

# Promise Believers #1 - Man's Promises or God's Promises

by Bob Hoekstra

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of relying on God's promises rather than our own commitments in the Christian faith.*

**Duration:** 54:32

**Scripture:** Exodus 19:7-8, Deuteronomy 5:27, Deuteronomy 26:16-17, Ezekiel 20:21, Matthew 26:30-35

**Topics:** "Gods Promises", "Faith Assurance"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the assurance that God will never leave or forsake His people. He encourages believers to boldly declare that the Lord is their helper, guardian, and companion, and to not fear what man can do to them. The preacher also discusses the topic of making promises to God, highlighting the importance of aligning our promises with God's character, work, power, and promises to us. He references James 4:13-15, where it is cautioned that we do not know what tomorrow holds and that our lives are fleeting. Instead of boasting in our own plans and abilities, we should humbly acknowledge that our lives are subject to God's will. The sermon concludes by introducing a series of biblical studies on being promise believers, which were inspired by observing the Promise Keepers movement but are not directly related to it.

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## Transcript

Lord, we thank you so much for your goodness, your greatness. You are a good God. You're glorious.

You're kind to us and merciful. We gather now for these study times in your wonderful name, the mighty name of Jesus, the name above all names, the name of the master, the master teacher, who by his Holy Spirit loves to teach his people even today. Lord, teach us, feed us, build us up.

We come humbly, Lord. We just openly declare without shame at all our absolute, complete, comprehensive, desperate, daily, every moment need of you. And we just thank you that we don't feel we need to hide that anymore.

We're not running from that. We just want to humble ourselves before you and thank you that you give grace to the humble. And we just ask you to pour out your grace upon us.

May your grace be mighty upon us in word and deed and attitude and understanding and heart change and receptivity and response to your truth. We just commit these study times to you and ask you to pour out your Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, the Spirit who guides us into all the truth, the Spirit that takes the things of Jesus and makes them ours, the Spirit that can fill us, the Spirit who dwells in us, the Spirit who can transform us under the image of the Lord Jesus Christ. Lord, just do a mighty work.

May you find no resistance in our hearts. May we just be expectant, anticipating the wonderful works of God. And we open up wide.

We ask you to fill us. And you be pleased, Lord, and may none of us miss what you have for each individual one of us. We thank you in advance for your word in general for all of us.

We each thank you right now particularly for the very special words you want to say to each one of us, not only through the word, but in the conviction of the Holy Spirit deep in the quiet places of our hearts. Have your way, Lord, and use these times for the building up of the Church of Jesus Christ as you fulfill your promise to build your church. And, Lord, do it in us and even use us, we pray in Jesus' name.

Amen. The topic of our study for these six visits together will be Promise Believers, six biblical studies to assist our growth in Christlikeness through faith in the promises of God. Now, you may have wondered, why Promise Believers? Does that have anything to do with Promise Keepers? Well, interestingly enough, this series was laid on my heart through observing and reflecting actually upon the Promise Keepers movement.

Now, right off the bat, these studies are not about the Promise Keepers movement. They're studies neither promoting it nor bashing at it. It's just not about those studies, though that movement did trigger the title of our studies.

In the spirit of Acts 17.11, where we are shown by example the Bereans who search the scriptures daily to see if these things are so, just for a moment, let me give just a brief comment about the Promise Keepers movement and you'll see why we're studying these very things. Some pros and cons. And like all of our lives and every church and every movement, there are always pros and cons.

We'd like that in none of our lives, of course, there'd be any cons or anything that would detract, but let's face it, there's always pros and cons. And also, for any of you who have been to the Promise Keepers movement and have been touched by those meetings in any way, I would like to underline why I wouldn't be surprised at all. On the pro side, the good side, the encouraging side, the edifying fruitful side, number one, the goals of the whole movement are tremendous, you know, basically godly biblical goals to be faithful men, to be promise keepers.

