

## Promises To Stand On

### II Peter 1:4

I have made lots of them and dollars to donuts, so have you. And if you're like me there is a high likelihood many have been kept and many broken. I'm talking about promises. If a list were made of all the promises I've made I wonder what percentage of them have been kept. Maybe I'm glad there isn't such a statistic. It might be rather dismal.

**Aren't you glad God isn't like us?** Our verse is about God's promises. In **verse 3**, which we considered last week, we discovered that **"God's divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness."**

Only His power can give us eternal life. Only His power can help us grow in Christ likeness. This comes through knowing God; a knowledge we gain through reading and studying His Word and living it out in daily life through the empowering work of the Holy Spirit who teaches us to know God.

In our verse for today, **verse 4**, we learn that through His **"glory and goodness...He has given us His very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires."** KJV – Exceedingly great

This is a power packed verse. In our time this morning let's consider the following:

The guarantee of these promises

The greatness of these promises

The goal of these promises

### I. THE GUARANTEE OF THESE PROMISES

When we speak of a guarantee we mean a positive assurance that something will be done in the manner specified. There is a confidence that when someone says they will do something, it will be done just as

they said. They will honor their word. Likewise, a promise is a spoken or written agreement to do or not to do something, a vow. It is an expectation of the person who made the promise and by the person to whom the promise was made. The promise is no greater than the person who made the promise.

**A presumably famous person named Aeschylus, famous perhaps because he is quoted, said "It is not the oath that makes us believe the man, but the man the oath."** In other words, the person is only as good as his word or better yet, the word is only as good as the person.

**Samuel Butler said that "oaths are but words, and words but wind."** I take that to mean that a lot of promises are nothing but hot air.

**Our 16<sup>th</sup> President, Abraham Lincoln noted that "we must not promise what we ought not, lest we be called on to perform what we cannot."**

Poet Ralph Waldo Emerson stated that all promise outruns performance, meaning we say a lot more than we can deliver.

**A Danish Proverb claims that "eggs and oaths are easily broken."**

**Another proverb notes that "when a man repeats a promise again and again, he means to fail you."**

Wherever we look promises are made and promises are broken.

A boss promises a raise or a promotion and it doesn't happen.

A co-worker promises that if you pick up a shift for them they'll return the favor and then forget.

A teacher promises to tutor a student struggling in class and then fails to follow through.

A husband promises his wife to clean out the garage and stays in to watch the big game.

A parent promises to take a child to the zoo and doesn't because something else came up.

A child promises to be home by 9 and stays out until 11.

And we won't even mention politicians.

We have no guarantee that someone will keep their word. **So what makes us think that God is any different and that He will keep His word, what guarantee do we have? How can we be sure He will do what He says?**

As you might expect the Bible has a few things to say about that. The first is that God's words are never false.

### A. God's Words Are Never False

**Numbers 23:19** "God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent. Hath He said, and shall He not do it? Or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good."

**I Samuel 15:29** "The Glory of Israel (another name for God) **will not lie.**"

**II Samuel 22:31** "This God – His way is perfect; the word of the Lord proves true."

**Psalms 12:6** "The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver refined in a furnace on the ground, purified seven times."

**Psalms 33:4** "The word of the Lord is upright, and all His work is done in faithfulness."

**John 17:17** "Sanctify them by the truth; Your word is truth."

**Titus 1:1-2** "Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness – a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time."

**Hebrews 6:17-19a** "Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of His purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, He confirmed it with an oath (promise). God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged. We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure."

God, who is, who always has been, and who always will be holy does not change, and will not change in His character. He will not lie because He cannot lie. It is totally outside His character. It isn't even a remote possibility. He has never even entertained the thought of telling something false. God is absolutely pure in His thoughts, His motives and His actions. He does nothing to deceive.

As Tozer has said, "He is absolutely holy with an infinite, incomprehensible fullness of purity that is incapable of being other than it is" (*The Knowledge of the Holy*, p. 105).

Satan lies. (**John 8:44**)

Man lies.

God does not lie. His words are never false.

We see second that God's words are never futile.

### B. God's Words Are Never Futile

His words are never empty or void or without meaning. They are always with a purpose, a promise.

**Isaiah 55:10-11**

His promises are not hollow. They are not void of any teeth or muscle to carry them out. His word accomplishes what He wills. He does not lack the power to fulfill what He promised. God's words are never futile.

We see thirdly that God's words are always faithful.

## C. God's Words Are Always Faithful

### Lamentations 3:22-23

**Hebrews 10:23** “Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful.”

**I Thessalonians 5:24** “Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.”

Take some time this week if you can and using a concordance or going to [www.studydrive.org](http://www.studydrive.org) and look up the word promise. Time after time we read “He promised”, “He promised”, “He promised”, “God promised”, “the Lord promised”. These phrases are statements of fact. What He said He will do. They are not used in the sense of what might be said about me. “Pastor Howie promised, but he didn’t keep his word.” When it says that God promised it means just that. He won’t go back on His word. What He said He will do.

