

98-05-24b

As we resume our study this morning, in thinking about this idea that there was a relationship, a pre-existing covenant relationship between God and Noah, which we have explored in some detail, the use of the term here, we ask ourselves, so what? Why spend the time exploring that particular phrase? It's just a phrase in passing, we move right on into the interesting things about the flood and so forth. Why stop and spend time on the phrase, I will confirm my covenant with you? Well, this is one of the ways that we make the connection. As we have noted in the past, when you're studying the Gospels or studying the accounts in the Pentateuch and so forth, it's a narrative form of communication, it's a story.

And it's fascinating to get engrossed in the details of the story and to see the forward movement of the plot and it comes to a climax, there's a denouement afterward and so forth, the resolution and the tying up of the loose ends and the story itself can be quite compelling and quite interesting. But our goal is, of course, to go beyond just learning the facts of the story and understand why it is recorded. This is where the meat, where the spiritual nourishment comes from.

Unfortunately, as with literature, my favorite example is when people recently saw a remake of the Moby Dick story. It had Captain Picard there, it was Captain Ahab and the big obsession that he has with finding the great white whale and everything. And anybody that stands in his way is hacked and slashed aside so that he can get back at this whale that bit off his leg and so forth.

And it's an interesting story and a lot of times people think that Moby Dick is a story about a whale and of course it's not. You look at the names that are used in there, Ahab, Starbuck, you look at the owners of the ship who have biblical names and many of the other allusions in that story that Herman Melville wrote, it is nearly an allegory. It is full, it's almost like Pilgrim's Progress as far as being an illustration, an explication and a commentary on the struggle between good and evil, between the things that pull and tear at our natures and the compulsions and the forces that drive us and the choices that we make and the way that we fly in the face of warnings and so forth.

Well, you can just read it as a good yarn about the sea and a whale and so forth, but you miss the whole purpose of the story if you're not sensitive to the issues behind it and what Melville is trying to get across. All great literature has more than just a story, it expresses ideas and viewpoint about deeper truths. It's a funny thing, I observed during my training as an English major that some people actually turn this into a sort of religion and they figure that well, the really great authors, Hemingway and Tolstoy and Dostoevsky and some of the great playwrights like Eugene O'Neill and Harold Pinter and so forth, the idea is that because they're a great playwright and that they are very good at embedding these ideas and expressing them through literature, that the ideas

themselves have some great mystical merit and people devote themselves to the reading and the study of literature in the hopes of digging out these deep truths and finding meaning in it, so it becomes a sort of a pseudo-religion and most of the people who really get deeply into this are seeking to uncover the truth that the author has embedded in that piece of literature and to benefit from it.

It's such a sad thing because it's a great endeavor if you're looking in the right place. The place to look is not in the literature that's generated by man but in the Word of God and those skills, it's a great thing, I didn't really realize at the time but I have come to appreciate the training in literature and in understanding the language of literature and the different levels at which it functions because God uses those channels. The Word of God is like the airwaves where you can have several different channels all functioning simultaneously and depending on which one you're tuned into, you get different things.

So we want to be sensitive as we go through and study the ark and the flood and the animals and Noah and so forth that this is here for a reason, God is wanting to communicate things to us and it is no accident that God says, I will confirm my covenant with you. It is no accident that it says, before this all begins, Noah is righteous, Noah is blameless, Noah walks with God. That's the key, that's the foundation and we want to understand that because ultimately we want to be beneficiaries of God's grace.

We want to be those who find grace in the eyes of the Lord. We want to be delivered from judgment, we want to stand blameless and justified in the sight of God. How do we do that? There is no more important priority in life than standing approved by God, being qualified for His blessing and His deliverance and His approval, being rescued out of our evil generation.

The New Testament tells us that's one of the reasons that Christ died, to deliver us out of this present evil age. Well, here's a man who found that key and used it and was the beneficiary and recipient of God's grace and so the details are important and here we have seen that there are promises, there is a relationship that pre-exists the time of crisis that Noah enjoys with God. There are, in our lives and in our experience, similar opportunities.