What do we want to be? Promise breakers? I mean, we are, but what do we want to be? You know, we don't want to be promise breakers. The goals are great and I commend them and I say amen to them. Another good thing about that movement, salvation has come to many men through that movement.

How can you but rejoice over that? You know, praise God, wherever the gospel gets out and men come to the Lord Jesus Christ. Another good thing about that movement, it's brought encouragement to hundreds of thousands of men and I might add wives, maybe more wives than men, who knows. Also, that movement has brought renewal into many lives and households.

Many homes have been touched deeply and if anyone wants to know what I say about that, I say praise the Lord Jesus Christ. He is so good. On the con side, there have been some problems.

Some, like Pastor Chuck, have openly mentioned concern about the cost, you know. Others, including myself, have mentioned another problem scene that is, at times, the very significant presence of psychological involvement in message and leadership and that's always a weakening of and undermining of the Word of God, a pointing to self, a detracting from Christ. Also, just built in anything big, not maybe anything anyone tried to do, but there's always the danger of hype, you know.

I mean, even we're excited, aren't we? You know, you get 100 and some guys together, it's exciting. I mean, you get 70,000 men together, it's hard not to just, you know, go, you know, bonkers emotionally, you know, just kind of bluey. And there's nothing wrong to get excited, really.

I like to get excited. I'm kind of excited right now. But we don't want to build a life on hype and sometimes movements can even inadvertently leave us there.

Also, some pastors, another detraction, really, that we sure would want to see God work with and deal with, and that is some pastors have been greatly under fire in relationship to the Promise Keepers movement because it wasn't on their heart to, as it were, get on the bandwagon and promote it. And I know dear pastors that love the Lord and they're not attackers of these men who want to see good things happen in the lives of men, but they weren't drawn to be a part of it and have come under tremendous pressure from some of their very own people as though they aren't allowed to follow the Lord, they've got to follow the trend. And that's not good.

That's not good. But all of that is just kind of Acts 17, 11, you know, look at what's going on, look at the Word, see where it measures. We all need it in all of our lives.

Every one of us need it. Every church needs it. Every ministry needs it.

But really, all of that has nothing directly to do with the name of our studies and how it came to my heart. It's another issue that has burdened me, and it's not just there in the Promise Keepers movement, it's in the flesh of every one of us, even those who love and know the Lord Jesus Christ. And that is the tendency, the desire, the thought that maybe we can build a godly, effective, faithful, promise-keeping life on man's promises to God.

Wouldn't it be great if all we had to do is say, I will, God, I won't, God, what do you want? Okay, God, that covers it, God, and hey, we just go do it. Has anyone found it that easy? No, there are a lot of other factors involved. And this is the issue, and it's not unique to Promise Keepers, but just by the name.

A year and a half ago, or whatever it was way back there, I was watching the movement, heard about it, and it kind of hit me, you know, I wish they'd call it Promise Believers. You know, it's not like boing, Lord, I think you want me to pray on that, think on that, study on that, look into that. And that's why we're having these six studies on Promise Believers.

Six studies in the Word of God to assist our growth in Christ-likeness through faith in the promises of God. The two sections of our study in this visit are first, man's promises to God, and then secondly, God's promises to man. And it's amazing on anything critical or important, the scriptures have already spoken on both issues.

First of all, man's promises to God, the place we'd like to live maybe, and just, you know, I will and then do it. Exodus chapter 19, verses 7 and 8. Man's promises to God. So Moses came and called for the elders of the people and laid before them all these words which the Lord commanded him.

Then all the people answered together and said, all that the Lord has spoken, we will do. See, this was the original Promise Keepers movement. All that God has spoken, we will do it.

Now it's good to have a heart to want to do the will of God. I'm not negating that at all. It's just there's a lot more to it than that.

We found it in our own walk, and we shouldn't be surprised we'll find it in the Word of God. God spoke to Moses. Moses spoke the commands to the people of God, called and chosen by God, set apart unto God, and their promise was, all you said, Lord, we will do.

