

**THE
BON AIR
PULPIT**

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Scripture: II Peter 1:4

**Sermon: *Building Our Lives
on God's Promises***

Take your Bible, and turn to the book of Second Peter, Chapter 1. There are verses that we often read over. We are kind of ready to read onto something else, and this is one of them. I want us to take a moment not to read over it, but let it speak to our lives today. You are going to hear two great concepts about God. One is His great power, and second is what these verses call His precious promises. I want you to see how both of those will work in your life.

Beginning in verse 3, chapter 1, II Peter. *His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him to called us by His own glory and goodness. His power will give you everything you need.*

The second thing He said: *Through these His goodness and His glory, He has given His very great and precious promises so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.*

In the very first pages of the Bible we are told about man's turning away from God. But we are also told that God came looking for those people. And we understand from that story at the very first of scripture all the way through the Bible that this is the way God works. God works when people turn away from Him. He comes looking for them; He cares for them; He works in their life, trying to bring them back unto Himself.

Also, in that story we learn a second pattern about God. He turns, in Genesis 3, verse 15, and gives what is called the first promise in the Bible. The first promise says this to the woman. *Woman, you were the one who listened first to the temptation of the evil one, but through you, the woman, there is going to come one who is going to crush evil in the world.* What happened when God said that was what I call the power of promise. ? The power of promise changes the whole circumstance, because they began to understand that evil was not going to triumph but that God was, that one day, He was going to send His Son, and His Son was going to be the one who would destroy evil in the world. We move from guilt to hope. It made the difference in the fact that every parent began to look at their child and say, you are the one who may have great possibilities of God, and every parent began to say, you may be the one that God has sent into the world. What God did at that first story in the Bible, He has done all the way through the scriptures so that people tell us that there are now over 3,000 promises in the Bible. What you can do, you could take a promise a day for nearly 10 years, and not have to claim the same promise over. God has just said I am going to give promise after promise after promise. Now what He wants you to do is, He wants you to build your life on His promises. So often we think about building our life upon His commands. While that is necessary, we often neglect the fact that we are to build our life on His promises.

The person who did that first and best for us was a man by the name of Abraham. Abraham, you recall, received a promise from God. He is through you, I am going to build a great nation. You are going to have children, and their children are going to have children, and one day they are going to become a great people of God. You might recall every day he said maybe today my wife will come and tell me she is expecting. But Abraham grew to be 100 years old. His wife was 90 years old. Amazingly, they still kept believing, believing

the promise. I want to read for you out of the Book of Romans what they said about their belief. Again all hope--you bet! Against all hope, Abraham believed and became the father of many nations just as God said your offspring is going to be many. Listen--without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead, because he was 100, and Sarah's womb was dead. But listen to what he said, yet he did not waiver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith, and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God has power to do what He promised. Here was a man who literally built his future on what God had told him in the past. He built his life on the promises of God.

What God wants to do in your life is for you to understand these promises, for you, like an Abraham, to be able to say, " God, I believe you have the power to be able, to keep your word to me, and I can live my life in light of what you've said."

A good illustration of that is in the New Testament. It is in the last part of the Book of Matthew, Chapter 28, words that most of the people in this room know. It starts off by saying this: Jesus is resurrected from the dead. He says: *All authority is given to me in heaven and in earth.* So there are some things you need to know. Then He said, *I want you to go into all the world.* There are some things that you ought to do, but the verses end this way: *And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world.* There are some things that you build your life on. What God wants you to do today is start afresh, claiming His word, claiming his promises. You may be like Abraham in that you don't see how it is coming to pass, but you keep on with faith believing that God can do what He says. When you begin to do that, then you begin to find a foundation upon which you can build all of your life together.

