

# The Promise

1 John Series  
1 John 2:25-29  
Bill Denton

## INTRODUCTION

### A. Illustration

We never prize the precious words of promise till we are placed in conditions in which their suitability and sweetness are manifested. We all of us value those golden words, "When thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee," but few if any of us have read them with the delight of the martyr Bilney, to whom this passage was a comfort and help while he was in prison awaiting his execution at the stake. His Bible, still preserved in the library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, has the passage marked with a pen in the margin. Perhaps, if all were known, every promise in the Bible has borne a special message to some one saint, and so the whole volume might be scored in the margin with mementos of Christian experience, every one appropriate to the very letter.

-- Charles Haddon Spurgeon, The Quotable Spurgeon

### B. What is a promise?

1. The dictionary would say (Merriam Webster)
  - a. a declaration that one will do or refrain from doing something specified
  - b. a legally binding declaration that gives the person to whom it is made a right to expect or to claim the performance or forbearance of a specified act
2. A promise is a word given or a pledge made by which we assure someone that we will do something for them (or not, as the case may be) – a promise is our guarantee that we will perform as we have said we would
3. The fact that promises are often much less than what we say they are is born out in an old Russian proverb  
Don't put a promise in my ear; put it in my hand.  
-- Vern McLellan, The Complete Book of Practical Proverbs and Wacky Wit

### C. John understood the absolute necessity of assuring Christians that God would do what he Had promised

1. The faith of many Christians was under assault by those who taught a false gospel and who pretended a super-spirituality
2. Much of the false teaching specifically targeted Jesus – both his person and his work
3. Regardless of the fact that the false teachers offered something appealing, something designed to satisfy questions and difficulties, it was empty and worthless
4. That fact has never stopped people from falling for lies instead of truth

### D. This morning, let's focus on the promise that John reminded his readers about

## I. PROMISES ARE MENTIONED SEVERAL TIMES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

### A. Note these verses

1. Luke 24:45-49 Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

"You are witnesses of these things.

"And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high." NASB95

2. Acts 1:4-5 Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," *He said*, "you heard of from Me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." NASB95

3. Acts 2:38-41 Peter *said* to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

"For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself."

And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation!"

So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. NASB95

4. Acts 13:26-29 "Brethren, sons of Abraham's family, and those among you who fear God, to us the message of this salvation has been sent.

"For those who live in Jerusalem, and their rulers, recognizing neither Him nor the utterances of the prophets which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled *these* by condemning *Him*.

"And though they found no ground for *putting Him to death*, they asked Pilate that He be executed.

"When they had carried out all that was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the cross and laid Him in a tomb.

"But God raised Him from the dead;

and for many days He appeared to those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, the very ones who are now His witnesses to the people.

"And we preach to you the good news of the promise made to the fathers, that God has fulfilled this *promise* to our children in that He raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, 'YOU ARE MY SON; TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU.'

"As for the fact that He raised Him up from the dead, no longer to return to decay, He has spoken in this way: 'I WILL GIVE YOU THE HOLY *and SURE blessings* OF DAVID.'

"Therefore He also says in another *Psalm*, 'YOU WILL NOT ALLOW YOUR HOLY ONE TO UNDERGO DECAY.'

"For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep, and was laid among his fathers and underwent decay;

but He whom God raised did not undergo decay.

"Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you,

and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses. NASB95

5. 2 Corinthians 1:19-22 For the Son of God, Christ Jesus, who was preached among you by us—by me and Silvanus and Timothy—was not yes and no, but is yes in Him. For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes; therefore also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us.

Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, who also sealed us and gave *us* the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge. NASB95

6. Ephesians 1:13-14 In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise,

who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of *God's own* possession, to the praise of His glory. NASB95

7. Titus 1:1-3 Paul, a bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness, in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago, but at the proper time manifested, *even* His word, in the proclamation with which I was entrusted according to the commandment of God our Savior, NASB95

8. Hebrews 6:13-20 For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself,

saying, "I WILL SURELY BLESS YOU AND I WILL SURELY MULTIPLY YOU."

And so, having patiently waited, he obtained the promise.

For men swear by one greater *than themselves*, and with them an oath *given* as confirmation is an end of every dispute.

In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath,

so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us.

