

Precious Promises (part 3)

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[0 : 00] Well, in our study of the precious things of God, we come to the precious promises.! And we're kind of camping on that for a while. 2 Peter 1.4, he has given us his very great and precious promises.

They're precious. They're part of our spiritual riches in Christ. This is our wealth. And so we are to treasure them as precious. Peter treasured God's promises.

He's the one who wrote those words. He didn't just say, God has given us his very great promises. He says, God's given us his very great and precious promises. You see, they became precious to him in the trials of life that Peter found.

And so he treasured them and prized them. David also treasured the promises of God. Psalm 119, 162. I rejoice in your promise like one who finds great spoil.

David was a fighting man, wasn't he? He led the armies of Israel into battle. And Saul had slain his thousands, but David his tens of thousands. And David had been there when they had conquered an enemy and fallen upon the spoils of victory.

[1 : 19] And he had seen the eyes of men light up at the spoils of victory. And David says, that's what my heart feels like when I find a promise of God.

I rejoice in your promises like one who finds great spoil. And who of us who have had our backs to the wall have not discovered the preciousness of a promise of God?

Better than just to have one word of promise from God than to have all the promises and well-wishings of men. Our trials have made us to value the promises of God above gold.

Psalm 119, 140. Your promises have been thoroughly tested and your servant loves them. Love is something we speak of for something that's precious.

And that's what the psalmist found. They've been thoroughly tested. They've been through the fire with me. And I've found them to be faithful. And so I love them. They're precious.

[2 : 26] Now, most men are blind to the value of the promises of God. The things of earth have caught their eye. And that's the precious and the treasures for which they live. But the child of God is increasingly learning to count God's promises as precious.

Now, our trials often bring us to treasure the promises more. Spurgeon found that in his introduction to his book of promises.

He says, Never were the promises of Jehovah more precious to me than at this hour as he was going through troubles. Some of them I never understood till now.

I had not reached the date at which they matured for I was not myself mature enough to perceive their meaning. Oh, how much more wonderful is the Bible to me now than it was a few months ago. Not that I've received new promises, but the old ones have opened up to me with richer stores. Is the Bible more precious to you now than it was a couple months ago?

[3 : 34] And is that not true in part because you have come in your need to see the value of those promises by which God kept you and strengthened you and upheld you for the last several months?

So, so far in our study, we've seen that God's promises are precious because of what they are. Because of what they are.

They're God's gracious commitments to his people. Stooping to obligate himself to do some good to us. Where he would say, once he says he'll do something, now he's obligated to do it.

What a stoop for the Almighty to make to us creatures. And so we treasure it because of what it is. It's the revelation of his loving plan made in eternity past that he will certainly fulfill.

That's what a promise is. And so it makes it precious. Now, some of you weren't with us last week, so I'm going to ask somebody just to explain to us what does, what God's promise has in common with playing pool.

[4 : 50] Does anybody remember? The illustration? Becky? You old pool shark, you, let's hear it. But I remember what you said, and that was that if you foretell the person that you're going to get that number five ball in the left pocket, and then you do it, we're definitely more impressed.

And think of it highly than if it just happens to go that way. All right. And what impresses people is that you announced it beforehand, right?

And so then people realize it wasn't just chance that with all the bouncing balls that one happened to go in the pocket. No, because you called it out ahead of time. You told which ball was going to go in which pocket, and then you executed it.

That's the promise. And God announces what he's going to do, his plan from eternity. He announces it to men by way of promise. I will do thus and so.

And then he does it. He executes it. And when he does, everyone sees that the Lord, he is God. He did what he said he would do. It didn't just happen.

[6 : 06] So he secures his own glory in that way, doesn't he? The promise makes it clear that it was his power and wisdom and might that brought it about. How is a promise like a check?

We saw that Spurgeon likens a promise to a check. Give me three ways that a promise is like a check. Think what's on a check. Pardon?

The payee. Who is it to? Who is it to? Another? Your signature. All right. The payer is at the bottom line. Who is promising to pay this?

And what's left? The amount. And what is being promised? So we looked at it in those terms. Spurgeon's book, Faith's Checkbook. He sets forth the promises. So the payee. Does it not make the promises precious to you to know that they're written out to you?

