

Promise Believers #2 - a God of Promise (Old Testament)

by Bob Hoekstra

God is a God of promises, and His promises are woven throughout the Word of God, demonstrating His character, presence, and work.

Duration: 1:03:49

Scripture: Exodus 3:10, Deuteronomy 1:30, Isaiah 42:1-4, Matthew 6:33, Galatians 3:8

Topics: "Gods Promises", "Faithful King"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the discouragement that can come from difficult circumstances. However, he reminds the audience that God is a faithful and unchanging king who has made numerous promises to his people. The speaker emphasizes that even though God's people may face bondage and injustice, God is always with them and promises to fight for them. He encourages the audience to stand on the promise that God will never leave or forsake them and reminds them that victory is a gift from God. The speaker also highlights the unique nature of Jesus as a king who did not come shouting and causing a scene, but rather brought forth justice and blessings through his humble and sacrificial life.

Transcript

Lord, the more we walk with you, the more we love to talk to you, the more we love to express our hearts to you, Lord. We're learning more and more just how right it is to pray, to pray in everything, to pray without ceasing, to let prayer be the very breath of our spirit. Just communicating with you, Lord, it's so good to talk to you.

Thank you for being there. Thank you for listening. Thank you for caring.

Thank you for your presence with us right now. Thank you for your great desire to communicate your heart and your mind to us. We thank you for the Holy Spirit and pray you pour out your spirit, even right now, with insight, understanding, even more than that, Lord, with transforming power that lets that new heart that's ours in Christ just come alive by the work of the Spirit.

Teach us, feed us, build us up, lead us and guide us as the good shepherd. Lord, we can only live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God, so we ask you to speak to us and we praise you that your words are spirit and they are life. We open up hungry to receive in Jesus' name.

Amen. The scriptures have reminded us already that our hope and our confidence is in God's promises to us, not our promises to him. Praise God for the liberty to express our heart to him in our promises.

Our promises have to be anchored in his previous promises, his character, his presence, his work, his will. The kingdom of God stands on nothing less than the promises of God. As a matter of fact, this is so basic to the kingdom of heaven because the true and living God whom we've come to know, whom we walk with, whom we are serving, he is a God of promises.

It is just characteristic of God. He's not only a God who makes promises, that's just his very nature, his very being. He loves to express his glory, his love, his purposes, his commitment, his willingness, his availability through his promises.

And for a while we'll look at this issue concerning a God of promises. In Genesis chapter 9, let's begin to look at some of the promises of God and let the Lord not only remind us of some of his great promises, but just give us a picture, a vision of this Lord God that we serve, that he is a God of promises. It's not unusual for him to make a promise here and there, it's just absolutely characteristic.

In the time the Lord gave me, a season of time searching the scriptures, anticipating these studies together, looking at, looking for the promises of God, I'm probably like you on the issue, no shock that God has made promises and we've probably stood on a lot of them, that's what's made all the difference in our lives. But just going back through the Word, seeing literally thousands, thousands of promises that God has made to us. Let's let the Lord not only remind us of a few of them, because that's what builds our faith, but let it also give us a vision of God himself, that he is a God of promises.

He just loves to commit himself to us. Like way back in Genesis 9, 11, oh for humanity to kind of start again with Noah and his family after the flood, kind of an exciting but a scary thing too. I mean, when's the next flood coming? Well, thus I establish my covenant with you, never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.

Yes, floods hit here and there in localities and only the ultimate wisdom of God and even spiritual war in the heavenly places could all sort it out completely, but will the earth ever again see humanity virtually destroyed by a flood? There's not even a chance, not even a possibility, not even a shred, an inkling of anticipation. Why? Because God has said never again, in fact he says it twice, never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth. And there hasn't been, and there won't be, because God has promised.

More strategic, but still just as certain, Genesis 12. Here's a promise of God, a strategic set of promises. These are woven throughout the Word of God.

The promise of God to Noah and the family of man to follow is woven into the history of man by the fact that there has not been a flood to destroy the earth and the fact that every time a rainbow appears it's a testimony unto God, before God, and to us that there never shall be a flood to destroy the earth. But more profound than that are the promises to Abraham. They're not only woven into the history of man, they're woven into the very revelation of the Word of God.

