Promise Keeper

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[0:00] Hebrews chapter 6, verses 13 through 20, if you would please stand with me as we honor the reading of God's word together.

For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, saying, Surely I will bless you and multiply you.
And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise. For people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation.
So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath. So that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us.
We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul. A hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.
[1:22] May God add a blessing to the reading of his word. Would you please be seated? Have you ever been lied to by someone you thought you could trust?

Has someone you loved ever made a promise to you that they didn't keep? I'm sure that, unfortunately, for all of us who have lived long enough, the answer to both of those questions is yes.
Few things do as much damage to our ability to trust than when someone we thought we could trust does not keep their word or their promise to us.
We live in a culture that sort of takes it for granted that people who should tell us the truth don't, and people who we think should keep their promises to us won't.
We have come to realize that individuals in positions of authority, such as parents, politicians, police officers, even pastors, who have sworn an oath or made a pledge to protect, serve, and uphold their roles with integrity often fail us.
[2:38] These failures can deeply impact our ability to trust authority. Broken promises and lies from those whom we once trusted have far-reaching negative effects.

But the most profound consequence is when these betrayals lead us to doubt or disbelieve the promises God made to us, the promises of our Creator, who is our ultimate authority.
Satan tempted Adam and Eve to sin by prompting them to question God's trustworthiness in the Garden of Eden.
He tempted them to doubt what God said and question if God's command would truly result in what was best for them. Jesus called Satan the father of lies in John 8, 44, and he called him the prince of this world in John 12, 31.
Satan's influence over the world's fallen system of thought, his deception and opposition to God continues to tempt people to exchange the truth of God for a lie and promote the idea that God can't be trusted.
[4:04] As Christians, as those who have been born again to new life in Christ, as followers of Jesus, as students of his word, we know that God's testimony in Scripture of himself is that he is holy, that he is the source of truth, and that as such, being holy and the source of truth, it is impossible for him to lie, as we read in Hebrews 6, 18.

We also know from reading Scripture that God has made a lot of promises to those he has saved, to those he has adopted as his children.
The Bible says that ultimately all of the promises of God recorded in his word find their fulfillment in Jesus Christ, his son. 2 Corinthians 1, 20 through 22 says, For all the promises of God find their yes

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in him, and that is speaking of Jesus.
That is why it is through him that we utter our amen to God for his glory, and it is God who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us, and who has also put his seal on us and has given us his spirit in our heart as a guarantee.
After the fall, God promised to send an offspring of Eve who would one day crush the serpent's head. The rest of the Old Testament reveals the promises God made to send the Messiah, the Anointed One, the Redeemer, the Savior, who would conquer sin and death by dying himself and rising again.
[5:40] The New Testament records the fulfillment of that promise and additional promises God made to save us from our sins, forgiving us of the eternal consequences of sin, preserving us from the influence of sin until we reach the final state of our salvation, glorification in which we will live with him eternally and are made permanently holy without the desire to sin or having to endure the effects of sin.

This is all good news, that God desires us to believe and to live confidently in so that we won't waste our lives and remain focused on him as we actively participate in his mission for us to go and make disciples who are equipped and encouraged to demonstrate the goodness of God for the glory of Jesus Christ, his Son.
In our text last week, we saw how God, through the writer of Hebrews, expressed his desire that we live confidently in him. That encouraging word came on the heels of a discouraging warning.
The writer of Hebrews knew his audience. In this church, there were some who were drifting away from the profession that they had once made to believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. They were spiritually infants who were not progressing and growing in the knowledge of Scripture and in their ability and their desire to apply it to their lives.
[7:20] In the face of persecution that they were experiencing, they were tempted to drift back into Judaism, to slip back into practicing the rituals and the ceremonies prescribed in the Old Testament, which foreshadowed the coming of Jesus, but which had now been fulfilled in him and were no longer necessary to atone for their sins under the new covenant God established through Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection.

