

Precious Promises (part 4)

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[0 : 00] Well, we are studying the precious things of God and we've come to the precious promises. And so we looked at that.

What has God promised me? An amazing thing that I would have promises made to me in this book. As sure as if I could read John Christian Heaney in the Bible, those promises are mine.

Then we looked at the payer. God himself puts himself on the bottom line. Amazing thing. That means that all that he is stands behind that promise.

So if it fails, he fails. If it fails, he is no more God. He can't be God. So what a wonderful thing to know that God is the payer.

And very often we are encouraged to consider who the payer is. That nothing's too hard for him. That he's the faithful one, the just one. All to strengthen our faith in the promise.

[1 : 25] So I suppose if we could wrap up the lesson on the payer, God, it would be that the promises are meant to lead us to the promiser.

So don't just deal with promises. Or you'll just have a mechanical religion. Oh, this is what has been promised to me and I by faith claim it and it's mine.

No. The promises are meant to lead us to the promiser. And to have dealings with him. To fix our faith upon him. Yes, what he has said.

But him and what he has said. So let the promises lead you to the promiser. And now there's one other, two other lines on a check where you put the amount.

You put it in numbers and then you write it out in words. Just to be sure that it's clear what it is that's being promised. So that's our study this morning.

[2 : 25] What is promised by God to his people. And our launching off point is 2 Peter 1, 4. 2 Peter 1, 3 and 4 is the text of this whole series on the promises.

But just this morning, especially that portion in verse 4. And we start with that phrase that he, that is this God of glory and grace.

He has given us his very great and precious promises. Peter can't just say he's given us his promises. He's got to say they are very great and they are precious.

He's obviously found them so. This isn't just verbiage, but that he has come to live on them and found them to be very great and precious. So our question is this morning, in what ways are they very great?

Mega, the Greek word, very great. And so first of all, consider that they are great in number. How many promises has God made in the Bible?

[3 : 33] I don't know if anyone's ever tried to count them. I told you of Spurgeon's daily devotional, Faith's Checkbook, also printed under According to Promise.

He's got 365 of them he's written meditations for. There are a lot of promises in the word of God. And that's what makes them very great. The number of them is very great.

And no matter how many promises God has made, they are yes in Christ, 2 Corinthians 1.20. A reference again to how many there are.

They're not a few. And no matter how many there are, they're all ours in Jesus Christ. And they're all sure and guaranteed in Christ. So I would challenge you, believer, to think of one situation in your life where you're left without a promise.

You'll find none. There is no such circumstance. There is no such situation you could ever be in in life and be without a promise. God is so rich in mercy and so full of promises that he sees to it that they address every circumstance you could ever find yourself in in this world.

[4 : 58] And the application of that, the comfort of that, is that there are promises for the present trial that you are in. Or the present situation you're in.

Maybe you're not in real heavy trials at this time. Maybe you're in prosperity and things are going. There are promises for you in whatever state you are in. That's how many there are.

And I wonder, do you know one or two promises of God concerning the state that you're in at present? That would be my challenge then for today's lesson.

Yes, many great and precious promises. But some of them are just for you in this present situation that you're in. Do you know them? You need to.

Those promises are the groceries that faith feeds on. And if you're to have a faith to meet your trial, you need the promises.

[5 : 56] You need what God has bound himself to do for you. So identify one or more of those promises. Memorize it. And we'll see further in the future how to make use of those promises.

But does that not make it precious to you? Does it not make the promises precious to you to think that God has thought of every situation I can be in in life and has given me, He's bound Himself to do something for me in that present situation?

They're great because of the number of them is great. Secondly, they're great. They're very great because they deal with great and important matters.

Spurgeon says, Spurgeon says, The promises are very great because they come from a great God. That's the payer. They come to great sinners.

That's the payee. And they work for us great results and deal with great matters. Now that's what we're considering today.

[7 : 00] What's promised to us? And Spurgeon is saying, Oh, they promise things of great importance. Great momentous things are promised to us.