[7 : 16] That these promises are to you. Peter says he has given us his great and precious promises. They're given to us. They're given to us.

They have our name on them. Now, not literally. As we said, you'll never find your name in the Bible. So we have to know how to determine if a promise is to us.

But nevertheless, once we've done that, it might as well have our name on it. Because it is ours.

And it's written to us and for us. And it's promised to us. And so that makes it precious.

These promises in the Bible have my name on them. Then we looked at the payer. And we saw that it's God himself who puts his name on the bottom line.

And no one is better than the one making. No promise is better than the one making it. So why do bad checks bounce? Anybody?

[8 : 23] Insufficient funds. Isn't that what it says on your statement? So the one that promised didn't have the wherewithal to pay it. He promised, but he didn't have the money to back up the promise.

So it could be that he didn't have the money. It could be that he meant well, but he just didn't have it when it came time to pay it. Or it could be that he never intended to pay it.

Couldn't it? But at any rate, it's because of a lack, whether of truthfulness or ability, in the payer that checks bounce.

Well, in the same way, there are bad promises that bounce because the promiser is promised more than he was able to deliver or ever intended to deliver. And there's a lot of those promises being made at marriage altars.

And people are not able to pay or never intended to pay. And so the promise is broken. That never happens with God.

[9 : 29] And these promises are precious then because of the promiser. Because of who he is and what he's covenanted to do.

What is it about the promiser that makes his promise so precious? Well, the first attribute we looked at last week was that he is faithful. I just want to ask how faithful is the promiser.

And I'm going to let God answer that with three verses I've had some men assigned to read. Psalm 33, 4. How faithful is the promiser? The word of the Lord is right and true.

He is faithful in all he does. Okay, so his word is right and true and faithful in all he does.

Lamentations 3, 23.

How faithful is the promiser? They are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness. Hmm. That's great. Faithfulness. How about Isaiah 21, 1?

[10 : 30] I'm sorry, 25, 1. Correct, Dan. The Lord, you are my God. I will exalt you and praise your name. For in perfect faithfulness, you have done marvelous things, things planned long ago.

All right. Great faithfulness, perfect faithfulness. So that means not one promise ever broken. That's who's signing the check. That's who's standing behind the promise to you.

Does that not make the promise precious? Now, that's where we left off. That's all by way of review. Now we're forging into new territory somewhat.

So what other attributes about the promiser make the promise precious? Think about who he is and tell us how some attribute of him makes the promise precious.

He's never going to go bankrupt. Okay. He's never going to go bankrupt. The earth is the Lord's and everything in it. So the whole shoot match is his. He can pay.

[11 : 31] He's omnipotent. And what does that do for the promise? It's outside what he can do. Let's time out on that.

Because I think next to the faithfulness of God, more often than scripture, if not more so than even the faithfulness, the power of God is the go-to attribute to assure us that the promise is going to come true.

And we find it over and over that the almighty power of God is guaranteeing the promise. Joel Beeky says, men promise mountains and deliver molehills.

But not God. He's almighty. And he can move mountains at his will. So is not one of the chief roots of unbelief the fact that we limit God's power in our minds to what we can fathom or imagine?

So we look at the situation. We size it up. And it's according to our history of what we've ever seen, what we've ever experienced, what's likely to happen.

[12 : 40] And that's what we expect. And in all of our factoring, we forget to factor in the fact that God is almighty. That's the ways that we would, quote, limit God in our own minds as to what he can do.

Turn to Psalm 78. The Israelites did this continually. And, of course, God tells us about it so we might see the various ways that we do this very same thing.

In Psalm 78, the referring refrain of the psalm is that the Israelites forgot. They forgot God's powerful deeds on their behalf.

And when the Bible says that they forgot God's deeds on their behalf, it doesn't mean that, you know, they forgot when the Nile River was all red with blood.

That they just had no recollection whatsoever of that. Or they don't remember the frogs everywhere. So they were all over the Egyptians' bedrooms and everywhere.

[13 : 49] It doesn't mean that they had no mental cognition about these things. When they forgot these things, it's saying that that reality that happened in the past had no more influence upon them at present than as if it never happened.

