

Precious Promise (part 6)

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[0:00] So in our study of the precious things of God, we've come to the precious promises. And more recently, how to make use of the promises of God.

And this by way of review. What's the first thing we're to do? All right.

We're going to talk about endorsing it. And endorsing the promise. The first thing we need to do is what? Find it. Find it. Find a promise that matches your need, your situation in life.

There are many great and precious promises. Find one, two, three, half a dozen that have to do with your situation. What has God said to me in this situation?

So find it. Because we can be like the farmer who had a 200-acre farm, barely eking out an existence year by year, when just beneath his land there was oil enough to make him a millionaire many times over.

[1:01] But he's none the richer because of his ignorance of what is his. And so the believer has exceeding riches that are ours in Christ.

All these promises that he has made out to us. And sadly we can drag ourselves through life when we could be carried along on the wings of a promise.

Just because we don't know them. We're not using them. And so our neglect and our ignorance becomes our own self-inflicted punishment. As we cheat ourselves from many of these great blessings and comforts offered to us in the promise.

So we want to develop a habit of looking for promises as we're reading our Bibles. To be looking for promises. And that will make it easier when in time of need you need a promise on the spot.

Alright, so once we find a promise, what's next? Memorize it. And I'm going to put two together. I put all these in one last time and I realized, well let's break them out.

[2:09] And so number one, find the suitable promise. Number two, we're going to call memorize and then what's the other M? Meditate. Jackie likes to call them the M&Ms, right?

Memorize and meditate. Because as we memorize them, we are making them our own. We're bringing that from the scriptures into our hearts so that it's ready for the Holy Spirit to bring to mind in our time of need.

We saw how critical that is. And then to meditate upon it makes it all the further our own. Psalm 119, 148.

The psalmist says, my eyes stay open through the watches of the night so that I may meditate on your promises. So by chewing on the cud, the cow gets more out of that mouthful of grass.

And by chewing on the scriptures and breaking it down word for word and thinking, how does this apply to me? And what does it say about my situation? This word and this word and this word.

[3:16] And breaking it down in that way, we will get far more from the promises. One good old Puritan, William Spursto of the 17th century said that meditating on the promises is like looking at the night sky.

I don't know if you enjoy looking at the stars. But he says it reminds me of that. That at first we only see a few stars as we look up. But the more we look, the more stars we see.

As our eyes get accustomed to the darkness and we begin to see many, many more stars than we did at first. So it is with a promise. We take a glance its way and, oh, there's some comfort in that.

But when we stare at it and we meditate on it and break it down, we see far more in the promise. Far more riches than what we ever realize. So chew on the promises and you see how memorization facilitates meditation.

You can be driving down the road and if you have a promise memorized, you can right then be meditating on it. And that's further laying up store for times of need.

[4:28] So we've found the promise. We've memorized and meditated on it. The next step is what we're coming to today. Pray the promise.

Joel Beeky says, Praying the promises is the most important element in the right use of the promises. We've come to the practical side of things. How do we use the promises to make a difference in our lives?

And Beeky is telling us that out of all these steps, he felt that praying the promises is the most important step of all.

Remember, we're using Spurgeon illustration of a promise being a check. And the promiser is God himself. And the one to be paid to is the Christian, the believer.

And the amount is written in, what God promises to do. But just having the check is not enough. This is what Tim was saying initially. We have to endorse the check.

[5:29] We have to put our name to it. We have to claim it. Take it to the bank and claim the money. Make a claim on it. Now, someone made the wisecrack last week after the service that they had direct deposit, so they didn't need to go to the bank.

Well, that ruins the illustration, as does your phones where you don't need to go to the bank. You can make the deposit from your smartphone.

They didn't have those in Spurgeon's Day. You had to go to the bank and take that promissory note, that check, and endorse it and say, I want what was promised to me.

And then they would hand over the riches. Well, this is the point that's being made, that the promises are meant to bring us to the promiser.

And if we miss this step, we miss, as Beeky says, the most important thing. How do we live this race? How do we run the race? Looking unto Jesus.

