

People of Promise

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Ephesians 3. I want to read verses 4, 5, and 6. Ephesians 3:4 "When you read this (this epistle), you (Ephesians) can perceive my (that's the Apostle Paul)... you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel."

Here's what's happening. In verse 6, Paul is considering this miracle that the Gentiles have not been left outside. Out in the darkness just basically to rot in their sins. (Incomplete thought) I've asked people before. Number the Gentiles from the Old Testament. Perhaps all of Nineveh repented, and they were saved. Perhaps they repented and just weren't destroyed. I'm not sure. But minus Nineveh, you start numbering them. You're not going to get to the second hand. You can number them on one hand. This is really incredible. Almost unbelievable. What's happening is Gentiles like these Ephesians and like us being swept into the kingdom. Suddenly, those who had sat in darkness, we're getting opportunity to see the great light. We don't recognize this so much 2,000 years later because the gospel now has been going among the Gentiles longer than the era from Moses to Christ. So, it's not so startling to us. But Gentiles are being transported out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son. And what's happening here is it's the mystery. It was hidden for generations. It's like the sun dawning on a new day. The light is coming up. What? That Gentiles are included. It's broken upon the horizon.

Verse 6 shows this inclusion. Now you don't see this in the English. But there's three words in the Greek here that all start with the same prefix -su. "Su." The mystery is that the Gentiles are "synklēronoma," "syssōma," "symmetocha." "Su" basically corresponds to our English prefix "-sym." Symbolic. Symbol. Symphony. Symmetry. It's a prefix that means "together with." You see, each one of these words, we're together with the believing Jew in this reality. Believing Gentiles are heirs together with believing Jews. Believing Gentiles are members together with believing Jews in the body of Christ. Believing Gentiles are together with believing Jews in the promise that's in Jesus Christ. That's what's happening here.

What I want to do is draw your attention particularly to the last of the three. Three assertions. the last of the three. We are partakers - now if we want to be accurate to the Greek word here, you want to put "together" in there. The ESV doesn't have that. The King James doesn't have that. But listen to how the New American Standard captures this. The New English translation captures this by using the word "fellow partakers." The Holman Christian uses "partners." You see, that captures the idea of being together with the Jews in this. But the idea here is that we're together with the believing Jews in this promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. Now, your Bible might say "His promise." It's interesting. In the Greek, you have the article "the" promise. If you've got the King James, the Greek text it comes from says, "of Him." But no matter what text your Bible comes from, in the original, it says, "the promise." Singular. There is an article "the" promise. I find that really interesting. Paul doesn't even tell us what "the"

- what is this "the" promise? And he doesn't even tell us what it is. It's like there's one promise above every promise that stands out as "the" promise. That, to me, jumps out. Not promises plural; "the" promise. What is it? I mean, what is it? What is it that Paul wouldn't even need to define it for us? Well, he uses this same kind of language over in Galatians. He uses it in various places, but there's no place where you get such a treatment of the word as you do in Galatians 3.

So it's the book right before Ephesians, turn back to the book just before this one and go to chapter 3. I want us to get a feel for "promise." What is the promise? I'm going to show it to you right off. Even though the term promise does not show up in Galatians 3:8, that's where the promise is. And now, you'll see afterwards how he begins to call it by the term "promise." The promise is here: "The Scripture foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham saying..." Here's the promise. In the ESV, it's in quotation marks because it's a quote. This is God's promise to Abraham. "In you shall all the nations be blessed." And now, down in verses 17, 19, and 22, Paul calls it "the promise." You can see it. Look down in verse 17. This is what I mean: The law which came 430 years afterward does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God so as to make the promise void."

Now, what's going on here? What Paul is saying is this: The promise was given to Abraham; 430 later, the law is given to Moses. Now, here's what the Jew thought. The Jew thought if we keep the commandments - well, they kind of thought if you knew the commandments - if you knew the commandments and you made an effort at keeping them, that's how you ended up in glory. And he says no. No, that's not true. It was always by promise. Not by law. It was always by promise. And God didn't come along 430 years later and give a way to heaven that contradicted the way that was given to Abraham. That's basically what he's saying. But notice how he calls it "the promise."