So they forgot it in the sense that it didn't influence them in their present trouble. That they had a God who split the Red Sea open.

Well, you would never forget that in one sense, right? If you'd walk through the Red Sea and saw the waters piled up on each side, you'd remember that. But you might also forget it.

In that when you face the next Red Sea in your life, you don't immediately say, you know, I remember God led us through and water was piled up on everything. He's the God who opens a way through the sea.

That's my God. I'm going to trust Him in this situation. That's remembering what God had done. To forget is to act like He never did anything.

[14 : 54] And so that's what Israel is continually doing here. When facing all the improbabilities and impossibilities and what has seemingly always happened in the past, they failed to factor in God's almighty power and thereby limit Him.

Even though they'd seen ten plagues, they'd seen a Red Sea open, they'd seen water come out of a rock to quench their thirst in the desert. They'd seen food come down from heaven and so on.

When faced with the new trial, those past works of God's power do not weigh into their behavior any more than if they never happened, as if they were totally forgotten.

So look at verses 18 through 20 of Psalm 78. They willfully put God to the test. After all these things He had done for them, they willfully put God to the test.

This is before He sent the manna. They put Him to the test by demanding the food they craved.

They're in the wilderness, they're hungry, and they're demanding food.

[16 : 01] They spoke against God saying, Can God? That's a question of ability, isn't it? Does God have the power? Is He able to pull this off? Can God spread a table in the desert?

I mean, when He struck the rock, water gushed out and streams flowed abundantly. But can He also give us food? Can He supply meat for His people?

I mean, it's one thing to have water come out of a rock. But it's another thing to have a table spread with food on it, some solid substance that we can sink our teeth into.

Can He do that? Well, verse 21, The Lord was very angry, and His fire and wrath broke out against them. Why? Verse 22, For they did not believe in God or trust in His deliverance.

Yet, He rained down manna from heaven. He rained down quail upon them. Verses 25 to 27 tell us, Yes, He did spread a table for them in the wilderness, and put plenty of bread and meat on it.

[17:08] Verse 32, In spite of all this, they kept on sinning. In spite of all His wonders, they did not believe. So, promised times are times to meditate on the promiser's power.

That's what we see with Abraham. Old man, body as good as dead, his wife's old, with a dead womb, barren.

What's Abraham's go-to attribute about God? Romans 4, 21. Somebody sign to read that, please. And so, he did not weaken in faith, but believed God.

He trusted God, and what enabled him to trust Him, was that he was fully persuaded, that he had power, to do whatever he promised.

He can bring life out of death. And so, out of him and his dead wife, God can bring life. So, God's power.

[18:25] It's the same thing in Jeremiah 32, if you'd like to turn over to Jeremiah, the prophet.

Remember the situation, Jeremiah 32, is that Jerusalem is besieged, by the great Babylonian army.

It's about to fall, and they know, God's promise to conquer Judah, that he, he has promised to bring the Babylonians, he's promised to deliver, Judah over to the Babylonians, and to take the people captive.

And yet, the Lord comes to Jeremiah, and tells him to buy a field. All right? So, the city's besieged, the Babylonians are about to, to be owners of all the land, and it's then that God is telling him to purchase a piece of property.

You see the trial of his faith? Buy property now? The prospect of, of its value is, is going way down. Why does God do this?

Because he, also promises, that after the Babylonian captivity, he's going to return, and restore Israel to their land, and that fields will be, bought, houses, and vineyards, will again be bought, in this land.

[19:43] So he wants Jeremiah, to believe that promise, and to honor that promise, by an act. All right? Do you believe that, once the Babylonians own everything, I'm going to come back, and give it back to you?

Show it by your actions then. Go out and buy this piece of property. And, faced with such a promise, Jeremiah, obeys, he believes, and then he prays.

I want you to notice, what does his mind run to in prayer, for the strengthening of his faith, in the promise? Jeremiah 32, 17. There's several, things here, and, we're looking especially, at his power.

See if he doesn't say something, about that. But, draw out all the attributes. Ah, sovereign Lord.

