

# A SERMON

ON

## THE PROMISES OF GOD.

PREACHED MAY THE 7<sup>TH</sup>, 1710.

2 COR. vii. 1.

*Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*

It is the unspeakable privilege of all believers to have, as a certain possession, the precious promises of God. But under what notion have we the promises of God?

1. We have them as manifest tokens of God's favour towards us; and every one of them are yea, amen, in Christ Jesus our Lord.

2. We have them as fruits of Christ's purchase. The Lord having purchased us with his own blood, we have these promises produced by that inestimable grace.

3. They are plain and ample declarations of the good-will of God towards men, and therefore as God's part of the covenant of grace.

4. They are a foundation of our faith, and we have them as such; and also of our hope, on these we are to build all our expectations from God; and in all temptations and trials we have them to rest our souls upon.

5. We have them as the directions and encouragements of our desires in prayer. Seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you. Wherefore they are the guide of our desires, and the ground of our hope in prayer.

6. We have them as the means by which the grace of God works for our holiness and comfort, for by these we are made partakers of a divine nature, and faith, applying these promises, is said to work by love.

7. We have the promises as the earnest and assurance of future blessedness. By these eternal life and glory is secured to all true believers.

And now, having observed these things, let us review the blessed promises of God; and

The first is,—He hath promised that we shall be his people.

The Scripture,—*Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people; for all the earth is mine, Exod. xix. 5.*

The second promise,—That all our sins shall be pardoned.

*I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins, Isa. xliii. 25.*

The third,—That our corruptions shall be subdued.

*For sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace, Rom. vi. 14.*

The fourth,—That the Spirit of grace shall be given us, to enable us for our duty in every thing.

*I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them, Ezek. xxxvi. 27.*

The fifth,—That God will put it particularly into our hearts, or circumcise our hearts to love him.

*The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live, Deut. xxx. 6.*

The sixth,—That he will give us the knowledge of his truth, and the comfort and the benefit of it.

*Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free, John viii. 32.*

The seventh,—That he will unite our hearts to himself and to each other.

*I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them and of their children after them, Jer. xxxii. 39.*

The eighth,—That he will be tender of those that are weak.

*He shall feed his flock like a Shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young, Isa. xl. 11.*

The ninth,—That he will direct us in the way of our duty.

*Good and upright is the Lord: therefore will he teach sinners in the way. The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way, Ps. xxv. 8, 9.*

The tenth,—That he will protect us from every thing that is really evil.

*The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in, from this time forth and even for evermore, Psa. cxxi. 7, 8.*

The eleventh,—That he will supply us with all good.

*The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing, Ps. xxxiv. 10.*

The twelfth,—That he will answer our prayers.

*Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son, John xiv. 13.*

The thirteenth,—That he will silence our fears.

*I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not, I will help thee, Isa. xli. 13.*

The fourteenth,—That he will bear us up under our burthens.

*The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms, Deut. xxxiii. 27.*

The fifteenth,—That he will give us a sure and lasting peace.

*The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever, Isa. xxxii. 17.*

The sixteenth,—That he will admit us into fellowship and communion with himself.

*Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth, and causeth to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple, Ps. lxxv. 4.*

The seventeenth,—That he will give us the comfortable enjoyment of ourselves.

*His soul shall dwell at ease; and his seed shall inherit the earth, Ps. xxv. 13.*

The eighteenth,—That he will deliver us in and under our troubles.

*Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honour him, Ps. xci. 14, 15.*

The nineteenth,—That he will affect us in measure and in mercy, when we have need of it.

*I will be his Father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: but my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee, 2 Sam. vii. 14, 15.*

The twentieth,—That he will spare us with the tenderness of a fatherly compassion.

*They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him, Malachi iii. 17.*

The twenty-first,—That he will not persist in his controversy with us.

*I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made, Isa. lvii. 16.*

The twenty-second,—That he will speak comfort to us when we are in sorrow.

*I will hear what God the Lord will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints: but let them not turn again to folly, Ps. lxxxv. 8.*

The twenty-third,—That he will proportion our trials to our strength.

