



“Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust,” II Peter 1:4.

God's Precious Promises

Lesson Aim: To gain assurance from the promises of God.

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Topic: God: Promises of.

INTRODUCTION - “Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust,” II Peter 1:4.

A promise is “an assurance on the part of another of some good for which we are dependent on him.” Its value rests entirely upon the ability of the one making the promise to give what is promised. Its assurance rests entirely upon the faithfulness of the one making the promise to keep his word. This is why the promises of God are so wonderful: “exceeding great and precious.” No others can offer promises which are so sure of fulfillment, so comforting in content, so fully built upon grace, nor so wonderful in performance.

What God promises, He will do. His word is unfailing. He makes no promise He is unable or unwilling to perform. **“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?”** Numbers 23:19.

God made many promises to men. Each of them is reliable. Look at these testimonies. “Blessed be the Lord that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised: there hath not failed one word of all his good promise . . .” I Kings 8:56. “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise. . .” II Peter 3:9. “For all the promises of God in him (Jesus) are yea,

and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us,” II Corinthians 1:20. One may safely trust the God who makes promises in grace for the benefit of mankind.

He who receives God's gifts never regrets it. He who claims God's promises is never disappointed by them. They both always work to man's good and God's glory. Hence, today's lesson aims “to gain assurance from the promises of God.”

EXPOSITION

I. CONTENT OF HIS PROMISES

What are these promises here designated “exceeding great and precious” by the Apostle Peter? Observe that no promises are itemized or is one clearly referred to. It is possible, of course, to call any and every promise of God “exceeding great and precious.” Perhaps no promise is enumerated here that this phrase may be applied to all. So whatever promise is needed for this day is such a great and precious one.

Peter seems to indicate that the promises relating to salvation are foremost in his mind. At least, it is by these promises that the divine (God-like) nature is received. This would include promises regarding regeneration, preservation, and redemption at the Second Coming. So the promises regarding salvation are not one, but many.

Nor does the subject of salvation exhaust all God's promises in the Word. Indeed, the Bible is so full of promises that someone has called it a book of promises. Open your Bible at any place, let it fall open at random, and observe somewhere on the two pages a promise of God! J. Neibor has well written, “Besides the promise to pardon from sin, there are promises to sustain in time of trial, promises of guidance in time of darkness, promises of strength in time of weakness, promises to aid in time of need, promises to protect in time of danger, promises of comfort in time of sorrow, promises of His presence in life and also in death. There are promises for the present life and the distant future. To those who die in Christ there are promises of resurrection and immortality. How dark all would be apart from these promises.”

The promises of God are “exceeding great and precious.” The greatness of the promise will be determined by its scope. The preciousness of the promise will be determined by the nature of the thing promised and our assurance that the Promiser can and will keep His promise. Is there really any question about God keeping His promises? Assuredly not!

However, Peter goes a step beyond the mere words used in making a promise. The term “promises” indicate the things promised rather than the act of promising. For instance, in Acts 1:4 the disciples are instructed by Jesus to remain in Jerusalem to “wait for the promise of the Father, which ye have heard of me.” He did not mean, “Wait until God makes you a promise,” but rather, “Wait until you receive that which the Father has promised, i.e., the Holy Spirit.”

So Peter is not merely saying, “God has made many pledges to us which are great and wonderful.” He is actually saying, “God has given us many things which are exceeding great and wonderful.” He is actually saying, “God has given us many thing which are exceeding great and precious in the faithful performance of His Word.” Not merely the act of promising, but the thing promised and already received, is “exceeding great and exceeding precious.” All believers can respond with a hearty, “Amen.”

II. CONSEQUENCES OF HIS PROMISES

1. Divine nature. — Grammatically, Peter uses a purpose and result clause to set out his idea. God gave us the exceeding great and precious fulfillment of His promises, (this is a purpose) so that we might be partakers of His divine nature (this is the result). Read verse 4 again.

To be a “partaker” means to share in, to be a partner, to have fellowship, to be a companion. The simplest translation would be, “that we might be sharers of the divine nature.” A divine nature is simply a God-like nature. Peter’s statement is amazing. He says God has given an exceeding great and precious fulfillment of His equally great promises and that as a result of this every believer becomes a “sharer of the God-like nature!” It is so easy to say but so difficult to comprehend its scope of grace.

Observe, however, that verse three states this miracle comes by his divine power. If any man receives God's nature, he must receive it by the power of God. Before we could become like God, He must become like us in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. The Divine One became partaker of human nature that we humans might become partakers of the divine nature. Because of the Lord Jesus, the vilest sinner can put his trust in the Savior, and receive this God-like nature, and so become a fit companion of the Lord!

Moreover, this divine nature is not reserved for a chosen few sanctified saints. It is shared by all those who are saved. “Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his,” Romans 8:9. If you are trusting Jesus right now, you are sharing the God-like nature with Him right now.

2. Sanctification.—There is a practical side of this new relationship the believer enjoys with God. Those who have received a God-like nature have “escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” Sanctification is the practical expression of salvation.

With the divine nature to resist evil and the divine power to enable us, there is no reason for a child of God to be entangled in the pollutions of the world, II Peter 2:20. Peter said the believer “has already escaped” (past tense). This is not a victory yet to be won. It is already won and is but to be claimed in joy.

The believer’s problem in the world is lust. Lust is unlawful desire. While the new nature received in Christ is opposed to lust and corruption, the old nature is weak and craves it. God saved the believer for a purpose expressed in I Peter 4:2, “That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.” It is evident, therefore, that living in lust is not living in God’s will. Having already escaped, the believer lives in lust only if he willingly submits himself to do so. The war that is raging within between the flesh and the Spirit (Galatians 5:16-26) can be won by the believer. “Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world,” I John 4:4. God provides a way to escape temptation when His children are tried, I Corinthians 10:13.