So what are some of the great and important things promised to us? The valuable things that we gain through the promises. I want us to take inventory just real quick.

We'll have some popcorn as we say. And you all pop up with some of the great things that the promises deal with. Alright?

Anyway. Pardon? Alright. God's promised presence to never leave us or forsake us. Alright.

Part of the problem with popcorn is sometimes two kernels pop at the same time. So I guess this is good. I'm glad you're coming. I need a hand then so we can just keep order. I'm sorry. Promise.

[8 : 02] What about illness? Okay. So His promised presence is ours in our illness. Our physical problems.

Someone over here had something. Yes. Huh. Forgiveness. That's not a small matter, is it? Eternal life. Eternal life. We're talking about great matters. Stan?

He who began a good work in me will carry it to completion until the day of Christ. He will help me for superior to me. So if only those who persevere to the end are saved, is it not a precious thing to know that what Christ began in us, He'll continue that work all the way to the end.

Yes? I will love you with an everlasting love. Hmm. That the love with which He's loved us has no end. Sam? Christ has been before us, suffered all those things.

What's He promise us there for? Sam? What's the promise in that? All that He experienced in the United States. All right.

[9 : 11] So out of that rich experience, He has all that He needs to give us exactly what we need to go through. Roger and then Billy. Rest in distressful values.

Promises rest. Peace that passes understanding. Perfect peace. We sang of it. Billy. Psalm 2 for the Lord's on high. He sets who He wants in place.

Mm-hmm. And the promise of that. Amen. He's sovereign over the nations. He raises up, puts down. What a trust. Jim. And we know that all things.

Hmm. God works for those who love Him. All things. Nothing's missing. All things. And I can hear an amen down at the Bremen Healthcare Center from Lou Center. Amen. Who always reminds us, A-L-L means all things.

Even my presence down here at a nursing home at the end of my life. Isn't that wonderful to be able to hang on? These are not small things, brethren. These are great matters.

[10 : 12] What else? Jackie. Jackie. Mm-hmm. Amen. You ever been disappointed? Mm-hmm. You'll never be disappointed for putting your hope in the Lord.

What a promise. Dan. God generously gives us wisdom when we ask and make. Mm-hmm. Yes, you did it. Trials. What do I do, Lord? I don't have a clue what I should do.

If any of you lacks wisdom, let Him ask. I'll give it generously. Jeff. And if I go to the third place, I'll give it to Jesus. Mm-hmm. The skies are going to split open one day, and Jesus is coming back for His church.

Blessed promise. Charlie. Mm-hmm. He Himself is a wall of fire around us. The glory within a shield.

Nothing can reach me. What must come through Him, and He will protect me. These are great things, brethren. Baruch, Bracha, was with us last week, and she was just rejoicing that they have this defense system, that when these bombs are lobbed over into Israel, and they're just right there to receive them where they live, that there's this shield that catches 97% of those bombs.

[11 : 26] And she was thankful for that. Aren't you glad Jesus is 100%? No bombs can reach us, but what He has determined should reach us.

He shields us, protects us. Great things, great matters. What else? Well, that's good. Thank you for sharing that. And we're just getting started, obviously.

But can you see from these things? They're not small matters about which God has promised us. These are huge matters. These are some of the biggest things.

They are the biggest things. They're not only about life, but about life after death. Well, who can put a price on these things?

They meet us at our greatest point of needs, and they bring us just what we need. So they're very great because they deal with great and important matters, and that's what makes them precious to us.

[12 : 29] In fact, they deal with everything we need for life and godliness. You see that in 2 Peter 1, 3 and 4. It's talking about all that we need for life and godliness is found in our knowledge of God, who has given us these great and precious promises.

These promises have to do with everything we need for this life and for godliness. And godliness holds promise both for the present life and the life to come.

We're talking about weighty matters here, and in them and of them, God has made promises.

They're far-reaching promises, reaching into the eternal ages.