But it's not as though Paul's so rigid, because if you look back in verse 16, notice what it says. "Now the promises..." See, there it is plural. In other words, what it seems that Paul can do is he can talk about one promise, or he can talk about a plurality of promises. But they kind of boil down to one. One promise as much as anything else. And notice this, this word comes up again in verse 19. In verse 19, "Why then the law?" Well, if the law wasn't given for us to have a code by which we could keep and get to heaven, if that's not why it was given, if the only way to heaven is by promise, by the promise that was given to Abraham, well, why did God give the law at all? And he says, "it was added because of transgressions." And you find this in various of Paul's writings. But he said basically the commandment came to increase the trespass. What it does is it shows us how sinful we are. In fact, what it does is it shows us we need another way to God than by that way.

The promise. It shows up again in verse 22. "Is the law then contrary to the promises of God?" Excuse me, I was in verse 21. Verse 22: "But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ..." See, that's what we need to get. The promise. It's by faith in Jesus Christ. And if you drop down to verse 29, "If you're Christ's, then you're Abraham's offspring, heirs according to..." Now, the article's missing here, but "promise." See, heirs according to promise. And now I want to go back to verse 8 again because I don't want you to miss the first part. "When God said to Abraham..." You see, when you go back there into the Old Testament, you're reading. You're reading in Genesis 12, Genesis 15, Genesis 17 - it

seems like it's repeated over and over. When God promises him, "I'm going to make you a blessing to all the nations," what you want to recognize is this: "This is the Scripture foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith." The promise: In you shall all the nations be blessed. But how are the nations going to be blessed? You see, how's the United States of America going to be blessed? By this. By the Gentiles justified by faith. That's what that promise means. And listen, what he says in here is that the promise was given to Abraham and his offspring. But if you notice verse 16, he says, "'not to offsprings' (plural) referring to many, but referring to one. "'And to your offspring,' who is Christ." You see, the truth here is that the promise was given to Abraham and to Christ. Christ is the recipient of this promise. We become partakers of it. We become partakers with the Jews. And the promise is this: That if we cling to Christ in faith, we'll be justified. There's the promise. You see, the promise is the blessing of all the nations.

The promise is this: That there is a way to heaven. There is a way to be justified by faith in Jesus Christ. That's the blessing. Justification by faith is the most glorious promise that can be imagined. I mean, this is it. This is it. Why? Because what God has done is He has found a way for us to be righteous without law-keeping. And that's huge! Because you see, if you keep the law, if you've kept it, you're just. You don't need any way to be justified. You are just. But if you've once broken His law - you see what God has done is He's given a promise to those who need another way. (Incomplete thought) See, the problem is, once you've broken it you can't heal that breach. There's nothing you can do once you're a law breaker to change that reality, except by the promise. That's it. See, there's no way. People who say, well, I'm a pretty good person. No, no, no. You can take that "pretty good" off the front. Because if by "pretty good," you mean that you sin sometimes, you're a law breaker. And as a law breaker, you're under a curse, and that curse says you need to keep everything written in the Book of the Law or you're going to go to hell. You're cursed. You're under the wrath of God. There is no hope. You have to keep everything. Everything. Every iota. Every jot and tittle. You cannot vary. You can't be at variance from God's law in the least bit. Why? Because to sin is to fall short of the glory of God. It is a reproach. It is an attack on His glory. And what God has said, "I give promise, Abraham, that a blessing is going to come." Oh, if Abraham could have laid his teeth into the fullness of it. It wasn't totally revealed. It was in darkness at the time. It was not revealed in other generations as it's now been revealed. Which is what? We Gentiles - there's a way to heaven. There's a way to have our sins dealt with that does not require me to keep God's law. And that is the promise.

Justification. What is that? Justification is an act - a gracious act of God, where He counts you righteous. Not because you are righteous. Not because you've done good. Not because you've kept the law. But He counts you as such based on the merits of Jesus Christ. By His obedience, by His perfections, by His obedience all the way to the cross, by His death, by His righteousness. He fulfilled all righteousness. And it's by this, oh, do you hear those words? David spoke them and they're repeated by Paul in the 4th chapter of Romans. Blessed. Blessed is that man against whom God does not count his sin. If you're good, you have no need of this. Look, if you came in here today and aside from all of this, you could say, "I'm a pretty good person." Then, you don't need this. You see, Jesus said, those who are well, they don't need a doctor. This isn't for you. God hasn't designed a way to justify people who have kept the law; who are good people. That's not what this is for. This is for people who need another way.

