

## THE PRECIOUSNESS OF THE DIVINE PROMISES

*"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises."* 2 Peter 1:4

The promises of God are the jewelry of the Bible. Every page of this sacred volume is rich and sparkling with these divine assurances of Jehovah's love, faithfulness, and power towards His people. We can scarcely cite, as illustrating His beneficence and forethought, a more appropriate and costly evidence of God's wisdom and goodness than this peculiar provision which He has made for the exigencies of His Church. It meets the believer at every step of his journey, confronts every circumstance of his life, and chimes with each phase of his mental and spiritual experience. Upon no spot in the wilderness can he plant his foot, strange and untrodden though that path may be, but a gem from this casket meets his eye, the sight of which inspires his heart with confidence, his spirit with comfort, his soul with hope.

Now, God, in giving us these divine assurances, proceeds with His Church upon the same principle which holds together the social fabric of human society, that is, *promise* and *trust*. It is promise, in some form or other, and trust in that promise, which binds man to man; and it is the confidence we repose in his word which gives credence to his statements, his discoveries, and his testimonies; and which lures and sustains us in our individual path of acquisition and research. The promise of gold allures the avaricious, the promise of glory fires the ambitious, the promise of pleasure stimulates the worldly, the promise of intellectual reward sustains and animates the student. And although these promises may prove as visionary and fitful as a dream, yet, for the moment, they impart confidence and inspire hope. Thus man's credulity in man is the great ligament of human society, and the promise of reward the pole-star of his life. Now, our heavenly Father deals with His children precisely upon the same principle—of promise and trust. He speaks, and challenges our belief; He promises, and asks our confidence; He utters His word, and bids us rely implicitly on His love, faithfulness, and power to make it good.

Among the precious things of God, then, how inconceivably precious and indispensable are *His promises!* Imagine what would have been the condition of His children apart from the divine

promises of which the blessed volume is so full. What must have been the desolateness, the sadness, and the sinking had we not the divine assurances of God's Word on which to rely; and in the realization of which we are guided in our march heavenward, are upheld in weakness, cheered in depression, and conducted step by step to final blessedness. Oh, were it possible to erase from the sacred volume all those precious promises which cluster in its pages, like golden fruit bending from the Tree of Life, what a wintry gloom would enshroud the whole of your future, both the life that now is, and the life which is to come. Rob a man of God of the "precious promises," and you extinguish the sun of his moral skies, and roll back the darkness and confusion of chaos. Rob him of the promises, and you cut off every spring of comfort and consolation that cheers and gladdens his heart in this valley of suffering and tears.

Another observation we make refers to the fact, that these are not the promises of man, *but of God*. They are the promises of Jehovah, the promises of an Infinite Being; the promises of a God who cannot lie—consequently He will fulfill them; and of a God of Omnipotence,—and consequently He possesses the power to make them good. We bid you keep this truth vividly before you, that the promises on which God has caused you to hope are the promises of JEHOVAH—consequently there is the certain pledge of their timely and complete fulfillment.

They are, moreover, *comprehensive* in their character, and are adapted to all the varied circumstances of individual history—so comprehensive and so adapted, that we cannot conceive of any condition in which you, as a child of God, may be placed, any circumstance by which you may be surrounded, any sorrow by which you may be depressed, any perils that may confront, any darkness that may overshadow you, or any wants of which you may be the subject, in which you may not find some promise of His blessed Word that meets your case. Away with the promises (as it regards my personal experience) if I thought there was a sorrow feeding at the core of my heart which God's word of promise could not console, an intricacy in my path through which it could not guide me, a bitter in the cup God causes me to drink for which it had no sweetness. Beloved, we want you to keep this view of the precious promises of God's Word constantly before you. They are comprehensive, and adapted to all the

circumstances of your personal history, and so prove themselves to be the precious promises of Jehovah.

Yet one more observation. These promises of God are *covenant promises*; that is, they are the promises of the new covenant of grace. We deal too much with the old covenant, and too little with the new. Our faith is too much of a Jewish faith, and too little of a Christian. A more glorious covenant is the covenant of grace; and its promises are "better promises"—promises of more precious blessings than ever appertained to the old covenant. They are all signed and sealed with the heart's blood of the Mediator of the covenant, and, consequently, they are the precious promises of our Covenant God. That covenant must be broken, the oath of that covenant must be violated, the God of that covenant must change, and the "blood of the everlasting covenant" must cease to be efficacious if one solitary promise on which your poor, trembling, and anxious soul hangs its all, should fail.