In Hebrews chapter 6, verses 4 through 8, the writer of Hebrews warns such people against completely drifting away from Jesus because if they do, they have no hope.
They have no anchor. They will, in effect, be crucifying Jesus again in the sense that they're turning away from him means that they will be standing with Jesus' enemies in agreement that he should have been crucified because they don't believe in who he is.
The writer of Hebrews is aware that others who are truly saved in this church could hear this warning and that warning could cause them to question their salvation.
So in verses 9 through 12, he addresses those who have demonstrated the evidence of their new life in Christ to bear the fruit of salvation and assures them that God's desire is that they live confidently and earnestly, actively, diligently, not sluggishly in their devotion and service to the Lord to declare his gospel, to make disciples, and to encourage them and equip them to demonstrate the light of Christ in their life because of their love for one another, which is motivated by their love for God's name.
[9:10] He urges them to imitate the confidence of those who, through faith and patience, inherit God's promises. And so now in verses 13 through 20, the writer of Hebrews presents Abraham as an example of one who lived confidently and faithfully in the reality that God keeps his promises.

And through Abraham's example, he encourages believers with this truth. which is the main idea for this morning's message. God in his faithfulness has firmly anchored your life, Christian, in the unshakable reality of his promise fulfilled perfectly in Jesus Christ.
God in his faithfulness has firmly anchored your life in the unshakable reality of his promises fulfilled perfectly in Jesus Christ. And so our text this morning contains three encouragements for Christians to live confidently in the reality that God keeps his promises, which are fulfilled perfectly in Jesus Christ.
Brother, sister, doubt is not a fruit of the Spirit. Neither is fear, worry, or anxiety. God desires you to trust him.
He's given you his word to remind you of his character and his faithfulness. I'm sure that you have been lied to and betrayed by people you thought you could trust.

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[10:41] And I'm sure the enemy wants to use those past hurts to tempt you to doubt God's present and future promises. his promise to love you, to save you, to keep you and never forsake you.

Satan cannot take away your salvation, but he will try to rob you of the joy and the confidence you should have in it. And I hope that today through his word God will encourage you and equip you to live confidently in the reality that in Christ he has firmly anchored you to himself and that you will live confidently knowing that you will receive the inheritance that he has promised to you.
If you're here this morning and you are not a believer, you're not a follower of Jesus Christ, friend, God has brought you here this morning to hear his word, to hear about his promises and he's brought you here to offer these promises to you.
And I hope that today God opens your eyes, I hope that today God softens your heart to see your need to receive his love, his salvation, and all the promises that he has made to those who are in Christ.
So we have three encouragements from God's word today for Christians to live confidently in the reality that God keeps his promises. The first encouragement is this, live confidently in God's purpose.
[12:11] Live confidently in God's purpose. Look again verses 13 through 14. For when God made a promise to Abraham since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself saying, surely I will bless you and multiply you.

Now, the theme of this passage is God. It's God in his faithfulness and his integrity and his ability to keep his promises.
Abraham is simply an example of those who trust in God's faithfulness and his integrity to keep his promise. But Abraham is an important figure in redemptive history.
Aside from Moses, no person from Old Testament times is mentioned more in the New Testament than Abraham. James refers to Abraham as God's friend. In James 2.23, Galatians 3.7 calls believers in all generations children of Abraham.
In Romans 4, Abraham's faith is used by Paul to make the important point that justification, salvation, has always been through faith and not by works. The life of Abraham takes up a good portion of the book of Genesis from his first mention in Genesis 11.26 to his death in Genesis 25.8.
[13:36] Now, the Bible doesn't tell us much about Abraham's early life. We know that he was the son of a man named Terah and he lived in a land called Ur before settling in the city of Haran.

We also know that Abraham's name was originally Abram and that he was 75 years old when God first spoke to him and that's recorded in Genesis 12.1-3.
Now, the Lord said to Abram, go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you and I will make of you a great nation and I will bless you and I will make your name great so that you will be a blessing.
I will bless those who bless you and him who dishonors you I will curse and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.
God made three promises to Abraham. First, the promise of land of his own. Second, the promise to be made into a great nation and third, the promise that God would bless him.
[14:46] These three promises form the basis of what is later called the Abrahamic covenant. Genesis 12.4 says that Abraham after hearing this from the Lord hearing what the Lord told him went.

