

# A Growth That Endures...



A VERSE BY  
VERSE  
EXPOSITION  
OF THE  
EPISTLE OF  
2ND PETER

## The Promises of God 2 Peter 1:4 (314, 717)

In these early sermons from II Peter I want to repeat a few strategic paragraphs with the aim of lodging the purpose and point of this letter firmly in your minds. Subversive agents of the devil had infiltrated the young churches in Asia Minor. Ignorant and arrogant men who obscured, maligned, and twisted the truth of the gospel had gained a hearing among the Christians. This introduction of doctrinal error and reckless living was beginning to undermine the stability of the community of faith. Peter writes to counter this deadly influence. His strategy is to establish believers so firmly in the gospel - to familiarize them so thoroughly with the truth - that error (either in doctrine or practice) would be readily detected and resisted. Indeed, the point of this entire letter is this: **growth in the truth of the gospel fortifies the church against the destabilizing influence of error.**

Peter's aim, then, is to stabilize Christians. His first step in this stabilization process, outlined in **verses 1 and 2**, is to establish in the hearts and minds of these beleaguered saints the fact that the gospel they have received, believed,

lived, and shared with others is the genuine, original, authentic apostolic gospel. Peter writes, *Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ: 2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.*

In **verse 3** Peter further stabilizes his readers. Verse 3 is God's pledge, God's confirmation, that He has already made arrangements for and provided everything we need to live the life to which He has called us. **2 Peter 1:3** says, *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.* I suggested that the big idea of verse 3 is this: **the gospel is sufficient to sustain your spiritual life.**

Now, in **verse 4** Peter continues to speak of the provision God has made for us. His focus is on the promises of God. **4** *For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.*

*Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* defines a promise as "a legally binding declaration that gives the person to whom it is made a right to expect or claim the performance or forbearance of a specified act." Promises give strength to the very fabric of our social life. Let me illustrate. The stability of marriage, for example, is based on a promise. "I, John, take thee, Jane; to be my wedded wife; And I do **promise** and **covenant**; Before God and these witnesses; To be thy loving and faithful husband; In plenty and in want; In joy and in sorrow; In sickness and in health; As long as we both shall live." The vitality of commerce

is based upon promises. Take, for example, a Deed of Trust? “This debt is evidenced by Borrowers note dated the same as this Security Instrument, which provides for monthly payments, with the full debt, if not paid earlier, due and payable on August 6, 2025.” The performance of everyday services is based upon promises. What about a service agreement with the termite company? “Effective February 6, 2005 through February 6, 2006, for the sum of \$1000, Terminix will provide the necessary service to protect the identified property against the attack of subterranean termites.” Essentially, these are all promises.

Similarly the stability of our spiritual life is based upon promises as well. Indeed, my big idea for today is this: **Gospel promises are the means God uses to work comfort and assurance in His children.** God does not promise us the benefits of the world. Nowhere does God promise us wealth, health, position, or an end of trouble, although it may please Him to grant them to us in this life. Jesus taught in **John 18:36a**, *My kingdom is not of this world.* Bryan Chapell says, “The promises of grace are not recorded in a bankbook, they do not rely on a doctor’s diagnosis, and difficulty cannot erase them ... [they] focus on the genuine benefits of grace” (*In the Grip of Grace*. p. 13).

What do we mean by a Biblical promise? Promises are the covenanted (pledged) spiritual benefits that flow to the elect of God by His free grace alone. The idea of God’s promises was deeply entrenched in the faith of the Old Testament. A feature of early Christian preaching was the proclamation (**Acts 13:32**) that what God had promised to the fathers He had now fulfilled in Christ. In view of the skepticism surrounding the doctrine of last things, Peter is thinking of the promises of Christ’s Second Coming (**1:16; 3:4, 9, 12**), of the establishment of a new heaven and earth (**3:13**, *his promise*), and of entrance into Christ’s kingdom

(1:11). Peter is saying that these are firmly guaranteed and should serve as the basis for the believer's hope and as the motivation for godly living.

Let's look at the first phrase in verse 4. **For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises. For by these.** Promises find their source in the perfections of God. *These* refers to the *glory and excellence* mentioned at the end of **verse 3**. God's promises are backed by His power. God has the power to perform all that He has promised. **Jeremiah 32:17**, *Ah Lord GOD! Behold, Thou hast made the heavens and the earth by Thy great power and by Thine outstretched arm! Nothing is too difficult for Thee.* In **Isaiah 46:11cd**, God says, *"My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure."* God's promises are backed by His truth. Promises are given with infinite sincerity. Nothing is more reliable than a promise made by the Living, and True God. **Num. 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 it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?*

**He has granted to us.** Promises are gifts to us from God. Indeed, promises are the heritage of the elect of God. Listen to the language from the first will we had drawn up after Julia and I were married. "I, George Thomas Ferrell, a resident of Davidson County, Tennessee, being of sound mind (*I used to have one of those*) and disposing memory, do hereby make, publish and declare this to be my Last Will and Testament ... I hereby give, devise and bequeath to my wife, Julia Cummings Ferrell, all my tangible property." That promise was made to a specific individual. No one but my elect bride was entitled to my estate. Promises are the blessed and exclusive heritage of the elect of God.

