

**WHAT MAKES GOD’S PROMISES GREAT AND PRECIOUS?**

2 Peter 1:1-4

**Intro:** This is the third service in which 2 Peter 1:1-4 has been my text.

It is a text which continues to provoke more thought the more anyone meditates on it. And there are thousands of verses like that in the Bible. Perhaps that is one reason we are encouraged in Scripture not only to read the Bible, but to take the time to meditate on what we read.

I suppose one of the first questions to arise out of this text is, what promises was Peter talking about? Generally we are on safe ground when we ask that kind of a question about Scripture if we say that Peter must have been referring to the promises that have to do with our salvation. That is what the Bible is all about: salvation, salvation from sin and salvation unto eternal life. This morning during the Lord’s Supper, Dennis Hayes mentioned in his prayer Col. 1:13, that God has “delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son.” That is salvation. We are saved from sin and all of its consequences and all of its power, and we are brought “into the kingdom of God’s dear Son. So we are saved *from* sin, and saved *unto* eternal life. Those *from* and *unto* ideas are even present in a familiar verse and favorite text like John 3:16.

However, going back to our text in 2 Peter, we have other reasons for saying that Peter was writing about promises that have to do with salvation. Look at verse 1. (Read.) Peter was describing saved people when he spoke of those who had “obtained like precious faith,” which would be *saving faith*, “through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ.” Some texts read, “through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.” Such a statement could only apply to believers.

A second reason for saying that these promises have to do with salvation is because of the nature of Peter’s greeting in verse 2. (Read.) This is both a greeting and a prayer, but throughout the epistles, it is always a prayer for believers, not for people in the world. So it has to do with salvation. It is one of the many benefits which saved people experience.

A third reason for saying that these promises have to do with salvation is found in verse 3. (Read.) Peter actually relates these promises in verse 4 to the people described in verse 3. Only saved people have life, and only saved people are capable of godliness. And, looking on to the end of

verse 3, only the saved are the “called.”

And then in verse 4 we have further evidence that these are promises that have to do with salvation. All of the people who have experienced salvation, and only those people, can expect to be partakers of the divine nature. That is the positive side of salvation. The negative side is that we, and only we, have “escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” Oh, the corruption of the world has touched all of our lives, and we continue to battle with it. But while we are still “in the world,” we are not “of the world.” The Lord has chosen us “out of the world.” And while we are still in the world, yet we have the Lord’s words to the effect that He has asked the Father to keep us from the Evil One. For those expressions you need to read again our Lord’s prayer in John 17. But what we are concerned about now is identifying the promises that Peter had reference to when he spoke of “exceeding great and precious promises.” I hope you are convinced that they are the promises of salvation!

But now let me take it from there to go on to what I have said many, many times before about salvation. Salvation is the big word, but it has three component parts to it. And most of you know what they are: salvation includes justification, sanctification, and glorification. Paul made this very clear in the book of Romans. Or to state it another way, justification plus sanctification plus glorification equals salvation.

And so when you and I say that we have been saved, we mean that we have been justified, we are being sanctified, and we will be glorified. All of these make up salvation. And from Rom. 1:16-17 we can see that these are all a part of the Gospel. In that verse Paul said,

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith (Rom. 1:16-17).

I think we have all been in the habit of limiting the Gospel to the message that we give to people who don’t know the Lord. And that after we are saved we can leave the Gospel behind. But the Gospel includes how we are saved, how we live after we are saved, and what eventually we will be when finally we are with the Lord. Salvation includes it all, and it is all a part of the Gospel. We are saved by faith, and we live by faith.

So I hope that you understand that these great and precious promises have to do with salvation.

But what makes them not only “great,” but “exceeding great,” and why did Peter call them “precious”? “Exceeding great” means that they are *the greatest. No promises that have ever been made surpass these in greatness. When we are talking about the promises of salvation, we are talking about what is superlative!* It means that they are the greatest in importance compared with all other promises. It means that they are the grandest in scale. This means that no other promises cover so much ground. No other promises include so much. In reality language fails us when we try to describe how truly great are the promises of salvation.

And then Peter said that they were also “precious.” This describes their value. In fact, all of the money in all of the world could not equal even one of the promises. But they are “precious” also because there are no other promises equal to them. Although this might sound a little cumbersome, yet we can say, “No other promises promise what these promises promise.” These promises promise the forgiveness of our sins. They promise eternal life. They promise not just to reform us, but to regenerate us.

But now I hope we are ready to consider what it is that makes these promises so superlatively great and precious.

My first point has to be this:

## **I. THEY ARE GOD’S PROMISES.**

Reading from verse 2 into verse 3 and then into verse 4 we see that these promises are given according to God’s “divine power.”

You and I know that a promise is no better than the one who makes the promise. Everybody makes promises. We promise ourselves that we are going to do something. And every once in a while we make promises to other people. But we don’t always keep our promises. Some people never intend to keep their promises. They just make promises to get out of some trouble. But even when we fully intend to keep our promises, circumstances can arise which make it impossible for us to do what we have said that we would do.

But God is never in a position like that. God is sovereign over all things. He is sovereign over men, and over nations. He is the Lord of all. He is always faithful to His promises. He is absolutely trustworthy. He is omnipotent! He cannot fail because He is God!