**II Corinthians 1:20** “For no matter how many promises God has made, they are ‘Yes’ in Christ. And so through Him the ‘Amen’.”

No matter how many promises God has made they will all come true, just as He said. Sometimes it may seem like they are taking a while. **Can I get a witness?** We might even be bit discouraged having to wait, but know for a fact and be encouraged that they will happen just as He said. Not one will fail.

**An unknown author said** “There is no pillow so soft as God’s promises.”

That God has made a promise ought to give us peace, comfort, encouragement, and strength. The guarantee we have in the promises that God has made stems from His holy character. Because He is wholly without sin, He will keep His word.

Robin Williams plays Peter Pan in the 1991 movie “Hook”. He tells his son Jack “My word is

my bond” and then repeatedly breaks his word. We have a guarantee that the promises God makes He keeps because of His holy nature.

**So what are these promises He has given us?**

Consider next the greatness of these promises.

## II. THE GREATNESS OF THESE PROMISES

A phrase or word occurs in **verse 4** that we saw in **verse 3** – “has given” or “granted”. We learned that it means to freely give or endow, stressing the freeness and worth of the gift. That means there isn’t anything we can do to earn what has been given to us. It’s a gift that is of great value.

The perfect tense also stresses the certainty of the fact and possession of this gift. We don’t have to wonder if it will be given because God promised. These promises come from God’s grace and because they come from God they are great and they are precious. Or they are beyond belief, beyond our comprehension and are of immense value.

These promises are great because we have a great God. A casual glance through the Psalms reveals how great God is.

### A. We Have A Great God

**Psalm 95:3-4** – God is great.

**Psalm 18:50** – God’s deliverance is great.

**Psalm 21:5** – God’s salvation is great.

**Psalm 25:11** – God’s pardon for sin is great.

**Psalm 31:19** – God’s goodness is great.

**Psalm 33:17** – God’s strength is great.

**Psalm 47:2** – God is a great King.

**Psalm 71:19** – God’s deeds are great.

**Psalm 76:1** – God’s name is great.

**Psalm 86:15** – God’s mercies are great.

**Psalm 92:5** – God’s works are great.

**Psalm 119:165** – God’s peace is great.

**Psalm 138:5** – God’s glory is great.

**Psalms 145:3 – “Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable.”**

Since God is great, His promises are great.  
 Since God is great, His promises are precious.  
 We have a great gift.

## **B. We Have A Great Gift**

In **I Peter 1:7** our faith is precious.  
 In **I Peter 1:19** the blood of Christ is precious.  
 In **I Peter 2:4** the living stone is precious.  
 In **I Peter 2:6, 7** the cornerstone is precious.  
 Here we see that these promises are precious.

Let's look at some of these precious promises.

### **I Peter 1:3-5**

We have the promise of a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In the gospels we have the promise of Jesus's resurrection which has irrefutable evidence no matter how much critics try to convince otherwise. His resurrection is affirmed by Paul (**I Corinthians 15:3-4**).

**John 3:16** – Here is the promise of God's love.  
 Here is the promise of the gift of His Son to die in our place for our sin.

Here is the promise of eternal life for those who believe in Him.

Here is the promise of condemnation for those who choose not to believe.

The same promise is given throughout the New Testament.

### **John 5:24**

### **I John 5:11-13**

In **Romans 1:16** we read about the promise that the gospel of Christ has the power for salvation.

**II Corinthians 5:17** promises that in Christ we have become a new creation.

**I Peter 1:4** gives us the promise of an inheritance,

something we will receive that is yet future, but something that is guaranteed. This inheritance won't perish, spoil, or fade.

In **John 14:3** Jesus gave the promise that He was going to prepare a place for His followers so that where He was they would join Him forever.

**I Peter 1:5** speaks about the promise for those who believe that their salvation is shielded or protected by God's power until Christ returns. Jesus said that there is nothing that can pluck a believer from the Father's hand (**John 10:29**).

Paul said in **Romans 8:38-39** that nothing in the visible world or the unseen world can separate us from God's love.

In **John 14:26; 16:13-14** we have the promise of the coming, abiding, empowering, teaching Holy Spirit.

In **Acts 1:8** that same Holy Spirit gives us the power to boldly proclaim the gospel of Christ. Our brother Dan can probably attest that it takes more boldness today to go onto college campuses to pass out gospels than it did 10 or 20 years ago. But the same Spirit that emboldened the apostles to preach in Acts is the same Spirit that emboldens us today.

The Beatitudes found in **Matthew 5** are promises of God.

We have in **I Corinthians 10:31** the promise that we can overcome temptation.

In **Psalms 119:9, 11** there is the promise that God's Word hidden in our heart will help us avoid sin.

**Psalms 119:105** promises that God's Word guides our steps and lights our path.

**Galatians 5:16** promises that when we walk in step with the Holy Spirit we won't pursue sinful desires.

**Galatians 5:22-23** Promises God's fruit to the yielded.

In **I Peter 1:6-7** we have the promise that the trials we encounter are meant to refine us, to shape our character, mold or conform us into the image of Christ. Late on we are assured that trials are only temporary compared to the vastness of eternity.

