-to-earth counsel and challenge. **The paragraph moves from what God has done, to what you and I need to do, ...if we are to experience and benefit from God's actions. In between God's provision and our application is the center-point, the crux, the goal, both the objective and foundation of this entire passage, ...that we may come to be *sharers* or *partners* of the divine nature.** The focus, or end point of the paragraph is **that we might *not* be idle, useless or uninvolved in Kingdom business, but that, instead, we might bear much fruit.**

One of the key words, which occurs three times in this paragraph, is the word translated as “true-knowledge”. It is the Greek word, *epiginōsis*. It occurs at the beginning, the middle and the end of the paragraph. It seems to be a critical part of the maturing process. There are several Greek words for “knowledge” or “knowing”. There is the idea of “knowledge-by-observation” or “I-know-because-I-have-seen” something. That is the Greek word, “*oida*”. Then there is the idea of “experiential knowledge” or “I-know-because-I-have-experienced” something, or “have intimate personal acquaintance with” something. This is the Greek word, “*ginōskō*”. The noun form of this word occurs in verses 5,6 in this passage. It can refer to experiential recognition or insight, as well. *Epiginōsis*, the word translated as “true-knowledge” above, is an intensive form built from this word-stem. **It refers to a clear and full recognition of something for what it really is**, usually gained by a flash of insight that is profoundly personal and experiential. With regard to spiritual truth in the NT, it seems to be a personal revelation from God that brings about this intense, “Aha!” kind of recognition. **It is not learned-by-experience, it is apprehended by an experiential-revelation or flash-of-enlightenment.** This word appears twenty times in the NT (Rom. 1:28; 3:20; 10:2; Eph. 1:1; 4:13; Phil. 1:9; Col. 1:9,10; 2:2; 3:10; I Tim. 2:4,25; 3:7; Tit. 1:1; Philem. 1:6; Heb. 10:26; II Pet. 1:2,6,8; 2:20), most often indicating this clear, revelatory insight which comes from God.

This *epiginōsis*-insight is critical to understanding this passage. (1.) This revelatory-recognition of God and Jesus our Lord is the *basis* for “grace and peace” to be multiplied to us. (2.) *It is also through the revelatory-recognition of God*, the One calling us by His own glory and excellent-virtue, **that we come to access the “all things of His divine power that have been given to us”**, the things that provide everything we need for life and good-devotedness. Through these things of God's power, God has also supplied His precious and magnificent promises. The purpose for these is so that, by trusting in and applying them, we can become partakers of God's nature. (3.) **Peter's concern is that we respond to and apply the revelatory-insights so that they produce results.** The worst case scenario is that we would end up disconnected, idle as far as Kingdom-work and Kingdom-power, and we would bear no fruit. In such a circumstance, the revelatory-recognitions of God, if we receive them, are lost and wasted. **It is important for us to see that *epiginōsis*-insight is critical, ...but not sufficient..., to produce power-filled, effective living.** Insights without application are just mental “head games”. They may be pleasant, ...and even invigorating and encouraging..., but if they don't translate into *action*, what good are they? **Insight without application is knowledge that is still-born.** It never comes into *actuality*. It never finds birth, expression, development, maturation or effective result. Its entire existence is between the ears, in the mind, of the person who receives insight, a world of imagination *only*, ...until there is application. There are many, many Christians living *right here*, ...and never “get off the dime”.

At the very center of Peter's argument is the focus of the *epiginōsis*-insights, and the power-potential associated with them. What is the focus? That we might become *partakers* of the divine nature!