There's one. You have made the heavens and the earth, by your great power, an outstretched arm.

Nothing is too hard for you. There's another. You show love, there's another, to thousands, but bring the punishment, for the father's sins, into the laps of their children, after them.

[20:55] Oh, great and powerful God, whose name is the Lord Almighty, the Lord of hosts. Great are your purposes, and mighty are your deeds. Your eyes are open, to all the ways of men.

You reward everyone, according to his deeds, and as his deeds deserve. You perform miraculous signs, and wonders in Egypt, and have continued them, to this day, both in Israel, and among all mankind, and have gained the renown, that is still yours.

You brought your people, Israel, out of Egypt, with signs, and wonders, by a mighty hand, and an outstretched arm, and with great terror, you gave them this land, you had sworn to give their forefathers, a land flowing, with milk and honey, and on and on it goes, with his prayer.

But do you get the gist, of what he's doing? I have just been given, a promise, that is now testing my faith, to the limit. Am I willing to put my, hard earned money, to buy land, that's just about to be owned, by the whole Babylonian empire.

And to do it on a promise, not on an insider, hint, but on an inside word from God, about what's going to happen. And, he's owning that he needs his faith strengthened, so what does he do?

[22 : 07] He goes back to those acts of power, and the Red Sea dividing, and the plagues that God did, and he says, this is the God of promise. There's nothing too hard for him.

He's the almighty, and he rests, his case upon him. He finds his faith strengthened. And so, immediately afterwards, the Lord responds, by assuring Jeremiah, of who he is, verse 27, and I am the Lord, the God of all mankind, is anything too hard for me?

Again, it's the power, it's his ability to pay up, what he has promised. So, faithfulness, and the power of God, those two, are huge, when you, deal with the promises, and, and just remember, that the pay is, is, both, powerful, and faithful.

Now, what other attributes, and how do they strengthen, our faith in the promise? How do they make the promise faithful? A promise precious to us? What are some other attributes, that would strengthen you, in a time of trial?

Yeah. It has goodness, and kindness, and many means, in the promises. Okay. That he has good plans for us. Yeah.

[23 : 23] How, I will never stop, doing good to them. I will rejoice, in doing them good. So, Jeremiah 32, and verse 40, and 41.

I'll never stop, doing good to them, and I will, I will do it with joy, in my heart. That's, that's what's at the bottom, of your, of the payee. It's not, oh, I guess if I said it, I've got to pay it. No, I will never stop, doing good to you, and I will rejoice, as I do it.

That's, that's in the heart, of the payee, towards you. So, so let that strengthen you, in faith, in his promise. What's another attribute? Jeff? His omniscience. And how would that help you, in a promise?

Or in a promise? A promise that is not applicable, in the promise. God knows what we need. Hmm. Hmm. So the very omniscience of God, knowing what we need, in this situation.

He means good to us, but can he, can he, does he know what kind of help I need right now? And Jeff's saying, that, that strengthens the promise. Yes, he not only has a good will towards us, to do us good, but he, he knows what's best.

[24 : 26] He's omniscient. What other attributes? Jackie? Okay. The love of God. Again, going hand in hand with the goodness.

How priceless is your unfailing love, both high and low among men, find refuge in the shadow of your wings. We, we, we come and take refuge in him, we trust in him. Why?

Because of his, his priceless, his precious, unfailing love, and makes the promise precious. What's another attribute? The patience of God.

How so in a promise? Pardon? I just gave you the first answer. Okay. She's going to let us tease that out. How would the patience of God encourage you in a, in a promise?

Slow to anger, abounding in love. This is the God that's, Lord, I, I've not been real good at, at believing your promises in the past.

[25 : 25] Does that mean that I'm disqualified this time around? And, and we, no. He's, he's slow to anger. He's patient with us. Do you have something else, Jason? No. Okay. Another attribute.

And why it strengthens our faith in the promise. Okay. His truthfulness. It's kind of in the same orbit of his faithfulness.

The same, same idea. His truthfulness. He's never lied. So, that encourages us. Yes. It encourages me that the promise is coming from a father.

Hmm. His child. Okay. And that would, that would be very similar to the, to the love and the goodness, uh, attributes of God. That it's the love of a father for his children.