So notice, so we're looking then at why are the promises so great and precious? There's so many of them. The matters that they deal with are so great. And the third is really just an outgrowth of that, the matters that they deal with.

Notice what is specifically mentioned in 2 Peter 1 and verse 4. He has given us his very great and precious promises, So this is what the promises are given for.

[13 : 49] So that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. Notice the effects, the great effects, the great results of the promises upon us.

They've been made to us so that through them we may participate. We may fellowship, koinonia, we may share in the divine nature. So that's the first result stated in our text then of the great matters that the promises have to do.

If they have to do with sharing in the divine nature. Well, what does that mean? Let me say first what it doesn't mean. When it says that we will participate in the divine nature, it doesn't mean that we become divine.

That we become little gods. Or that we become part of God. As if we are absorbed into the deity.

That's not what he's teaching. We know that from other places.

There will always be the creator-creature distinction. We never become God. We'll always be creatures of God. Though it was Satan's desire to become like God.

[15 : 01] That's a devilish thought. So that's not what Peter's saying. That we become God. And become part of the divine being. But rather what he's saying is that we participate in the divine nature by way of the new birth.

We receive a new nature. Don't we? A new nature that is not like the old nature. The old nature was devil-like.

We were children of the devil, John 8. And so we had natures like the devil. But when we're born again by the Spirit from on high, we get new natures.

We now participate in a different nature. Not devil-like, but God-like. A nature renewed in the image of our creator.

Colossians 3.10 So the nature now is God-like. In the image of our creator. Ephesians 4.24 You have put on the new self.

[16:06] And what is this new self? This new nature that I am. Created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. So the new nature given to us is a God-like nature.

It's true righteousness and holiness that we are recreated in. So the new you was created to be like God.

You were born of God. And that's what it means to be sharing in the divine nature. It's a moral renovation. At the fall, we who were made in the image of God, God, our holiness and true righteousness was so corrupted and marred.

You couldn't even see much at all of the moral likeness to God. Someone has compared it to an ancient ruins. And you're walking there through Corinth, perhaps.

And you see this column. The outline. Maybe the stumps of these pillars. Pieces of pillar lying around. And by looking at it all, you realize, Wow, this was at once a grand edifice.

[17:15] This stretched out here. And there were pillars every three feet or whatever. And what a grand temple this used to be. But not anymore. It's just the ruins of it.

And there's just the bare trace of what glory used to dwell there. Well, that's mankind. He was made in the image of God. But sin has wrecked and ruined that moral likeness to God, that righteousness and true holiness.

And those recreated by the new birth, made a new creation, are being made once again into the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Now, so that we bear the family likeness. We're born of God, so like Father, like Son. It's Father's Day. There's your message, okay? We're born into the family of God.

We now have natures that bear the likeness of the divine nature. Now, Peter is saying that it's through the promises that we share in this divine nature.

[18:19] So I'm going to ask you to put your thinking cap on and say, what promises? And remember, Peter's basically working from the Old Testament Scriptures. What promises are there in the Old Testament Scriptures about a new nature being given, a new birth being given?

All right, some popcorn. Becky? I think that he's going to know where it says what it's going to do. I, you know, give us a new heart. Can anybody help Becky identify where that's at?

36. Let's turn to it. Ezekiel 36. You're right on, Becky. It's one of the promises that I had down at this point as well.

Make sure this is one of the promises you know, brothers and sisters. It's a precious, a very great and precious promise. It's, the promises are easiest to recognize when God says, I will.

If you ever see that, you can put a P in the column of your Bible. This is a promise when someone says, I will. And God is saying, I will, in this passage. And notice what he's promising.

[19:32] Ezekiel 36, 26 and 27. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you. I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.

And I will put my spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. You see, this is all promise.

This is all what God will do. There's no duty here at all. This is what God will do. There's many other commands in scriptures for us to be careful to keep God's laws.

Many commands for us to not have a stiff, rocky heart, but to be soft and pliable to God. But this is not command. This is promise. I will do this, God is saying for his people.