This was at the first giving of the law of God to Israel. Israel promised to keep all of it. Then Deuteronomy chapter 5. Deuteronomy chapter 5, verse 27.

The people had told Moses, this is a recounting, this is Deuteronomy, the second giving of the law, the first giving of the law as they came out of bondage in Egypt, headed toward the promised land. Deuteronomy, 40 years later, ready to go into the land, having the law of God, the will of God, the character of God rehearsed for them again, but at times Moses reflected on what happened at the first giving of the law of God. Deuteronomy 5.27. The people had said to Moses, you go near and hear all that the Lord our God may say, and tell us all that the Lord our God says to you, and we will hear and do it.

A reminder, at the first giving of the law, Israel promised to keep it. Now, Deuteronomy 26, verses 16 and 17. Deuteronomy 26, verses 16 and 17.

Now, the second giving of the law, what is Israel going to do? What are they going to say? How are they going to respond? This day, the Lord your God commands you to observe these statutes and judgments. Therefore, you shall be careful to observe them. Yes, God does want obedience.

Observe them with all your heart and with all your soul. Today you have proclaimed the Lord to be your God and that you will walk in his ways and keep his statutes, his commandments, and his judgments, and that you will obey his voice. Again, the second giving of the law, God spoke his commands.

Israel said, we'll do it all, we'll keep it all, we will obey. On two major occasions, Israel heard the commands of God and they promised God they would keep his will, his law, his path. Now, how well did they do? About as well as we would do on our own, I think.

Ezekiel, doesn't leave us guessing. Ezekiel chapter 20, Ezekiel 20 verse 21, notwithstanding the children rebelled against me, this is God speaking, they did not walk in my statutes and were not careful to observe my judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them. But they profaned my Sabbaths.

Then I said I would pour out my fury on them and fulfill my anger against them in the wilderness. They said they would do what God said. They promised to.

Their record, they weren't able to do it. They did not do it. Much later, this is through the wilderness, much later, looking back on centuries of Israel living before God, in Acts chapter 7, in that astounding sermon, that bold, courageous sermon that cost him his life, you know, when you really, when you really preach it

right, it can, it could cost you your life, you know.

No compromise in this message, oh, how Stephen preached before the Sanhedrin, rehearsing the history of the children of God walking with God and in Acts 7, verse 51, near the end, how's this for a conclusion to the sermon? Speaking right to those listening, you stiff-necked and uncircumcised at heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit, as your fathers did, so do you. So by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Stephen preaches to the leaders of Israel about the history of Israel. He says, you've been resisting today the work of the Spirit of God, hard-hearted, rebellious, stiff-necked, just like always in the history of the leadership and of the people.

You always disobey like your fathers. Man's promises to God, if that's all we have, we're going to end up just like Israel. Maybe well-intended and certainly speaking God's will, this is what He wants, we want to do it.

Hey, God's for that. Again, oh, if that were all that there is to it. But God records, in fact, you can go through the entire Old Testament.

How would you like to make promises to God to keep His perfect holy will and God has someone there recording your commitment, and then He has hundreds of years of record keepers. How do you think we'd do before that? You know, we'd be as embarrassed as Israel must have been looking back on their history if they were open and honest. Well, let's bring it into the New Testament.

How about a follower, a disciple of Jesus Christ in man's promises to God? Matthew chapter 26, Matthew chapter 26, verses 30 through 35. And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. They're now leaving the upper room, heading toward Garden of Gethsemane.

Then Jesus said to them, He's there alone with His disciples. With the 11, Judas is now gone. All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night.

And it would fulfill a prophecy. For it is written, I will strike the shepherd and the sheep of the flock will be scattered. But after I've been raised, I will go before you to Galilee.

Now Peter's going to speak up and make his promises. Peter answered and said to Him, Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble. Probably a good time to talk about never saying never, right? I will never be made to stumble.