[6:33] And if we're making use of his promises, we're constantly coming back to Jesus, coming back to the bank and asking the promiser to keep his promises to us.

And so the promises enable us to have this sweet fellowship with our Savior if we will let them do what they're supposed to do, and that is drive us back to the promiser for, and to present the promise to God himself for payment.

And that's what we do in the praying of the promises. And that's one thing that has marked out men of prayer as we find them in the Bible. They made much use of the promises of God in prayer.

Turn to Genesis 32 as we're going to look at some of these examples of prayer that are given to us who are God's people, not just to admire, not just for our admiration, but for our imitation.

And here we see Jacob. And you remember Jacob. He wrestled with God all night long, that angel of the Lord, the Lord Jesus in his pre-incarnate state.

[7:48] And here in Genesis 32, we find him on his way home. He's been away from home for something like 20 years. He went to find a wife. He ended up with two.

And because of his father-in-law's deception and so on, and now he's 20 years later. He's coming back home to meet Esau.

The last time he saw Esau, Esau wanted to kill him. He wanted him dead for having stolen his birthright, the blessing of the firstborn.

So he's on the way home, and he hears that Esau is coming out to meet him with 400 soldiers. Now that'll put a man on his knees, won't it?

And don't you find that, that your troubles bring you to the Lord in prayer? That's what's happening here. Jacob is outside of his ability to cope with this.

[8:45] And we get to hear his prayer here in chapter 32, verse 9. Then Jacob prayed, O God, my father Abraham, God of my father Isaac, O Lord, who said to me, go back to your country and your relatives, and I will make you prosper.

I'm unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness you have shown your servant. I had only my staff when I crossed this Jordan. But now I have become two groups. Save me, I pray.

Here's his prayer. Now notice his prayer. Save me, I pray, from the hand of my brother Esau, for I am afraid he will come and attack me and also the mothers with their children.

But you have said. And he quotes God's own word right back to him. I will surely make you prosper and make your descendants like the sand of the sea, which cannot be counted.

But you have said. In pleading for safety, he reminds God of what he had said. And this promise was made to his father Isaac.

[9:58] It was made to his grandfather Abraham, that he would make his descendants more than the stars of the sky and the sand of the sea. And he reminds God of his promise.

And that's why when Jacob wrestles with the Lord all night long, and he's reduced just to clinging to God, he can't even wrestle anymore. His hips thrown out of place, and now he's just clinging to the Lord.

And what did he say? I will not let you go until you bless me. Now who has a right to pray that?

Well, a man with a promise, a woman with a promise, has a right to say that.

I will not let you go until you bless. You said. You promised me. And I'm not letting go until you do as you said. So it's not just that Jacob was writing out his own check and saying, well, I'm not going to let you go until I get what I want.

No, no. This is a man wrestling with a promise in his hand. And that's the promise that God gave to him, his father, and his father's father.

[11:07] And God's not put off by this, by him quoting his promise, by him saying, Lord, you have said, now do what you've said.

He's not put off by that. But rather, he honors him by changing his name from Jacob to Israel. This is, you ever wonder why that country's called Israel? It's right here.

Your name is no longer to be Jacob, but it's to be Israel. Verse 28. Because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome. The word Israel means he struggles with God.

So he becomes an example of the true Israelite. They're marked by struggle with God in prayer.

And no small part of that struggling with God for blessing is to know the promised blessings and to say, I will not let you go until you bless me.

So he becomes a model for us, who are the true Jews, that we would make bold use of the promises of God. God loves to be put in mind of his word, to have them quoted back to him as an argument in prayer.

[12:16] But you have said, Lord. It looks like he's going to wipe me out, but Lord, you said that our descendants are to be numerous. Now do as you have said.

I wonder how often those words find their way into your prayers. When was the last time you said to God, but God, you said. Lord, it looks like this is happening, but you said.

And then you quote him his own word and plead for that to be fulfilled to you. Well, Jacob.