These promises in Genesis 12 can be traced right through the entire Old Testament, right down into the promises and the work of God in the New Testament. In fact, in a while after we take a break and come back together for our third study, we're going to pick up on the same issue, God of promises, but instead

of looking in the Old Testament as we are now, we'll look in the New Testament for a while and it's amazing how many promises in the New Testament are anchored right back in to these promises to Abraham in Genesis 12 verses 1 through 3. Now the Lord God said to Abraham, get out of your country, from your family, from your father's house to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation.

I will bless you and make your name great and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and I will curse him who curses you and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Or the promises of God to Abraham.

For his purposes and by his promises, God here calls out a people unto himself, makes his commitment to them, and they will be a people of faith, people who just believe in the promises of God, live on the basis of that, live by that, have their lives directed and shaped and formed by the promises of God, and Abraham would be the father of those of faith as we see in Romans 4 and in Galatians. What great promises. I'll give you a land.

Didn't tell him where it was. God often does that with us. Gives us promises of things he's calling us to, things he wants to do for us and then in us and through us for others.

Doesn't always spell out all the details. The world talks about blind faith. That's because really they're really talking about the power of positive thinking.

There's nothing there in their faith. It's totally blind. They're just imagining a future that they hope they can walk in by their own positivism, by their own visualization or whatever.

Well, the promises that we stand on don't lead to blind faith. We know there's a God there making those promises. We see him by the eye of faith and yet in a sense there is a blindness also.

Abraham, come on, follow me. I'll take you to a land and give it to you. Where, Lord? Well, you're not going to see it now.

Just follow me. Now you concentrate on me. Eventually I'll show you what I'm taking you to.

So often that's the way it works with us. And then God said, in that land I'll make you a great nation and not only that but through you all the families of the earth shall be blessed. We'll come back to that later in the New Testament.

Fantastic promises. In fact, without these promises and God's faithfulness to them we would not be today where we are in Christ. We would not be here seeking the Lord.

We'd just be out groping and wandering in darkness. Promises of God to Abraham. Galatians says that right even here the gospel, the early seeds of the gospel were being preached.

But not only God promising to Abraham to make him a nation, give him a land and touch all the families throughout the world, throughout history by him. But Exodus 3.10, when the people of God would be in bondage and trouble, smothered by, held by the world and the God of this age, God also promised to deliver His people. Exodus 3.10, Israel, the people of God, called out through the promises of God to Abraham, now becoming quite a huge nation but held in the bondage of affliction in Egypt, some more promises.

Exodus 3.10, come now therefore and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt. Verse 12, so he said, I will certainly be with you and this shall be a sign for you that I have sent you. When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.

Verse 17, and I have said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites to a land flowing with milk and honey. In bondage, you have enough food to get by on, but existing in slavery, certainly not abundance, certainly not freedom, God promises to bring them out and bring them in. Verse 20, so I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all my wonders, which I will do in its midst.

And after that, he will let you go. And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians. And it shall be when you go that you shall not go empty handed.

But every woman shall ask of her neighbor, namely of her who dwells near her house, articles of silver, articles of gold and clothing, and you shall put them on your sons and on your daughters. So you shall plunder the Egyptians. Boy, the I wills and you shalls, all based on God's activity and God's ability and faithfulness.

What a vision they serve. Potentiality and possibility in the Lord. Just in these few verses, there must be 10 or 12 promises of God to the people of God.

But God is the same. He never changes. And really, there's nothing new under the sun.

God's people still get in bondage. We were once in bondage to sin, totally serving the God of this age, though don't you know we hated to hear that? Can you remember when you were dead in trespasses and sins? People would say, you're under the influence of the devil. You're under the control of Satan.

It's like, oh, what do they know? They believe in fairy tales. We go on about our business, you know, I am the captain of my ship. I'm in charge of my life.

The enemy's back there pulling the strings, you know, going, yes, you tell them, you know. In fact, remind them I don't even exist, you know. We too are in bondage to the world system.

And similar promises to us, available to us, we heard them and God called us out of bondage to follow him. God not only promised to Abraham to make of him a great nation and do things that would extend in spiritual blessing throughout the world and throughout the history of man, but when God's people are in bondage, God promises to deliver. Not only from the bondage of sin and death, which we've all come out of, perfect type of Egypt, but the things that bind us even today.