*There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it, 1 Cor. x. 13.*

The twenty-fourth,—That he will put true honour upon us.

*Them that honour me I will honour, 1 Sam. ii. 30.*

The twenty-fifth,—That he will feed us with food convenient for us.

*Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed, Ps. xxxvii. 3.*

The twenty-sixth,—That he will clear up our injured reputation.

*He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day, Ps. xxxvii. 6.*

The twenty-seventh,—That he will comfort and relieve us in sickness.

*The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness, Ps. xli. 3.*

The twenty-eighth,—That he will prevent our apostasy from him.

*I will make an everlasting covenant with them, and I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me, Jer. xxxii. 40.*

The twenty-ninth,—That he will make all events conduce to our real welfare.

*We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose, Rom. viii. 28.*

The thirtieth,—That he will perfect the work of grace in us.

*Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ, Phil. i. 6.*

The thirty-first,—That he will be with us when we are old, to bear us up under all our infirmities.

*Even to your old age I am he; and even to hoary hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you, Isa. xlvi. 4.*

The thirty-second,—That he will never desert us in any exigence whatsoever.

*For he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee, Heb. xiii. 5.*

The thirty-third,—That he will give us victory over our spiritual enemies.

*The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly, Rom. xvi. 20.*

The thirty-fourth,—That he will recompense our charity to the poor.

*He that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will he pay him again, Prov. xix. 17.*

The thirty-fifth,—That he will make up all our losses for his name's sake.

*Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred-fold, and shall inherit everlasting life, Matt. xix. 29.*

The thirty-sixth,—That he will let us live long enough in this world, and give us a comfortable prospect of a better.

*With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation, Ps. xci. 16.*

The thirty-seventh,—That he will be with us when we come to die.

*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death; I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me, Ps. xxiii. 4.*

The thirty-eighth,—That he will receive our souls into the arms of his love.

*But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for he shall receive me. Selah! Ps. xlix. 15.*

The thirty-ninth,—That he will take care of our posterity when we are gone.

*The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee, Ps. cii. 28.*

The fortieth,—That he will raise our bodies to life again.

*This is the will of him that sent me, That every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day, John vi. 40.*

The forty-first,—That he will own us in the judgment of the great day.

*Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven, Matt. x. 32.*

The forty-second,—That he will put us into possession of everlasting bliss.

*And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life, 1 John ii. 25.*

REPETITION TEXT.

*Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*

And now what shall we say to these things?

I.—1. Let us be thankful to God for all these great and precious promises, that God should not only do us good, but engage himself by promises to do so.

2. Let us be ashamed of ourselves that we have not lived more upon these promises.

3. Let us encourage ourselves with these promises to go on cheerfully and resolutely in the way of our duty.

4. Let us acknowledge the truth of God, and his faithfulness to his promises. *There hath not failed one word of all his good promise, &c. 1 Kings viii. 56.*

5. We are concerned to treasure up these promises, that we may have them ready to use when we have occasion for them, to silence our fears, and to strengthen our faith.

6. Behold, what need we have to live by faith, through which, and by which, we make use of these promises. God gives by promise that we may take by faith; therefore set about that work, and be much in the exercise of it.

II. Here is our duty inferred from this privilege. Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit: by which is understood,

1. We must abhor that which is evil, and abandon all sin with an holy detestation.

2. We must cleave to that which is good; we must perfect holiness in the fear of God. Observe, The consideration of God's promises to us should strongly engage us against all sin, and to all duty. To show you what strength there is in this argument taken from the promises, to abhor that which is evil, observe, (1.) We are bound in gratitude to please him who has given us so many, so great and precious, promises, Ps. cxvi. 12. What shall I render? Oh, how great is his goodness which he hath laid up for them that fear him! God hath spoken in his holiness, I will rejoice, Ps. cviii. 7. Observe, (2.) We forfeit the benefit of God's promises if we do not make conscience of, and endeavour to keep, his commands. Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it, Heb. iv. 1.

III. We are taught the blessed fruits of these promises.

1. These promises furnish us with strength and grace sufficient against sin, and for duty. Turn you at my reproof, behold, I will pour out my Spirit upon you, I will make known my words unto you.