Now put yourself in Abraham's sandals for a minute. How many of you would leave behind everything that is familiar to you and go without knowing where you're going?
Without knowing your destination? I don't leave town without having my destination pulled up on Google Maps. We feel the need to know where we're going and we also want to know when we're going to get there.
Abraham didn't have any of that information at this point. And so imagine the questions that Sarah, Abraham's wife, might have asked him.
where are we going? To a land God will show us. Okay.
[16:04] Where is that? And how long is it going to take us to get there? God didn't say. So God told you to go to a land he will show you but you don't know where it is or when we'll get there.

did he say anything else? Yeah, he's going to make me into a great nation and bless me and make my name great. We don't know if Sarah asked these questions or if she wrestled with these

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questions in her mind but those of you who are married, wives, could you imagine your husband telling you yeah, we're going?
We don't know where we're going. All we know is that God is going to bless us. All Abraham knew was God's word and he believed God's promise.
God's word, his promise was all he needed. That was good enough. God reiterated this promise to Abraham again after the painful decision to separate himself and his party from his nephew Lot in Genesis 13 14-17.
The Lord said to Abraham after Lot had separated from him, lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are northward and southward and eastward and westward for all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring forever.
[17:29] I will make your offspring as the dust of the earth so that if one can count the dust of the earth your offspring also can be counted. Arise, walk through the length and the breadth of the land for I will give it to you.

But then after living ten years in the land and still having no children, Abraham was old and he was getting older. Sarah, his wife, was old and she was getting older.
And then after rescuing Lot, defeating four kings in battle and then meeting a mysterious figure named Melchizedek who we'll look at in our text next week, Abraham was no doubt weary I think.
And it was then that the Lord appeared to him in a vision in Genesis 15 and I'm going to read the whole chapter. After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision.
Fear not, Abram, I am your shield, your reward shall be very great. But Abraham said, O Lord God, what will you give me?
[18:32] For I continue childless in the air of my house as Eleazar of Damascus. And Abram said, Behold, you have given me no offspring and a member of my household will be my heir.

And behold, the word of the Lord came to him. This man shall not be your heir. Your very own son shall be your heir. And he brought him outside and said, look toward heaven and number the stars if you're able to number them.
Then he said to him, so shall your offspring be. And Abraham believed the Lord, and the Lord counted it to him as righteousness. And he said to him, I am the Lord who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess.
But he said, O Lord, how am I to know that I shall possess it? He said to him, bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a young pigeon.
And Abraham brought all these, cut them in half, and laid each half over against the other, but he did not cut the birds in half. And when the birds of prey came down on the carcass, Abraham drove them away.
[19:42] As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abraham, and behold, dreadful and great darkness fell upon him. Then the Lord said to Abraham, know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in the land that is not theirs, and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for 400 years.

But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. As for you, you shall go to your father in peace, you shall be buried in a good old age, and they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.
When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking firepot and a flaming torch passed between the pieces. On that day, the Lord made a covenant with Abraham saying, to your offspring, I give this land from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, the land of the Canaanites, the Chesazites, the Cadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.
A couple of things are really important for us to see here. First, Abraham questions God's plan, but he doesn't doubt God's ability.
He's been patient, he's been faithful. The intent of his questions, like any good student, is to receive more information. And so, friend, if you have questions about God's purpose, the best thing to do is ask those questions to God and seek answers in the Bible, his word.
[21:21] But Abraham didn't have any scriptures to go to. But you do. God has given us his word, which serves as a light to guide our path.