Jesus said to him, Assuredly, I say to you that this night before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times. Peter said to Him, You know, great place to be, arguing with the Lord Jesus Christ. Peter said to Him, Even if I have to die with you, I will not deny you.

Pretty strong promise, isn't it? I mean, it's a good intention. We don't ever want to deny the Lord. But what's Peter standing on right there? You can tell.

You can tell by the results of it. I will not deny you. His own promise, his own capacity and capability.

But let's not stop there. It's not, Oh yeah, Peter. No, it's us.

Because look, the verse ends, And so said all the disciples. What do you think you and I would have said if we were there? Count me in, Lord. You know I'd never fail you.

You know, Rome? Who's afraid of Rome? We have to die, Lord. We won't deny you. The promises of man.

Later in this chapter, that very night, chapter 26, verse 56, toward the end of the verse, Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled. What had happened? The soldiers came. Trouble came.

Threat. Now the promises are put to the test. Easy in the private, quiet time alone with the Lord.

Oh, Lord, the things I'll do for you, you know. Well, the Lord may appreciate our intentions, you know. At least they want the right thing.

But, you know, He knows better. And the Heavenly Father must look on and smile like we do at our kids, you know, when they come out with these tremendous promises, you know. It's kind of like, well, I'm glad they want the right thing.

But the story's not over yet. Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled. They all denied Him in deed, even though Peter gets chronicled as the primary one in word and deed.

Verse 69 through 75, Now Peter sat outside in the courtyard, and a servant girl came to him, saying, You also were with Jesus of Galilee. But he denied it before them all, saying, I do not know what you are saying. And when he had gone out to the gateway, another girl saw him.

He's not even standing against soldiers here, just maidens challenging him, and said to those who were there, This fellow also was with Jesus of Nazareth. But again, he denied with an oath, I do not know the man. This is the man who promised to die before he would deny Him.

And a little later, those who stood by came up and said to Peter, Surely you also were one of them, for your speech betrays you. His accent. Then he began to curse and swear, saying, I do not know the man.

Immediately a rooster crowed. Don't you know that went right through his heart? And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, who had said to him before the rooster crows, You will deny me three times. So he went out and wept bitterly.

Peter did exactly what he promised he would never do. That's a sobering thing. Left to ourselves on our own best resources, we're no better than Peter.

Lord, I will never. Lord, I will always. Oh, how easy it is to rely on our own resources, to try to build our Christian life and commitment and our path of godliness and growth and service on our own promises.

Man's promises to God, thank God that is not how the church of Jesus Christ is built. Thank God we have something far greater than our promises to God to build a kingdom on, to develop a Christian life by. How much greater can you get? Oh, the difference between man's promises to God and God's promises to man.

How could you even measure the difference between the two? Well, we've seen quickly in the history of Israel, we've seen in one testimony of the disciples of Jesus Christ, what can come if we just try to build a life on our promises to God? Well, what are we to do then? Well, obviously, we need to gear into, engage with, stand on, learn to walk on the promises God makes to us. Let's look for a few minutes at God's promises to man, Ezekiel 36. Ezekiel 36.

At verse 26 and 27, listen to these promises from God to man. I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and you will keep my judgments and do them. Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers.

You shall be my people and I will be your God. How does that sound? Verse 26, I will give you a new heart. That's what it's all based on.

The work of God inside of us. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you. I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh that is not a carnal heart but a soft, pliable heart.

God's promises. I will give. I will put.

I will take. I will cause. The result of that, and you will obey and you will be my people and I will be your God.

God's keeping of his promises to his people are here seen as that which produces the necessary changes in man. Yes, we want to be faithful men and women. What we're talking about is not just pertaining to men.

It's men, women, and children. We want to be faithful. We want to be true.

We want to keep our promises. We want to obey God. We want to be reliable more and more.