We also have a relationship with God as believers. We have promises that God has made to us. Well, if we want to find ourselves in the status that Noah enjoys of receiving deliverance from God, receiving personal communication from God to guide him, to identify for him the resources that are available, to work out his own salvation as we saw last week, how does his situation compare to ours? How can we do what Noah did? That's the great question to answer.

Well, first of all, God says, I will confirm the covenant. I will confirm the promises. I will express the benefit that comes through relationship, he says to Noah.

What are some of the promises that we enjoy? What are some of the things that we can claim because of our relationship with God if we are sensitive to it? Look with me at Psalm 111, verse 5. Psalm 111, verse 5. We're going to look just for a moment at the promises of God and how we qualify as claimants of those promises as Noah did. Psalm 111, verse 5. This Psalm begins, praise the Lord. I will praise the Lord with my whole heart in the assembly of the upright and in the congregation.

You will notice that the psalmist is in the assembly of the upright. He makes it a point to associate himself with other believers. And in that assembly, praises God with his whole heart.

As I've mentioned before, it's a sad thing that so often we find ourselves in the company of other believers and we don't praise the Lord with our whole heart. We talk about everything else but God. Here the psalmist gives us an insight into what it is he talks about when he praises the Lord in the assembly and in the congregation.

The works of the Lord are great, studied by all who have pleasure in them. Not all of us as believers take delight in the works of God. We're more interested in pursuing our own goals.

But there are those who take pleasure in them and they study them. His work is honorable, verse 3, and glorious, and his righteousness endures forever. He has made his wonderful works to be remembered.

The Lord is gracious and full of compassion. Look at verse 5. He has given food to those who fear him. He will ever be mindful of his covenant.

He has declared to his people the power of his works in giving them the heritage of the nations. God doesn't forget his covenant promises. The problem is we do.

But to those of us who remember, he gives food. That, of course, stands in for everything that is of benefit, everything that nourishes and builds up, strengthens and sustains us. Who does he give that food to? To those who fear him, to those who remember him, to those who study his mighty works, to those who meditate on his honor, his glory, his righteousness, and his wonderful works that he has made to be remembered.

So we begin to answer the question for ourselves, what about this idea of relationship with God? How do we exploit it? How do we qualify the way Noah does? Well, here's a description of the believer who does so. Part of our thinking has to be that that Paul expresses in Romans chapter 4, verse 21. You remember Romans 4 is the chapter that talks about Abraham as an example of faith.

What then shall we say that Abraham, our father, has found according to the flesh? Chapter 4 begins. If Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the scripture say? Abraham believed God, and it was

accounted to him for righteousness.

Look down at, after this chapter, you can review this at your leisure, all of the description of Abraham's faith expressed in his life. It says down in verse 19, not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body already dead, since he was about 100 years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb. This is one of the things that happens today as a result of our fascination with science.

Science tells us a lot of things about diet. It tells us a lot of things about lifestyle, and this will contribute to cancer. This will contribute to this particular malady and that particular malady.

When science speaks and says, well, drinking coffee will cause this, or getting a hold of NutraSweet will do that, or we almost daily have some pronouncement of science that something is beneficial or something is not, and hundreds of thousands of us immediately alter our lifestyle based on what science has said. Then two or three years later, they come back out and say something different. They came out for a while and said, oh, eggs or anathema.

If you eat eggs, you're going to have all kinds of cholesterol. Everybody swore off of eggs. I say everybody.

The people who hold science in such great esteem thought, well, I've got to cut out the eggs and so forth. Well, then they came back a few years later and said, well, eggs aren't as bad as we thought because we've found out that there's two different kinds of cholesterol, etc., etc., etc. But they talk about what's good and bad for your body.

All of this is we're fascinated with the idea of living longer and staying younger. Well, your skin will last longer and your eyesight will last longer. Your heart will beat longer.

Your systems will function. Cancer won't get you if you listen to what we're telling you about diet and lifestyle and environmental factors and one thing and another. Well, notice that Abraham, living the life of faith, did not take what science might have told him into account.

What would science say about a 99-year-old man with an 80-something-year-old wife as far as having children? Now, the promise of God said, you will have a son. He's going to be named Isaac. He's going to be the seed through which all the nations will be blessed and through which my covenant promises to you will be fulfilled.

Well, now he's 99 years old. All of the evidence, if we could bring Abraham in here now and say, this man thinks he's going to have a child. All of his hopes and dreams are fixated on having a child.