And, uh, we, we had one here, sovereignty. Can somebody tell me how the sovereignty of God, uh, that's, that's, that's how Jeremiah immediately prayed. Uh, Babylonians are circling the, the city and I'm buying land.

[26 : 24] Oh, sovereign Lord. What is it about the sovereignty of God that would strengthen Jeremiah's faith? Anybody? Okay. Okay.

So, so sovereign means that he rules over everything. So, the mighty Babylonian empire, they will draw their next breath. If, if my sovereign Lord gives it to them, if not, they won't.

So, in other words, the sovereignty of God says that all the factors of my problem are under his care. He has power. He reigns. He governs over every single thing in the universe.

And therefore, when he signs the promise, I'm good. Because there's nothing outside of his reign. All right. And, I, I think we could spend the rest of the hour and just, what we would come to is, is

there any attribute of God that we can think of that does not make the promise of God precious to us?

Maybe that would be where we ought to start. but we're not going to take time to, to give you a shot at that. You come to me afterwards if you think you found one. But I, I tried to go through many of the attributes of God.

[27 : 34] His wisdom. Oh, it's a wonderful thing to know that the one that promised has all wisdom. And he knows how to maneuver through all the things that, that are involved in this and, and how to bring about his promise.

The fact that he's unchanging. He's, um, um, what he was yesterday, what he was to Israel. He still is today. It's not like, well, he was faithful yesterday, but he's, he's going to change on us. He was power yesterday, yesterday, but he might not have power. He, he doesn't change. And so, all the attributes of God. In short, there's not an attribute of the promiser, but that it encourages our faith in the promise.

And makes the promise precious to us. Now, sometimes in the giving of the promise, his attributes are actually stated. They're attached to the promise.

Uh, that we might immediately count on them and, and be encouraged in our faith. Uh, we saw it Sunday night in Zechariah chapter eight, full of promises of the great things that God would do for his people.

[28 : 39] When he returned to them and lived with them, wonderful things were going to happen, uh, in Judah. And, which attribute did he continually remind them of in Zechariah eight?

Who was saying those promises? Remember? The Lord almighty. Now, that's not just a throwaway phrase. It came probably 10 to 15 times in that one chapter.

God's doing something there. He, he's saying, remember who's making the promise. Is the Lord almighty. And we would do well then to, to see that sometimes the promise comes, uh, attached with an attribute to encourage our faith.

Uh, again, when God promised Abraham and Sarah, they would have a son. And said, uh, when Sarah was inside the tent and the Lord said to Abraham, about this time next year, Sarah, your wife will have a, a son.

And she laughed in the tent as if that was not going to happen. And remember how the Lord said to Abraham, why did Sarah laugh and say, well, I really have a child now that I'm old.

[29 : 52] Is anything too hard for the Lord? What does he meet our unbelief with? His power. Is anything too hard? he attaches it. He, he, he, he stoops to help us and he stoops to our weakness and seeks to, to lift us up to believe the promise.

For to us, a child is born to us. A son is given. And the government will be on his shoulders and his name will be called wonderful counselor, mighty God, everlasting father, Prince of peace. uh, the zeal of the Lord almighty will accomplish this.

You see, oh, there, there, there, this God is a zealous God and he has a, a zeal to carry out his, his promise. Uh, that's meant to encourage us even as the promise is given.

Also, sometimes along with the promise, we see such statements as for the mouth of the Lord has spoken. The Lord has spoken. Many, you find that in Isaiah. Uh, the glory of the Lord will be revealed and all mankind together will see it for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

What, what's, what's that for? What's the significance of that? Uh, well, consider who the promiser is. Who's talking. It's, it's not just anybody's promise.

[31 : 07] It's not just from any mouth. No, it, it's coming from the mouth of the Lord from which no words ever return empty. Isn't that a wonderful thing? The mouth of the Lord has spoken.

Uh, and, and what comes out of his mouth is never, ever returned back unfulfilled. Uh, uh, tell me in, uh, uh, uh, uh, uh, uh, uh, uh, but the condition is if we confess our sins.