We want to be pleasing in the sight of the Lord. But what brings about those changes in our lives? Where do we find the capacity, the dynamic, the resource? Remember the law gives us what? Israel heard it and said we'll do it. You know what they missed? They missed the how.

The what? The will of God in the law? It's perfect. It's holy. It's just and good.

But how do we increasingly walk in it? Not on the basis of our conviction and our commitment expressed through our promises to God. Now we'll see a little bit later. It's not that we cannot make promises to God.

It's not that. You can find in the scriptures and we'll see that before we're done here. But we can't build a life on our promises to God.

We can receive a life, have a life developed and changed by walking and standing on the promises of God to us. Jeremiah 24 7. Jeremiah 24 7. God again speaking, making promises to His people. Then I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am the Lord, and they shall be My people, and I will be their God, for they shall return to Me with their whole heart.

Again, God promising to work on man's behalf. I will give, what He's going to give is a new heart. That's what we need.

A heart from God, developed by God, open to the work of God. I'll give them a new heart. Therefore, they shall know Me, and I will be their God.

The promises of God, walked in by man, become the life-changing dynamic that the Spirit of God is involved in in our lives. Jeremiah 32. Jeremiah 32 40 and 41.

Again, God speaking, and He is making promises. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from doing them good, but I will put My fear in their hearts, so that they will not depart from Me. Yes, I will rejoice over them, to do them good.

And I will assuredly plant them in the land with all My heart, and with all My soul. What would you rather stand on? The commitment of all of your being to do right for God? Or God committing with all of His heart, to work on our behalf, to achieve what He wants to see? What a difference. The promises of God.

I will make, I will not turn, I will put, so that they will not. That's the sequence of heavenly thinking, when God starts promising. Now let's spend a pretty good time, with sort of a reflective conclusion.

Thinking back over this issue of man's promises to God, versus God's promises to man. In the book of Numbers, chapter 23, verse 19. Numbers 23, 19.

God is not a man that He should lie, nor a son of man that He should repent. Has He said and will He not do? Or has He spoken and will He not make it good? Here's the big difference between living by our promises to God, versus living by God's promises to us. Man does end up lying, not necessarily always purposefully, but inadvertently, eventually.

Man, on his own resources, cannot keep the promises to God that are needed. Because the promises to God that are needed, is I'll walk in your perfect will. Will of holiness, and godliness, and love, and purity, and Christ-likeness.

And not veer, or stray, or slack off. Well, we are men. And so often our promises become lies.

And we're the son of men, and we end up changing our mind. Hey, I can't do it. How many men have started out, I'm going to please God, I am going to do right, I am going to follow His path.

And before too long their mind has changed. You know, I don't know if I can. And some just say, hey, I can't, I quit.

Many, many a man, has started out with a good heart of desire to please God. And trying with all of his might to keep all the best promises he could ever give. Ended up with a change of mind that said, you know, I can't, I guess, I'm just not like others.

They seem to be able to. And they end up in despair. God is not like that.

Has He said it? Will He not do it? Yeah. If He said it, He'll do it. Has He spoken? And will He not make it good? Oh, how I wish.

Through the years I could have always made good on every promise I ever made. I didn't. Personally, I'm kind of cautious with promises now.

In a moment, I think we'll see the scriptures, though not forbidding us making promises, even to God. We're shown how we must not do it, and the only way that has any hope of fulfillment. Through the years I could have always made good on every promise I ever made.

I didn't. Personally, I'm kind of cautious with promises now. In a moment, I think we'll see the scriptures, though not forbidding us making promises, even to God.

We're shown how we must not do it, and the only way that has any hope of fulfillment. God is not like man. God does what He says.

God does what He promises. There's never a doubt, never a possibility that He won't. Well, that's the place to stand.

Look at Titus 1.2. Remember this? Titus 1.2. In hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began. Speaking about God and His promises here, and tying in with His promises, which He can make even before time begins, and then keep them in time and through eternity. How's that? Look what it says.

Which God, who cannot lie. What a difference. You and I might be men who don't want to lie, but we can.