Help us out here. What are the chances? What would science say about him and Sarah?

No possible way. He should have done this earlier.

He should have lived a different life. He should have enjoyed the wife of his youth and so forth. But because Abraham was not weak in faith, he did not consider his own body.

In our day, this would be the pronouncements and the evidence of science. If you have a conflict between what science says and what God says, it ought to be an easy choice. But for us, it's not.

Because we think, well, but science is fact, and what God says is sort of the interpretation of Scripture, and maybe we're wrong or we're not applying it right and so forth. So, for example, when the Scripture says, all things are good for food if they're taken with prayer and thanksgiving, and science says, oh, no, two-thirds of the food you eat is all bad for you, and here's what's wrong with meat, and here's what's wrong with sugar, and here's what's wrong with fat, and here's what's wrong with this, that, and the other. This is full of carcinogens.

This is going to give you diabetes and so on. Well, you have to make a choice. Who do you believe? God says, if you're thankful, if you appreciate the source and pray and express that thankfulness before God when you partake, all food is good.

Eat it, enjoy it, don't worry about it. Science says, oh, stand by, this is all bad for you. Well, it's a clear choice, but many of us say, well, you know, it's a sad thing that science is more compelling to us to change our lifestyle than the Word of God is.

There's nothing wrong with being careful. You know, if you have certain medical problems, if you have been told by a doctor because of the following condition that you have, that it would be good if you laid off of this food, we don't do like the poison drinkers and the snake handlers and so forth and say, well, I'm going to defy all logic and do this silly thing. It's a matter of principle.

We need to examine our souls and decide what do we hold in higher esteem. If we do observe a dietary restriction or if we do avoid certain things, why are we doing it? Is it because our faith in science is greater than our faith in the Scripture, or is it the better part of wisdom? Are we doing this not in spite of what God says, but in accordance with what God says to take care of ourselves because our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit. We have a responsibility to be good caretakers and so forth.

It isn't so much what we do, whether or not we eat a food. It's why we do it. And we just have to be careful because we can fool ourselves.

Abraham did not consider his own body already dead, since he was about 100 years old, or the deadness of Sarah's womb. He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God. And this is the key.

Whatever we do, whatever decisions we make about life and our bodies and so forth ought to be decisions that give glory to God and that don't give, well, we do what we do because we're giving credence to science or we're glorifying the work of some dietician or whatever. He was, in verse 21, fully convinced that what God had promised, he was also able to perform. Our faith in God's promises are based on our certainty that God is able to fulfill his promises.

Now you look at Abraham. Put yourself in Abraham and Sarah's position. At that advanced age, even in those early patriarchal days, nobody expected anyone to have children.

It was a certainty. It was unheard of. Everybody knew that after a certain age, in our lifetime, when you get in your 40s or 50s, the whole reproductive portion of life ceases to be available or to function.

And it is common knowledge. It might have been scientific knowledge in Abraham's day, but Abraham says, well, I see that, I hear that, I understand all of that, but he did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief. He had a promise from God.

God said, you will have a son. He'd already tried the Hagar thing and thought, well, maybe it's just sort of a vague promise that by some other means I'll have a son. And God said, no, you and Sarah will have a son.

And Abraham believed God. In spite of all of the evidence to the contrary, nobody else would have understood it. He was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and was fully convinced that what he had promised, he was also able to perform.

And look at verse 22. Therefore, it was accounted to him for righteousness. That's the kind of thinking we want to cultivate.

To, first of all, know the promises of God, and secondly, once we know them and we understand the conditions of their fulfillment and we endeavor to meet those conditions, then to rest in the certainty that God is able to perform and fulfill those promises. We don't do that enough. None of us do.

And this is one of the lessons from Noah. Think about the generation that Noah dwelt in. We talked last week about the long period of time, perhaps 120 years, where he was gathering trees and chopping them down and planing the planks and building the ark day by day by day with everybody thinking he was a nut.

But he had the promise of God. He had a relationship with God. He walked with God.

And it was certain in his mind that by being obedient to God, he would glorify God and would experience the preservation that God had promised. We need to cultivate that kind of thinking ourselves. So we have the promise of God.

