

Tom Ruggirello - Precious Promises

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Brethren, I have to say that the Heavenly Father has made so many wonderful promises that we couldn't possibly think of covering all. You know, he's made these great promises, and we know because of the character of who he is that every one of them will be fulfilled. But in addition, we also know that He's a very wise father and he wants his children to fully understand how this life should be lived. Pretty basic, fundamental question that he's teaching us, and to plant the beauty of life into our hearts. He's had to hold back from granting us all the wishes, all the riches that he has in store for the human family.

But in due time, the human family will be showered with the richness of what God will give us all. He has made wonderful promises, as I said, but we're going to only consider a few from the Old Testament. The precious promise mentioned in our opening hymn that says, I will guide thee with mine eye is from a very meaningful chapter in the book of Psalms. Psalm 32, along with Psalm 51, is David's poem of forgiveness after his sin with Bathsheba, the killing of Uriah, and the death of his new baby, and when we examine those experiences, oh, my goodness, my heart aches.

We can only imagine how David felt after he heard those initial words from Nathan. Remember the story? The prophet Nathan came to David and told him the story about a wealthy man who owned many flocks, and then he described a poor man who owned one little lamb, and he loved that lamb, and he nurtured it, and he.

And he raised it as part of his own family, and one day a traveler stopped by to visit the rich man, and the rich man wanted to entertain him, and he wanted to make a meal for him, but he didn't want to take one of his own sheep to prepare that meal, and so he took the poor man's one little sheep and he prepared the meal for his visitor, and the story made David so angry that he said, as the Lord liveth, the man who hath done this thing shall surely die.

And he shall restore the lamb fourfold because he did this thing and because he had no pity, and in one of the most profound moments in David's life, Nathan said, thou art the man. Thus saith the Lord God of Israel. I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul, and I gave thee thy master's house and thy master's wives into thy bosom and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah, and, and if that had been too little I would moreover, have given unto thee such and such things.

Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord to do evil in his sight? Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword and have taken his wife to be thy wife. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house because thou hast despised me.

Brethren, imagine that moment for David if you can. I believe there was a long silence while David's heart thought about that and his heart sank within him, realizing the power of the truth that Nathan had said. Here's David's response. David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord, and Nathan said unto David, the Lord also hath put away thy sin.

Thou shalt not die. Howbeit? Because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. The child also that is born unto thee shall surely die again. What a heart piercing moment for an otherwise noble and good man.

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The remarkable response from King David showed us something very different about him compared to most worldly men who have ignored it or would have persecuted Nathan or put him away. David listened to the words of Nathan and he truly repented and he sought forgiveness from God. He also understood that the sins he committed with Bathsheba and against Uriah, as bad as they were, were overshadowed by his disloyalty to God, and he didn't want his sins to separate him from God's care, from his heart communion with God. He didn't want to break that bond.

So he begins Psalm 32 by saying, Blessed is he in whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, in whose spirit there is no guile. Thou art my hiding place. Thou shalt preserve me from trouble. Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance.

Selah. You know, the word selah is put there to tell you, to pause and consider, to think about what he has said and what message is being put in your heart, and then he shares God's answer. God says, I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go. I will guide thee with mine eye.

There's the context of what we sang earlier. Brethren, you know there's an amazing lesson in this whole story of sin and forgiveness. We know that sin has its consequences, but forgiveness is available when we truly and humbly seek it from God. He's looking for heart condition and the honesty of recognizing when we fall short. Brother, we're going to Pause and consider David's words by listening to a song of his thoughts put to music as we recall other meaningful moments in David's life.

Moments of victory, failures, sorrows, and even the challenges of old age that he faced. They're common themes in many lives, and David's experiences, I know, will be invaluable in the kingdom as he helps share his life experience with the world and then also share what God thought of them.

You are my hiding place. You always fill my heart with songs of deliverance. Whenever I am afraid I will trust in you.

I will trust in you.

Let the weak say I am strong in the strength of the Lord.

You are my hiding place. You always fill my heart with songs of deliverance. Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in you.

I will trust in you. You let the we say I am strong in the strength of the Lord. I will trust in you.

You are my hiding place. You always fill my heart with songs of deliverance. Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in you. You I will trust in you.

At the weak say I am strong in the strength of the Lord. I will trust in you.

I will trust in you.

Sam.

I will guide thee with mine eye. It's another precious promise given to David, and you can appreciate how much that meant to him. But it's not as easy as being led by the hand or told what

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to do, is it? To be guided by God's eye, you have to listen and watch differently than with your natural senses. We must be guided by godly principles, by observing the hand of providence, by making decisions that we believe will honor God.