The value of God's promises is beyond estimation. Indeed, they are **precious and magnificent promises**. **Psalm 19:7-10**, *The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether. They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.*

The promises of God are highly valued on account of the sheer number of them. There are 31,173 verses in the Bible. Someone has said that, of those, 30,000 are promises. Mr. Everet R. Storms estimated that there are 7,487 promises by God to man. Lockyer observes that almost every verse of the 2,461 forming the **Psalms** is a potential promise. The very least that may be said is that God is benevolent and generous.

The promises of God are highly valued on account of the certainty of them. **I Kings 8:56**, *Blessed be the LORD, who has given rest to His people Israel, according to all that He promised; not one word has failed of all His good promise, which He promised through Moses His servant.* Does the thought not whet your spiritual appetite? Does it not overshadow your desire for position or possessions? To wake up tomorrow with the confidence filling your soul that every word of God is absolutely certain and trustworthy.

The promises of God are highly valued on account of the immutability (unchangeableness) of them. **Psalm 33:11**, *The counsel of the Lord stands forever.* **Isaiah 40:8**, *The grass withers, the flower fades but the word of our God stands forever.*

The promises of God are highly valued on account of the sanctifying influence they have upon the believer. Promises encourage. Promises console. Promises instruct. Indeed, the next phrase speaks of the design of these promises.

**Gospel promises are the means God uses to work comfort and assurance in His children.** Indeed, the fulfillment of the promises of God will result in believers becoming *sharers of the divine nature*. **In order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.** Now what does this mean?

The fallen heart of man entertains all sorts of fanciful notions of how men can intersect with, have communion with, experience, or make contact with the divine. Some say we become gods ourselves; some that we can know God through mystical experiences; some that we know God through meditation, visions, higher consciousness, and other such things. Peter is not suggesting that we become part of the essence of God. That's theological nonsense. When Peter says we *share in the divine nature* he means that we enter into true union with Christ. Using the term Paul uses, we are *in Christ* (see **Rom. 8:9; Gal. 2:20; I John 5:1; I Pet. 1:23**). In **I Corinthians 5:17** he says, *Therefore, if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come*. The Lord's Supper itself speaks of that very union. Back in **I Peter 4:13** Peter speaks of being *partakers of Christ's suffering*. In **I Peter 5:1** he says we shall be *partakers of the glory that shall be revealed*. All of this is because we are partakers of Christ. To repent, believe and be baptized into Christ by the Spirit is to enter into a totally new relationship with God. It is one in which He becomes our father and we members of His family (see Lucas & Green, p. 74). It is one in which Christ's

fortunes are our fortunes. It is one is which we enjoy fellowship with God through Christ (**I John 1:3**).

Peter argues that it is by these same gospel promises that believers have **escaped the corruption that in the world**. It is by trusting Christ that sinners are freed from the dispositions and bondage to sinful desires in which unregenerate men live. Paul writes, *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death* (**Rom. 8:1-2**).

Now let's spend a few minutes considering the practical implications for us. I want to set before you two questions that are best answered together. One, do we have a part in the process? Some promises of God are **absolute**. **Hebrews 13:5** ... *"I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU."* Other promises require diligence and endurance to become real in our experience. Spurgeon believed all the promises of God and that many of them he had personally tried and proved. He said, "I have seen that they are true, for they have been fulfilled in me."

**Hebrews 6:11-12**, *And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.* **Hebrews 6:15**, *And thus, having patiently waited, he obtained the promise.* **Hebrews 10:36**, *For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised.*

Promises are not simply comforting thoughts to be read in the morning or at bedtime. They are to be aggressively pursued and diligently applied. How does

this work? How do we secure many of the Bible's promises and make them our very own? **First**, acquaint yourself with the promise(s) of God. God's promises are lodged in the Scripture. We have no promise that is not recorded for us in ink on paper. Lockyer says, "All God's promises are in written form in His Word, which is the only authentic revelation of the divine mind and purpose the world has" (*All the Promises of the Bible* p. 14-15).

**Second**, meet the promise with faith. Part of Berkhof's definition of faith reads like this ... *and a hearty reliance upon the promises of God in Christ*. Of Abraham **Romans 4:19-21** says, *and without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb; yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief, but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what He had promised, He was able also to perform*. Mary, the mother of Jesus said, "Behold, the bond-slave of the Lord; be it done to me according to your word" (**Luke 1:38**). Elizabeth said of Mary, "And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what had been spoken to her by the Lord" (**Luke 1:45**).