It's an if, then conditional promise. If we confess our sins, God will forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. That's what he'll pay out. But who's the payee?

He is what? Faithful and just. Now, we understand how the faithfulness of God would encourage us to, to come and to confess our sins because it's hard to confess our sins, especially if, if it's the 10th or the 20th or 30th time that we've confessed that sin.

It, it's harder. It gets harder each time in a certain sense. So we need to remember that his faithfulness promises to forgive us again. Now, how does the justice of God encourage us to believe the promise?

[32 : 46] It's faithful and just. Anybody? How do you get comfort to, to believe the problem? I'm going to be forgiven. So I'm going to confess because God is just.

Amen. He has already punished that sin in Christ for all his people. He died not for some of our sin, my sin, not in part, but the whole was nailed to his cross and I bear it no more.

And God is too just to punish sins twice, first in my substitute and then again in me. And so I find great comfort to know that the payee is not only faithful, but he's just.

He would have to become unjust to not forgive me. Right? And that means he would have to ungod himself. He would have to become less than God and no longer be God.

He puts himself on the line that we might draw assurance from the promise. So Winslow says, take hold of a promiser in the promise.

[33 : 55] Never detach the promise from the promiser. If you would have your faith in any way encouraged, I could write you a check for a million dollars after the service.

And if you detach the promise from the promiser, you're going to be deceived. If you remember the promiser, you'll say, I know it's a, it's a bounced check.

It's, he doesn't have what it takes to pay it. And so never detach the promise from the promiser. So when we see a promise, it's, it's, it's like bell should be going off.

Who's, who is it now? Who is it now that just said that? That, that I will never stop doing good to you. It's the God who is good all the way to the middle, to the core.

So I'm able to say, surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life. No, I wonder, I wonder, no, his mercies are new every morning.

[35 : 00] And surely this God who is good will do you good and never stop doing you good and will work everything together for your good and your likeness to Jesus, which is the highest good.

So keep the promise and the promiser together. Nothing could be more secure than one of God's promisers, one of God's promises.

We're going to go next week, next week's Baruch Ma'od, so he'll be, he'll be teaching us in this hour. Be sure you're here for that. Invite others and bring them.

We have a converted Jew and he's going to open up to us important matter in the Sunday school concerning God's work of salvation and just the way that Jews and Gentiles and this whole thing comes together in the, the plan of salvation.

And, but the week following, then we're going to go to the third aspect of the check. We've looked at who it's to, the payee, us. We've looked at the payer, God.

[36 : 11] We're going to start to look at, well, what are some of the things that he's promised? And as we do, we'll see just why Peter says, these are precious because of what's being promised.

So, I don't know. I, I'm thinking, if you make notes in your Bible, maybe this week in your own Bible reading, you might just put a little P out in the margin if you bump into a promise.

I thought of it with regard to the warnings. Maybe as you're reading along and, wow, there's a warning, W. There's a promise, P. and, and then we'll begin to, to appreciate just how many promises there are as we're going to come to, what is it that's being promised to us?

It's not just a few things, is it? And, and as if we're alive to that reality in our reading of the Bible, we'll become aware of the goodness of God's heart and making so many promises to us.

So, we're going to break off there. Is there any questions then with regard to how important it is to consider the, the promiser, the payer behind the promise?

[37 : 24] Any word of testimony, any question, any comment to have at it? Has anybody here found him unfaithful? All right.

No. Let's thank you. O Lord, who, who am I and who are we that, that you should ever promise us anything good?

We who rebelled against you, who turned away from your good laws and your kind government, your, your loving rule over us, and, and went our own way, thinking that we were wiser than you, and knew better how to live.

O God, thank you for that mercy that abounds to us in Jesus Christ, that you would forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness, that you would be almighty and faithful and just and sovereign and, and wise and, and apply all that you are for our good.

And so then forgive us that, that ever we, we stagger in unbelief before the promise, and take us by the hand and lead us more and more into believing the promise.

[38 : 50] And even this week, help us to lay hold of those promises that we need for the trials that we are presently in. And fill our hearts then with the joy and peace that comes from believing, we ask in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. We're dismissed. We're dismissed.