It means doing our best to conform our words and our conduct to the pattern that Jesus left for us, and you know that that's not always easy. But when we make the effort to live that way, the benefits will be eternal, and just like David, our lives will become useful to God and helping the world back to human perfection into an appreciation of who God is and what his heart intent is for this world. Another precious promise comes from the book of Jeremiah.

It says, for I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, to give you hope and the future, and again, this verse is part of a larger context. It's part of a letter that Jeremiah wrote to the exiles while they were in Babylon. Here are the opening words of Jeremiah's this is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to build your houses and settle down, plant your gardens and Eat what they produce, marry and have sons and daughters. Find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage so that they too may have sons and and daughters increase in number there do not decrease.

Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper. Interesting advice that God gave the people in Babylon, and the reason he wanted them to prosper while in Babylon was so that they could form a nucleus for the rebirth, the regathering of the nation once their punishment was over. Because we know had they fully assimilated with the Gentiles, their return to Israel would have been much more difficult.

In fact, many did assimilate and only a small number of Israelites went back to the land. Well, God's words through Jeremiah go on to warn them to stay away from worldly thinking, and then he writes our verse, and he shares God's promises for the return of Israel. He says, for I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you. Plans to give you hope and a future.

Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek Me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you, declares the Lord, and will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you, declares the Lord, and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile. Those are tremendously encouraging words to people who had been taken from their homes to a distant and unfamiliar land.

The Israelites needed that encouragement, knowing that God had not abandoned them as a nation. In fact he had plans for them. I love that phrase, plans to prosper them. But those plans were contingent on them seeking him with all their heart, and of course, there is another important principle here.

It's really been consistent from God right from the beginning. It shows us that God's heart desire is to bless all those who seek Him. Seems like a simple formula, don't it? Seek him with all your heart and he will bless you. The exile of Israel is similar to the exile of the human family, isn't it?

Like Israel being taken to Babylon and later to Medo, Persia. Mankind's punishment has been for its own good, to show us where true prosperity in life comes from. What a meaningful promise from

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God when he said that he has plans for each of us, and that includes all humanity, of course, and those Plans are filled with hope and prosperity. Brethren, we're going to listen to a selection from a concert that was held just outside of Jerusalem, given by a father and his daughter, singing the words of our text.

His name is Marty Goetz. He's a Christian Jew who composed this with his daughter. They wrote the music and the words together, and if you listen at the beginning, the daughter's voice is conveying the sentiments of the exiles in Babylon, not knowing if they would ever see their home again, and then the Father comes in as the voice of God, comforting them with the promises of his plan for their future.

And then they join voices and they repeat the promise of God. So let's listen to that.

Here I am, waiting once again on my knees, listening, and there is a moment, a voice so clear speaks in a whisper the words I need to hear. I know the plans I have for you, you're always on my mind and all the thoughts I think toward you are lovingly designed to bring you through and give to you a future and a hope, therefore your peace, therefore your good.

The plans I have for you I know the plans I have for you, you're always on my mind and all the thoughts I think for you are loving me. Desire to bring you through and give to you a future and a hope there for your peace, there for your good. The plans I have for you oh, there is no one like you. Still sometimes I need you to remind me and every time you do, you say, see me, you will find me.

I know the plans I have for you, you're always on my mind and all the thoughts I sing toward you are lovingly design to bring you through and give to you a future and a hope, therefore your peace, therefore you're good. The plans I have.

To bring you through and give to you a future and a home There for your peace, therefore your good.

The plans I have for you, The plans I have for you.

Could there be any better words to describe God's heart than the plans he has for us? I appreciate the statement from the exile's perspective when it said, sometimes I need you to remind me, and every time you do, you say, seek me and you will find me. We all need that, don't we? To be reminded.

To be reminded of God's promises, of his good heart, of the blessings he has store for humanity.

And then the Lord's response and all the thoughts I think towards you are lovingly designed to bring you through and give to you a future and a hope. They're for your peace, they're for your good the plans I have for you. How wonderfully the divine plan illustrates that God's heart's desire is that for everyone. What a blessed hope lies ahead for this world because God has promised it, and he is good to his promise. The next precious promise we're going to look at is in Isaiah chapter 40.

It reads, don't be afraid, for I am with you. Don't be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand. Now, if you look at the Book of Isaiah, you realize that it's divided into various sections, and chapter 40 is directed to the time of Israel's captivity and Babylon again.

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So when Isaiah wrote chapter 40 Like Jeremiah, he was addressing the Jews who had been ripped from their homes and taken away from all the things that were familiar with them. Here's a painting by a German artist named Gebhard Fugel depicting Jews sitting on the banks of the Tigris river which flowed through Babylon, and they are mourning their captivity and longing to go back home. Psalm 132 describes their lament. It says, by the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down.

Yea, we wept when we remembered Zion. For they that carried us away captive required of us a song, and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, sing us one of the songs of Zion. Ah, how shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning.