This is part of what is called the new covenant. Turn over to Jeremiah 31. It's also mentioned there.

[20:38] Jeremiah 31. And quoted at least twice. And other references, yes, several times in the New Testament to this new covenant promise.

Many times found in the New Testament. And this is the promise that God says. This is the covenant. Jeremiah 31, 33.

This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel. After that time, declares the Lord, I will.

Here's another I will. I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts.

I will be their God. They will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor or a man his brother, saying, know the Lord, because they will all know me from the least to the greatest. They will all be taught by God and so on.

But here he's promising to put the law in their inward parts, right upon their natures. A nature is the sum of the components of what you are.

[21 : 40] There's the nature of the bird. And he's got wings. He can fly. I suppose that's probably true of most birds. There's certain things that mark out the nature of a bird. There's certain things that mark out the nature of a fish.

There's certain things that mark out the nature of a devil. And there's certain things that mark out the nature of God. And God is saying, I'll put my law in your inward parts.

I'll make it a very part of your nature so that you will think about me and you will desire me and my ways. And you'll have a will that will choose me instead of choosing your own way.

So this is the promise of a renovation of our natures. And you remember that one night that a man came to see Jesus all by himself, a Pharisee.

We're told he was the teacher in Israel. And Jesus cut to the chase and said, Nicodemus, you must be born again. And Nicodemus is nonplussed.

[22 : 41] What do you mean? Surely I can't enter my mother's womb and be born again. And Jesus is teaching him, you must be born again or you will never enter the kingdom. I don't care if you're a Pharisee, the most religious man in Israel.

You will never enter the kingdom of God unless this happens to you. You have a moral regeneration. You are born again of the spirit. You get a new nature, participating in the divine nature.

And Nicodemus doesn't know. He receives a rebuke from Jesus. He asks the question, how can these things be? And Jesus says, you are Israel's teacher and you do not understand these things? Because as Israel's teacher, he had access to the scrolls, to the Old Testament, to Ezekiel 36, to Jeremiah 31. The new covenant, that's not a small part of the hope of the Old Testament believer of this new covenant.

We've had the law put upon us with outward force. But here's a promise of God putting it on the inside so that for every command that comes to me on the outside, you shall have no other gods besides me.

[23 : 52] There is something in my heart that says, Lord, I don't want to give anything to the place that you alone deserve in my heart as God. There's this answer in the heart.

So, blessed new covenant and Nicodemus was ignorant of it. But this is what was promised in Christ, in the gospel.

It's part of the promised blessings of the gospel. In other words, salvation, the new covenant said that your sins will be remembered no more. They'll be forgiven.

But salvation is more than just the forgiveness of sins through the blood of Jesus. It is also the moral renovation of the heart, the nature of the sinner.

He doesn't just forgive us our sins and leave us the sinners that we were before salvation. No, he gives us a new birth. He makes us new creatures so that we have new desires, new will, new mind.

[24 : 53] And that's what is being promised. And it's through the promises then that you become a partaker in this divine nature.

Now, that takes place initially at the new birth then. Whenever someone by faith is placed into Jesus Christ, he's a new creation. Old things are passed away.

Everything has become new. And though it has that initial participation and we get a new nature, we participate in the divine nature more and more as we grow in true righteousness and holiness.

So I trust that you are more godlike now in your thoughts and desires and your choices and your words than you were when you first were saved.

There's this process of becoming more godlike. It's called ongoing sanctification. And so, yes, we participate in the divine nature through the new birth. We're made radically new.

[25 : 55] But then we are more and more participating in that divine nature as we become more and more like Christ. And what's at the end? When we see him, we will be made like him.

There will be the perfect mirror of God's true righteousness and holiness as we see Christ and are made like him. And so, all this is promised to us.

That's no small matter. My nature was to go my own way. But here's a promise that God will work such a transformation upon his people.

That they'll be made new creatures to want to go God's way. A whole new nature. And is that not one of the glories of the gospel?