That's the problem. There are a lot of things we can't do. There are some things we are very capable of.

We can lie. No wonder our promises are inadequate. No wonder there's always a thought, a possibility.

Will He do it, or will I do it, as I said it? Here's the fantastic thing. God cannot lie. It's not just that He's committed to not doing it.

It's not just that God won't lie. Because of His character, God cannot lie. People say, is there anything God cannot do? Yes, but the things that He cannot do are not a limitation of Him.

They're part of the glory of Him. You know, people like to argue, well, is there anything God cannot do? Yes, sure there are things He can't do. But that doesn't make Him less.

It makes Him the greater. He can't do some of the things I can do very well. Does that make me greater? No, it makes me lesser.

I'm not boasting about the things I can do that God can't do. That's my problem. God doesn't have that problem.

God cannot lie. Boy, that's exciting. Hey, let me stand on those promises.

Tell me some more about them. They're as true as they can be. Because God cannot lie.

Now, all of this does not mean that we are forbidden to make promises to God. That would be a different kind of a law. See, trying to live by making promises to God and keeping them on our own best effort, you know what that is? It's one more popular form of legalism.

It's one more way to live under the law, where all I have are the external commands, and the only resource is my commitment to do them. Boy, that's living under the law. Whole books of the Bible were written to warn us about that.

The whole book of Galatians. Great chunks of Hebrews, and 2 Corinthians, and Romans. We cannot live by the law.

We couldn't find eternal life by it. We can't develop life in Christ by just the perfect regulations of God and our best effort. That's how serious this is.

It's not just, well, he likes to live by his promises, and I kind of rather live by God's. It's not just a personal choice. One works, one doesn't.

One is death, one is life. One is destined to human failure, one is guaranteed to see divine success at work. What a difference.

Well, we don't come back the other way and say, oh no, you can't ever make a promise to God. That's just another law. We're trying to lay on each other.

It's not that either. But the scriptures show us how we must express, how we want to think when we are making commitments and promises to God. For example, we'll look at some promises man is making rightly to God.

For example, Psalm 18, 1 and 2. Psalm 18. The reason we know this kind of promise is right is we'll see how it fits so beautifully, some of the guidelines given later on in the Word in a moment. Psalm 18, 1 and 2. David is speaking.

He certainly had a heart for God. He made some great promises to God. He makes one here.

On his own, did he keep them all? No. God never failed him, but he failed to keep some of his commitment to God. But look at this promise and how it's couched and how right this is.

Psalm 18, verses 1 and 2. I will love you, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my strength in whom I will trust, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. Psalm starts out with a promise.

I will love you, O Lord. Now God wants us to love Him. In fact, with all of our heart and soul and mind and strength, with everything we are, He wants us to love Him.

But if everything we are is only what we can produce, in a thousand ways, we'll fail to love Him rightly. Again, it's got to be God supplying the heart for it and working in and through the heart. But notice how David puts it.

I will love you, O Lord, my strength. Ah. Look who he's leaning on.

The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my strength in whom I will trust. In David's desire to love God and express a life of love for God, this is the way to express it. With a complete dependence upon the strength of the Lord, the delivering power and work of the Lord.

Who the Lord is? The Lord is my deliverer. You know, that's the only power great enough to deliver us from compromise, from lying, from going back on our commitments and our word. It's got to be the delivering power of God at work in and through our lives.

But that can be so. That's why He comes to our aid. That's why He lives with us and works in and through us.

Beautiful promise. I will love you, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock.

I stand on that foundation in this love relationship. I put my trust in Him. He's my strength.

He's my energizing power. That's where that love and faithfulness will come from. Our promises must stand on God's character and God's resources and our trust in Him.

Otherwise, it's just humanistic, vain man promising a perfect holy God. Israel has shown us how that works. Peter is exemplified for the disciples how that works.

It comes to failure. It comes to naught. Hebrews 13.