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It records his purposes for us. It reveals his plan. The writer of Hebrews had this record of God's faithfulness and trustworthiness to refer to his readers.
And that is what we must do for ourselves and for each other in the church. Seek God in prayer, find answers in his word, and encourage each other to be faithful as we live confidently in our God who keeps his promises.
The second important thing for us to see here is that Abraham believed God's word, and God counted that to him as righteousness. This is a monumental event in redemptive history.
Abraham believed God's promise. He remained confident in God's ability to keep his word. He trusted that he would become a father though he had no children.
[22:28] The aged patriarch rested everything, his entire life, on God's word and his promise. And again, the whole thrust of Romans 4 is that Abraham was saved, he was justified, he was counted righteous by God because of his faith.

Before circumcision, before the giving of the law, before the institution of the sacrificial system, and the temple, and all the ceremonies that distinguished God's people from the world and marked them as his covenant people, before all of that, Abraham was saved by faith.
Also, take note of this. Abraham didn't seek God. Abraham didn't call out to God. first. God did that. God chose him.
God called him. God revealed himself to him. And God promised him. Abraham believed, he obeyed, and he continued to trust in God's character as a keeper of his promises, even when that promise seemed delayed.
And so now we can better understand the truth expressed here in Hebrews 6, 13-15. Abraham trusted God's purpose for him. God did not take Abraham from his homeland and send him to a foreign land to wander the rest of his life to fulfill some kind of divine whim.
[23:49] God doesn't play games with our lives. God had a purpose for Abraham and for the world through Abraham. And again, this was God's idea, not Abraham's.

God did not tell Abraham he would bless him and multiply him if he first fulfilled certain requirements or conditions. God's promise guaranteed its own fulfillment.
God expected many things of Abraham, but as far as fulfilling the promise was concerned, Abraham was a spectator watching what God was doing through him.
God has a purpose for Abraham. Through him, the nation of Israel descended and through Israel came the Messiah, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, through whom all the nations are blessed.
And like Abraham, if you are in Christ, God has chosen to bless you. Ephesians 1, 3, 3, 6, says, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.
[25:06] In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the beloved.

This is God's plan, his purpose for us, to know him, to delight in him, to live in the light of his truth, and to rest in his glorious goodness and grace.
And as a result of that, to live confidently, knowing that he does work all things together for the good of those who love him, and that he will keep what he saved, and that he will finish the work that he began in saving us.
I love the truth communicated by God to us in his word in Philippians 1-6 through the apostle Paul. And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion on the day of Jesus Christ.
The poet from Oklahoma, Toby Keith, once wrote a song, I guess that's what we'll call him, As Good As I Once Was. You ever heard that song before?
[26:25] In that song, he reflects and he laments in a joking way that with age, his physical abilities aren't as good as they used to be.

But he celebrates his past glory days when he was physically in his prime. I'm not as good as I once was, but I was good once.
We do that a lot, don't we, older people? We glory in the glory days. I joke with my son whenever we watch sports and I'll see a great player and be like, man, that guy reminds me of myself.
But it's fun for us to do that and we celebrate the past and those are our glory days.

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But this is the opposite of what the Christian life is supposed to be. We shouldn't look back to our past for our glory, we look forward to it.
[27:32] I'm not as good as I will be, but one day I will be when Jesus glorifies me. The best for us in Christ is yet to come.

And the joy of that future hope, that future glory, of that promise yet to be realized should spurn us all onward knowing that we have a God-given purpose to make him known until the day when we know him fully, when we're dwelling physically in his presence.
If you feel like you don't have a purpose this morning, it's probably because you've chosen a different purpose than the one that God has given to you. If you want to feel purpose, then know Jesus and make him known.
Go, declare the gospel, make disciples, teach disciples, love God's name, seek his glory, and I promise you if you do that, you will feel that your life has purpose.
Now the second encouragement, I'll move a little bit more quickly, is to live confidently in God's pledge. Live confidently in God's pledge. Verse 16, for people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation.
[28:58] Oaths in ancient Israel's time were not written contracts as they are now. They were not sealed with a signature, but with an oath, with a word, with a pledge. People swore on someone or something greater than themselves to secure the validity of their promise.