He's the example for struggling with God with a promise. Then there's Moses. God's own mediator. To go between God and man, both in bringing the word of God to the Israelites, but also in bringing the people's needs and petitions before God.

So he's this mediating intercessor. And in that role, we see him praying the promises. Exodus 32. We were in Genesis 32.

[13:24] Now let's turn to Exodus 32. And we see Moses is up on Mount Sinai. They come out of Egypt through the Red Sea.

He's meeting with God to receive God's law to give to the Israelites down below. But we learned that the people grew tired of waiting on him. He was up there 40 days and 40 nights, and that gets long.

And so they decide to make a bull calf, a golden calf, and they worship it as a symbol of the Lord their God that brought them out of Egypt.

It wasn't that they had changed gods. They were not breaking the first commandment so much as the second commandment, worshiping through an idol. And so they're worshiping Jehovah, but doing it through the use, the aid of an idol, which is also forbidden.

And verses 9 through 13. God says to Moses, I've seen these people, the Lord said to Moses, and they are a stiff-necked people.

[14:33] Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them, and then I'll make you into a great nation. But Moses sought the favor of the Lord his God. Oh, Lord, he said, why should your anger burn against your people whom you've brought out of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand?

Why should the Egyptians say it was with evil intent that he, God, brought them out to kill them in the mountains and to wipe them off the face of the earth?

Turn from your fierce anger. Relent and do not bring disaster on your people. Remember your servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, to whom you swore by your own self.

And now he quotes God's word. I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky, and I will give your descendants all this land I promised them, and it will be their inheritance forever. Then the Lord relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened. So he's pleading the oath-bound promises that God had made to Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, or Jacob. [15 : 39] And as he pleads, God relents and does not bring the threatened disaster.

Moses' prayer was God's own means of relenting and not bringing on the people the disaster he had threatened, that if they would repent, if there would be this turn of their heart, that he would spare them.

Now, we're meant to learn from Moses to plead the promises of God in prayer. He's giving God a reason to answer his prayer. He's given him many reasons.

What about your name, Lord? Do you want everybody thinking that that was your intent in bringing Israel out of Egypt, that you might just slay them here? Is that the kind of God we have?

Do you want that reputation stuck to you? And then he pleads the covenant. God, what about your promise to Abraham? So he's giving God reasons to answer, and he uses promises to do so.

[16 : 39] We might feel pinched in such a case. If somebody comes to us and says, well, you promised, we might feel reluctant and have to, well, okay, I guess you're right.

I did promise, didn't I? So I've got to do it. God is not that way. He delights to have us bring his own word back to him and to say, but Lord, you said.

You said. Now please, do as you promised. He's honored to have his own word brought back. This man, this woman thinks enough of my word and my faithfulness to my word and my power to keep my word that he and she are bringing it back to me.

They're endorsing the promise and they're wanting to claim the promise. That's an honor on our God, and he shows that honor by faithfully keeping his word.

Then there's Daniel, Jacob, Moses. These are great intercessors that were pictures to us of the prayers, the prayers of our Savior, and we ought to learn from that that our Savior prayed the promises.

[17 : 52] Here's Daniel, chapter 9. Daniel, chapter 9. We've got to be quick with Daniel. I won't be able to read it all, but you'll be familiar with this long prayer of Daniel's.

Daniel has been taken captive to Babylon. Jerusalem has been destroyed. The temple is in ruins, and now Darius the Mede is made ruler of the Babylonian Empire.

And in the first year of Darius's reign, we find in verses 1 and 2 that Daniel came to understand from the scriptures, namely a prophecy of Jeremiah, that the desolation in Jerusalem would only last 70 years.

So that was a promise God made. Even as he sent them off into captivity in Babylon, he promised this is only going to last 70 years. Now, I say only.

It's a man's lifetime, but still, there's an end to it. You won't be captives forever, and Jerusalem won't lie in ruins forever. So there's the promise. Now, what does Daniel do when he comes to understand that promise?

[19 : 05] Look at verse 3. So I turned to the Lord and pleaded with him in prayer, and petition, and fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes. You see what he did?