This is for people who, you know what? In the eyes of good people; in the eyes of religious people, they're hopeless. There's no way. You see, this is for people like the thief on the cross who have done nothing but live a life of wretchedness and debauchery and sin and thievery, and they've got nothing. And they don't have time left to even try to repair their bad record. Which is basically what most of the false religions teach: do enough good and you can undo the bad. But you see, no matter how much good you do after you've broken the law, you're unjust. Justification is God, by His grace, devising a way that bad people can be declared righteous. That's the reality. That's the promise. What greater promise could you be a partaker of than that one? That's it.

Now listen. My whole point in this message is this: We are people of promise. And the truth is, that is "the" promise. It really is a synonym for the gospel. The good news. What is the good news? Well, the good news is that there's a way to be righteous in the sight of God aside from my own law keeping. And Jesus has fulfilled that. It's the gospel. That's what the promise is all about. But I want you to just remember we are a people of promise. Because you see, if you're a partaker of that promise, it's the key that unlocks all the promises of God. That's exactly what Paul says. He says in 2 Corinthians 1:20, listen to this, "For all the promises of God find their yes in Him." I like the KJV: "For all the promises of God in Him are yea (or yes) and in Him amen to the glory of God."

Do you comprehend this? Listen. (Incomplete thought) See, this is the key. You can take this key, and you can read anywhere in your Bible, and you can find a promise of good. You can go back to Joshua, and you can find the Lord saying to Joshua, "I'll never leave you or forsake you." Stick that key in there. The author of Hebrews shows us that in Hebrews 13 right? Hasn't the Lord said He'll never leave you or forsake you? And that's exactly the promise that the author of Hebrews is trying to encourage those people with - those New Testament believers. Why? How can that be? That is a promise given to Joshua. You go back there and read it. It doesn't say that it was given to all of God's people. It says it was given to Joshua. But see, there's the key. In Him, all the promises of God. All of them! Get that. All of them! In Him. In Christ are yes. They're an affirmation. Amen. You know what amen means? Truth. Verity. Certainty. That's the key. If you once are a partaker of "the promise," there is not a promise for good anywhere in this book - what you need to do is recognize; you need to put the right glasses on. And you look. They're the Christ glasses. And you read any promise - every single promise for good in this Bible is given with reference to Christ. Now, you don't see it in most of the places where those promises are given. But right there in 2 Corinthians 1:20, Paul shows us the reality. We are a people of promise.

Do you recognize as you're scouring the promises of the Old Testament, you see some obscure promise given in Micah or something. If you have been justified by faith and you're a partaker of that promise, that's yours. You can appropriate it to yourself. And we need to know that and we need to live that way. And we need to live in light of that reality. We are people of promise. Faith is not some ambiguous thing that just sort of swirls around out there; this nebulous, obscure, ambiguous thing. Our faith has promise for its substance. Faith is not just this ambiguous thing. Oh, I have it. It is that which grabs hold of God's promises and climbs on top of it. You know what it means to climb on a promise? It means you put all your weight on it. That's how God's people live. That's what it means to live from faith to faith. That's what it

means to fight the good fight of faith. It means that you are living on promise. It doesn't necessarily mean that you think about every promise at any given moment. You follow what I mean? We come under temptations. We come under attacks. We walk through this life - to be a child of promise doesn't mean that you're living on every promise of God at every single moment. You can't even think about every single promise of God at every single moment. But what it means is that in whatever situation you're in, you're living on what God has said. "Man does not live by bread alone." He's living on what God has said.