2. These promises speak the language of Caleb and Joshua, who said, We are well able to overcome

the people, when they are about to enter into Canaan; while the other spies discouraged the tribes. Thus we may say, through the strength of divine grace, we shall be well enabled to overcome all our spiritual enemies, namely, the world, flesh, and devil, Ezek. xxxvi. 26. Observe it.

3. God is faithful to these promises which he has made to us. Therefore we must not be false to those promises which we have made to him, Heb. x. 23. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, for he is faithful that promised.

4. In having these promises we have great honour put upon us, and we ought to carry it as becomes us. God has promised to be to us a faithful God, a loving, a tender Father. Let us not wander out of the way of duty. If we have received the promise, as Abraham did, we ought to do some great act, in our obedience to his commands, as he did.

5. The promises secure to us an abundant reward for our obedience; therefore let us be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord, 1 Cor. xv. 58.

And now having observed these things concerning the promises, let us explain fully the duty which is inferred. It contains two parts,

I. To be cleansed from all filthiness of flesh and spirit.

II. To perfect holiness in the fear of God.

I. We must be cleansed, &c.

1. Therefore let us look upon sin as filthiness; let the grace of God, and the purity, not only of his nature, but also of his word and promises, make sin more odious and terrible than in the threatenings it appears dangerous. In the promises, sin appears loathsome, and filthiness itself. For, observe, (1.) It is odious to God, contrary to that purity of nature which appears in his promises, which should deter us from sin, Jer. xlv. 4. Oh! do not this abominable thing that I hate, Gen. xxxix. 9. How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God! Observe, (2.) Look upon sin as that which unfits us for communion with God; therefore, upon this account, let sin become odious to us. Observe, (3.) Sin in Scripture is called and compared to a wound, to a plague, to leprosy, &c. and all to make us fear and loathe it.

2. Let us cleanse ourselves from this filthiness, by receiving the Lord Jesus Christ; for it is he that is made to us both righteousness and sanctification. It is our duty to cleanse ourselves, but we cannot do this without God's grace, and he will not do it without our endeavours. This implies, (1.) That we truly repent of the sins which we have committed, and loathe ourselves for them. Whenever we go to worship God, we must lie down in our shame, and abhor ourselves, repenting in dust and ashes. (2.) That by faith we apply the blood of Christ to our consciences,

and sprinkle them with it, and that we wash in that fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. We read that the Ammonites made themselves odious in the nostrils of David, and so they hardened themselves, that is, strengthened themselves, against him. Let us not act so against God, but let us lie low before the Lord, and make the Lord Jesus Christ our friend to reconcile us to God.

3. Let us mortify the habits of sin, and purge out the old leaven, both in the head and in the heart. Get clear of our bad principles, that we may not make so light of sin as we have done; cleanse ourselves from corrupt fancy, cleanse ourselves from all filthiness that is in the imagination. Great pains must be taken with the heart, to get it clear of all corrupt inclinations. Wash ye, make ye clean, indulge no evil thoughts in your hearts.

4. Let us watch against all occasions of sin, that is, all those things by which you have contracted pollutions. Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. Keep at a distance from every thing which has the appearance of evil.

5. Let us resolve for the future to have no more to do with sin. Refrain from all acts of sin. Let him that has stole steal no more, Eph. iv. 28. Let him that has been drunk or unclean, be so no more, Isa. iv. 4. When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof, by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning, that is, by a saving knowledge of, and a sincere love to, God and his commandments, submit to the Spirit's influences, or you will never get the mastery over your sins and corruptions. Therefore you must put on a holy resolution, and take the kingdom of heaven by violence, for the violent take it by force.

6. Our care herein must be universal. We must cleanse ourselves, (1.) from all filthiness of the flesh, from slothfulness and the love of ease, from sensuality and the love of pleasure, from gratifying the desires of the body with forbidden fruit, or indulging them too much, to the damage of the soul; for even lawful pleasures may turn into sin without due care and watchfulness over ourselves, such as gluttony, drunkenness, or seventh-commandment sins. (2.) We must cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the spirit; from pride, covetousness, and the love of the world, from fraud, deceit, and injustice, Job xxxi. 7. from all sinful anger, malice, hatred, and desire of revenge; for these are spiritual filthinesses, from all which we must be cleansed.