Hebrews chapter 13, the end of verse 5 and verse 6. For He Himself has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you. So we may boldly say, the Lord is my helper. I will not fear.

What can man do to me? See the beautiful relationship between those two? Just like David, he promised God he would love Him. Here's a promise. The promise is this.

I will not fear. What's that promise, I will not fear, based upon? God Himself has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you. Oh, there's so many things around us that want to dominate our lives and push us into fearfulness.

Fear is one of the most destructive things around. I'm not talking about a healthy fear that God builds into little lives, afraid of fire or something big and scary. Fear is a paralyzer.

Fear is a destroyer. Fear is a killer. Body, soul, and spirit.

Fear is just a destroyer. We don't want to fear. We'd like to be able to say, I will not fear.

But not, I know I won't, I know I won't, I know I won't. But this. He's promised never to leave me, so I boldly say, I will not fear.

Confidence based on the promises of the Lord. See there are two promises here. One, God gives to man.

Then another, man responds, giving back to God. Here's God's promise to man. I will never leave you nor forsake you.

Hey, I think I can boldly say, I will not fear. As long as I keep that in mind, I can tell God, I will not fear and anticipate that based on His faithfulness in keeping His promise, fear will not grip my life. You know, if you're in school and a kid and all the bigger kids are picking on you and beating you up, you know, that can produce a lot of apprehension and fear and panic and every trip to school is like dominated by fear.

What are they going to do today? How about if the biggest tank in school takes a liking to you? Won't leave your side the moment you arrive on campus. Hey, hey, hey. I will not fear.

Why? Because my buddy said, I'll never leave you nor forsake you. Hey, what threat are they to me? My buddy's here. How about this? God Himself says to us, I will never leave you nor forsake you.

So we may boldly say, the Lord is my helper. The Lord's my buddy. The Lord's my guardian.

The Lord's my companion. I will not fear. What can man do to me? God's on my side and He's right there with me at my side.

Hey, I don't need to fear. I will not fear. It's not that we can't make promises or make promises even to God, but they better be hinged on either His character, His word, His power and or His promises to us.

James chapter 4. A couple more reflections in conclusion here. James chapter 4, verses 13 through 15 about this matter of can we make promises or make promises to God and if so, how? James 4, 13 through 15. Come now you who say, today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city.

Spend a year there. Buy and sell and make a profit. There's our promise.

We got it nailed. We're going to go there, do it and be successful. We are positive thinking Americans.

This is how you do it. Well, God has something to say about that. Whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow.

For what is your life? It's even a vapor. That's kind of humbling, isn't it? Say to someone, how would you describe me? A vapor I think would do. On our own, I mean that's all that's left.

Boy, he came and went so fast. Who are we to be making promises? Oh, tomorrow I'll go there. I'll do this.

Oh, here will be the results. A lot of that thinking has come into the American church these days. We don't even know what's going to happen tomorrow.

What is our life? It's even a vapor that appears for a little time, then vanishes away. Instead, you ought to say, if the Lord wills we will live and do this and that. Look at this next verse.

Let's add it verse 16. But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.

One of the dangers of trying to build a life on my promises is even if I happen to fulfill some of them, what does it end up sounding like? What is it really? It's a boasting. I said I will and I did so there. Oh, let's all bow down and give you the glory.

It's not right. It's not right. Because even if man can stumble through some of his promises and keep them, you can't build a faithful life that way and you can't glorify God and see the kingdom built in and through our lives.

Sure, we can make promises, but they need to be promises like this. If the Lord wills, we shall go here and there and do this or that. If the Lord wills.

Let it stand on His will and His faithfulness to His will. Otherwise, here's where we could be. But now you boast in your arrogance.

Even making a good promise and keeping it on our own best effort can just leave us not humble, but arrogant. Remember, God is opposed to the proud, but He gives grace to the humble. Sure, it's humbling to condition our promises.