He took the promise as soon as he came to understand it, and he took it right back to God. Now, God, you said 70 years was the end, and you've been treating us right.

We deserve everything that's happened to us. But you're righteous, and uphold the uprightness of your name, and remember what you said. He's pleading this promise for God to come and to shine his face upon them once again and to restore Jerusalem and the temple there.

He's pleading the promise as soon as he came to understand it. And then there's the apostles in the New Testament. You remember in Acts chapter 4 when Peter and John were imprisoned for preaching, and they were brought out the next day for trial by the Supreme Court of Israel, and they threatened them and said, don't you dare preach anymore in the name of Jesus.

And what did they do? They immediately went to the prayer meeting. They gathered the saints, and they prayed together. And in that prayer, they called upon the sovereign Lord to remember his promise in Psalm 2.

[20 : 23] Why do the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing? Why do they rage in vain? Indeed, they see that that was Herod and Pontius Pilate warring against, rebelling against the Lord and his anointed king.

That's what happened in the crucifixion of our Messiah. But Lord, it was all in vain. He rose again. And now, Lord, they're threatening again. And Lord, Psalm 2 says that the nations are raging in vain.

Now keep your promise and come and help us that with boldness we might preach your word. And so they're pleading the promise in Psalm 2 that the nations will rage in vain to upturn and unseat God's anointed king, Jesus Christ.

You remember Stephen as the stones are pelting the life out of him. What's his prayer? Lord, receive my spirit. I believe that's a prayer that rested on a promise.

How did Jesus die? What were his last words? Into your hands I commit my spirit. And Stephen sees in that a promise that when a believer dies their spirit goes into the hands of the Lord.

[21 : 39] Lord, so when he's dying he's praying on the basis of his Savior's prayer. Into your hands I commit my spirit. Lord, receive my spirit.

He's looking back and sees in the Savior's own words a promise for him. Read the prayers of Paul. We have a lot of them in the scriptures. See how he's grabbing hold of things he knows about God. Those came from his word. promises that God made and he pleads them for the church of Jesus Christ and for himself. And the Lord Jesus as well. We don't have time to turn to John 17 and his prayer there and how he prays Father, the time has come.

Because in that eternal covenant that you made with me you said that you would glorify your son that your son might glorify you and Lord, the hour has now come. Glorify your son.

Do what you promised me before I even became man. That you would enable me to glorify you and you would glorify me through my death, my resurrection, my ascension and my reign at your right hand.

[22 : 48] Now do he is claiming remember that and glorify me now. So these types of Christ that we find in the Old Testament are fulfilled in the Lord Jesus who is the man of faith par excellence who lived on the promises of God as a man.

But I want to come to one other man that's set before us as an example of prayer. Who in all the Bible do we have more prayers from than anybody else? David.

Anybody want to offer a different name than his? Just think of the Psalms. We don't have we don't have the prayer book by any other man and most of the Psalms are David's and so we have all these prayers of David and so it's him more than any other who's an example of praying the promises to us.

We have more prayers from him and we see in him more of this element of praying the promises. So turn to 2 Samuel 7 and we see just the heart of this man.

2 Samuel 7 and again I just trust that you're seeing that these are men of like passions as we are as James can say about Elijah.

[24 : 08] These are people just like us and yet they learn to pray and to pray the promises. 2 Samuel 7 God makes a covenant and again a covenant is just sworn promises that God made to his servant David remember how it came about David wanted to build a house for the Lord.

For all those years God's presence dwelt in the temple a tent or I shouldn't say a temple but a tent in the wilderness and David says I don't want you I don't want to be in my palace and you still be in a tent I want to build a permanent place a temple for the Lord.

Well his heart was good in that and at first Nathan said go ahead and do it and then God said to Nathan no you go to David and say he's not the man to do it. But God comes back and says you want to build a house for me I'm going to build a house for you.

It will be your son who builds that house but I'm going to build a house for you. What did he mean by the house that he would build for David? Anybody? His children on the throne.