Corrie ten Boom once said that we should “let God's promises shine on your problems.”

**Psalm 23:3** gives us the promise that no matter how difficult the road we travel God is always present.

David Nicholas said “God's promises are like the stars; the darker the night the brighter they shine.”

In the horrors of a German concentration camp Corrie ten Booms sister, Betsie, affirmed the truth Psalm when she said “**there is no pit so deep that God is not deeper still.**” God promises His abiding and strengthening presence at all time.

We have the promise from **Hebrews 13:5** that God will never leave us or forsake us.

**Isaiah 41:10** promises there is nothing to fear because God is with us.

We could talk a long time about God's promises: promises for joy, strength, our resurrection, godliness, abundant and abiding grace, guidance, help, instruction, wisdom, heaven and eternal rewards. All of His promises are yes and amen. They are exceedingly great and precious. Because of who He is, we have every confidence that what He promised He will do because He is faithful. That is the greatness of the gift of His promises.

Search the Scriptures and lay claim to His promises.

Ow look once more with me at our verse and consider a final point, the goal of these promises.

### III. THE GOAL OF THESE PROMISES

Our verse gives us two.

#### A. Our Participation in God's Character

These great and precious promises are given “**so**

**that through them you may participate in the divine nature.**” (Emphasis added)

“**So that through them**” is a purpose clause that connects the promise with the result. In this case the result of these promises is participating in God's character. This does not mean that we become god-like. Instead we are becoming like God in character. The word “**participate**” literally means to become partners. We share in His character. We see that in **II Corinthians 5:17** where we are told that because we are in Christ we are a new creation.

In **Acts 17:29** we read that we are God's offspring. Peter uses the same word here to speak of the new birth that comes at the moment of salvation. This new nature is the very righteousness of Christ we receive through faith. It's the same word Peter uses in **I Peter 1:23** “**For you have been born again, not of perishable seen, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.**”

We especially see it in **Galatians 2:20**.

**Hebrews 12:10** speaks about God disciplining us since we share or participate in His holiness.

The uniqueness of this partnership is seen in the Greek word. It comes from the word for fellowship, a fellowship that is only possible through faith in Christ. Through that union with Christ through salvation we participate in the divine nature, taking on the character of God as we yield to the work of the Holy Spirit in us. In **Romans 8:9** we read that if we don't have the Holy Spirit, then we don't belong to God. If we don't have the Holy Spirit, we are not participating in the nature of God.

Warren Wiersbe provides some insight into what this partnership looks like. “**If nature determines appetite, and we have God's nature within, then we ought to have an appetite for that which is pure and holy. Our behavior ought to be like that of the Father, and we ought to live in the kind of ‘spiritual environment’ that is suited to our nature. We ought to associate with that which is true to our nature (II**

**Corinthians 6:14ff).** The only normal fruit-bearing life for the child of God is a godly life.”

Peter put it very succinctly in his first letter when he told us to be holy because God is holy (1:15-16).

That is participation in the divine nature.

That is participation in God’s character.

That is one of the goals of these promises.

**Is His nature evident in you?**

The other goal of these promises is our prevention in godless corruption.

## **B. Our Prevention In Godless Corruption**

These great and precious promises are given **“so that through them you might...escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.”**

19<sup>th</sup> century theologian and Pastor Alexander MacLaren wrote “we either escape lust or are destroyed by it...If we have God in our heart we will flee corruption.”

Paul gave the same instruction to his protégé Timothy.

**I Timothy 6:11-12 “But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, and gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.”**

Lust or evil desires is anything that we crave after or desire more than anything else with a willingness to do anything to get it.

It doesn’t even have to be anything bad in and of themselves, but when consumed by it can become an evil desire, something we covet. It’s one thing to have a good job and want to provide for your family, even seek promotions if that’s possible. It is an entirely different thing to let the pursuit of promotions consume you to the point of losing your family, losing your integrity, losing your soul for

the sake of just one more dollar.

Anything can become an evil desire. But the promises of God help us to escape that corruption that ties us to the world, things that otherwise keep us from pursuing godliness.

Gnostics believed that in order to escape the material world which they considered evil, you had to separate yourself from the material things, from any form of pleasure. Peter was showing these believers that people could escape the corruption of worldly desires by participating in the divine nature through the promises He has given which comes through faith in Christ.

Paul adds in **Romans 12:1-2** that a way to avoid conforming to the world is through transforming your mind by the Word of God.

These promises combat the desires for the world and instead give us a desire for God’s glory and excellence.

We shouldn’t be content to live in a rotting world when an escape is possible. God’s way of escape is taking hold of His promises in order to grow in His character. The more we become like Him, the less we are attached to the world.

In closing let me give you two questions to ponder.

**What promises are you claiming?**

John Phillips writes “the promises of God are blank checks, drawn on the bank of heaven, signed by the Lord of glory, and given to us so that we can fill in our name, our need, and the ‘now’ of our present emergency.”

**So what promises are you claiming to help you become like Christ?**

**What nature are you participating in: God’s character or godless corruption?**

God has given us His divine power and precious promises, everything we need for life and godliness.