Abraham. Think about Abraham. Abraham is the father of faith. Abraham is the one to whom the promise was given. Think about him. Abraham said, "Behold, You have given me no offspring." You see, this is the issue. Genesis 15. Do you know what happened back in Genesis 12? God told Abraham that he was going to be this father of many nations. By the time you get to chapter 15, he's looking and he's saying Eliezer - a foreigner - he's my heir. I'm old. Sarah's barren. You see where the temptation was? And what God says to him is this: "The Word of the Lord came to him, 'this man (Eliezer) shall not be your heir. Your very own son shall be your heir.' And He brought him outside and said, 'Look toward heaven and number the stars, if you're able to number them.' Then He said to him, 'So shall your offspring be.' And he believed the Lord, and He counted it to him as righteousness." What I want you to see is right there. He believed the Lord. What did he believe? What the Lord just said. It doesn't say that he believed every promise that God had given. Look, I'm not saying that he would have denied some of the promises. You follow what I'm saying? He was clinging to the one promise that flew in the face of him being a father of all nations when his wife was barren, he's old, Eliezer is head of his household and heir, and it looks like this can't happen. He seized hold on this promise. It doesn't say he was going through the file cabinet and looking at every single one of God's promises. It was that promise, because that promise dealt with the very thing that would challenge his faith; challenged what he believed.

And what I'm striving at is this very thing, that look, as we go through our lives, the issue is we have all these promises. But you know what? It's not enough to say, "Well, I believe them." That's not it. Beloved, I am very convinced that the reason that God has designed the devil the way he is - I'm not saying God's the author of sin - but there's no question, the devil and who he is is right on script. This is God's design. The devil is fashioned to put fire to your faith. And when he comes calling, do you know what's essential? Not that right at that moment, you're able to recall every single promise that God has ever given in His Word. Do you know what you need right then? You need that one promise that will cause you to stand in the day of evil.

Just this week, I received a phone call from a man. A professing Christian for a long time. Even in the ministry. Living in all manner of immorality. Do you know what happened? A friend of his turned on Paul Washer's message - I think it was the same one that was preached here: Examine Yourself. Maybe the very same message. This man was laid bare. And he recognized, I don't measure up. And you know what he fears now? Is being in the ministry, having so much light, having this false profession for so long, living in this immorality - you know what he's afraid of now? That he's Esau. He's afraid he's committed the unpardonable sin. He's afraid he's gone too far and there's no way back. Now, I'll tell you this. I'll tell you what I told him. I can't tell you that there is a way back. The truth is there is a line in Scripture that when men

cross it, there's no way back. There is a Hebrews 6 reality. There is a place men come to that there is no more repentance. He told me that his friends and counselors had sent him to the Word of God. That's good. To look at passages that dealt with the cross. I told him that's good. But you see, what he could tell me: "Well, I believe He went to the cross. I believe He died. I believe everything I'm reading. I just don't know if it's for me." I told him exactly, that is exactly the issue. I said what you need to do is you need to find that one verse that he can sink his faith into; that he can say, "that's for me." You see, that's where faith is. Saving faith isn't saying, "I believe Jesus was a true, historical figure." It's not saying, "I believe Jesus went to the cross." It's got to be personalized. There's got to be something you can hang on that you know is for you. Because you know what the devil's going to do to him? The devil's already doing it to him. He's going to whisper into his ear: "Oh, after what you've done, there's no hope for you. You are Esau." He just keeps hearing that in his ear over and over and over. You know how you answer that? You answer that with a kind of promise that resists the devil. That the devil simply cannot answer. What do you tell him? I told him you may have crossed that line, but I know this. That if he can find any promise in this book that he can lay his faith onto, he will not be disappointed. He will not be confounded. He will not be cast away. Because that's what saving faith is.

And you know as I was thinking after I got off the phone with him, I started thinking about what sort of verses are they that a man in that condition might find? I mean, if he was going through Scripture, what might be one verse? I'll tell you one that jumped out at me. And sometimes they can be obscure verses, and sometimes you may think that they're not even dealing with the very thing that you take it in faith to mean. But if you take it in faith to mean it; if you take it in faith that you're trusting the God behind these things - I mean we could just look at that. The broadness of some of God's promises. I mean, you know what? You think about how in Isaiah 53, how by His stripes, we're healed. Does it blow anybody away that Matthew basically in Matthew 9 says He's healing the people, thus fulfilling that? You're like, wait a second. I thought that was spiritual healing back there, and Jesus is physically healing. We might just talk about the broadness of some of God's promises.

But I got to thinking about this, Jesus Himself says, if somebody strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If a man could just find hope there. I've struck Him in the cheek by my actions, but He is such a God who sends His Son who is the radiance of the glory of God, and He is the kind that teaches us that if we're struck, turn the other also. I mean, if He's teaching that to us, is He not also a God who takes many blows, many dishonorings, and yet is still willing to turn the other cheek?