That you're here this morning to worship God? Because you know that apart from God, you would have no heart for the things of Christ. You'd be out in the world pursuing a thousand different things.

[26 : 54] But you have to confess, I'm not what I used to be. I know what John Heaney, I know what the old man was. I'm a new creature. I have a new nature. That's participating in the divine nature.

So it comes to us through the promises of the gospel. We share in this new nature. But notice what else is said. We have been given these very great and precious promises so that we may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. That's the second thing. And it's really just the other side of the coin, isn't it? To participate in the divine nature that is righteous and holy like God is to escape the world's corruption and its evil desires.

You see what I mean by just the other side of the coin? If you have a new nature that is like God into righteousness and holiness, well then you have escaped the corruption in the world that comes from a desire for evil, the nature of Satan, the nature of a fallen sinner, a depraved sinner without grace.

So it's the flip side, but it's mentioned to us because there are the two sides, and we need to consider both. What a precious thing to have a new nature, and what a precious thing to escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

[28 : 28] Now that's the world. That's everybody outside of Christ. They have a nature, desires, that are following after sin, Satan.

Satan is the god of this world, and they're following him. And it's corruption, it's decay, it's like rotting fruit. And where does the corruption of the world lead? Ultimately.

To damnation forever. Is this one of those very great things promised? That we could escape that? Oh yes, that's a tremendous promise.

That through the promise we could escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. And again, that happens at the new birth. We step from death into everlasting life.

God frees us from the corruption of the world at the new birth. But we are continually, every day, escaping the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

[29 : 37] Now, so it's as we are partaking more and more of the divine nature, we are enjoying more and more the escaping of the world's corruptions.

Anybody here need help in escaping the corruptions? Anybody ever feel like the world is squeezing you into its mold, and you're becoming like it, and you're enticed by the world to become? Well, here it is.

Through the promises, we can escape that corruption and those evil desires. Look at 1 John chapter 5. 1 John 5.

And one of the themes of John, both in his gospel, he begins with it, and John 3, is the new birth. And he carries that through many references to being born again in 1 John.

And here in 1 John 5, verse 19 tells us that we know that we are children of God and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.

[30 : 48] So, there's the world, there's the corruption, the whole world is under the influence and power of the evil one, Satan. But look at chapter 5 and verses 4 and 5.

For everyone born of God overcomes the world, and this is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world?

Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. So, there we were in the corruption of the world. But everyone born of God overcomes the world.

You see, we've got a new nature. We've got a divine nature. And so, we have overcome the world by this new birth and by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

What is the victory over the world? Our faith in Christ. So, here is the escape from the world and its domination and its corruption that's leading to everlasting destruction.

[31 : 54] Chapter 3, verses 8 through 10 of 1 John. He who does what is sinful is of the devil. He has a devilish nature.

Because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. No one who is born of God will continue to sin because God's seed remains in him.

He cannot go on sinning because he has been born of God. And this is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are. Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God nor is anyone who does not love his brother.

So, there's this radical transformation of life whereas before in the world sin was like water and we drank it down. It was like air and we breathed it in.

That was our life. Then we were born of God. The seed of God came in us. We have participated in a divine nature and one of the things that the new birth does is enables us to escape the corruption in the world.

[33 : 00] We don't go on sinning like we used to. It's no longer our habit and our practice. It no longer identifies us. There's a whole new identification of life that's in line with the moral commandments of God that we now love God.

We didn't love him before but we do now. We now love our neighbor. We didn't care at all about. We just were all about me. And that's the result, John is saying, of the new birth, of participating in the divine nature.

And it's how we know those who are gods and those who are Satan's. Again, you see by the participating in the new nature, in the new birth, we are escaping the corruption in the world. And so there are many other verses we could turn to but I want you to see then that the promises of God are critical to our escaping this downward gravitational pull of our old sinful desires and that of the world surrounding us.