They *cannot* fail, because they are the promises of the new covenant of grace. Well may they be called "exceeding great promises." They are the promises of a great God, and of a great covenant. They are "*great*," in themselves, because they promise us great blessings. They are "*exceeding great*," because they are the promises of JEHOVAH. They rest upon four foundations, or pillars; and so long as these pillars stand, so long must stand the precious promises of God's word. God's *holiness* is one pillar upon which they stand, which will not suffer Him to deceive; God's *goodness* is another which will not suffer Him to forget; God's *truth* is another, which will not suffer Him to change; God's *power* is the fourth, which enables Him to accomplish all that He has promised. With these few general observations, we now proceed to a more particular illustration of their preciousness and efficacy. "*Exceeding great and precious*" is the character given to them by the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit never uses words without profound significance and meaning.

They are "*precious promises*," because of the source from whence they originate. What are these promises? They are the unfolding of the heart of God; they are the revelation of the mind of God; they are the exponents of the will of God; they are, in a word, God Himself. If a faithful and true friend, a man of probity, integrity, and honesty, who would rather pluck out his right eye, or sever his right hand than violate his word, makes us a promise,

it is but another exhibition of his own self. In that promise we read his veracity, his kindness, his love. We receive the promise, believe the promise, act upon the promise, because we know the man, and feel sure that the promise is a reflection of his character. We want no other endorsement than the probity, integrity, and friendship of the promiser. Look at the promises of God. They are exceedingly precious, because of the source whence they originate. They are the throbbings of the infinite and deathless love of God. I cannot, with a weeping eye, light upon a precious promise, but the moment I see it I behold my Father's love exhibited and unveiled. I read God's heart in the promise. I seem to hear the gentle, tender accents of His voice; therefore, as the revelation of my Father's love, the promises of God become exceeding precious. Oh, how often has your heart been touched with the kind promise of a parent! You have read in that assurance the love whence it originated. Beloved, read the love of your heavenly Father in the precious promises. They are but the echoes of His heart sounding from each page of the sacred volume.

They are precious, too, *from the channel through which they flow*. All the promises of God come to us through a channel—the same channel through which every blessing flows—but which, we fear, is too much overlooked, and in our sad forgetfulness of which we have such low thoughts of Jesus, and such dim views of God's love. Beloved, there is but *one channel* through which God bestows any blessing upon us. You ask what it is. I give it you in God's own precious words:—"There is one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." All your blessings flow to you through Jesus. Your providential mercies, the higher blessings of grace—your sins pardoned, your name written in the Lamb's Book of Life, the glories of heaven unfolding to your faith—all flow to you through the one Mediator. Jesus is the medium through which the precious promises of the word come to us. We ask you, then, if the promises are not *precious*? if they do not derive inconceivable value and sweetness from the channel through which they flow? Oh, it is kind of God to send you a blessing or a rebuke through one who loves you! Dearly beloved, look at the precious promises. They all come to you through the merits, mediation, finished work, atoning sacrifice, the incessant and ever-prevalent intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ. Consequently, they become exceedingly precious. No, more than

this. Every promise meets and centers in Christ. "All the promises of God are yes and amen *in Christ Jesus.*" Not a solitary promise that buoys you above the surging billows, or that paints its bright bow on the dark cloud that overshadows you, or that distills its drop of sweetness into your nauseous draught, but that promise is in Christ, through Christ, from Christ and will be made good to you in virtue of your union with Christ. Here the case of many of God's saints is met who say, "I dare not claim the promise; I am so sinful, so unworthy, so unbelieving, I have so often looked at the promise and rejected the comfort that it gives, that I dare not now appropriate it." Dearly beloved, the ground on which you stand with regard to the promise of God, is the finished work of Jesus Christ; and these promises come to you in virtue of what Christ has done; consequently, there is not a sin-burdened, sorrow-stricken soul but may stretch forth his hand and receive these precious jewels as they flow out from the open casket of God's word.