I'm going to build a house a dynasty of kings that will come from your loins and so that there will always be a king in Israel from David's seed.

[25 : 27] So that's the promise God comes to give him verses 11 through 16. The Lord declares to you that the Lord himself will establish a house for you when your days are over and you rest with your fathers I will raise up your offspring to succeed you who will come from your own body and I will establish his kingdom.

He's the one who will build a house for my name and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father and he will be my son and when he does wrong I will punish him with the rod of men with floggings inflicted by men but my love will never be taken away from him as I took it

away from Saul whom I removed from before you.

No, your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me. Your throne will be established forever. Now there's a lot going on here and we don't have time to unpack it all of course you know that in one sense the son to succeed him who would build the house was Solomon but there are things said of this son that can't be fulfilled in Solomon.

He doesn't reign on the throne forever for one, does he? Let's just start there. So not everything here is to be seen as being completed in Solomon. He's rather talking about David's greater son Jesus Christ who according to the flesh was born of the seed of David and that his he would sit on David's throne and reign forever and ever and he would be the one to build the house of God the temple and brothers we are the temple of the living God.

He's the one I will build my church he says he's the one who is building the church so there's there's a whole lot here that we don't have time to see Christ is the fulfillment of this greater son but just to see that he's receiving this promise of a dynasty of kings from his loins and that one of those kings would reign forever and ever on God's throne.

[27 : 35] Well what's David's response to God's promise? Let's just dip in at verse 25 he's humbled by it I can't believe you're doing that to me the man such a least of man that I am but verse 25 and now Lord God keep forever the promise you have made concerning your servant and his house do as you promised so that your name will be great forever and then men will say the Lord Almighty is God over Israel and the house of your servant David will be established before you.

Oh Lord Almighty God of Israel you have revealed this to your servant saying I will build a house for you so your servant has found courage to offer you this prayer oh sovereign Lord you are God your words are trustworthy and you have promised these good things to your servant now be pleased to bless the house of your servant that it may continue forever in your sight for you oh sovereign Lord have spoken and with your blessing the house of your servant will be blessed forever David's response in four words is do as you promised again I ask you when's the last time those words have found their way into your prayers and mine do as you promised immediately upon hearing the promise he turns it right back to the promiser he comes to the promiser he's got his name on the check now God I heard you say that now do as you promised give me

I'm making the claim on that promise and it's it's interesting that Solomon his son at the dedication of the temple will make the same promise of God the thing that gives him confidence to cry out to God for the blessings he's claiming these promises made to David and what and then yeah Psalm 89 it's it's one of the Psalms that was written by Ethan but it's all about this covenant that God made with David and for Israel to sing Psalm 89 when things are going bad and we don't even have a king on the throne anymore and what do we do when it looks like you've rejected us forever and you've completely forgot your promise they go back to the promise of Abraham or the promise to David Lord you said to David you promised you swore by your own name to do this now do it and I think that it's really the same thing that Mary Virgin Mary had told to her when the angel Gabriel came to tell her that she is as a virgin is to be have a son conceived by the Holy Spirit and he's the one who is going to be the fulfillment of this Davidic promise that the king he will be the king to reign on the throne of his father David and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever and his kingdom will never end that's quoting the promise to David and it's a thousand year old promise it reminds us that the promises of God never wear out they only ripen with age they only become more precious with age and so she's told about this covenant promise with David remember that that's going to be your son and what's Mary's immediate promise or her immediate response to that promise I am the Lord's servant may it be to me as you have said do to me according to your word your promise so we see how promises are meant to be used by bringing them to the

Lord in prayer now that's not just an isolated incident in David's prayers it was rather a habitual habit a pattern to his prayers turn to Psalm 119 we don't have time to look at the Psalms as a whole you can do that as you're reading through look for David's use of the promises as you read the Psalms but Psalm 119 176 verses and all but a half a dozen are prayers to God they're just short succinct cries to the Lord and it's in these that we find David so often pleading some promise from God look at verse 38 fulfill your promise to your servant so that you may be feared Lord I want to fear you more I want to stand in awe of you and when you fulfill your promise to me that's what happens

