

INTRODUCTION

The first video cassette recorders launched a revolution. Instead of being present to watch a television show live, you could record it and watch it later. Well, you could tape it if you had a degree from MIT in electrical engineering. That’s why today, there are millions of homes where is a VCR flashing “12:00.” You also needed a fat bank account because the first VCRs were huge boxes costing over \$1,000. But of course, the prices came down and so did the size. But the result is you may have dozens of videocassettes containing something at the time you thought was important enough to be preserved gathering dust.

But never fear, DVRs are here! These digital video recorders are basically computers that record programs on a hard drive. There are no tapes to rewind, and you can usually record a program with just the push of a couple of buttons. Best of all they don’t have clocks flashing “12:00” all the time.

I enjoy watching golf on television, but I hardly ever watch it live. It’s too slow and it seems there are commercials every 30 seconds. So, when I want to watch a golf tournament, I record it. On late Sunday nights, I usually unwind by watching a golf tournament. The great thing about recording it is that I can fast forward through the commercials. Isn’t fast forward great? With my old VCR, I could fast forward at about 4 times the normal speed. But now I have DVR and it can fast forward up to 300 times the normal speed. Usually, I don’t even watch the full tournament. I find myself using that 300 times fast forward function to speed through the tournament until the last couple of holes. Then when I see who wins, I can go to bed.

Wouldn’t it be great if life had a fast forward button? If you could push it and look into the future and know everything would be okay, don’t you think it would help you sleep? Today, we begin a new teaching series through the book of II Peter and I’ve entitled the series: “Living in Fast Forward.” The Bible enables us to use our eyes of faith and fast forward into the future. I’m not talking about looking 20 or 30 years ahead—but looking 20,000 to 30,000 years ahead—just to see who wins. If you could glance into the future and comprehend the victory that is ours, wouldn’t it make a difference? Peter uses that phrase “looking forward” in two consecutive verses. He writes: “In keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth. Since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.” (II Peter 3:13-14)

The reason we can look forward to the future with confidence is because God has given us wonderful promises for our future. Today, we’re going to look at God’s precious promises.

Throughout history, God has been making promises. The Bible tells about a terrible flood that occurred on earth many centuries ago. It’s not just in the Bible, almost all civilizations having a preserved written ancient history refer to this great flood. After the fatal flood, God made a promise to Noah and his descendants that He would never again destroy the world with a flood. Whenever you see a rainbow, you should be reminded of God’s promises because He said, “I have placed my rainbow in the clouds. It is a sign of my permanent promise to you and to all the earth.” (Genesis 9:13, NLB)

That is just one of many of the promises of God we find in the Bible. Peter begins this second letter by writing about these precious promises. We read in II Peter 1:1-4:

“Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours: Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

His 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. Through these 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 of the world caused by evil desires.”

These are the precious promises of God. The word “precious” means more valuable than anything you can buy. Peter liked that word. In I Peter he wrote about how suffering is like a fire that refines our faith and make it “more precious than gold.” (1:7). He wrote about how we have been cleansed by “the precious blood of Christ.” (1:19) He wrote that Jesus is the living stone rejected by man but “chosen by God and precious.” (2:4).

But the word “precious” wasn’t enough to describe God’s promises, so he added “great.” The Greek word for “great” is “mega.” God’s promises are Mega-precious! But even *that* wasn’t enough! Peter includes an ending to “mega” that intensifies it—*megista*! These are the very great and precious promises of God.

Herbert Lockyer was a preacher and prolific author who wrote over 50 books about the Bible. He died in 1985 at the tender age of 99. One of his books is entitled *All the Promises of the Bible*. As Peter wrote, “God has made very great and precious promises to us.” Dr. Lockyear went through the Bible and counted the promises of God. He reports there are 7,457 promises God has given to man! That means if you read one promise a day, it would take you over 20 years to read them all! If I tried to preach on a different promise each Sunday, it would take me 143 years to cover them all! That’s why Peter writes they are the very great and precious promises.