How do you sing those words with mirth. Isaiah's words were meant to comfort these people who longed for home. Not referring to this painful time. Isaiah begins by giving us these amazingly uplifting words. He says, comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith your God.

Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned, for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins. The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness. Prepare ye the way of the Lord. Make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.

For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. How meaningful that despite having to punish Israel, God sends these comforting words. You know, it's like a father who has to punish his children, but while they're being punished, he says, don't worry. It'll be over soon and you will be a better person for this, and as I imagine a scene like that, I can see the little boy just rolling his eyes and sarcastically saying, oh, sure it will.

You just didn't have to punish me. I could still be a better person without your punishment. But then someday, when he's a man and he looks back at his father's words and he does see that they made him a better man and that he is better for the experience, then he will understand the wisdom of his Father. But it had to be difficult for the Father, too. Isaiah is clearly speaking beyond Israel's captivity, though, isn't he?

Yes, Jerusalem's warfare would be accomplished and her iniquity pardoned. But in the larger picture, he points to John the Baptist preparing the way for the redeemer of all men and their release from the captivity to sin and death, a much worse captivity than what Israel was experiencing. He extends a promise of comfort to all creation, and he tells us that the difficulties will one day be over and that this captivity to sin will make sense in the larger context of a father planting wisdom in the heart of his children and the glory of the Lord will be seen by all flesh. That's the greater hope that Isaiah points to. We're going to listen to just a shortened version of Handel's rendition of this inspiring passage.

Now, as you listen to this first, listen as if you were a Jew sitting in a foreign land, surrounded by those who speak a different language, who have different customs than you do, who don't know or appreciate your God. The Jews needed to hear these words, and so do we, because we too, in a sense, are in a foreign land, and then try to envision how Isaiah's words point to the coming images, comforting images of the coming kingdom. This is only a shortened version.

And cry unto her.

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We don't have time to watch all of it, but meaningful words from God's heart. Comfort, pardoned. Those are key words that we understand, and it's an extraordinary privilege for you and I to understand the deeper meaning of Isaiah's words and to know that they're going to be fulfilled on a worldwide scale, and that it will be manifested to this world how good our Heavenly Father is. In Psalm 119:54, the Psalmist wrote, thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.

Brother Yoo and I sing songs in our hearts when we appreciate the depth of God's plan to bless mankind, and someday, too, the world will sing those same songs and share the same feeling that you and I often have when we think of God's goodness. They will understand that what brings songs of joy into life is understanding and loving the statutes and the principles that God stands for, and when they fill the human heart, then eternal life will be granted to a race that will finally be worthy of it. They will look to our Heavenly Father and say, thank you.

Thank you for being a wise Father, for giving us everything we have needed to know what life is all about. Well, brethren, on another note, some of you may relate to this, but as I get older, I have more of a tendency to look back on my life and I remember meaningful moments, both the precious ones that I treasure and certainly the more challenging ones in life, and it's good to remember both, and I know that as I look back, I owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to many brethren who have helped guide me in my life and teach me what life is really about, and that's serving our Heavenly Father and coming to know Him.

I also look back and reflect on some of my failures, but realize even in those, there can be great value. Like the illustration of the Father teaching His son, we often learn more about who we are and who God is and the meaning of what Jesus can do. When we miss the mark and the Lord says, try again. You'll do better next time. Well, God is not the only one who has made promises.

Every consecrated individual in this room has made a promise that they will seek God with all their hearts and in everything they do, and in keeping with that promise, there is great reward. So we have become makers of promises as well, and just like God is assured that he will keep every one of his promises, we have to be equally committed to keep our consecration vows to Him. For younger brethren, then remember that you are now writing the memories of your life, ones that someday you will look back on.

So I encourage you to write them well. Make them precious, and when you make mistakes, if you look to the Lord, they too will make you a better person in the Lord and a wiser and better able to understand life from God's perspective, and so, with that sentiment in mind, we're going to close with a song titled When It's All Been Said and Done. A reflective back and after the hymn, we've asked Brother Joe Miguez to close with prayer.

Sa.

When it's all been said and done.

There is just one thing that matters Wonders Did I do my best to live for truth? Did I live my life for you? When it's all been said and done.

All my treasures will make mine?

Only what I've done for love's reward? Will stand the test of time?

Lord, your mercy is so grave?

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That you look beyond our we?

And find purest gold in my reclaim? Making sinners into s? I will always sing your praise?

Here on earth and ever after?

For you've shown me heaven's my true home? When it's all been said and done? You are my life?
When life is done?

When it's all been said and done?

There is just one thing that matters? Did I do my best to live for truth? Did I live my life for you?
Lord, I live my life for you?