**Third**, obey any precept attached to the promise. **Exodus 24:7**, *Then he (Moses) took the book of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the people and they said, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do and we will be obedient!"* **Ephesians 6:1-3** *Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER (which is the first commandment with a promise), THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH YOU, AND THAT YOU MAY LIVE LONG ON THE EARTH.*

**Fourth**, pray the promise back to God. When we pray God's promises back to Him, three things happen. First, God's Word is magnified. Second, God's

promises begin to shape and govern our prayers. W. C. Proctor in Lockyer's *All the Promises of the Bible* says, "The promises of God should be the basis of all our prayers, for they are both our warrant for asking and our security for receiving. It is not safe for us to ask anything that lies beyond their all-encompassing scope, for we have no authority to do so; but we may confidently ask for whatever is included in them, for He never fails to fulfill them (p. 57). Third, we are moved to confidence and hope in God.

Imagine two men - one a humble believer in Jesus Christ who served Jesus faithfully and looked forward to the day when he would see His Savior. The other, a good man by human standards, but one who had rejected the Master. He had never repented of his sin and embraced Jesus but still entertained fond hopes of eternal blessedness in heaven. Both men died and were handed envelopes that contained the promises of God concerning them.

The first unfolded the divine document and (to his eternal joy) read, "*He who overcomes shall inherit these things, and I will be His God and He will be my Son*" (**Rev. 21:7**). The second man, expecting similar good news, (to his utter despair) read God's promise to him. "*But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death*" (**Rev. 21:8**). What accounted for the difference? **II Corinthians 1:20** explains it. *For as many as may be the promises of God, in Him they are yes.* My dear friend, the promises of God are the heritage of those upon whom God has set His affection - those who are *in Christ*. They are the covenanted benefits God has granted to all who have received Jesus Christ as He is offered in the gospel.

I invite all who have never placed your trust in Christ for salvation to do so this morning. Our Lord's promise to those of you who do is sure: *"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life and does not come into judgment but has passed out of death into life"* (**John 5:24**).

**Benediction (Romans 16:24-25, 27)**

Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ ... to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever ... The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

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### Review

The point of this entire letter is this:

\_\_\_\_\_ **in the truth of the gospel** \_\_\_\_\_ **the church**  
**against the** \_\_\_\_\_ **influence of error.**

The big idea of verse 3 is this:

**the gospel is** \_\_\_\_\_ **to** \_\_\_\_\_ **your spiritual life.**

**II Peter 1:4** ... *For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.*

A promise is “a legally binding declaration that gives the person to whom it is made a right to expect or claim the performance or forbearance of a specified act” (Webster’s).

The big idea for today is this:

**gospel promises are the means God uses to work** \_\_\_\_\_  
**and** \_\_\_\_\_ **in His children.**

### What do we mean by a Biblical promise?

Promises are the covenanted (pledged) spiritual \_\_\_\_\_ that flow  
to the \_\_\_\_\_ of God by His free grace alone.

**For by these**

Promises find their source in the \_\_\_\_\_ of God.  
God's promises are backed by His \_\_\_\_\_ (**Jer. 32:17; Is. 46:11cd**).  
God's promises are backed by His \_\_\_\_\_ (**Num. 23:19**).

**He has granted to us**

Promises are \_\_\_\_\_ to us from God (*granted*). Indeed, promises are the heritage of the elect of God (*to us*).

**precious and magnificent promises**

The \_\_\_\_\_ of God's promises is beyond estimation (**Ps. 19:7-10**).  
The promises of God are highly valued on account of the sheer number of them ... on account of the \_\_\_\_\_ of them (**I Kings 8:56**) ... on account of the immutability (unchangeableness) of them (**Ps. 33:11; Is. 40:8**) ... on account of the sanctifying \_\_\_\_\_ they have upon the believer.

**In order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust**

When Peter says we *share in the divine nature* he means that we enter into true \_\_\_\_\_ with Christ. Using the term Paul uses, we are *in Christ* (see **Rom. 8:9; II Cor. 5:17; Gal. 2:20; I John 5:1; I Pet. 1:23** ... see **I Peter 4:13 and 5:1 ... I John 1:3**).

Practical implications for us.

Some promises of God are **absolute** (**Heb. 13:5**).  
Other promises require \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ to become real in our experience (**Heb. 6:11-12, 15, 10:36**).

How do we secure many of the Bible's promises and make them our very own?

- First**, \_\_\_\_\_ yourself with the promise(s) of God.  
**Second**, meet the promise with \_\_\_\_\_ (**Rom. 4:19-21; Lu. 1:38, 45**).  
**Third**, \_\_\_\_\_ any precept attached to the promise (**Ex. 24:7; Eph. 6:1-3**).  
**Fourth**, \_\_\_\_\_ the promise back to God.

**Two men**

*For as many as may be the promises of God, in Him they are yes* (**II Cor. 1:20**).

**Our Lord's promise to all who place their trust in Christ:**

*"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life and does not come into judgment but has passed out of death into life"*  
(**John 5:24**).