This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a *hope* both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil,

where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek. NASB95

9. James 1:12 Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which *the Lord* has promised to those who love Him. NASB95

#### B. We must do something with statements about God's promises

1. We can judge them to be unreliable or even false

a. if we do that, then we can ignore them, or even reject them

b. obviously, they will not be very important to us

2. We can judge them to be true and reliable

a. if we do that, then it makes no sense to ignore them or reject them

b. if they are true, then we ought to treat them like they were important

## II. NOW FOCUS ON THE PROMISE ABOUT WHICH JOHN REMINDED HIS READERS

### A. 1 John 2:25

This is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life. NASB95

### B. Illustration

The Christian life begins with belief in a promise for eternal life (1 Jn. 2:25). It continues with daily walking in the promises of God (2 Pet. 1:3–4). The promises give us hope in hopeless circumstances and focus when life goes out of focus.<sup>1</sup>

1. That's a pretty good summary of the essence of Christianity
2. It's about eternal life
3. That promise affects the life we live now
4. When things go haywire for us, it's the idea of eternal life that puts things back in focus

### C. Jesus and the promise of eternal life

1. Matthew 19:28-29 And Jesus said to them, "Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.  
"And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name's sake, will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life. NASB95

2. Matthew 25:41-46 "Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry, and you gave Me *nothing* to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink;  
I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.'  
"Then they themselves also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?'  
"Then He will answer them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.'  
"These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." NASB95

3. John 3:14-16 "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up;  
so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life.  
"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. NASB95

4. John 3:35-36 "The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand.  
"He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." NASB95

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<sup>1</sup>*Discipleship Journal : Issue 103*. 1999 (electronic ed.). Colorado Springs: The Navigators/NavPress.

5. John 4:10-14 Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water."  
She \*said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep; where then do You get that living water?"  
"You are not greater than our father Jacob, are You, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself and his sons and his cattle?"  
Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life." NASB95
6. John 5:24 "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. NASB95
7. John 6:26-27 Jesus answered them and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.  
"Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal." NASB95
8. John 6:39-40 "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day.  
"For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day." NASB95
9. John 6:47 "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life. NASB95
10. John 6:53-54 So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves.  
"He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. NASB95
11. John 10:27-28 "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. NASB95
12. John 17:1-3 Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You, even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life. "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. NASB95
13. Romans 6:22-23 But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. NASB95

#### D. John's admonition is very simple

1. Since eternal life is a promise from Jesus Christ, the false teachers offer nothing
2. Since eternal life is a promise from Jesus Christ, abide in him (stick with him!)

## CONCLUSION

### A. Illustration

In the early days of our country a weary traveler came to the banks of the Mississippi River for the first time. There was no bridge. It was early winter, and the surface of the mighty stream was covered with ice. Could he dare cross over? Would the uncertain ice be able to bear his weight?

Night was falling, and it was urgent that he reach the other side. Finally, after much hesitation and with many fears, he began to creep cautiously across the surface of the ice on his hands and knees. He thought that he might distribute his weight as much as possible and keep the ice from breaking beneath him.

About halfway over he heard the sound of singing behind him. Out of the dusk there came a man, driving a horse-drawn load of coal across the ice and singing merrily as he went his way.

Here he was--on his hands and knees, trembling lest the ice be not strong enough to bear him up! And there, as if whisked away by the winter's wind, went the man, his horses, his sleigh, and his load of coal, upheld by the same ice on which he was creeping!

Like this weary traveler, some of us have learned only to creep upon the promises of God. Cautiously, timidly, tremblingly we venture forth upon His promises, as though the lightness of our step might make His promises more secure. As though we could contribute even in the slightest to the strength of His assurances!

He has promised to be with us. Let us believe that promise! He has promised to uphold us. Let us believe Him when He says so. He has promised to grant us victory over all our spiritual enemies. Let us trust His truthfulness. Above all, He has promised to grant us full and free forgiveness of all our sins because of Jesus Christ, our Savior. And He has promised to come and take us to His heavenly home. Let us take Him at His word.

We are not to creep upon these promises as though they were too fragile to uphold us. We are to stand upon them--confident that God is as good as His word and that He will do what He has pledged.

The Bread Line, Newsletter of the Colby Presbyterian Church, Colby, Kansas  
--James S. Hewett, Illustrations Unlimited

B. If you are creeping through life as a Christian, it just might be that you have been led away from the confidence that the promise of eternal life was meant to develop in you -- get the Promise of Jesus clear in your mind again

### C. Invitation