3. Growth.— The believer is never content to remain where he is in spiritual development. God’s Spirit places within him the yearning for divine things. Yet, this desire can be quenched and spiritual growth neglected. That far too many believers are in this case is sadly true.

Yet the admonition is to “give all diligence” to spiritual growth. Diligence means haste, speed, earnestness, effort and zeal. It speaks of active, dedicated, and steady application to any matter. What a difference it would make if all Christians were diligent, awake and looking for opportunities to serve the Lord Christ. Diligence makes us develop spiritually just as exercise makes us grow strong physically.

Spiritual growth is never isolated in one area only. Each area of growth is an aid to growth in other areas. For instance, growth in knowledge will increase faith while growth in faith will inspire service. It would be proper to translate Peter’s admonition in verses 5-7 in this manner: “Let your faith produce virtue, and virtue lead on to knowledge, and knowledge produce temperance, and temperance develop patience, and patience issue in godliness, and godliness be expressed in brotherly kindness, and brotherly kindness grow into Godly love.” The steps of spiritual growth are clearly set forth. Let us measure ourselves by them.

(1) Faith—Faith is as the leader of the choir and each virtue is as a member. It is the basis of all relationship with God and without it God cannot be pleased in any wise, Hebrews 11:6. We are not told to supply faith; that comes from God. But from our confidence in Him all other virtues spring.

(2) Virtue—The idea is not so much of chastity as of valor, manliness, courage. It is Christian fortitude or “energetic faith.” Without vigor of soul there would be a weakness for Jesus in Christian living. Its idea is to “be a man” for Christ.

(3) Knowledge—Spiritual discernment as to what is right and what is wrong is essential to effective living and witnessing. The word for absolute knowledge is not used in the New Testament. This word is rather “growing knowledge” and means to say the believer never quits increasing in knowledge of the Lord.

(4) Temperance—This is the blessed grace of self-control. It will forbid excesses of any kind. It will put a check on the lips, the heart, the hands, the mind. All our fleshly lusts will be kept in submission. Knowledge of right and wrong must issue in the discipline of self-control. Read Proverbs 16:32 for a surprising evaluation.

(5) Patience—The grace of endurance is essential to Christian living. The man who has learned self control will be able to stay under the load when the going is difficult. Patience and hope are joined in Christian endurance. This is not indifference nor just resignation to the inevitable. It is an energetic bearing of one's problems in the spirit of Christ. This is a most needed grace in Christian living.

(6) Godliness—God-likeness is true piety which is the highest demonstration to the world that one belongs to God. It gives a right tone to all conduct and keeps a proper disposition in the heart. It is more than religious form. It is being in true communion with the Lord which expresses itself in a pure and lovely character. Godliness is Christ manifest in the lives of His people.

(7) Brotherly kindness—Kindness and good will showed between Christians are next in order. True piety will express itself in attitude toward the brethren. See I John 4:20-21. This imperative is repeated in Romans 12:10; I Peter 2:17 and I Peter 3:8. If the world could see more true brotherly affection between believers it would take more serious note of their profession.

(8) Charity—Translated “love” in newer English versions. Charity translates a Greek word which is almost always used when speaking of the love of God. It is a love which goes out to all alike, related or unrelated,

friend or foe. True “brotherly kindness” should mark our relations with Christian brethren, but holy love should go out from hearts to all mankind. This is not a love of personal attachment but a love which seeks the welfare of its object. We must not stop with brotherly love, but like God who loved us, go on to love those who are undeserving of our love. This is the way God would have, it be. Are you this mature in spirit?

4. Fruit—If these things are your natural and rightful possession, and are in you in abundance, they so constitute you that you are not idle nor unfruitful in the things of the Lord Jesus Christ, verse 8. Here is the key to Christian fruitfulness. Jesus said it is the Father’s will that we bear fruit and that He is glorified when we bear much fruit, John 15:1-8. Serving God, therefore, is not just a matter of going to church and living honorably. It is a cultivation of the graces of the Lord Jesus so that life actually produces fruit to the glory of God. These Christian virtues make one to be neither idle (barren) nor without results (unfruitful).

III. CONSUMMATION OF HIS PROMISES

The final promise of God in respect of time is the promise of a “new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness,” II Peter 3:13-18. The present creation will pass away because of the curse of sin now resting upon it. Revelation 21-22 describe the new heavens and new earth in glowing terms.

They are lovely beyond description; “prepared as a bride adorned for her husband,” Revelation 21:2. They are sanctified by divine presence. **“Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them. . .”** Revelation 21:3. It is sanctified with joy and freedom from sorrow: **“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away,”** Revelation 21:4. It is totally new in kind and quality: **“Behold, I make all things new,”** Revelation 21:5. It shall be for the redeemed: **“And there shall . . . enter into it . . . they which are written in the Lamb's book of life,”** Revelation 21:27.

CONCLUSION—God's promises are true and faithful altogether. For He is true and faithful. Don't question; listen! Don't doubt; believe! Don't argue; accept! And the peace of God will fill your heart and mind.

Apart from the faithfulness of God, the very foundations of the Christian faith would crumble. If He is not reliable the Christian is most

miserably deceived. But He is faithful and His promises are sure and reliable. He made a promise and confirmed it by an oath (a situation in which it was impossible for Him to lie) just to give us strong consolation, Hebrews 6:17-20. And we rest in that assurance today.

We must remember that to trust God is the height of sanctified common sense. To doubt Him is the depth of foolishness. Trust Him and you will never be disappointed.

QUESTIONS

1. How does II Peter 1:4 describe the promises of God?
2. What does Numbers 23:19 contribute the subject?
3. How is the divine nature in us related to God's promises?