When God gave us his promises, he also warned us about something I want to help make

clear in your life. He began to warn us about what we call presumption. Let me give you an illustration. When Jesus was on earth, you recall that one of his temptations from the devil was that he took him up to the top of the temple which overlooked a huge ravine, and he said I tell you what you ought to do. You jump, and I believe that God's angels will be there to keep you from hitting the ground. And Jesus turned to him and said, you need to know, devil, that the Bible says you should not tempt God. Let me show you how that would work in your life. You may come to me and say I would like a ladder, and I would like to get to the top of our steeple. And to prove God, I am going to jump off the steeple, and God is going to keep me from hitting the ground. If I let you do that, let me tell you what is going to happen in about 5 seconds after you jump. You will be in no position to argue with me. Why is that true? Because God never promised that you can jump off of buildings and fly like a bird. There is presumption. But I tell you what God did promise. He did promise that He would never leave you, He would never forsake you, that He would provide every need of your life, and you can build your life on that.

He said, let me tell you what will happen if you build your life on God. One, you will begin to participate with God. You will begin to understand who God is. He is the God who makes and keeps promises. As you claim them and build your life on them, then you begin to know who He is. And the second thing He said it will do, it will keep you from being drawn away by this world. Why is that true? The reason it is true is because you will begin to sense that there are some things that are more important than anything this world can offer. When your life is built on the promises of God, nothing else really seems that important.

It is important as you are going to build your life on the promises of God to understand something very, very important. It is important because you are made in the image of God, God made us to also make and keep promises. We are the only thing that God created that can make and keep promises. That is because we are like God.

So we may keep promises all the time. In fact, if you stop to think about it just for a moment, most of your life is lived in promises that you make. I will be there. The game is at two o'clock, right? I will be there. I will pay that on time. I will be at work next Monday. I will be faithful to you. In fact, most of your life is built upon how well you make and how well you keep your word.

Yesterday we had the wonderful privilege of having one of America's premiere Christian psychiatrists speak to our couples. He was talking about building in your children integrity. My ears really picked up when he turned and said let me tell you what integrity is. Integrity is being able to tell the truth. Every child needs to know how to tell the truth. Integrity is taking responsibility for your own actions, not blaming everybody else, responsibility for your own actions. Then he said, integrity is being able to keep your promise. Have you ever played this little game, "Mom, I'm going to do it." And you have your fingers crossed behind your back. What you meant was I am saying it, but I really don't mean it. The sickness in America is we keep having our fingers crossed. We say with our mouth, but we have no sense of making such commitments that we follow through with them with our life.

Robert Belle is one of America's best known psychologists. Several years ago he was in a speaking engagement like Mrs. Jones is here today. He made arrangements for 200 people in that community to come and have a

seminar with him. He paid the money. He said I want to do a poll. After two hours, talking with them, he said this confirms what I have found all across America, that is, people do not understand what it means to make commitments to God, to nation, to family, or to church. He said what they do is, I will make a commitment unless. I will make a commitment if I will make a commitment when.... everything else is done. I will make a commitment as long as nothing else comes along. We need to understand not from the pulpit but from psychologists and like the man yesterday, what they are saying is there is a sickness among us. The sickness is we keep making promises, but we do it with our fingers crossed. We somehow lack this business of making commitments that will last and last forever.

There was a sign years ago in a parade in which important people were going through the streets of San Francisco. What the sign said was this: "Nothing is worth dying for." The question is this, if nothing is worth dying for, what is worth living for? If there are not some things that you put down and say, listen, this is so important to me that I don't care what comes along, this is what guides and determines my actions. That the reason we don't call our children Judas. Judases are the kind of people who look at you in the face and say, "I am one of your disciples," but then 30 pieces of silver looks pretty good. They will sell you out in a moment. People have actually gotten so sick they use all kinds of ways to manipulate you with promises. Oh, I love you, and I am going to love you for a long time. What they mean by that is, if you will go to bed with me. This is a deal you can't pass by, and all the time they know they are selling you something inferior.

You remember in history, Chamberlain, who came back to England after he had just met for a week with Adolph Hitler. The press met him and said, "Did you reach an agreement?" He said, "Yes, there will be no war in Europe." In lied like a dog. He told you a promise, but he had no

intention of living up to it. That sickness is now in our culture. It is always I will make commitments until, or if, or when, unless something else better comes along. So what we have is a whole generation of folk who don't know what it means to say something and really mean it.