He will give food to those who fear him. He is ever mindful of his covenant. He's not going to forget.

We don't slip through the cracks. That's what we learned from Psalm 111. We need to be fully convinced because God is able.

There is no lack of ability on God's part. Can God cause us to live a long and happy life even if we violate a lot of the dietary recommendations of science? Well, answer that question in your own mind. Is God able to fulfill his promise that everything taken with thanksgiving is good for food or not? I would rather die of heart stoppage at the age of 49 and stand before God saying, Lord, I ate, I drank, resting in your promise.

And if that's when I died, then it was your perfect time than to scrimp around and eat bird seed and hemp and lettuce and all the other things people try to convince themselves is good for them and stand before God and say, Well, I know you said that everything is good for food, but I really wanted to try to preserve my body and so I really day by day by day applied scientific principles to my diet instead of biblical principles. The Bible doesn't say, weigh your food. The Bible doesn't say, it says, Look, God made it, it's good, eat it, like it, ask for more.

That's the concept. Look at 2 Corinthians 1 and verse 20. 2 Corinthians 1 and verse 20.

What is his subject here? Look at verse 18. God is faithful. I've got to embroider that and put it on the refrigerator.

God is faithful. Our word to you was not yes and no, for the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, by me, Silvanus and Timothy, was not yes and no, but in him was yes. For all the promises of God in him are yes, and in him, amen, to the glory of God through us.

The fulfillment of the promises of God rests on the merit of Jesus Christ. That's the thrust of what Paul is saying here. Sounds a little confusing when you render it into English.

It makes a lot better sense in Greek. The point here is that because of Christ, we're not worried about the negatives anymore. The promises of God are yes in Christ.

The faithfulness of Christ, the merit of Christ, the righteousness of Christ, and the faithfulness of God combine to give us a yes answer to the promises of God, and it glorifies God. That's one of the ways to tell. We say, where does practical wisdom leave off and faith in God begin? When are you being prudent? When are you leaving yourself susceptible to the thinking of men? When are we being wise? When are we being foolish when it comes to observing various taboos or various recommendations that we might receive from the world? Well, look at the glory of God.

Does your lifestyle reflect faith in God? Does your lifestyle reflect confidence in the

promises of God? Do your decisions and your choices reflect the priority of God and the things of God in your life? Or is your reputation, is your name, what people know and think of when they think of you, reflect something else? Well, they're this kind of an ist or this kind of an ism. That's what this person is. This person falls in this particular category, and it's some form of category in the world.

Well, this life has as its hallmark or its distinguishing feature adherence to something in the world, or is it something from the Word? The glory of God. You'll see this occur over and over again in these passages of God's promises. Why does God establish and confirm and fulfill His promises and His covenants? Because it reflects His character and His glory.

That's what we want our lives to do. Turn a few pages over in 2 Corinthians to chapter 7, verse 1. Knowing that God has made His promises, that they are the food to those who are thirsty and hungry, that God is ever mindful of His covenant promises, that He is able to perform them, and that we have them, what should we do? Well, Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 7, verse 1. Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. Possession of these promises and the certainty of their fulfillment from God should motivate us to do something.

Isn't it interesting? What Paul says is, having these promises, let us cleanse ourselves. He doesn't say, having been cleansed at the point of salvation, we know these promises will be fulfilled. He says, we have these promises as a potential, so to receive the fulfillment of them, we need to cleanse ourselves.

What does Genesis 6 say about Noah? Noah was righteous. Noah was blameless. How did he get that way? How did he receive the declaration of righteousness? He received it the same way Abraham did, by trusting the promises of God, walking with God, knowing God, and believing in God.

How did he achieve the status of blameless? Did he just never sin? He was walking with God, and God kept him from sinning? We've seen before that the idea of blameless means that we claim the cleansing forgiveness of God when we do fail. This is how we cleanse ourselves. If you cleanse yourself, you are clean.