I mean, we get restricted, we get smothered, we get wrapped up in fear and apprehension. God is still able to deliver. Praise God for his promises of deliverance.

Then Deuteronomy chapter 1. Deuteronomy chapter 1, God not only promises to call forth a people, create a people for his own possession, he not only promises to deliver them from the things that bind them, that want to smother them, that want to keep them from following him and serving him in liberty and freedom and fruitfulness, but God also promises to fight for his people as he takes them on in to the land of his promises. Deuteronomy chapter 1 verse 30. The Lord your God who goes before you, he will fight for you according to all that he did for you in Egypt before your eyes.

So here are the children of Israel out of bondage. They've, even now, about to finish their staggerings through the wilderness. A real picture of walking according to the flesh, walking by human resource, walking by sight.

You know, oh, those giants, they're too big, we can't handle them. Hey, that's by sight. By faith, we look at those giants and say, oh, I think God could eat them alive.

They're about through being characterized only as walking by sight according to the flesh. They're about to go into the land and they're reminded the promise of God, he will fight for you. Oh, how we need that promise.

Because sure we're out of Egyptian bondage. Sure we're no longer held in the bondage of sin and death, but too often we're like the children of Israel, staggering around in the wilderness, doubting what God can do. Overwhelmed by what we see.

Oh, those giants are big. You know, I sure like those big graves, but not with those big giants around. Oh, how we need to hear this promise.

He will fight for you. God does battle on behalf of his people. Joshua chapter 1 verse 5, ready now to go into the land led by this Joshua type of Christ.

Joshua 1 5, no man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you.

Isn't it amazing how many times God has promised in the word of God that he wouldn't leave us nor forsake us? I wonder why he says that so often. It's almost like he thinks we need to hear it. It's almost like he knew we would think he had departed at times.

And can't it feel like that at times? Can't it look like that at times? Of course, that's by sight, not by faith. By faith, here's the truth. I will not leave you nor forsake you.

Sometimes we would almost pray like that. Lord, you've forsaken me. Isn't God gracious and patient to listen to the prayers of such as we? Sometimes even our prayers cast doubt on the promises of God.

Oh, Lord, where are you? He's right there. Lord, why have you forsaken me? I'll never forsake you. How we need these promises.

Here's Joshua about to lead the people of God into the blessed promises and provisions of the Lord. For us, a wonderful picture of the abundant life, of life in Christ, a fullness of provision, victorious Christian living. And here's the only way to walk into that.

Stand on this promise. I will never leave you nor forsake you. Sometimes the Lord calls us to lead others.

In fact, everybody almost always is leading some group of people, whether it's our neighbors, our family, the prayer group we lead, the class we minister to, the church the Lord might have us pastoring. We're all leading more people than we even imagine. Sometimes we aren't even aware of it.

Folks are watching us, trying to pick up clues of the way to go. Sometimes we're not leading them in the right direction, but they're looking to us to see where to go. How can we ever lead anybody in the right direction? Get them where God wants them to be.

Well, here it is. Stand on this promise. I will never leave you nor forsake you.

The God who promises to fight for his people, he's always with us. He's the mighty warrior ready to give us his victory. Remember 1 Corinthians 15 and 57, thanks be to God who gives us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord.

I'll tell you, I am thankful that spiritual victory is a gift from God, not something I have to establish and deserve, aren't you? Thanks be to God who gives us the victory. You mean victory is a gift from God? Hey, I think I can maybe become a victorious Christian. Whoa, you know.

How often have we viewed it as arm wrestling with the enemy, you know? I will be victorious. I will. Boom.

What a promise. God will fight for us. He's always with us.

And thanks be to God who gives us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord, the victorious one, the conqueror. In fact, he's the one behind these promises to Joshua. I love later on, I think it's Joshua 5, where Joshua runs into Jesus, sort of a pre-incarnate manifestation of the Son of God, the commander of the Lord's army, and he doesn't know who he is.

He says, are you for us or against us? And there's a wonderful answer only God could make. He goes, no. Now, wait a minute.

Do you got to be one or the other? No. No, wrong question. The question is, are you with me? Are you for me? I'm the captain of the Lord of hosts.

I'm the leader of the Lord's army, the commander-in-chief, the Lord Jesus Christ. You for us or against us? No. I'm the one you need to be for.