I learned this years ago in a very personal experience in my own family. My Mom woke up one morning. Her right side was paralyzed. From that moment on until she died, she had a series of strokes that made her an invalid. About five years before she died, my Father at that time was in his early 80's, was forced to place her in a nursing home where she could receive round-the-clock nursing care. I lived out of town, so not long after Mom was put in the nursing home I came down to see my Dad. He came in at six o'clock in the morning, and said, "Get up." I said, "Where are we going?" He said, "We are going to feed your Mother." So I got dressed. The nursing home was about 35 minutes away. We got in the car and went across the city. I watched my Dad feed my Mom, who could not at that time do anything for herself. So we stayed around for a while and then we left. About eleven o'clock, he said, "Are you ready to go?" I asked, "Where are we going? He said, "I am going to feed your Mother lunch." So we got in the car and made the 35 minute trip all the way back. About 4:30, when he said, "Are you ready to go?" I understood where we were going. I got in the car. We went over and he fed my Mother her evening meal. When we got home that night, you know, children have a way of becoming protective. I turned to my Dad and said, "Dad, you are in your early 80's. You can't keep doing this." I could always tell when my Dad wanted really to communicate with me. At that time I had grown kids and all the other things. He said, "Son, you know now nearly sixty years ago I married your Mother. You are a preacher. You remember what you tell people when they get married? That you will love for better, for worse, richer or poorer, in sickness and in health. If I was sick, your

Mother would come and take care of me. As long as I am able, I am going to take care of her." Then he turned and said something I have remembered all of these years. He said, "You need to understand that nearly sixty years ago, I promised." Then with a twinkle in his eye, he said, "Conversation ended."

He helped me to remember that the very basic structure is built on promise. It is built on making promises and keeping them. All of my life I have counseled people in marriage difficulty. I remember the lady who came to me who was in the process of helping to break up a marriage in our fellowship. She said to me, "I know that he is married, but if he had met me first, he would have married me instead of her. Wonderful logic! In the course of conversation I asked her a question. I said, "You know, marriages break up for lots of different reasons. What I am going to ask you isn't true of all marriages, but I just want to ask you about this circumstance. This is what I want to ask you. If he would put aside his wife for you, how do you know he won't put aside you for somebody else?" If marriage is built on nothing more than how I feel at the moment, and it is not based on I promised, then you don't have anything.

When you became a Christian, you made a promise. This was the promise: God, I will love you. I will serve you. I will obey you. Now I want to ask you. Have you kept your word, or as this scripture intimated, maybe the world has come along and you have decided that is more important than your commitment to God. It is fascinating to me that even in church where we talk about commitment and faith and promise all the time, that in our congregation we now even have to plan that if I am going to say something today, I have to work about also saying it next week, and next week, because it takes about a month to be able to

communicate to the life of our congregation, because only about 30-35% of our members are present on one Sunday of any year. Sometimes people say I went to church, and I didn't hear that. Well, then I just forgot the process I had to go through.

We asked people this past week to start to take care of kids, young people. The word you hear is I can do it one Sunday out of a month. If nothing else comes up, I will be there. I believe that what has to happen if you and I are going to understand God is you and I are going to have to get back to making commitments and promises and keeping them. How can you come to God and say, "God, you keep your word. I want to be like you, but I am not going to keep mine." You said, "I am the same yesterday, today and forever, but I wake up every morning, wondering who I am going to be."

I want to close by asking you to take a trip. The trip was you walked down an aisle of a church just like this. The pastor took you by the hand and said, "Why did you come?" And you said, "I want to accept Jesus Christ as my Savior and my Lord." And they took you up in the baptistery in a Baptist church, put you under the water and said, "You are dying to yourself, you are living to Jesus."

How are you doing with the promise? Until we come back to say, "Lord, I renew my promise to you, and I am going to serve you and be obedient to you," you and I will end up being spiritual midgets in a world that needs spiritual giants.