It just follows. And once you are clean, that's the definition of blameless. Perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

This is what the presence and the existence of the promises of God ought to do in our soul. When's the last time we thought, sometime in the middle of the week, about the promises of God? When you think about the promises of God, does it motivate you? Does it encourage you? Does it make a difference in the way you live? It should. Paul tells us that we should all be motivated to cleanse ourselves from filthiness of the flesh and

spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

2 Peter 1.4 tells us another result that ought to take place in our lives because God has given us these great promises. 2 Peter 1.4 His divine power has given to us all things. I'm reading verse 3 here of 2 Peter 1. His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness through what? How does God give us all things that pertain to life and godliness? It doesn't say some things.

It doesn't say spiritual things. It says all things that pertain to life and godliness. How do they come? Through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue.

This is where the study of the Word of God enters in and is so important. Then look at verse 4. By which? By what? By the knowledge of Christ. By the knowledge of God.

In that has been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises so that, here's the purpose of the promises, through these you may be partakers of the divine nature having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. Pursuing the fulfillment of God's promises, claiming those promises, seizing and claiming the cleansing that comes through, the forgiveness that is in God. We escape the corruption that is in the world and we become partakers of the divine nature.

This is an option. It's not automatic. We don't have perseverance of the saints.

It is something that comes when we choose it. Turn a few pages over to 1 John 2. What is the promise? 1 John 2.25 This is the promise that He has promised us. Eternal life.

That is the motivation. Look at verse 24. Let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning.

If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise that He has promised us. Eternal life.

The life of the Father, the life of the Son dwelling in us comes by claiming those great and precious promises. What are some of those promises? If you sat down right now and had a little pop quiz, had a blank sheet of paper, how many promises of God could you think of? Do you know the conditions for fulfillment of those promises? Most promises have some qualification. They are not granted and fulfilled in the case of all believers.

What are those promises? How many can you name? This is one of the useful features of Scripture memorization is to memorize promises. I'd like to review just a few of the thousands of promises in the Word of God that apply to us. If we want to be like Noah, if we want to walk with God, if we want to have confidence in God, if we want to fulfill the potential that we have through God's promises to us, the way it was fulfilled in Noah's life, we need to know these promises.

We need to be familiar with them. We have many divine promises. Those promises are unfailing as we have seen.

God remembers them. He is able to perform them. You might put with that 1 Kings 8.56, Blessed be the Lord who has given rest to His people Israel according to all that He promised.

There has not failed one word of all His good promise which He promised through His servant Moses. God fulfilled every word of His promises to Israel and He will do the same for us. The example of God's dealing with Israel applies to us as well.

You can see this in Jeremiah 42.10. If you will still remain in this land, then I will build you and not pull you down. I will plant you and not pluck you up, for I relent concerning the disaster that I have brought upon you. If we dwell in the land, that's the land of rest, the land of promise, the land of obedience to God, He will build us up and not pull us down.

There's a qualification. If you will dwell in the land, if you will remain in the land. If we depart and say, well, there's a lot of strength in the help from Egypt, there's a lot of help available through the armies of another.

If I go outside the land, if I look to some other form of sustenance, then this promise does not apply. He says, if you will remain in the land, I will build you up and not pull you down. I will plant you and not pluck you up.

I will relent concerning the disaster that I have brought upon you. These promises are made to believers who are in the category of being qualified to have them fulfilled. Not all believers can claim all the promises of God.

You can't claim God's promises if you're outside the criteria for fulfillment. And this is where the big misunderstanding about inheritance of eternal life and inheritance of rewards and blessing and being an overcomer. This is where the confusion has come in in Christianity today.

People want to think that these are universal and that they apply to everyone, and they don't. It's important for us to understand, like Noah did, what the conditions are to be able to go to God and claim His promise. You can't be disobedient, apathetic, indifferent, and then in time of crisis go to God and say, God, here's your promise, and I'm claiming it.

We may not qualify for the fulfillment of that promise because we are not righteous, we are not blameless, and we have not walked with God. That's why you have that important statement in Genesis chapter 6. But God makes promises to believers. We talked about those reflected in the illustration of Israel in the Old Testament that we saw in the dwelling in the land in Jeremiah 42.

You find this same idea in Psalm 37.3. Trust in the Lord and do good. Dwell in the land and feed on His faithfulness. Dwell in the land.

This is the land where you dwell by faith. This is the land that you claim because of God's promise. We have promises related to prayer.