We're either degenerate or regenerate. Those are the only two options. We either have the nature of the devil or the nature of God. And I say that in quotes, in the likeness of God's nature.

[34 : 16] Well, you put these two things together and we see that the promises are useful to our ongoing sanctification. They're critical to our becoming like Jesus Christ.

The promises embrace both the new birth, participation in the new nature, and escaping the corruption. So I need to make use of the promises to escape the corruption of the world through evil desires.

These promises are to have a sanctifying effect upon us. They're to make us more like Christ and to keep us from the world's ways. So turn to Hebrews 13 and let's just ask the question.

How do the promises enable us to escape the corruption of the world? And down where we live and right down where the rubber meets the road, how does this work? How do the promises help us escape the corruption in the world?

Hebrews 13.5, I'm glad that this promise was quoted. It says, Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have because God has said, Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you.

[35 : 32] Now what's the particular corruption of the world that we need to be, we need to escape from in this verse? What is it? Love of money.

Is there another? Discontent with what we have. Discontentment. Okay, but especially the love of money, they go hand in hand, don't they? We're discontent with what we have and we love money and wish we had more of it so we could have more of the things that we want.

Well, you know that those who love money are ensnared by that love and it leads to destruction. So this is a big one. This is not a small matter. This is a great matter.

Do we have any promises to help us? Well, what is the promise in this text to help us escape the corruption of the love of money in this life? I will never.

Who's I? God is promising to never leave us or forsake us. So here's the love of money in the world. Here's the promise from God.

[36 : 36] I will never leave you or forsake you. Now somebody connect the dots. What does this have to do with that? How will this promise enable me to escape this particular corruption of the love of money?

Pardon? The one who promises to be with us and never depart from us provides for our needs. What else? He is all that I need. He's all that I need.

Can anybody say, He's all that I want? Asaph said it. Whom have I in heaven that I desire besides thee and earth has nothing that I want besides you.

In other words, here is your treasure. God is the pearl of great price. This is true riches. You have God and everything in Him. All the promises in Jesus Christ.

That's yours. And I will never leave you or forsake you. I will be this God to you all through this life and throughout all eternity. And if I'm treasuring Him, what will the world's money look like?

[37 : 44] We sing a hymn that compares it to gravel, dust, ashes, stones. That if we're feeding on God, that the money of this world will just become like gravel to us.

So do you see how we escape the corruption of the world? Through faith and the promise. And that's just one example of literally hundreds. In fact, wherever you find a promise, it's meant in part to help you to escape from the corruption in this world.

Somebody said, Jesus Christ is coming back for us. How will that keep me from living for this world? Well, I realize He's coming back to take us to the place He's preparing for us.

This is not my world or my home. This is not where I belong. I'm just passing through. There's my home. And by the way, did anybody have such a promise in the Old Testament about God promising him a land?

He'd never seen it, but by faith He laid hold of the promise. Hebrews 11, Abraham. And He wasn't meaning just the parcel of ground over in Palestine, but He was meaning heaven.

[39 : 02] A city with foundation whose architect and builder is God. He was looking forward to that eternal home. And so He didn't settle for anything in this world.

He lived as stranger and pilgrim in tents. You see, the promise drove Him on. Moses. Why does Moses turn His nose up at the riches of Egypt and all the pleasures and treasures of Egypt? Because He was looking ahead to His reward. Where did He hear about a reward? The promises of God. And He treasured the promise and by faith those things were more real to Him than the treasures in Egypt.

They were more valuable to Him. And so He's able to scorn Egypt's treasures and pleasures because, as we sing, lasting treasures.

None but Zion's children now. So, the promise enables us to escape the corruption of the world caused by evil desires. One question, if there is one, and we'll conclude.

[40 : 06] Our time's gone. Anybody a question? Do you see the principle? Through the promises, we partake of the divine nature and we escape the corruption of the world. Mark? It's reminded me of a verse in Genesis 15.

After this, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision. Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield. I am very grateful, Lord. Amen.

With that, we're dismissed. Thank you.