II. We must perfect holiness in the fear of God.

1. We must be holy.

That is taken for granted; for we cannot perfect holiness unless we begin it. We must be holy. What is that? (1.) We must be devoted to God, as

all holy persons and things under the law were. We must be holiness to the Lord. (2.) We must be conformed to God's likeness, and to his will. God's holiness is his agreement with himself; our holiness is our agreeableness to him. We must act in every thing as becomes our relation to God, Col. i. 10. That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, &c. and the image of God must be renewed upon us; be ye holy, saith the Lord, for I am holy. (3.) We must be employed in the services and worship of God; we must engage our hearts in all our approaches to him; we must employ our minds, and all the powers of our souls, in all the inward acts of inward worship, and in all outward worship also we must not only bow the knee, but also the heart, before the Lord; for heartless worship is vain worship, God will not accept it, and we ourselves shall be no gainers by it, so it must be in vain. (4.) We must be engaged in the interests of God's kingdom amongst men. To be holy, is to be on the Lord's side, and to espouse his cause, to be his witnesses, to be courageous and valiant for the truth, to contend earnestly for it, for great is the truth and it shall prevail; God will own and honour those that do own and honour him.

2. We must be sincere in our holiness, or perfecting holiness. For sincerity is our gospel perfection, as a good man said. I know no religion but sincerity, this is uprightness. Walk before me and be thou upright. By this is understood, (1.) We must be sanctified throughout. The whole man must be sanctified. The understanding must be enlightened, the will bowed and brought into obedience to the will of God, both to the will of his precepts to do them, and to the will of his providences to submit to them; and thus we stand complete in the whole will of God, that we may be sanctified in body, soul, and spirit, and so be perfecting holiness in the fear of God. (2.) The whole law of God must be regarded, and a respect had to it. Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments, Ps. cxix. 6. Let my heart be sound in thy statutes that I be not ashamed, v. 80. I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way, v. 128. O let us labour to be sincere to the day of Christ, like good and faithful servants waiting for the coming of the Lord.

3. We must be growing and making progress in holiness; though we cannot perfect it in this world,

yet we must be perfecting it, that is, adding a greater degree to a lesser, pressing forwards towards perfection. (1.) The habits of grace must grow more confirmed and rooted, our resolutions against sin more settled, and our resolution for God and duty more steady. This is to perfect what is lacking in our faith, 1 Thess. iii. 10. (2.) The actings of grace must grow more and more vigorous and lively. We must be more ready for every good work. We must have more spiritual success in a lively exercise to resist sin, and all temptations that would insnare us. (3.) We must be more and more watchful, and upon our guard. Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. Therefore be not high minded, but fear, Rom. xi. 20. We must never think ourselves good enough, and safe enough, but must be still growing wiser and better. (4.) We must be actuated and animated therein by the fear of God. That is, [1.] We must keep up a constant worship of God in our families, and in our closets; we must be frequent in holy adorings and admirings of God. This will be a good means of perfecting holiness, to be in the fear of the Lord every day, and all the day long. [2.] We must maintain a reverent regard to his majesty and authority, and this will keep us from sin; when others make bold with sin, we must stand in awe of God, as Nehemiah did, *ch.* v. 15. But so did not I, because of the fear of God. 3. We must have a continual dread of his wrath and vindictive justice. A fear of God's wrath and displeasure will be a means of keeping ourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

To conclude. The apostle directs his exhortation to his dearly beloved, so do I to you, my dearly beloved.

1. Apply the promises to yourselves, live upon them, take them to be your heritage for ever. Both you that are young, and you that are old, treasure up the promises. 2. Apply the precepts to yourselves, and live up to them, and be holy in all manner of conversation. Keep a conscience always void of offence both towards God and towards man.

And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified, Acts xx. 32. And may you be always looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of faith, till you come to be for ever with him. Amen.