Or, how about this? In Joel 2, God says, "Yet even now..." Those three words could be something that somebody's faith could cling to. "Yet even now..." Wait. What's that? "Yet even now, declares the Lord, return to Me with all your heart." You know when you say that - "yet even now," it's after people have done a lot of bad. "Yet even now..." after all you've done, "if anyone will turn to Me with all their heart, with fasting, with weeping, with mourning, rend your hearts and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful..." How about these three words? "...Slow to anger." If a man's faith can get into that God is slow to anger. I can put my weight on that promise, because I've provoked Him for a long time, but He's slow to anger. Oh, certainly the God of Scripture in all of His infinite mercies; certainly I could

not wear out His kindness just in these years I've done this. Certainly God is greater than that. Those words, "yet even now."

Or how about this? "God's kindness is meant to lead to repentance." Because one of the things I told him; I told him one of the things that tells me God is not done with you is He led you to that Paul Washer sermon. And He convicted you. And you came clean. He confessed. He confessed to his wife. He confessed to his church. That is a kindness. And what would you say? God's kindnesses are not meant to lead him to repentance? You see, that isn't the indication in my estimation of somebody that God is done with.

Or how about this? To Sardis. Oh, when I preached about those seven churches in Asia Minor, Sardis jumped out at me. "You have a name that you are alive, but you are dead." This is a church. You talk about people exposed to light? But you're dead. What did He say? No hope? You've crossed the line? He doesn't. He says, "Wake up." See, if our faith can just grab words like that: "Wake up."

Of course, there's these words: John 6:37 Our Lord says, "Whoever comes to Me, I will never cast out." Whoever. It doesn't matter what you say you've done. If you go to Christ, He won't cast you out. Period. It's amazing when I come across people who are struggling with the unpardonable sin and I bring up this text, immediately, "yeah, but..." Look, if you want to find every reason not to believe a text, that's classic unbeliever. And you will perish. See, the only hope is that our faith can find a place to stay.

Bunyan. In fact, as I was talking to this guy, Bunyan and his "Grace Abounding" came to my mind. If anybody's ever read that - "Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners," basically what it is is a testimony of Bunyan the first few years of his Christian life, at least, maybe a testimony of how God saved him. Bunyan suffered hellish struggles. You know what he did? He would be under some kind of oppression. It sometimes would go on for years. And he would constantly be in this book searching for a promise to answer that thing that laid hold on him. Which was undoubtedly insinuations and accusations of the devil. Listen, at one point, it was like the devil came to him and said, "only the elect can be saved." Some of you have probably been there. "How do you know you're one of the elect?" "You're almost certainly not one of the elect." Do you know what it was that his faith laid hold on? He got to thinking about the lives of the people of God in Scripture. And he came back to this: Was there ever anybody in Scripture who trusted in God and yet in the end were confounded? And he found not one. Now, that's not a specific verse, but you know what he did? He's wondering about being elect and how's he going to answer Satan? He went back to Genesis 1:1 and he began reading through the whole Bible, and everytime somebody came up, he looked: was there ever anybody who put their trust in the Lord who was thrown off at the end? You see his conclusion? Election isn't really the issue. Yes, there are elect people, but how do you know them? Anybody that clings to the Lord is never confounded.

You know what he was gripped by at another time? He's walking along and it's like these thoughts - sometimes you see in Pilgrim's Progress - you remember Pilgrim? He's walking through the valley of the shadow of death, and these little hellish imps are coming up and whispering in his ear. Look, this is a reflection of his own life. Maybe some of you know - we know this as Christians. The devil comes up and suggests things. Whispers things. Whispers doubts. Suddenly, we're gripped by it. The devil came to him one day and said, "What if the day

of grace should be past and gone?" What if there's no hope? Your opportunity came and went. The day of grace. Bunyan found his faith cleave to this: Luke 14:22 - you may know that portion of Scripture. You don't have to turn there. But it's where the great feast is. And you remember, those who were invited were told to come in and they all began to make excuse. You remember that. This text: "The servant said, 'Sir, what you have commanded has been done and still there is room.'" Those words right there: "still there is room." His faith was able to hold on. The devil's saying the day may be past for you, and those words came with power to his own soul. "But still there is room." God is wanting to fill His house. The day can't be past when there's still empty seats.