Balaam, that prophet whom Balak called to curse the Israelites, didn't have much to say that was good, but there is one statement he made about God that is worth remembering! I memorized it years ago before I really understood about Balaam. But this is what I am referring to. You will find it in Num. 23:19:

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?

When God gave that marvelous promise of salvation to Abraham which included making Abraham's descendants into a mighty nation, and giving them a land of their own, and promising salvation that would include people from all nations, it was such an amazing promise that God not only made the promise, but He did something else. And this is explained to us in Hebrews 6. Let me begin with verse 9. (Read Heb. 6:9-20.) God's promise made it absolutely sure, but to strengthen Abraham's faith, and, by the way, our faith, *He confirmed it with His oath. And so we have the truth of salvation secured not only by God's promise (which would have been enough), but by His oath.*

If you are reading according to our schedule, you finished the epistle of Paul to Titus today. In the opening verses of that letter, this is what Paul had to say:

- 1 Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness;
- 2 In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;
- 3 But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour (Titus 1:1-3).

How much time was there between eternity past and Paul's day? According to our time schedule, at least four thousand years! And Paul was just as convinced of the promise of salvation, as Abraham was 2,000 years before Paul, and just as convinced as you and I should be today. The promises of God are totally, 100% sure. The Apostle Paul in writing to

the church at Corinth, said, “For all the promises of God in Him (Christ) are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us” (2 Cor. 1:20).

But let me give you another reason why Peter called them “exceeding great and precious promises.” It was because of:

## II. THE NATURE OF THOSE PROMISES.

Peter expressed it here in verse 4 of our text: “That by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature.” A word some of us have learned to associate with Dr. McCaleb, is the word *fantastic*. Can you think of anything more fantastic than this, that God promises to take guilty, rebellious, sinful human beings and make them partakers of the divine nature? And yet that is the very objective that God has for each one of us, and the work that He is progressively doing in us every day. It would be wonderful just to know that our sins are forgiven. And even that is a miracle of God’s grace. And if God had only added to that that we would be in heaven some day, that would be far more than we deserve. But God has predestined us to be conform to the image of His Son. Cf. 2 Cor. 3:18:

18 But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Or take the Apostle John’s word in 1 John 3:2, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God . . .”

If you had been designing salvation, would you have even thought of this? It is no wonder that Paul said what he did in Eph. 3:20 and 21.

It is by these “exceeding great and precious promises” that God is going to accomplish this purpose in all of us. This ought to make us note carefully as we read our Bibles what these promises are by which such a miraculous change is being made in you and in me.

Do you know why the Lord did not give up on Peter when He cursed and denied with oaths that he even knew the Lord? It was because He would not break His promise concerning Peter even though Peter was not able to follow through on a promise that he made to the Lord.

I remind you again that God’s promises are not what we do for Him, nor what we do for ourselves. God’s promises are what He fully intends to do

for us to make us partakers of His “divine nature.” After all, we see in verse 3 of our text that He has called us “to glory and virtue.”

But let me give you one more point. God’s promises are “exceeding great and precious” because:

### **III. THERE ARE NO OTHER PROMISES LIKE THEM.**

During our Lord’s ministry here on earth He was teaching on a certain day when He got into some subjects which many of His professed disciples were not able to accept. One of those truths was that no one would come to Him except the Father would draw them. And another was that all that the Father would give to Him, would come to Him, and that those who came would never be cast out. And they may have been offended by some of the other things the Lord had to say on that day.

Well, the Apostle John remembering that day many years later wrote in his Gospel,

66 From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him (John 6:66).

And then John tells us that immediately the Lord turned to His twelve disciples and said to them, “Will ye also go away?” Peter responded with these words, “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God” (John 6:68-69).

We read this morning about a Midianite priest who turned from his religion to the God of Moses because Moses’ God offered him what his heathen religion could not do for him. And I spoke of Rahab who turned away from whatever religion she might have had, because she was convinced that the God of Israel was the true God. We all know the story of Saul of Tarsus, and how God changed his life, and how afterwards he taught very powerfully and faithfully that the Law which he had tried to follow very faithfully could not have saved him. Only Christ could do that?

Does Allah promise salvation and the forgiveness of sins? Absolutely not! He promises young men that if they will murder people who aren’t Moslems, and kill themselves in the process, that there are seventy-two virgins waiting for them in Paradise where they can continue a life of lust and sin.

All the religions of the world tell their followers what they must do. It is on the true God Who has given us His “exceeding great and precious promises” of what He has done for us in Christ, and what He will do for us in fulfilling all of His promises to make us partakers of the divine nature, which means that when the Lord has finished His work in us, we will be like our Savior.

**Concl:** Is there any question as to the only way we should go? And yet none of us figured this out by ourselves, and came to Christ. The Lord bought us, and God sought us, and the Holy Spirit drew us to Christ. And so we have not saved ourselves, but our Lord is the One Who has saved us, as you may have read this morning in Titus 3:

4 But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared,

5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

6 Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;

7 That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life (Titus 3:4-7).

Peter knew that if his salvation had been the result of his works, he never would have been saved. But depending upon the infallible “exceeding great and precious promises,” promises which were God’s and dependent upon God for their fulfillment, his salvation was absolutely secure.

As you read your Bible this week, look for the promises. And as you find them, thank the Lord for them, and trust Him alone to make them a reality in your life.