In this message, I want us to learn three important aspects of the promises of God:

1. GOD’S PROMISES ARE CERTAIN

Our English word “promise” comes from two Latin words, *pro* (meaning “forth”) and *mittere* (meaning “send”). So a promise carries the idea of “sending forth” a statement that can be claimed in the future. When you sign a promissory note with the bank you are giving your word you will pay back a loan in the future.

But we all know that just as all promissory notes are not repaid, there are many human promises that aren’t kept. You’ve probably heard someone say, “Promises are made to be broken.” Jonathan Swift wrote: “Promises and pie crusts are made to be broken.” Indeed, anyone who deals with people will have promises made that are broken.

We are a generation of promise breakers. Because we have been lied to before, we become cynical and skeptical. Why not? We live in a culture where lying is commonplace. Someone compiled a list of the ten most common lies in America:

1. The check is in the mail.
2. Your table will be ready in a minute.
3. This hurts me more than it hurts you.
4. It’s not the money, it’s the principle of the thing.
5. I just need a minute of your time.
6. I’m from the IRS and I’m here to help.
7. If you’re not completely satisfied, your money will be cheerfully refunded.
8. The light was still green when I drove through the intersection!
9. You get this one, I’ll pay next time.
10. I’ll start my diet tomorrow.

Maybe somebody promised you they would love you until “death do us part” and they broke that promise. Or maybe somebody promised they would give you a promotion or raise if you only worked harder and longer, and instead, you found yourself out of a job. Don’t be surprised. People break promises everyday.

But the good news is: God’s promises are *certain*. He can’t lie and He has never broken a promise. The Bible word for promise is the Greek word *epangelia*. It comes from two words, *epi*, meaning “upon” and *angellos*, meaning “message or announcement.” When the Bible speaks of God’s promise, it means to stand upon the announcement. God’s promises are something you can stand on. The Bible says, “God is not a man that he should lie, nor a son of man that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?...Not one word has failed of all the good promises he gave...” (Numbers 23:19; I Kings 8:56)

If you put your confidence and trust in anyone except God, you stand to be disappointed. But you stand on the promises of God you will never be disappointed. In his book, *All the Promises of the Bible*, Herber Lockyer wrote: “If you would only read from Genesis to Revelation and see all the promises made by God to His people...if you would spend a month feeding on the precious promises of God—you wouldn’t be going about complaining how poor you are. You would lift up your head and proclaim the riches of His Grace, because you couldn’t help doing it!”

2. GOD’S PROMISES ARE CONDITIONAL

God’s love is unconditional. That means there is nothing you can do to earn His love or to change His love for you. But God’s promises are conditional. That means His promises often contain the important two lettered word “if.” For instance, eternal life is a promise of God, but that promise won’t be automatically fulfilled to every person on earth. You can only claim His promise of eternal life if you are willing to turn from your sins and place your trust in Jesus.

Another example is found in II Chronicles 7:14. That’s a verse many people apply to America.

In fact, on both occasions when President Ronald Reagan was inaugurated, he placed his hand on that verse when he took the oath of office. It's a great verse in which God promises to hear the prayers of His people, to forgive their sin, and to heal their land. Amen! We want that, right?

However the first word in the verse is "if." God will only fulfill that promise on the condition that His people who are called by His name will humble themselves, pray, seek His face, and turn from their wicked ways. It is a conditional promise.

Another example concerns prayer. Do you want your prayers answered? In John 15:7, Jesus promises we can "ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you." You may think, "Amen! I want that! I'm going to ask to win the lottery; I'm going to ask for a new job..." But like the other promises of God, it is conditional. The first word in the verse is "if." Jesus said you could expect answers if "you remain in me, and my words remain in you."

Before you complain against God for breaking what you thought was a promise to you, remember that His promises are conditional.

Here's how it works: God makes a promise, but then it is my faith that believes it; but more than that, it is my hope that stands on it; and because promises are always send forth into the future, it is my patience that hangs on to it.