Before I tell you more about Bunyan, as far as his experiences. Let me tell you about Bunyan in another one of the illustrations that he wrote. I think this is classic. There is a man in the Interpreter's house - I told you about the muckraker before when his wife was there, but here's this man in an iron cage. You know what the man in the iron cage is? Somebody who has truly sinned beyond hope. And we could get all into that account, but you know what? That man in that iron cage said two things that I think are very insightful. He said this: "I've crucified Christ to myself afresh. I've despised His person. I've despised His righteousness. I've counted His blood an unholy thing. I have done despite to the Spirit of grace. Therefore, I have shut myself out of all the promises." I've shut myself out. Now how did he know that? Because he comes along and says this: "God's Word gives me no hope of encouragement to believe." Oh, that's key. That's key. I am certain that is when God is done with somebody. When they go through the Scripture, and they can't find a promise for their faith to land on. You come to them as a believer, and you tell them, look, Jesus says whoever comes to Me, I will never cast out. Your faith seizes it. You're trusting that. And you bring it to them. But it just goes right past them. Why? Oftentimes, whether they've actually committed the unpardonable sin or not, look, if their faith can't find anything in Scripture to latch onto, there's no hope. You need to remember, it's not that our faith latches onto a promise, so much as it latches onto the One who gave the promise. And if we're not able to do that, that's what an unbeliever is. You see, when you cross the line; when you sin so as to provoke, enrage the Spirit, the evidence is when that Spirit no longer gives you any hope in anything that God has said.

We come back to Bunyan. You know what, he's reading through Scripture one time, and he saw that Jesus specifically called certain people to follow Him. But it's like the devil rushed right in and said, "Oh, but He didn't call everybody." He said he was especially struck by how Jesus is said to have chosen certain individuals that He called apostles. And what he was struck with was fearing that he was not called. Oh, how he longed to be John and James and Peter - even the rich, young ruler, to actually hear the words from Jesus' mouth Himself: "Follow Me." Now listen, you have to understand, he was often months and years plagued by these thoughts. It gave him no rest. He'd lay there in bed at night and he'd be thinking through all these things, scouring Scripture looking for something. Do you know what he found? He found a text in Isaiah 45:5. "I will gird you though you have not known Me." And it brought hope and light to his soul.

You say I don't see it. It doesn't matter. He did. And his faith laid hold on it. And you know what? A text he never saw, you might see. You know another one? He was listening to a sermon on the Song of Solomon 4:1. "Behold, you are fair..." This is Christ speaking to His people. "Behold, you are fair, My love." Behold, you are fair... Those two words: "My love." It

chased the clouds away. Two words! You see, there's promise in those two words. My love. And if they come home to your soul, to where your faith can lay hold on them, you can resist the devil in the fiercest battle, by just two words, if your faith is able to cling to them. You know, the devil came to him one day and said, "Oh, you may have found Christ. But you know what? If you live any length of time, ah, you see how many people fall away. You're going to fall away. You won't hold fast." Now this is a text that we might anticipate: He found Romans 8:38-39: "I am sure that neither death, nor life nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor power, nor height, depth, anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." And he said if that's true, long life can't separate me.

And another time, it was his extreme sinfulness. He just felt like I'm too wicked to be a Christian. This time it was Colossians 1:20 - "making peace by the blood of His cross." It came to him with sweetness and power.

And another time, he's being tempted to exchange Christ for the world. It's like these thoughts just keep bombarding him, bombarding him: "Just give up Christ." "Sell Christ and you can have this, you can have this." He was just being tormented. And of all things, a text in Leviticus. Leviticus 25:23 - Now look, you will never go to Leviticus 25:23, unless you first recognize 2 Corinthians 1:20. And that if you're justified by faith, it's the key to every single promise of God. And you know what he saw? This text: "The land shall not be sold permanently, for the land is Mine." You know what he recognized? God saved me. The inheritance He gives is permanent. It's not just that it's reason to think I shouldn't exchange Christ for the world. It was reason for him to think: I can't exchange Christ for the world. If God once bestows inheritance on me, He's not going to take it away. His confidence was in God. He's going to cause me to stand. I won't give it away. Sometimes the thoughts come into our mind, and then it's almost like the devil can do this: he puts the suggestion in your mind and now that you've actually thought it, you feel guilty yourself and he condemns you for having thought it.