[32 : 58] I say can this be that God would really listen to a man pleading the promises and really fulfill them fulfill your promises to your servants so that you may be feared verse 41 may your

unfailing love come to me oh Lord your salvation according to your promise how many times did David get in a situation where he needed deliverance he needed salvation and he's praying Lord your unfailing love your salvation I need it now according to your promise you said you said now according to your promise grant me your unfailing love your salvation the sure mercies of David that you promised to me verse 58 I've sought your face with all my heart be gracious to me according to your promise God you've promised grace now be gracious to me according to your promise verse 76 may your unfailing love be my comfort according to your promise to your servant are you needing comfort there are promises that you can say with David may your unfailing love be my comfort according to your promise to your servant

Psalms 119 116 sustain me according to your promise and I will live do not let my hopes be dashed again sustain me hold me up as you have said as you have promised 154 defend my cause and redeem me preserve my life according to your promise 170 deliver me according to your promise so these are just examples of these short prayers that perhaps David threw up in the midst of his sadness Lord comfort me as you promised deliver me as you promised be gracious to me and so on and then there's all the verses in the psalm that speak according to your word they don't say according to your promise but it means the same thing according to your word verse 25 I'm laid low in the dust preserve my life according to your word verse 28 my soul is weary with sorrow strengthen me according to your word

I'm weary I'm weak do you ever need strength here's David pleading strengthen me according to your word ever need direction verse 133 direct my footsteps steps according to your word let no sin rule over me what a promise a believer can pray when they're when they're up to their chin in temptation and they're falling according to your word let no sin rule over me we know that promise from Romans 6 and verse 14 he knew it from other promises in the Old Testament give me understanding ever need wisdom and understanding 169 give me understanding according to your word so again you're getting a flavor I challenge you to read through Psalm 119 and just make these your prayer memorize some of these so that when these are the things you need you have these words that remind you there are promises to be pled at the bank of heaven to the Lord the promiser now some people think that asking for something that God has promised is wrong it shows unbelief it shows this or that but I trust that the Bible itself will be clear to that it says something else it says we are to make use of the promises precisely by taking them right back to the promiser and asking him to do what he said we don't need any other philosophical psychological explanation of why this is right or wrong this is the pattern of scripture God is pleased when we bring his word back to him and ask him to do the very things that he's promised to do well we'll finish with 1st John chapter 5 1st John chapter 5 a promise puts us on praying ground a promise gives us confidence in prayer these verses are familiar but I wonder if you've thought of them in relation to the promise and with this we'll close 1st John 5 14 and 15 and this is the confidence we have in approaching

God what gives you confidence when you pray that you are going to get what you're asking for that's the issue at stake here not confidence that he will hear you in the sense that well I know my prayer got through to him we have confidence in that in Christ just that he has opened this new and living way that we can come and spill our souls before God through his blood but I'm not asking that I'm saying what gives you confidence to know what you're asking for will be given now read 14 and 15 of 1st John 5 and this is the confidence we have in approaching God that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us and if we know that he hears us whatever we ask we know that we have what we asked of him so what does the confidence come from from knowing that the thing we're asking is according to his will what is one way that you can know for sure that it's his will has God said something about what

[38 : 52] I now need in the way of a promise that I can have all confidence Lord you said I will never leave you nor forsake I feel all alone and I need your presence now I can know I can know I can be confident that I will receive what I've asked for so again think of the promises as God's prayer list you're you're on praying ground aren't you when you've got a promise in your hands these are things he's promised to do he's put himself on the line to do so get a promise in your hand when you go to pray get many promises when you're praying for this there's a promise for that when you're praying for this there's a promise for that I'm not saying that we should only pray for things that God has promised he is so good that he said just bring your wants to me bring your needs to me bring your desires to me open your heart and tell me anything all I'm saying is that the

confidence that we have that we have the thing we've asked for comes from knowing it is the will of God and that's what we have in every single promise let's make use of them let's endorse them let's take them back to the promiser in prayer we're dismissed