Hey, we're men of God. We're men of faith. We can just go do it.

Well, let's express that faith this way. If the Lord wills, let's trust His will. If the Lord wills, we'll go here and there and do this or that.

Then Hebrews 6.3. And this we will do, if God permits. Here's another promise. And this we will do.

What? Well, it's referring to verse 1. Let us go on to perfection, on to maturity, on in growth. You know, leaving the elementary things, getting on to maturity. Let's do it.

Nothing wrong with calling each other in godly directions, but notice how the promise is put. Not, and this will do. I mean, you just watch.

We will be mature. You can check your clock by it, you know. Not at all.

And this we will do, if God permits. If God will stay involved in this. If God will work on our behalf.

Sure, we can make promises. Number one, if they're in line with the word and will of God, but further, if they're hinging upon His character, His resources, His previous promises and His will. Our last verse in this study, 1 Corinthians 15.10. When I was praying through these verses, thinking, studying on them, closer I got to the end, I was just impressed to add to the study there on the end, 1 Corinthians 15.10. I just thought, oh my goodness, this sounds again like the grace of God.

You know, it just sounds again, once more about the grace of God. Oh, how the grace of God permeates the scripture. Permeates the heart of God.

He's the God of all grace. Some of you know, we've done together a six hour, six unit study on growing in the grace of God. And I was thinking, you know, here it is again.

This is God's grace at work. We don't deserve this kind of commitment of God toward us, but it's just who God is. And we can't live by our promises.

Hey, that's humbling. Well, God gives grace to the humble. It just kind of hit me again.

You know, let's reflect on that in one verse. 1 Corinthians 15.10. But by the grace of God, I am what I am. And His grace toward me was not in vain, but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

This is the Apostle Paul's testimony. Oh, what a man of faithfulness. What a man of maturity he had become.

What a man of abundant labors. What an instrument in the hands of God in building the early church. It seems in this day and age, if you went to a church building instrument like Paul, you know, and how did you do all that? Everywhere you went, you left a trail of churches built behind you, you know.

In this day and age, the answer would almost be like, well, let me tell you how I did that. I had 7 to 10, 12 steps that were very strategic. Sometimes I had to apply them in great ingenuity and wisdom, but I always seemed to find out, you know, what was going on in the population.

We knew our demographics and just knew exactly how to move. We were very careful, you know, never to offend anyone, too. It was tough, but, you know, what can I say? I just did it.

After all, I'm a man of God, you know. I mean, that's the flesh just reeking. I love this.

I mean, this is right at the heart of the kingdom. Paul, how did you become what you are? How did you do what you did? By the grace of God, I am what I am, he tells us. His grace toward me was not in vain.

It wasn't ineffective. Yes, I labored and, okay, maybe it was more than any others ever did, but I'll tell you this, it wasn't me. What was going on? The grace of God with me.

When we have a God willing to make promises to us who cannot lie, why try to live on our promises to him? How gracious of God, knowing we can't keep our promises on our own resources and instead he steps in and makes promises to us that will take us through time and eternity and through these studies we'll look at a lot of them together. Faith giving, faith building promises, Christ focusing promises, grace demonstrating promises. Man's promises or God's promises.

In just having a few moments to reflect on the choice, which one do we want? Which one do we think God chooses for us? Absolutely. Let's live by God's promises to us. Let's pray together.

Lord, we thank you so much that you have not hinged our success and fruit and transformation upon our ability to make the right promises and then keep them with our own resources. Thank you for the liberty still to make promises, Lord. We just love to express things to you.

We want to say I will love you. We want to say we'll go here and there and do this or that. We want to say we can press on to perfection, to maturity, to growth.

But Lord, we want to hinge it on all the right things. Your will, your promises, your resources, your character, your grace. Thank you for your great commitment to us.

We love knowing and worshiping and serving a God who cannot lie. Oh, Lord, may all your promises just work out in their truth and power up on and in and through our lives. We pray to your glory in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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