Other times, he thought he committed the unpardonable sin. This was Psalm 68:18 that he found deliverance. "Thou hast received gifts for men..." You know this is what Paul quotes in Ephesians 4 that we're going to eventually get to, but it's Jesus giving gifts to men. He found this: "Thou hast received gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also." And he thought if Christ gives gifts and even gives them to the rebellious, he started thinking, well, that's what he was condemning himself for. After knowing Christ, having committed some rebellion, and here's somebody having committed rebellion and Christ is giving gifts to them. And so if that's the case... He started thinking at first, I've committed the unpardonable sin. Well, there's David. Yeah, but my sin that I committed isn't like David's. And then he thought about Peter. And he thought yeah, Peter's closest. And then he felt like, yeah, but there's exceptions. Mine's not exactly like that. Then he felt all condemned and he said my sin is more like Judas'. But in the end, with all the struggles it was this. One little text about Jesus giving gifts to the rebellious also. And see, when he would grab hold on these, then the devil's ability would weaken and you resist the devil and he flees away.

My whole point of saying all these things to you is this: My brothers and sisters, we are people of promise. When Bunyan portrayed this, Apollyon fighting Christian. You'll remember in the battle, the sword flew out of Pilgrim's hand. That means he lost touch with the promises for a moment. And when that happened, Apollyon said, "I'm sure of you now." And you know how

Pilgrim won the day? His fingers got hold of the sword. And he quotes Micah 7:8, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy. When I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me." What Bunyan is doing is portraying the reality of this fight. You've got to find the promise. Whatever your struggle, what sins you struggle with, what trials you go through, what thoughts haunt your mind in your brain, what attacks the devil may throw at you, what slurs, what accusations, this is where we must come to. We must be a people of promise. We must be thinking about promise.

Look, men of old like Bunyan; men made of the same stuff we're made of, they were finding promises in Micah. They were finding promises in Colossians, in Leviticus, in Psalms, Isaiah. They were finding promises - sometimes obscure promises to sink their faith into. But you'll never do that, like I said, you'll never do that unless you believe that every promise is yours in Christ. Read this book as for yourself - even the Old Testament. It's for you. Don't write that off as: well, that's for the Jews, or it sounds like He's speaking to Israel all the time. How can I lay claim to this? That's what the dispensationalists will do to you. They'll see to disarm you. Don't let them do that. Don't let them steal away your promises. Because you need those promises. You need them to survive. You need them to fight. We are people of promise. We are partakers of the promise. Remember that. We are people of the promise. We have promises.

And God's given us a bunch of them. They're His promises. They're not just worldly promises, vague promises. They're God-given promises that He's given to us to fight the good fight of faith with. To seize hold of. To put our weight on. Like I said before, climb on these. Even if it comes down to two words: My love. Or three words: There's still room. I mean, whatever it is, look. Look. Search. Know. Read your Scriptures. Be here. Arm yourselves. People of promise. Arm yourselves. We have a promise Giver. You don't need every single promise every single day. You can't even think of all of them. But it may be just two words. It may be three words that will carry you victoriously in battle against an archangel. Isn't that amazing? That's what you've been given. That is the offensive weapon that we're going to come to in Ephesians 6. The sword of the Spirit. You can defeat powers and principalities of wickedness, sometimes through two or three words. If your faith will see in those words a promise of the living God and hold fast. You'll resist the devil and he'll flee. May God help us, brethren.

Father, we pray, give us these words. Give us these promises. Help us to find them. Help my brothers and sisters to find the ones that they need now to deal with what they're dealing with in their lives, even on the best days, the glorious days, the sun-shining days, we still need to live on promise. Lord, give us minds and hearts that work right. Sound minds where Scripture is real; where it flows. Help us to fight just like our Savior fought. When the devil brought his accusations and his temptations, our Master answered perfectly with Scripture. All three responses from Deuteronomy. Help us to handle Scripture like that. To know how to answer. Lord, arm us. Equip us. Help us to be like Bunyan, and even more, help us to be like Christ. We pray for His help and in His name, Amen.