He's the one who leads us into victory, as he did the children of Israel, when they would look to him and not to themselves. So God promises to have a people, to bring them out of bondage, to fight for them and bring them into his promises and provisions. Then 2 Samuel 7, wonderful promise, another passage packed with promises from God.

2 Samuel 7, God's promises to David, promising an enduring kingdom to David, not just to make them a people and bring them into the land, but to establish his rule and leadership there. 2 Samuel 7, 12-16, God promising to David, when your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

I will be his father and he shall be my son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men. But my mercy shall not depart from him as I took it from Saul, whom I removed from before you.

And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever. And then verse 28, David's response, and now, O Lord God, you are God and your words are true and you have promised this goodness to your servant.

It's like David says, I'll just rest in that. Oh, you've promised such good things. Your word is true.

I can count on it. What a good example for us. God not only took Israel into the land, but he promised to set up a leadership that could point the people to him, could proclaim and walk in his will and his word.

And that this royal seed, this kingly leadership would last forever. Now, obviously Solomon's reign did not last forever. And even along the way, it looked like Solomon's seed, the seed of David continuing was not going to be always godly.

What's happened to this promise? Well, the King of kings and the Lord of lords is the one behind it. He's the one who's going to sit on that throne. We can't see him in throne right now, but he is in throne in the hearts and the praises of his people.

He is the king of kings. He does have a kingdom. It's an unseen kingdom in many ways.

Many people look at us and they just go, Oh, you religious people, you know, you're just so weird, so different. They don't realize we were just dead people in bondage to sin. God called us out.

He's been bringing us in. He's been fighting for us. He rules in our hearts.

We're just subjects of the king of kings in the kingdom of heaven. Someday he'll come back and establish that throne and all that is unseen, but real will be real and visible. That's all involved in these promises to David.

The kingdom is going to be an everlasting kingdom. Well, it's great to be in a kingdom that never fades and never passes, especially having such a king as we have. Man gets all hyped and excited over political kingdoms and you have political parties and political conventions.

When I was younger, I was, Oh, man, I got into that stuff. Oh, yes. Wear your button.

Shout the chant. Four more years, four more years. Our chant in this kingdom is forever, forever.

All based on the promises of God. Your kingdom shall be forever. And David said, Your words are true.

You promised this. That settles it, Lord. It shall be done.

Then in Isaiah 11, some beautiful pictures of the king who would rule this kingdom forever, the Messiah. Messiah from the Old Testament. Christ bringing the same term into the New Testament.

This king would be anointed. The Spirit of God would be upon him. This would not just be the best man ever doing the most perfect possible job ever.

This would be God the Son with the Spirit of God upon him. Isaiah 11. Look at these promises.

There shall come forth a rod from the stem of Jesse and a branch shall grow out of his roots. These roots, Jesse, then David, these roots, they go back rooted in the promises to Abraham. Genesis 12.

And this branch that would grow out of those roots, this branch coming forth by promise out of the promises to Abraham, fulfilling the promises to David. Verse 2, the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him. The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.

Oh, this mighty king who would rule the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of David that would be an everlasting kingdom. The Spirit of the Lord would rest upon him. The Spirit of the Lord shall rest.

Look at these promises. There shall come forth this branch who is Messiah and the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him. Even Jesus lived by the promises of the Father.

His coming to earth was because of a promise of the Father. His ministry on earth was not as we often picture it. Hey, this is God the Son, no problem.

He just walks around and he's God and he just does what he wants. No, he was even praying, not my will, Father, but yours be done. Sure, he was God in the flesh, but he was showing us how man was supposed to live.

He was also the perfect man. How is man to live? In abandonment to the will of God, functioning by the promises of God, empowered by the Spirit of God. And here's a promise that even the Messiah, Jesus, the Spirit of the Lord would rest upon him.

That's how he functioned in wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, and perfect fear of his Father. That is, trusting respect toward his Father. That's exactly how we're to live.

You say, yeah, but I'm not God in the flesh. No, but we have the same Spirit available to us. The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him.

Remember earlier, Isaiah 9.7, after the promise of a child is born, a son is given. Isaiah 9.11, of the increase of his government and peace, there will be no end. Upon the throne of David and over his kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever, the zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

Another promise, Isaiah 9.11, of the increase of his government and peace, there will be no end. Upon the throne of David and over his kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever, the zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this. Another promise.

How certain is it that Jesus will have an everlasting kingdom? Well, there's not even a shadow of a doubt. There's not even the room of a possibility that it will not happen. The Father has promised it.

And in case we would underestimate that, he says, the zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this. As though it isn't enough just to say, God has promised that it shall be done. That is sufficient.

But God adds, the zeal of the Lord of hosts. How would you like to have God zealously after something to do it? Not only I'm going to do it, but I'm going to do it with fervor. I think we can count it done.

Oh, what a kingdom we have. As it is mentioned at the last verse of Hebrews 12, a kingdom that cannot be shaken. Boy, it's good to be in a kingdom like that, based on the everlasting promises of our everlasting God.

The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this. Oh, what a king we have. Now in our lives and forever in the everlasting kingdom of heaven.

Isaiah 42, one through four. Look at the uniqueness and the effectiveness of our king. The king who rules our hearts even now.

In Isaiah, in the chapters of 40 and following, the Messiah is spoken of as the suffering servant, who even in Isaiah 53 is shown to die for the sins of his people. Isaiah 42, one. Behold, my servant whom I uphold, my elect one in whom my soul delights.

I have put my spirit upon him. Another indication in the New Testament of this promise that the spirit of God would be with, yes, with convicting. But then for those who respond in, for those who believe and receive, but not just dwelling in us, working upon us just as he did upon Messiah to empower.

I have put my spirit upon him. He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles. Do you ever look at the world and just get sick with all the injustice? You hear it all the time.

People saying, you know, life's not fair. Well, that's an understatement. It seems like it bounces back and forth to mankind as being unbelievably lucky.

And on the other hand, unbearably unfair. Of course, in the kingdom of heaven, neither of those apply. There's not even an ounce of room for luck in the kingdom of heaven.

All things are under the control, the work of God. But boy, at times things look unfair. Listen, how fair is it to lie about, deny, crucify and murder the king of glory.

Yet the most unfair, unjust act in the history of humanity became what God used to bring forth the most glorious gift could ever be given forgiveness and eternal life. Oh, it's so good to be in a kingdom where God's in charge of those things, where even the ugliest, the most unjust thing can become the avenue of great blessing. You ever been treated unjustly? Yeah, let me tell you about it.

And we've all got our stories too, you know, let me tell you about it. Well, no one was treated as unjustly as the Lord. But even those unfair things in our lives, God can turn those to glorious good.

Ultimately, though, he will bring forth justice to the Gentiles throughout all the nations. But don't you look forward to that day when everything that takes place will be just, will be fair, will be right. Look at our Messiah, our king, what an unusual king, unique.

He will not cry out nor raise his voice, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. When Jesus came, he didn't come screaming. He could have shouted so loud he'd have shattered every eardrum in humanity.

Hey, listen up, I'm sick of it. I'm God, now shape up. He just came like a servant walking among man and only would talk to those who would listen.

He was not there screaming and yelling and demanding. He just said, here I am and this is who I am. I know you doubt it, but you know, look, I'm walking on water, I'm raising the dead.

The promises of the prophets are being fulfilled. I am He. Look how He treated people.

A bruised reed, He will not break. It's a promise. A smoking flax, He will not quench.

What a unique king we have. Lives can get like bruised reeds. You ever feel like your life has been like that? You know, a bruised reed, a little reed by the riverside, maybe seen it.

If it gets bruised or pinched or damaged, how it just hangs over. No strength, no vitality, can't stand upright. It's just our lives get that way.

In fact, you look around humanity, there are bruised reeds everywhere you look. Lives as meager, as vulnerable as little reeds by the river. They've been beat on, knocked down, they're just kind of bent over, defeated.

Well, a bruised reed, He will not break. Naturally, after our own humanity, we're not like that. It's easy to break a bruised reed, you know.

Come across a bruised reed, you know, what is it with you? Shape up, tan-hup, you know. You're pathetic, you know. God's looking for more than that.

Come on, shape up, you know. Kidding? I'm broken. Well, a bruised reed, He won't break.

He doesn't blow away a bruised reed until it's just absolutely snapped in half. In fact, it says in Isaiah that He can make us oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified. What a King we have.

He will not break the bruised reed. In fact, He can turn that little bruised reed into an oak of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He Himself might be glorified. And a smoking flax that is a dimly burning wick, a flickering wick, He will not extinguish.

That's also unlike us in our natural humanity. You know, it's too easy for us. We come across a life that's just flickering, just smoldering there.

Child of God with hardly, man, you're the light of the world? Be serious. Come on, start blazing. Great ministry, huh? Snuffing out flickering wicks.

So easy to do that. Here's a promise of God. A flickering wick, He, our great King, will not extinguish.

Aren't you glad for that promise? Haven't you been that bruised reed at times, that flickering wick? God didn't come along and just blow you away. Rather gently, you know, fuel and fan the fire. Put us ablaze again.

What a King we have. What promises. And by His Spirit, this is the kind of ministry we can have.

Standing on His promises, we can touch lives like this. We won't bust in half bruised reeds. We won't blow away the flickering wick.

We'll be patient and tender, life-giving, not condemning. And ultimately, Isaiah 42.3, He will bring forth justice for truth. He will not fail nor be discouraged.

Failure and discouragement characterize man, not God. An easy quiz we'll have right now. Think back through your life.

Have you ever failed? No, no, think carefully. Let me rephrase the question. Have I ever failed? Here's another one.

Have you ever been discouraged? Ever? You're kidding. Real men don't get discouraged. Real t-shirt fodder, you know.

Who are we kidding? An aged teacher and feeder of the saints, I once heard it said, the number one destroyer of ministry. And my ears are perking up. What do I need to watch out for, Lord? Is it wine?

Women's song? Abuse of power? What is it? I want to be alert, Lord.

I don't want to have ministry undermined. He said, looking back over 40 some years of ministry, he said, I'd say the number one destroyer of ministry is discouragement. Oh, it just sunk like an arrow in my heart, like, oh, yes.

Boy, he nailed me. I'm not saying I'm invulnerable to those other threats. I could succumb to them, left to myself, just like any man.

But I'll tell you what's hit me the most in 29 years of teaching has been discouragement. Circumstances get so impossible, you know, you just you just get beaten down. You just feel like, Lord, there's no way on.

Well, praise God, we have a king who stood and lived and ministered. And even today is this kind of a king. He will not fail nor be discouraged.

Till he has established justice in the earth and the coastlands, all of the places of humanity shall wait for his law. What great promises. A king and a unique king.

A king like no other king is promised for us. How far will that reach? Isaiah 42,6. I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness and will hold your hand.

I will keep you and give you as a covenant to the people, as a light to the Gentiles. The kingdom of this king will extend not just to the chosen, the called, that peculiar people of God, the nation of Israel, but even in the Old Testament, in the promises to Israel, they were told and we're told. These promises will extend.

This light of the world, Messiah, will be a light to the Gentiles. Isaiah 49,6. Indeed, he says, it is too small a thing that you should be my servant.

The father speaking about his servant king, the suffering servant, Messiah. It's too small a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel. Sending Messiah to call the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Too small an assignment for this king. Not big enough. He's too great just to send out to get one nation.

No way he would be sent on a mission that small. Oh, he would restore them. He would come to call back the Jews.

To their Creator and God and Redeemer. Absolutely, he'd do that. Too small an assignment to stop there.

I will also give you as a light to the Gentiles. That you should be my salvation to the ends of the earth. This is not some great shock in the New Testament that all of a sudden, boom, you mean the Gentiles get in on this? Sure, Israel was shocked, but religious flesh is always shocked.

God, you're that good? That big? I mean, I can see how I would fit in there, but them? You save that group? That nationality? That color? That class? Oh, he gets so pompous, so arrogant. That was the tragedy of Israel. God chose them and instead of being humbled and overwhelmed, it's like, hey, hey, we're God's people.

Oh, woe unto the rest of humanity. How blind can you be? I will also give Messiah as a light to the Gentiles. The Father promising to the Son that you should be my salvation to the ends of the earth.

What a great promise that all of humanity can be brought into the work and fruit of Messiah. Those are some of the promises of God. Now let's just think for a few minutes about God's ability and his promises.

These are big promises. Not just never again a flood, but now a people will be called out. Not just the people, but when in bondage, I'll deliver them.

Not just delivered, but I'll take them into my promises. And just as Israel had a promised land to live in, we're to live in the spiritual realm of promises. The promised land is where we're to live today.

Not a geography, but a spiritual habitation of living by the promised abundant provision of the Lord. But not just that, in those promises, a king to reign forever. And not just a king, but a unique king promised to function by the power of the Spirit with wisdom and knowledge.

But a gentle king, not a harsh heavy-handed king. And not just for a little select group, but to the ends of the earth, all who will may come. Oh, what promises these are.

Well, let's reflect on his ability in connection with his promises. Jeremiah 32, 17. Many men have made promises, even worldwide promises of conquering and some even blessing.

No way, except this king, Jeremiah 32, 17. Ah, Lord God, behold, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. There is nothing too hard for you.

The creator of all, who made all, there's nothing too hard for him. Not one of these promises will stretch God's ability. God isn't straining and groaning on the throne.

Oh, why did I ever promise so big? Now I've got to do all that? Not even an ounce of that. Nothing's too difficult for him. Isaiah 32, 27.

A rhetorical question. Behold, I am the Lord, I'm Yahweh, Jehovah, the Great I Am, the Eternal One, the God of all flesh, that is, the ruler of all humanity, whether they know it or not. Is there anything too hard for me? God's in charge of all of humanity.

Yeah, even Saddam Hussein, you know. Or as someone nicknamed him, Saddam Insane. Not that he's any different than we would be left to just our flesh, you know.

But he's under the hand of God. He won't acknowledge it, sure, but there are people all over the world like that. God of all flesh.

Is there anything too hard for God? Not at all. These promises are no strain for him, nothing. Nothing is beyond the ability of God.

You may remember the promise in Matthew 19, 26. With God, all things are possible. With God, all things are possible.

And it's put the other way in Luke 1, 37. With God, nothing will be impossible. Isn't that great? God kind of gets us coming and going on that one.

With God, all things are possible. Let me put it another way. With God, nothing will be impossible.

Whatever he has said, whatever he wants to do, all of it's possible. None of it is impossible. Oh, the ability of God.

Jude 1, 24. The ability of God related to his promises. Jude 1, 24.

Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. To him be glory, dominion, power, honor. To him who is able, the ability of God.

Aren't you glad God is able to keep you from stumbling? And then to present us before the presence of his glory, joyfully, faultless, without blame, without shortcoming. Maybe this is one of the great expressions of the ability of God. Think how able God is.

Now, let it be real personal. God is able to keep you. We know what kind of guy you are.

God is able to keep you from stumbling. How able is God? Not only is he able to keep you from stumbling, he is able to take someone like you, like me, and then present us joyfully before the Father, faultless, cleansed, clean, worked on, developed, what God wants us to be. Oh, how able God is.

It's one thing to make promises, but if you aren't able to fulfill them, what good is the promise? Every promise we hear from God, may God connect it in our hearts and minds, our thinking, with his ability. How able he is. That's why these promises are so sure.

Not only do we serve a God who cannot lie, he has the ability to perform everything he has said. It doesn't stretch him, it doesn't max him out, it doesn't go beyond his capacity. How many times have you promised and found out you didn't have the resource to do it? You say, I will, and find out, oh my goodness, I'm not able.

Praise God, he's not like that. God's ability matches his promises. One more, Ephesians 3.20. Ephesians 3.20. This is one of my favorite statements of the ability of God in all of the word of God.

I love to pray with this verse in mind. Maybe you've done the same. Ephesians 3.20. The ability of God in reflection upon his promises.

Now to him who is able to do exceedingly, abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us. Again, to him be glory and honor. But the ability of God.

What is God able to do? We serve a God who is able to do not just, just what we might ask or think, but he's able to do not just abundantly above what we might ask or think, but exceedingly abundantly above. We ask here, God's able to do way more than that. Above all that we ask or think.

Let me ask you this, do you sometimes think of things and then just cannot even put them into prayer requests, they're too big? Oh man, what a thought that was. I can't ask God that. I believe we often think way beyond what we ever ask God.

Because we're kind of staggered sometimes at the thoughts that come. Maybe things God is planning in our hearts. Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart.

It's a promise. And as the Lord is our delight, sometimes in our heart he gives these desires and these thoughts come to me. Oh man, are you kidding? I think of Pastor Chuck, when his great desire was to have a church of 250 people.

You know, straining, striving, laboring, working, 10, 12, 15, 17, 18 years, you know. Just can't get way up there. I wonder if he ever had a thought.

Lord, forget this 250, how about 25,000, you know. While you're at it, maybe hundreds of churches around the world, you know. You know, you get thoughts like that and you go, oh man, no way.

Get real. Let's get back to practical praying, you know. What a fantastic picture of the ability of God.

He's able to do exceedingly abundantly beyond all we ask or think. Oh how able God is. And this is the God who promises to us the ability of God.

It goes out of sight just like his promises. Again, but a little more brief this time than last study. Just a brief reflective conclusion.

Daniel 3.17, in reflection to conclude. Daniel 3.17, some of the children of Israel ready to be cast into the fiery furnace. The world's standing against them.

They're not conforming to this world. The world doesn't like it. And says, we're going to throw you into the furnace.

And Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, they had a great answer, Daniel 3.17. If that's the case, they say, if you're going to throw us in your furnace, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning, fiery furnace. And he will deliver us from your hand, O King. Oh, how good to know the ability of God.

Often the world wants to throw us in its furnace. Often, you feel like you're in it, don't you? The heat's turned up. Everything's against you.

How good to know that our God is able to deliver us from the fiery furnace. I even like verse 18. But if not, you know, if he doesn't deliver us, let it be known to you.

It doesn't change our mind. If you throw us in there and we're burned up, well, that's it. You know? We won't worship.

We won't bend the knee to your path, world. To put that in full New Testament terms, hey, if we're in the fiery furnace, he most likely and so often does deliver us. If he doesn't, oh, how awful! There we are in his total presence forever after.

I wouldn't be surprised. If some of us are on the edge of a fiery furnace right now, or maybe some right in the middle. I know God's never blessed in our lives in walk and work and ministry ever like now, but I've never felt the heat like now ever either.

It's really true. The more we know and love and serve and want to walk with the Lord, and even the more he does, it's like the heat from the world comes. The world doesn't like it.

The enemy rages. Praise God he's able to deliver us. Brother, if you're on the door step, or if you've been already thrown in, what a great confession.

Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning, fiery furnace. And one last reflection, 2 Timothy 1.12, For this reason I also suffer these things. Nevertheless, I am not ashamed.

For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep what I have committed to him until that day. Oh, for the family of God, for the brothers, the sisters, the children of the king. There will be things we suffer at times, but we don't have to be ashamed.

There's a carnal, fleshly, self-centered theology that if you're suffering, you're saying it wrong, believing it wrong, or doing it wrong. Yeah, sometimes that's true. Sure, we can create our own problems and suffering, but sometimes there's just suffering in doing right.

Nevertheless, we don't have to be ashamed. We don't have to be ashamed to say, hey, things are tough right now. I'm hurting bad.

Why need we not be ashamed? Because we can also learn to say this, I know whom I have believed. I'm getting to know the God in whom I put my faith. You know what that eventuates in? A persuasion.

And I am persuaded that he is able. The more we get acquainted with the God we've come to trust, the more we are convinced that he's able. Able to what? To keep, to guard, to protect, to take care of, to manage whatever I commit to him right up until the day of Christ's return.

We're learning to believe in our God, trust in him. And as we walk with him, we're beginning to get acquainted with him, getting to know him, intimately fellowshiping with, learning who he is and what he's like. And all that does, it just persuades us, ooh, this God, I'm getting to know him.

Ooh, look how able he is. Look at his promises. You know what? I'm convinced.

I'm more persuaded than ever. He is able to what? Take care of anything you and I are willing to commit to him. And maybe there are things today, maybe there are things right now as we conclude in prayer, that God wants us to commit to him, to take care of, to handle, to manage, to work through.

To work out, to work in. If we'll just commit them to him, he'll handle it even right up until the very day Jesus Christ comes back. See, the promises of God are matched by the ability of God.

Let's pray together. Lord God, the God of promise, take the things right now that you're stirring in our hearts, the matters that we ought to commit to you, entrust to you, lay in your lap, leave in your hands, and just on the acquaintanceship you've given us through the years, just be persuaded that you're able, you can handle these things, Lord, as impossible as they look at times. You can take care of them all the way up until the return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So Lord, we glorify you, we magnify you, we take your promises, we let you match them with your ability, and we say Lord, we trust you. And we stand at peace in Jesus' name. Amen.

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