Jesus says in Mark 11.24, Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them and you will have them. So faith is required for the answer to prayer. We think, well, so if I just believe hard enough, I can ask for anything and God will give it to me? What are we talking about when we talk about faith? We're not trusting that God is going to answer and that God is going to grant our request.

What are we trusting? What is faith? Faith has as its object the Word of God. So when we pray and we believe that God is going to answer that prayer, why do we believe He's going to answer it? It's not believing that He's going to answer it in the affirmative. We're claiming some principle of Scripture that we know.

If we have been faithful and we know that God has promised to preserve the faithful, then in a time when it looks like we're not going to be preserved, I wonder if we can go to God and pray for deliverance and say, I am praying for deliverance knowing that I'm qualified. I have walked with God. I have been diligent.

I have asked and sought and knocked. This is one of the most common promises that we claim when we study the Word of God. Jesus said, Ask and it shall be given.

Seek and you will find. Knock and the door will be opened to you. So if we go in prayer and say, God, give me understanding of your Word.

Help me to remember it. Help me to put it into application when the occasion arises in life, are we going to receive an affirmative answer to that prayer? Yes. Why? Because we know a promise of God and we're claiming it.

It's not, Oh God, I really want a new refrigerator. Please give me one. And then we believe He's going to say yes.

That's a complete misunderstanding of the principle and what Jesus is saying here. Whatever things you ask, when you pray, believe or have faith that you will receive them, what is the basis of believing that we will receive? It's claiming a promise of God that we understand and that we qualify for. And when we understand that, we will receive.

Many times God will set up a situation waiting for us to go through the exercise of remembering the promise that applies, claiming that promise in prayer and saying, God, here's the situation. Here's what you have promised. I see the correlation between my circumstances and your promise and I bring that up before you.

I'm citing your word and your promise in this situation. And when we have closed that loop in our soul, then we see the fulfillment and the wonderful thing is we're very aware. We're acutely aware that this is the action of God.

This is the fulfilling of God's promise. And God is glorified because we appreciate Him. If we just went along and assumed that everything was fated and eternity passed in the divine decree, when God fulfills His promises and we hadn't thought about that promise and realized its application to our circumstance, God would not be glorified in our soul because we're not really making the connection the way that we do when we go through that cycle of thinking.

Jesus said in Luke 17, 6, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, you know, we have a mulberry tree right out here in our backyard and there have been a few times when all those berries are falling on the car and the birds are eating them and leaving deposits all over the area there. I've felt like actually performing this particular action, be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea. Jesus says, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say that and it will obey you.

Now, would we just for the heck of it, just to demonstrate our faith, run around pulling up mulberry trees and having them planted in the sea? What would that faith as a mustard seed constitute? If there is a circumstance where the pulling up of that tree is necessary in the furtherance of the plan of God, Jesus didn't pull up a tree and plant it in the sea, did he? Jesus did curse a tree and it withered and it was a sign. It was a sign to the disciples about the nature of the opportunity that Israel had as the fig tree to bear fruit and did not. The potential was there in the parable Jesus told about digging around the roots year after year.

He dug around it for two years and it didn't bear any fruit. The owner wanted to chop it down and the husbandman says, give me another year. Let me dig around the roots and cultivate it one more year and then if it doesn't bear fruit, let's go ahead and cut it down.

The picture of the fig tree representing the nation of Israel, when it was the time to bear figs, when it was the time to be fruitful and show those early figs, they weren't there. Full of leaves but no fruit. So when Jesus pronounced the curse on that tree and it withered, that was a specific occasion where Jesus had confidence that that sign was going to be fulfilled and would stand recorded in the Word of God as a part of communication of divine truth.

We can do that same thing. It's important though that you have to have the object of faith. It's not the strength of our belief, it's the strength of the thing that we believe in that counts.

And when we pray believing, we're believing some promise or some principle, some application of the Word of God. Otherwise, it's a work on our part. Well, if we try hard

enough in believing, if we generate enough belief that the answer is going to be yes, we're just believing that the answer is going to be yes.

That's not a biblical principle. But if we look at a situation where here is a believer that needs provision and God has promised provision and we say, Lord, you've promised provision in these circumstances and here is someone who's qualified and I'm asking you to fulfill that promise that you have in your Word, then we have confidence because we are like Moses praying to God in confidence that we're stating a true thing that God is going to honor. We have qualifications for those promises.