3. GOD'S PROMISES REVEAL HIS CHARACTER

The fact that God has never broken a promise reveals that He can be trusted. His unbroken promises reveal His perfect nature. In these first four verses, Peter touches on three important aspects of God's character. We see:

(1) God's grace

According to verse 1, this letter is addressed to "those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours: Grace and Peace be yours in abundance .." The precious promise is that He has given you His righteousness. Are you claiming His forgiveness? Notice Peter didn't write anything about *our* righteousness—if he had, there wouldn't have been much to say since none of us are righteous! The focus is on God's righteousness.

The Bible says we are saved, "not by our works of righteousness, but according to His mercy." (Titus 3:5). The Apostle Paul wrote about two ways you can try to get righteousness. You can try to establish you own righteousness with zeal and good works, or you can accept righteousness as a gift from God. (Romans 10:2)

II Corinthians 5:21 says, "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." When you surrender to Jesus, when God looks at you. He doesn't see your sin, He sees you through the filter of the righteousness of Jesus. God has promised to remove your sins as far as the east is the from the west (Psalm 103:2). The Bible says He has placed our sins behind His back (Isaiah 38:17) God has promised to hurl all your sins to the depths of the sea (Micah 7:19). Are you claiming that forgiveness today?

Years ago I learned a poem by an unknown author: “I will cast in the depths of the fathomless sea / All your sins and transgressions, whatever they be. / Though they mount up to heaven, / Though they reach down to hell, / They shall sink in the depths and above them shall swell, / All my waves of forgiveness so mighty and free, / I will cast all your sins in the depths of the sea!” As one old preacher said, “God has buried my sins at the bottom of the ocean, and put a sign there that says, ‘no fishin’!’”

(2) God’s goodness

It says in verse three that by “His divine power has given us everything we need for life.” Why? The last word in verse three explains it: “Goodness.” The promise is: He has given you everything you need—are you trusting Him alone?

Let’s imagine I have \$1,000 in the bank, and I write you a check for \$100. As long as you carry it around in your purse or wallet, it won’t do you any good. And to cash it, you don’t have to go down to the bank and get on your knees, and hold out the check and say, “Please! Oh please! I beg of you, I desperately need some money. Won’t you please have mercy on me and give me \$100?” Ridiculous, right? You only have to endorse the check, and you have \$100.

It’s as if God has written you a check on the Bank of Heaven. It says, “Pay to the Order of...and you supply your own name.” The amount is “everything you need.” And His account is never overdrawn! Notice the Bible doesn’t say He *will* give you everything you need, it says He already *has*. Now it’s up to you to claim it. God has never promised to meet your wants, but He has promised to meet your needs.

Because of that you don’t have to worry. God won’t let you starve. David said, “Once I was young, and now I am old. But I have never seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.” (Psalm 37:25) Finally we see:

(3) GOD’S GLORY

The third promise of God is found in verse four. Peter wrote: “Through them (God’s precious promises) you may participate in the divine nature.” Here’s the promise: He has given you His divine nature—are you behaving like His child? My daddy’s name was Orlo, which is my middle name. He died in 1981 when he was in his late 50s. So although I haven’t seen him for awhile, the older I get; the more like him I realize I am. I’m even starting to look like him. My dad had a crooked smile and a deep cleft between his eyebrows. Some mornings I wake up and look in the mirror and I want to say, “Mr. Dykes, can David come out to play?”

I act like my dad. He loved sports, and when he discovered golf, he was a goner. He had a competitive nature, and anybody who plays golf with me knows I’m that way, too.

We are all born with a human nature—we inherited a spiritual DNA from Adam that makes us want to rebel against God. But when you are born again by the Spirit, God gives you a new spiritual DNA—a new nature. You don’t become God, but you are infused with this “divine nature.” That means you will start acting and looking like your Heavenly Father.

One of the main themes of II Peter is that there are a lot of “fake Christians.” They claim to know God, but they don’t have a divine nature. While addressing this issue, Peter gives us what many consider to be the most unpleasant verse in the Bible. It is a picture so graphic, it’s hard to miss. He wrote: “The proverbs are true: ‘a dog returns to its vomit,’ and ‘a sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud.’” (II Peter 2:22).