They are precious *in themselves.* Take the promise addressed to a soul under a conviction of sin, spiritually and earnestly inquiring his way of pardon, acceptance, and salvation. The Holy Spirit has given you a deep sense of your sinfulness. You see your heart to be vile, your nature depraved; smitten with godly grief for sin, and bowed in the dust of self-abasement, you are almost on the brink of despair. But Christ's promise meets your case—"Come unto me, all you that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Look unto me and be you saved all the ends of the earth." "Him that comes unto me I will in no wise cast out." The moment your eye of faith, though misted with tears, can observe these promises, hope springs up in your heart. Oh, precious promise, that bids me come weary and heavy laden with sin to rest in the Lord Jesus Christ, and receive Him as all my salvation and all my desire! Will you not say that is an "exceeding great and precious promise," that bids the sin-weary find rest in Jesus? Or, are you oppressed by some of those varied mental and spiritual exercises that do so much cast down the child of God? How precious is the promise—"Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disturbed within me? Hope you in God, for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance and my God." Or, are you a child of the light walking in darkness, no starlight, no sunlight, not a solitary beam to cheer your way—all spiritual gloom around you? Listen to that precious promise—

"Who is among you that fears the Lord, that walks in darkness and has no light, let him trust in the name of the Lord and stay himself upon his God." What a precious promise is that? Or, are you suffering from a sense of the Divine withdrawal, the suspended manifestations of the Lord's love to your soul? What a precious promise is this—"For a small moment have I forsaken you, but with great mercies will I gather you. In a little wrath I hid my face from you for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on you, says the Lord your Redeemer?" Or, conscious of backsliding and departure from God, having gone astray like a lost sheep, your heart smitten with godly grief, beginning to doubt the reality of your former Christian experience? Hear the touching words of the Lord—"Return, you backsliding Israel, says the Lord, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you, for I am merciful, says the Lord, and I will not keep anger forever. Only acknowledge your iniquity." Oh, what precious promises are these to the poor, heart-broken penitent! Is there nothing in these gracious assurances that meets your case? Or, are you in trouble, difficulties hemming you in on every side, all things seeming to make against you? Is there no preciousness in that promise—"Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me?" Oh, how many a tried and afflicted saint, buffeting with the storm, has been buoyed up and kept above the waves by this one solitary and precious promise of God, "Call upon me in the day of trouble!" Or, are you assailed by the fiery darts of the enemy? Listen to the promises addressed to the tempted, "The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations." "There has no temptation taken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it." Are you in deep affliction, in sore adversity? Listen to the promise of your God—"When you pass through the waters I will be with you, and through the floods they shall not overflow you." "All things work together for good to those who love God." "Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you." Are you troubled because answers to prayer are delayed; because the vision tarries and appears not? The promise is—"Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart." Are you anticipating an evil, looking at it in the distance, and trembling at its approach? Hear the soothing word of your Father—"Come, my people, enter you into your chambers, and shut your doors about

you, hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast." Could sweeter chimes breathe upon your troubled spirit words more appropriate or more soothing? Are you afraid of coming short of eternal glory—of perishing at last in sight of heaven? Listen to the promise—"He that has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." "Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling." Thus kept, how can you perish? Are friends and kindred alienated, and do you feel desolate and lonely?—"When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up"—"I will never leave you, nor forsake you," is the precious promise of your God. Do the infirmities and weaknesses of age accumulate around you? "Even to old age, I am He, and even to hoar hairs will I carry you. I have made and I will bear. Even I will carry and deliver you." This is the precious promise to God's dear aged saints. Let us learn from these words to be very tender, sympathizing, and patient towards the aged. They are dear and precious to the heart of God, and it is an honor—oh, how great!—to place our arm beneath the aged one whom God carries in His loving heart. Are you afraid of temporal poverty, that the cruse of oil and the barrel of meal will fail you? Hear your God—"Your bread and your water shall be sure." "Seek you first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all things shall be added to you." Are you in bondage through the fear of death? Cling to the precious promise—"This God is our God forever and ever. He will be our guide even *unto death*." Thus have we traveled through a few of the varied circumstances in which you may be placed, for each one of which God has provided a precious promise, on which He causes your soul to hope.

Precious, too, are these promises *in the experience of His people*. You can testify to their inconceivable preciousness. What, my beloved, would you have done without them? Have they not stanching many a bleeding wound? and dried many a falling tear? Have they not calmed many a perturbed moment? Have they not guided your feet through many a labyrinth, shed light on many a lonely path, been as oil on the broken waters of many a dark billow, and like voices of music have broken sweetly on many a dreary night of weeping and of woe? You have fled to them in times of necessity, have entwined your arms of faith around them in weakness, and having tested their soothing and support, you

can put your seal to the truth, that the promises of God are "exceeding great and precious."

Precious are they, too, *in the fruit they bear*. Who can describe the peace and joy of the soul when faith takes hold of the Divine promises? Who will not say they are "exceeding great and precious promises," as he beholds the precious fruits these promises bring forth in the happy experience of the saint of God? With this bare outline of the subject, let us, in conclusion, refer to one or two practical inferences.