The word translated as “partakers” is another key word in this passage. The Greek word is “*koinōnos*”. It means “to share something in common with another”. In this context, it can mean to either (1.) share in a common *inner life and nature*, through the abiding and emanating power of the Holy Spirit within us; or (2.) to be a partner with the *activity of God’s Spirit* operating within and around us. **The focus of the first option is the source of the inner life of the Spirit within us.** It is emphasizing that the power and promises of God are given so that we could live an *entirely different life*, one arising from within us by the indwelling Holy Spirit. **The emphasis of the second option is that we can partner with the *outworking or outward activity of the Spirit as He leads us in obedience* to His promptings. By our will, we *join Him* in what He is doing. **I think both options are implied and intended by the language here.** The *epiginōsis*-insights are given to enable us to draw upon the inner life pulses, flow and character of the Holy Spirit within us, the divine nature. The *epiginōsis*-insights are also intended to open our eyes to see what God is doing around us, so that we partner with Him. In that way, God leads and directs us into *effective ministry*, ...the cutting edge of His activity in the world. That is certainly true by the time we get through verse 8. **BUT, the phrase, “having-escaped the corruption of the world by lust”, unquestionably places the focus on the inner man,** the working of the divine nature within us. We are not just to partner with God in the *outward* things, we are to live out from His Spirit operating *within us* as our source of life. **We are to share in His very life, His nature, as our life.****

With the end of verse 4, Peter’s argument takes on a completely different trajectory. He turns from looking at the depths of God’s provision to the practical outworking of that inner life into our experience.

There is one more key word to define, before we can pull this all together. It is found in verse 3, and again in verse 5. **It is the Greek word, *aretē*,** and it is translated as “virtue, excellence, goodness, moral excellence”. Those are not particularly complete or helpful definitions, at least for me. When I did a little more research, I found that it can mean “**an endowment or empowerment from God; a manifestation of God’s goodness, grace or power.**” In other words, it is the “prompting, rising-up, or righteous-motivation of God” within us. Plug that back into verse 3, “All things of His divine power, that pertain to life and godliness, have been given to us, by means of the revelatory-recognition of God, the One calling us by His radiant-outshining-glory and manifestation-of-His-righteous-motivation.” In other words, **God is living inside of us, ...prompting, bubbling-up, empowering-us-with-goodness, so that, between those experiences and the promises of God, we might become sharers of His inner life.**

Then, Peter brings the application: “Now for this very reason also, bringing-in-alongside all diligence, in your faith apply THE excellent-virtue, and in the excellent-virtue, knowledge...” This was a big insight for me. I had missed this connection for 45 years of studying the Bible! I got the need for diligence or zealous activity. I got that I needed to add something to my faith. What I did NOT see in this passage until just the other day was that I needed to diligently act *on the prompting, rising-up, righteous-motivation of God!* I emphasized this in my translation at the top of this page, by capitalizing the word THE. **I am not supposed add my own virtue, or my own moral-excellence. No. I am supposed to add to, supply or provide the righteous-inworking of God, ...His *aretē*.**

As I do that, a progression begins to unfold. I act on the righteous-prompting of God. When I do that, **I gain experiential-understanding.** I experience God in a fresh way. As I am prompted again, **I add to that knowledge the self-control to follow God again,** instead of following some selfish, fleshly way. I experientially-know the result and impact of *that* obedient choice. **Then, I choose to make the choice for the endowment of God’s inner working, even when the going is tough.** I remain steadfast and faithful in responding to the inner-working of God, even under opposition and discomfort. **As I do that, my entire soul gets redirected toward God.** I become “well-devoted” toward Him. **As I do that, I find the spillover is that I begin to appreciate and value my brothers and sisters in Christ.** I delight to see God at work in *them*, and want to share what I have discovered to stimulate them, as well. **Before long, I find myself choosing to sacrifice my own comforts for others. I find the agape-love of God rising up within me,** and I have become accustomed to recognize and respond to the leadings and initiatives of God’s life rising up within me. **I find my capacity to love, serve and give to be enlarged.**

Notice that this progression moves me out of my thought-life into acts of service toward others. My character is developed along the way, and the visible | appearance of God in my life becomes more evident. My devotion to God is deepened, and my affection and sacrificial love for others is the result.

In summary, Peter wrote, “For if these things are happening with you and are increasing, they establish you as neither useless (idle; unemployed) nor unfruitful in the true-knowledge (*epiginōsis*-insight) of our Lord Jesus Christ.” **Again, however, this does not just happen. We must be seeking to recognize God at work; we must in faith respond to His leadings; and we must do so with energy and persistence, if we are to experience the greatest result. If we do these things, God will use us significantly, and we will bear good fruit for His glory.**