What’s the point? Simple. A dog eats vomit and a hog loves mud because that’s just the nature of dogs and hogs. When we are partakers of the divine nature, we don’t behave like those who only have a human nature. We *act* like His children.

CONCLUSION

God’s promises are certain, they are conditional, and they reveal His character. There are over 7,000 promises God has made to you in this book. But the question, I must ask you is, “How many of them have you claimed for yourself?” God has offered these precious promises to you, but they are worthless unless you claim them.

Right now the IRS is looking for thousands of Americans—not because they haven’t paid their taxes, but because they have a refund due. Each year the U.S. Postal Service is unable to deliver tens of thousands of refund checks, so they are returned to the IRS. There are many reasons for this. The person might have changed their address or married and changed their name, or it may be a simple error in the address line. The IRS holds this money until the taxpayer claims it. How much are we talking about? According to the IRS, since the year 2000, over \$2.5 billion has gone unclaimed! (You can visit www.irs.gov to see if you’re on the list).

How tragic it would be for you to have thousands of dollars due to you, yet you never claim it. How much worse it is that there may be thousands of promises God has given you that you’ve never claimed. Are there any unclaimed promises of God in your life?

Do you feel guilty? The Bible says, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us of all unrighteousness.” (I John 1:9) But you must repent and claim that promise. Are you feeling lonely? God has promised He will be with you. But you must claim that promise because the Bible says, “Draw close to God and He will draw close to you.” (James 4:8) Are you suffering from a broken heart right now? Jesus has promised He will “heal the broken hearted.” (Luke 4:18) But you won’t claim that promise unless you are willing to give Him all the pieces of your broken heart. Are you feeling weak and helpless? He will give you strength, but you must surrender your life to Jesus. The Bible says, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” (Philippians 4:13) Are you afraid? God has promised He will give you perfect peace—but you’ve got to claim that promise by making Him your focus. The Bible says, “He will keep in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Him.” (Isaiah 26:3) Are you feeling lost? He has promised He will guide you, but you can only claim that promise by following Jesus because He said, “I am the way...” (John 14:6)

I could go on, but I don’t have time to cover all the 7,000 promises of God, so let me give you a shortcut to claim God’s promises: Come to Jesus, because all of God’s promises are found in Jesus. The Bible says, “For no matter how many promises God has made, they are ‘Yes’ in

Christ. And so through him, the ‘amen’ is spoken by us.” (II Corinthians 1:20). Whatever you need come to Jesus and He says, “Yes!” But it is up to you to say, “Amen.” That means, “So be it.”

The politicians make many promises—that’s why some say politics is the “most promising” of all careers! But we all know politicians may break their promises. Maybe you’ve had friends who made promises and then broke them. Perhaps even your spouse who stood there and said, “I promise to love you until I die” has broken that promise to you.

You can’t always stand on the word of others. It’s like trying to stand on a bridge of Kleenex! But you CAN stand on the Word of God—the rock of Jesus. I don’t know about you, but as for me, I’m standing on the promises that cannot fail. When the howling storms of doubt and fear assail. By the loving Word of God I shall prevail! Standing on the promises of God! (Words by R. Kelso Carter)

OUTLINE

THEME OF II PETER: LIVING IN FAST FORWARD (II Peter 3:13-14)

1. GOD'S PROMISES ARE CERTAIN

"God is not a man that he should lie, nor a son of man that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?...Not one word has failed of all the good promises he gave..." *Numbers 23:19; I Kings 8:56*

2. GOD'S PROMISES ARE CONDITIONAL

God makes a promise:
Faith believes it;
Hope stands on it;
Patience hangs on to it!

3. GOD'S PROMISES REVEAL HIS CHARACTER

(1) God's grace:
He has given you His righteousness.
Are you claiming His forgiveness?

(2) God's goodness:
He has given you everything you need—are you trusting Him alone?

(3) God's glory:
He has given you His divine nature—are you behaving like His child?



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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes