

# Laying hold of Promises

by Duane Troyer

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*This sermon emphasizes the importance of holding onto hope and faith in God's promises, even in the midst of despair and suffering. It explores the realities of agony and misery, both in personal lives and in the state of the world, while highlighting the need to trust in God's faithfulness and seek Him diligently. The message draws parallels between the lamentations of Jeremiah and the ultimate hope found in the New Jerusalem, pointing to the assurance of God's mercy and the restoration He promises.*

**Scripture:** Lamentations 3:21, Revelation 21:1, Psalms 89:1, 1 Corinthians 6:19

**Topics:** "Hope in Despair", "Faithfulness of God"

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## Description

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## Transcript

I greet everybody in Jesus name and glad, glad to see you all. Well, let's start with prayer. Are there any particular, specific prayer requests somebody might have? Let's stand.

Our father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, here on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors, and lead us not into temptation.

Deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Father, we ask that you be with us today. Keep us, keep us in your care.

Help our thoughts and hearts to be toward you, and our ears to be open to you. Our hearts to be soft and understanding. Pray that you would kindle a fire among us and a love for each other.

Or fan it, what is there, that it could grow and we could be faithful witnesses of you. We pray for just the meeting today, be with us. Be with brother Adlai as he shares later and give him words that we need to hear.

Just help us as we read your word here and give us understanding. In Jesus name, Amen. I'm just going to do a little reading here this morning.

Maybe something will come to mind to share. And if not, maybe you all have something to share. I started preparing a certain subject this morning.

Then I just thought it needed to wait for a main message sometime. I didn't know how to pack it all into a short message. Then I didn't know what to talk about, so I've been going back and forth about it until the last few minutes.

But I think I'll share it later. Because I think it's too important of a subject to just lightly skim over it. I'm just going to read the last couple chapters in the Revelation of John.

These are things we should often remember and often think of. Is the great day of the coming of the Lord. When time shall be no more.

When we will no longer see in part and darkly. When God will ultimately separate the sheep from the goats. The light from the darkness.

The things that defile from the things that are right. It's good for us to often think about the finality of that. The promises involved in that.

We can read these things and they can be terrifying. But we can read these things and see the promises. I think it's the Apostle Peter that says something about great and precious promises.

Maybe I can find it real quick. Seeing that his divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness through the true knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and excellence. For by these he has granted to us his precious and magnificent promises.

So that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. There's great and precious promises that the Lord gives. That we can lay hold of.

And that we do well not to forget. Because if there's no promise. I think it doesn't Paul say somewhere.

If there's no resurrection we are of all men most miserable. Consider the fact that true believers are. They take things seriously.

They see not only the love and the mercies of God. But they see the severity of God. And they have a fear of God.

They have a conscience that's still prickable. And so it's not a light thing to them when something is convicting. And so they take things seriously.

And therefore it's not uncommon for believers. Saints. Pious people to like.

To like often really. Oh I don't know what the word is. To like.

To agonize to agonize over. Their own condition to agonize over the things around them. You look around the earth and this is just this is such a sin curse place.

And and and it creates this agony. If if that doesn't happen like if that never happens to ever if we can go through. It's it's kind of it's kind of nice to be around happy go lucky people.

But. But if somebody can just always go through life and just. They're just never troubled by by the.

By the state of things around them like I just. I start wondering about the seriousness of. Of.

Of what they believe or. And please don't get me wrong I don't think it's right. And here's the whole thing like OK here's the whole point.

I don't I didn't have this plan but the whole the whole point of what I'm saying about promises is like. So so we can we can see that we can we can we can take this seriously and we can. We can see the affliction in the world the oppression in the world the sin in our own lives.

The the the failures. And we can despair. Or.

We can also lay hold of promises that the Lord has given us and keep from despairing and just and just hang in there. And trust him and be faithful to him and let him work these things out. If God never expects us or intends that we're going to we're going to clean up this whole world.

He doesn't he doesn't expect us or is going to judge us for not. For not creating some kind of. Flawless utopia here.

He he's not looking for that. I mean but but here's the promise. He will bring that right.

Eventually we will be delivered from this body. We will be delivered from this earth. And.

And these are promises. If if we stay faithful to him and if we and I think we have to lay hold of those promises the first time that I ever. The first time that I ever read.

The Pilgrim's Progress. That that part where where Christian and hopeful ended up. In.

They ended up aside from the path and they were caught in a storm. And they ended up in in giant despair or giant Grimm's. Terrain giant despair.

Yeah giant despair. And he he got them and put them lock them up in Doubting Castle. And.

And every day he would come down there and. I haven't read this in a long time but but he would come down there and he'd he'd. You know just tell them what miserable creatures they are how utterly hopeless it is there.

And he laid before them weapons. That and enticing them to just. End their misery because you know what you're never getting out of here.

And. And Christian. He would have done it.

Every day. The giant would come and he'd be he'd be furious that that they were still alive and and. And he he torment them again.

And. But but they hung in there with a little bit of help from hopeful. They just didn't do it until one day.

It dawned on Christian. He has a key on him. That may just unlock the door to this castle this dungeon.

And it did he. It dawned on him and he he thought he'd try it and it just. No hesitation it it unlocked the door and the door swung open and it was bright and sunny outside.

And they made their escape. And giant grim when he. Giant despair.

When he go ahead. OK maybe so. OK that's good.

That's good that's a good point it didn't open easy to start with it was rusty it was creaky they had to work it. But. But then then when they were on the outside like giant despair.

Found out that they're escaping and he runs out and giant despair can't operate in sunlight he's a he's a man of darkness and gloom and and whenever the sun hits his eyes he he gets fits and falls to the ground and can't can't operate anyway they make their escape. What was that key that that Christian had it was called promise the key was called promise and I. I think maybe the first time I read that I don't know I must have been a teenager because I read that book when I was young. But it.

It just spoke so loud I thought the allegory was so perfect even without getting into it even all how the circumstances that led up to them. Being beside the path. And now sometimes sometimes we'll watch.

Little videos of the pilgrims progress and I think all of them don't do any justice whatsoever to that part of the story the thing that the way that thing impressed on my mind what. The allegorical or the truth of that allegory like I always see the videos of that part and I think it's such a such a miserable. Attempt at it at at showing what I what I think happened there OK but my whole point in that is that like.

The true Christian is serious he doesn't take Jesus words lightly he doesn't take the he doesn't take the judgments that the. Consequences the finality of of death he doesn't take those things lightly and therefore. It is not uncommon and we see this through scripture we see this.

Over and over really godly men who. Who got to points where they were like Lord take me I just want to be delivered from this earth we see it in Elijah. We see it in Jeremiah we see.

In. If you're at all familiar familiar with the book of Tobit like. The young Tobit and Sarah.

Both wanted this thing they both they both wanted to be delivered they asked God for it but then they left it in his hands. And. Paul Paul makes mention of those kind of things Moses does.

I almost think it'd be safe to say probably. Most of the men of God that we have a pretty pretty pretty long description or good description of their life like would sometimes I get to this point in their life where they just. The suffering was great the grief was great.

And and as Paul says if if we had no hope of a resurrection we would be of all men most miserable. Oh. Probably.

Yeah. But but let me just let me just emphasize this point like if. We do have these great and precious promises that.

That. That we must lay hold of. If.

If we don't want to end up a victim. A complete victim. Of of doubting castle.

OK so I feel like I've gone too far now I've gone too far. Too far down down some of the thoughts I was having. I'm going to I'm going to keep.

Keep I'm going to read a passage. That that I had thought to read and now just a few minutes ago I said I changed my mind. I'm going to read it.

Out of a book out of maybe one of the least read books in the scripture. In fact. I don't remember ever hearing a sermon out of this book.

Oh. I'm sure it's happened I just haven't heard one. I think for the most part it's such a gloomy book that most people don't like it.

It's the lamentation of Jeremiah. But. I see something in there and I saw something in there that really like.

Spoke to me. This morning. I'm going to read portions of chapter 1 2 and 3 but for the sake of time I'm not going to read the whole thing.

And so I'm going to start here at 1 and I'm going to just going to read some of the verses. OK. And here's what I want you to do like.

Try. OK. Here's Jeremiah.

He sees. He sees the ruin of Jerusalem coming. And he talks about and he warns about it.

And. And. And then he sees it happen right before his eyes.

He sees it happen. Jerusalem. This is the city of God.

This is Zion. Right. This is the place where.

God showed his glory where men worked and traded and built. This is the place where old men told stories and young men. Children played and it was full of life and there was meaning to life.

This was. This was. This was Zion.

This was Jerusalem. And now. Now it's like.

It's. It's desolate. It's in ruins.

It's. It's in heaps of ashes that the buildings that remain standing look hollow. It's quiet.

It's eerie. Here and there an owl screeches. A raven calls.

Vultures climb over skeletons. It's. Totally.

It's totally miserable. Right. No wonder Jeremiah sits down and weeps.

OK. And here's this song of lamentation that he writes. But.

But as I read these I would like to encourage us. OK. So.

So here's what happens. With. With me like.

I look around at the state of. Christianity in general. And it.

It looks kind of like this. Just. What has happened.

If. If you read through. I used to.

Well I still do. If you read through history and you read of some of the. Movements.

That. That swept through areas like wildfire and people. People.

Came to the knowledge of truth and. And there was righteousness and godliness and the world was shook by people and. And if you long for that thing and you look at the state of.

At the state of Christianity now it's. It's just this. Fragmented.

Pitiful. Spotty little. Groups.

And yes they're faithful they're glorious they're good to be around but. But still like. It's lamentable.

And to think that like. Even there like. That.

There's apostasy and there's falling away and there's. There's men who we thought were so faithful. Crumble and succumb to.

Deception and worldliness and. OK so that's that's one thing and then even just. Even then even just in our personal lives or.

In our own lives like. Sometimes things can just. Just just really like get us down.

OK so as I read this I would like for you to think less about. What was happening in Jerusalem. Back in the days of Jeremiah and more about how these words describe.

The agony. That. That we go through.

For. For whatever it is we go through whether whether it's. Your life whether it's your family life whether it's your.

Surrounding whether it's the state of. Christianity at large whether it's. Whether it's the lawlessness that's.

Coming over this land and. The gloom of. Of what looks like.

A horrible future. Any of those things. How lonely sits the city that was full of people.

How like a widow is she. Who was great among the nations the princes among the provinces has become a slave. She weeps bitterly in the night.

Her tears are on her cheeks. Among all her lovers she has none to comfort her. All her friends have dealt treacherously with her.

They have become her enemies. Judah has gone into captivity under affliction and hard servitude. She dwells among the nations she finds no rest.

All her persecutors overtook her in desire in dire straits. The road to Zion. The roads to Zion mourn because no one comes to set feasts.

All her gates are desolate. Her priests sigh. Her virgins are afflicted and she is in bitterness.

Her adversaries have become the master. Her enemies prosper. For the Lord has afflicted her because of the multitude of her transgressions.

Her children have gone into captivity before the enemy. And from the daughter of Zion all her splendor has departed. Her princes have become like deer that find no pastor.

That flee without strength before the pursuer. In the days of her affliction and roaming. Jerusalem remembers all her pleasant things that she had in the days of old.

When her people fell into the hand of the enemy with no one to help her. The adversary saw her and mocked at her downfall. The adversary has spread his hands over all her pleasant things.

For she has seen the nations enter her sanctuary. Those whom you commanded not to enter your assembly. All her people sigh.

They seek bread. They have given their valuables for food to restore life. See oh Lord and consider.

For I am scorned. It is nothing to you. All you who pass by behold and see.

If there is any sorrow like my sorrow. Which has been brought on me. Which the Lord has inflicted in the day of his fierce anger.

From above he sent fire into my bones. And it overpowered them. He has spread a net for my feet and turned me back.

He has made me desolate and faint all the day. The Lord has trampled underfoot all my mighty men in my midst. He has called an assembly against me to crush my young men.

The Lord trampled as in a winepress the virgin daughter of Judah. For these things I weep. My eye my eye overflows with water.

Because the comforter who should restore my life is far from me. My children are desolate. Because the enemy prevailed.

Zion spread out her hands but no one comforts her. The Lord has commanded concerning Jacob. That those around him become his adversaries.

Jerusalem has become an unclean thing among them. I called for my lovers. But they deceived me.

My priests and my elders breathed their last in the city. While they sought food to restore their life. See O Lord that I am in distress.

My soul is troubled. My heart is overturned within me. For I have been very rebellious.

Outside the sword bereaves me. At home it is like death. How the Lord has covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in his anger.

He cast down from heaven to the earth. The beauty of Israel. God remember his footstool in the day of his anger.

Standing like an enemy. He has bent his bow with his right hand like an adversary. He has slain all who were pleasing to his eye.

On the tent of the daughter of Zion. He has poured out his fury like fire. The Lord was like an enemy.

He has swallowed up Israel. He has swallowed up all her palaces. He has destroyed her strongholds.

And his increased mourning and lamentations in the daughter of Judah. The Lord has purposed to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion. He has stretched out a line.

He has not withdrawn his hand from destroying. Therefore he has caused the rampart and wall to lament. They languish together.

Her gates have sunk into the ground. He has destroyed and broken her bars. Her kings and her princes are among the nations.

The law is no more. And her prophets find no vision from the Lord. The elders of the daughter of Zion sit on the ground and keep silent.

They throw dust on their heads. And gird themselves with sackcloth. The virgins of Jerusalem bow their heads to the ground.

My eyes fail with tears. My heart is troubled. My bile is poured on the ground.

Because of the destruction of the daughters of my people. Because the children and the infants faint in the streets of the city. They say to their mothers, where is grain and wine? As they swoon like the wounded in the streets of the city.

As their life is poured out in their mother's bosom. How shall I console you? To what shall I liken you, O daughter of Jerusalem? What shall I compare with you? That I may comfort you, O virgin daughter of Zion. For your ruin is spread wide as the sea.

Who can heal you? All who pass by clap their hands at you. They hiss and shake their heads at the daughters of Jerusalem. Is this the city that is called the perfection of beauty? The joy of the whole earth? All your enemies have opened their mouth against you.

They hiss and gnash their teeth. They say, we have swallowed her up. Surely this is the day we have waited for.

We have found it. We have seen it. Their heart cried out to the Lord.

O wall of daughter of Zion. Let tears run down like a river day and night. Give yourself no relief.

Give your eyes no rest. I am the man who had seen affliction by the rod of his wrath. He has led me and made me walk in darkness and not in light.

Surely he has turned his hand against me time and time again throughout the day. He has aged my flesh and my skin and broken my bones. He has besieged me and surrounded me with bitterness and woe.

He has set me in dark places like the dead of long ago. He has hedged me in so that I cannot get out. He has made my chains heavy.

Even when I cry and shout, he shuts out my prayer. He has blocked my ways with hewn stones. He has made my paths crooked.

He has been to me a bear lying in wait like a lion in ambush. He has turned aside my ways and torn me in pieces. He has made me desolate.

He has bent his bow and set me up as a target for the arrow. He has caused the arrow of his quiver to pierce my loins. I have become the ridicule of all my people.

Their taunting song all the day. He has filled me with bitterness. He has made me drink wormwood.

He has also broken my teeth with gravel and covered me with ashes. You have moved my soul far from peace. I have forgotten prosperity.

And I said my strength and my hope have perished from the Lord. Remember my affliction and roaming and the wormwood and the gall. My soul still remembers and sinks within me.

Okay, I'm going to stop right there for a little bit. Is there any wonder we're not so fond of reading this? Like something between either just utter despair or wanting to shake Jeremiah and say, you know, this is not real. We can feel those things.

But they are real. There's a reality that settled into Jeremiah. And however we think about these situations in our own life, like that reality sets in.

But here's what I want to read. He wasn't quite done yet there. Verse 21 of chapter 3, he says this.

What I just got done reading. This, I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope. Now that, that is a whole switch of what we were just reading.

It sounded so gloomy. It sounded so agonizingly, despairingly awful. And now he says, these things, I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope.

Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed. Because his compassions fail not, they are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness.

The Lord is my portion, says my soul, therefore I hope in him. The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him. And I think, I think here's, here's what happens.

As the reality of all this misery in Zion settled into Jeremiah's heart, there was another reality that came in. And that is that he has, he has promises for those that are faithful. Regardless, regardless of what happens.

Regardless of the surrounding. Regardless of, if, how bad the affliction is. Like, there, there is a promise for those who trust in him.

Who are faithful to him. Who wait on him. Who seek him.

And, and if we can, if we can, if we believe that. Like, to not believe that is to not believe the Lord. Right? And without belief or without faith it is impossible to please him.

Like, that is why I think it is just, it is important. That, that we lay hold of these great and precious promises. And, and let that reality sink in as well as all these other realities that, that are so sobering.

And so, so severe. And, and one of these promises is that eventually we will. Like eventually, if we wait on the Lord eventually, we will be delivered.

From this sinful body. We will be delivered from this sinful earth. We will be, we will be delivered from the confusion.

From the, all the things that, that tend or that can make life meaningless or agonizing. And without those promises, without the hope of that resurrection, we are of all men most miserable. Okay.

Let me, let me read just a little portion now of the revelation here. I have not stuck this all together, but I think it is appropriate. In the revelation of John chapter 21, he says this is what John sees.

He says, then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. For the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, behold the tabernacle of God is among men. And he will dwell among them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be among them. And he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and there will no longer be any death.

There will no longer be any mourning or crying or pain. The first things have passed away. And he who sits on the throne said, behold, I make all things new.

And he said, right, for these words are faithful and true. And I'll just close there. Feel free to share any comments that you have.

I was reading along in the Septuagint and in Lamentations 3:21 where it talks about hope. It says, this will I lay up in my heart, therefore I will endure. I thought that was interesting, not interesting, but that really fit in with hope.

I never, I guess, thought that those two could be synonyms, but maybe it's just a translation. Jerusalem, they're not in exile in Babylon. And they said, Jeremiah is full of baloney, and it's going to be good news, it's going to be great news.

And then the word of the Lord comes to Jeremiah and says, now Judah's going to get it because of them. Judah's going to get it because of the false prophecies they're getting. And there was no end to it, it seems, is suffering and misery.

But the good part, like you said, there's a light at the end of the tunnel. This is not original, I'm going to say, but when you were talking about Jerusalem, and I thought the New Jerusalem, someone mentioned this, that in the promises in the covenants, rather, that when God created Adam and Eve in the garden, He wanted them to be priests, and serve in the temple, priests and priestesses, and just serve in the temple, and acknowledge God as their creator, and their lover, and their maker, and that was perfection. But then when the devil deceived them and they fell into sin, then he made a covenant with Noah and Abraham,

and then Moses, and when they couldn't keep, and Moses wanted to restore the temple, build a temple, but they couldn't keep it again, and they fell.

And I guess the two sins that Jeremiah mentions was, they have forsaken the law, and have turned to idols. And so then Moses' temple, I mean, Moses, the people, they were thrown out, put into captivity, Moses' law, and Jesus came in the scene, and then He said, He's going to build a new temple, and that new temple is us, and we're the temple, we're parts of this, don't you know that your body, how does He say it? That you are part, how does He say that? 1 Corinthians 3, 1 Corinthians 6, that your body is a temple, our body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. And so that's the hope that we have, the covenant relationship.

Probably one of the favorite Psalms that is quoted is Psalm 89, I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever, with my mouth I'll make my known. And it's such a beautiful thing, and then it starts out so positive, but how does it end? Well, they're in captivity over in Babylon. When? Why? How come? And so, but it starts out in a beautiful note, but they're in captivity.

The Lord be magnified. I didn't have anything to add, I just wanted to say thanks, I really appreciate that. Something to look forward to, the hope at the end of the tunnel.

Yeah, I just wanted to say thank you, I appreciate that, God bless you. Yeah, I want to say amen, thank you for the message. A lot of the sentiments that were being explained today about how, I was thinking about the Pilgrim's Progress section about having the hope, the key, to get out of their disparaging situation.

I don't know if anybody, anybody that didn't grow up kind of having a Christian background, if they could see or pay attention to the disparaging things that are going on in the earth, without actually believing in God, or without seeing that hope or that truth, then it is just that, it is disparaging, and it is, and that's why I think, just like maybe people wouldn't like to pay attention to lamentations, I think people will do it in other ways in reality, like maybe they might distract themselves with football or everyday activity, keep themselves so busy that they don't have to pay attention to the pains or the sufferings of their neighbors. And even if they could see these things, whether or not they would have enough effort put forward to actually do something about it, or to help somebody, but I think God not only gives us the courage to be able to fight against the ways of wickedness, but to see past all the deception that's in the world, that keeps you from seeing these things, that makes it a reality, and why we even recognize that we need a hope, we need a key, we need that salvation. And so, without that hope, then all you have is darkness, even if you can see it.

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