We're not always in a position to claim them or claim them on behalf of others. For example, God has made promises to those who are humble. Psalm 138.6 Though the Lord is on high, yet he regards the lowly.

This is our recognition of our place in God's plan. We don't puff ourselves up and get proud of what we have done or come before God and say, Lord, you know, I'm really on fire for you and I've done all these wonderful things and witnessed and so forth. He regards the lowly, but the proud he knows from afar.

Isaiah 66.2 All those things my hand has made and all those things exist, says the Lord, that on this one I will look on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit and who trembles at my word. Who is it that God is going to listen to? Who is it that God is going to look upon with favor and with favor on their requests? On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit and who trembles at my word. Someone who values the word of God and seeks to honor it and to apply it, has faith in it.

Luke 9.48 Whoever receives this little child in my name receives me and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. For he who is least among you all will be great. And this is recognition that even though someone doesn't seem, you know, everybody wants to host the missionaries, you're in a big church, the missionaries come to visit, oh, you know, let me have them in my home and so forth.

But there may be other people in the congregation who are equally needy and there isn't a big rush to host them or to help them. They don't have the prominence and the notoriety that a missionary or a visiting pastor or someone might have. Well, Jesus says, even the little ones, even the least, when you do something for them, you're doing it for him and by extension doing it for the Father.

You receive him and receive the Father. Luke 14.11 Whoever exalts himself will be humbled and he who humbles himself will be exalted. That's a promise.

When we don't put ourselves forward, we don't worry about trying to establish our reputation, our goodness and so forth, God will exalt those who are humble. James 4.6 He gives more grace. Therefore, he says, God resists the proud but gives grace to the

humble.

God will bless those who are objective and through their objectivity are generous. Remember, we've talked about subjectivity in the past. If you're not objective, you're subjective.

You're either looking at life from God's point of view as far as priorities or we're looking at it from a human point of view. And subjectivity will generally fall into three categories. We either have our eyes on ourself, we have our eyes on other people, or we have our eyes on circumstances or things.

And we can't be objective. We can't rightly measure. We can't rightly prioritize when our vision is full of ourself or full of other people or occupied with circumstances.

If we are objective, we will be looking at life through or in the divine perspective. And that enables us to be genuinely objective. We will be generous.

We won't be concerned with ourselves. We will be able to exercise love through faith and hope. So in Psalm 41.1, Blessed is he who considers the poor.

We can get so occupied with ourself or where we stand with other people or our circumstances that we miss opportunities to see those around us who are in need. God says, Blessed is he who considers the poor. The Lord will deliver him in time of trouble.

Well, when there's time of trouble, if you have been observant and have exercised opportunities to be of benefit to those who are in need, you can have confidence that you can claim God's deliverance. You say, Lord, I have not overlooked the poor. I've tried to be sensitive in those areas.

I've taken advantage of the opportunities. And now it's my turn. I am now one of the poor and I hope that as they have been benefited by your grace, I will be as well.

And you can have confidence because of that generosity. Proverbs 3.9 Honor the Lord with your possessions and with the first fruits of all your increase. Verse 10 So your barns will be filled with plenty and your vats will overflow with new wine.

Proverbs 11.25 The generous soul will be made rich and he who waters will also be watered himself. And it is at the point that we no longer worry about our own self-preservation and our own kettle of fish when we are busy looking out for others and opportunities to be of benefit to others. That's when God is most free to bless us.

Well, we're out of time for this morning. We'll resume our study next week on the promises of God and God honoring that promise in the life of Noah. We're also going to see some fascinating things about the chronology of the flood, the date and time references as we move rather quickly through the remainder of chapter 6 and into

chapter 7 next week.

Let's close in a word of prayer. We thank you, Father, for your great and precious promises. We thank you that we not only know that you are faithful to make those promises and to fulfill them, but that we have the ability to qualify to receive your grace in the fulfillment of your word.

We pray that God the Holy Spirit will show us those areas in life where we can avail ourselves of that grace through your spirit, through your word, cleanse ourselves and be in a position to receive the fulfillment of your promises and in so doing reflect your glory. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.