We exhort you, beloved, *to take hold of the Promiser in the promise*. The mere promise is nothing to us if we cannot observe that which underlies the promise,—and that which we are to deal with in the promise is, the Promiser Himself. Abraham staggered not at the promise of God, "because he counted Him faithful who had promised." He would have staggered at the promise of man, because it was so marvelous; but when he saw the Divine Promiser in the promise, he knew that what was impossible with man was possible with God, and so he believed Him faithful that had promised. Rest in Jesus, you wearied and burdened ones,—rest in God, you tried and tempted ones,—rest in the Holy Spirit, you sad and mournful ones; for all the precious promises of God, on which He has caused you to hope, are but the unfoldings of God Himself. Deal, then, with the Promiser in the promise, and you will find the promise to be like a rock of adamant beneath your feet.

We exhort you to *store your heart richly with the precious promises of God*. Take them on board your bark plentifully, for you have yet many a storm to weather, and you will need them to ballast your vessel in the tempestuous sea. Furnish your memories abundantly with them; let your heart deal closely with them; the time will come when the promise will be more precious to you than gold, yes, than much fine gold; and when affliction comes, and the dark cloud gathers, oh then, how precious will you find the promises of your Covenant God to be with which you stored your mind and fed your faith!

Recollect, *they are God's gifts*, and are not your purchase. "Whereby are *given* unto you exceeding great and precious treasures." Come, then, to God empty-handed. Do not reason and



hesitate because of your past unbelief; but as gifts of God's free favor, welcome and trust in them.

God may sometimes write the sentence of death upon a promise, and everything in His providence may seem opposed to its fulfillment, though for years you have clung to it. Be not, however, staggered at that. There is a life in that promise, beloved, that never can die. Take, as an illustration, the seed you have sown in the earth. You go and look at it, and find it, apparently dead and decayed—a mass of dust only; but there is a vital principle there that cannot be lost, and in process of time that seed will germinate and become a beautiful flower. So is it with the precious promise of God. Month after month, year after year has rolled by, and you see no fulfillment of the promise; but wait God's appointed way and His ordained time, and the promise shall rise again in all its life, loveliness, and fruit. God will cease to be rather than not fulfill the word on which He has caused your soul to hope.

*Walk in the holiness of the promise.* Oh, those are solemn words in 2 Cor. 7:1—*"Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."* The crowning glory and preciousness of these promises is, that they are *sanctifying*, promoting that holiness of life "without which no man shall see the Lord." Having therefore these rich clusters of precious promises bending down from the Tree of Life, whence we may pluck them at all times, in all seasons, and under all circumstances, let your life be a holy life, and let the sanctifying influence of the promises mold and govern your conduct.

In all your future path "be you followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises," in all their fullness, blessedness, and preciousness. Follow them as they followed Christ; imitate them as they imitated God; press after them as they pressed forward and reached the goal and won the prize, for before long you too shall be put into their full possession—the promise of grace terminating and expanding in the full enjoyment of the promise of glory. And when the time of your departure is at hand, your work finished; your battle fought, and your victory won, and when the soles of your feet smite the chill waters of death, then shall you find the path through those waters all paved and glowing with the exceeding great promises of your covenant

God. Standing upon these precious stones, when heart and flesh are failing, and you are about to leave a wife in lonely widowhood, or children in friendless orphanage—eternity, a solemn, untried eternity, unveiling its realities to your view—with what firmness will faith plant its feet upon these Divine promises—so shall you pass peacefully, triumphantly over Jordan, and all the harpers will meet and welcome you on the other side. The Lord grant that these exceeding great promises may become increasingly precious to our hearts, and purifying to our lives, and all the praise and honor shall redound to Him who has declared, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away." Lord, help us to receive Your promise, and to trust in You the Promiser!

"How often have sin and Satan strove  
To rend my soul from You, my God!  
But everlasting is Your love,  
And Jesus seals it with His blood.

"The oath and promise of the Lord  
Join to confirm the wondrous grace;  
Eternal power performs the word,  
And fills all heaven with endless praise.

"Amid temptations sharp and long,  
My soul to this dear refuge flies;  
Hope is my anchor, firm and strong,  
While tempests blow and billows rise.

"The gospel bears my spirit up;  
A faithful and unchanging God  
Lays the foundation of my hope  
In oaths and promises and blood."