This wouldn't work today, but it worked back then. And so God here swears by himself to Abraham because there was no one greater for him to swear by.
God didn't have to make an oath. He's holy. He cannot sin. He cannot lie. He is the source of truth. He is truth. So we wonder why did God swear by himself?
And I think it's this. He didn't do it for himself. He did it for Abraham. He condescended in this way. He lowered himself. He wanted Abraham and those who would inherit his promise to have an unwavering confidence in his promise.
And so he made this oath with himself. Verses 17 through 18 again say, so when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath.
[30:08] So that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. Going back again to the covenant God made with Abraham in Genesis 15 when the animals were sacrificed, when they were cut in half and God passed through them alone, we see how God condescended or lowered himself to give Abraham increased confidence in God's ability to keep his word.

We also see a picture there of how God would later condescend, how he would ultimately lower himself to increase our confidence in him by fulfilling his ultimate promise to us to send his son.
To redeem us from our sins and establish a new covenant in his blood. The Abrahamic covenant, the Mosaic covenant where sacrifices were made and blood was shed all pointed to the cross of Jesus Christ.
Those Old Testament symbols and shadows became realities in Christ who fulfilled the old covenant by shedding his own blood on the cross. When we take communion like we did earlier this morning, we remember what Jesus promised.
We remember what Jesus has done and we understand that we are new covenant people as he said in Matthew 26, 27 through 28. Jesus took a cup and when he had given thanks he gave it to them saying drink of it all of you for this is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.
[31:42] Jesus gave his life to atone for our sins to ratify a new covenant in which we are saved and we are sealed with the promise, the guarantee of his Holy Spirit.

In the rest of scripture we are reminded of the cross and what God has pledged to us through faith in Jesus Christ. For example, Ephesians 1, 7 through 10 says, in him, Jesus, we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses according to the riches of his grace which he lavished upon us in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time to unite all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth in him.
The Bible says in Christ we are redeemed. Our debt to God for our sin has been paid by God himself. Romans 5, 9 says, since therefore we have now been justified by his blood, much more

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shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.
In Christ we have a pledge from God that our sins have been totally atoned for. In Christ we have a pledge from God that we have been completely cleansed and purified of our sins.
1 John 1, 7 says, but if we walk in the light as he is in the light, if we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his son cleanses us from all sin.
[33:06] In Christ we have a pledge from God that we have access to him now. And that access will never be denied. It's eternal. Hebrews 10, 19 says, therefore, brother, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus and being in Christ, what is your pledge?

It should be this understanding that you know you can live confidently in him, knowing that he will keep his promises to you. Romans 10, 9 says, here's our pledge, because if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.
When I first started studying this week for this text about Abraham and his faithfulness to God to keep his promise righteousness, the first thought I had was, Abraham sinned in big ways.
Twice, Abraham lied about his relationship to his wife to save his life. Abraham also took his wife's encouragement to have a child with her maidservant when they were impatient with waiting for God to deliver the promise to him.
A couple like this would need some therapy, wouldn't they? Some Christian counseling. But you know what's awesome about God? You know what's great about him? He truly separates us from our sins, doesn't he?
[34:52] Abraham's sin is recorded in Scripture, sure, but not nearly as much as his faithfulness, which was based on his confidence in God's promises. And his pledge to one day provide the one through whom the nations would be blessed.

Brothers, sisters, sometimes we dwell more on our sinfulness than God's faithfulness, don't we? And if you are in Christ, you have been forgiven and he has separated your sins from you.
That gives joy, that gives peace, that gives confidence. Yes, you are a sinner, but Jesus is a Savior who pledged to save you, keep you and never forsake you.
So now we come to the third encouragement. Live confidently in God's provision. Verses 19 through 20. We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.
Jesus Christ, the Son of God, added a human nature to his divine nature. He came to us, he lowered himself, he condescended to become one of us, to live the sinless life that you and I are incapable of living.
[36:13] We are all sinners, we all fall short of the glory of God. He lived sinlessly and he died purposefully, sacrificially on the cross, where there he shed his blood to atone for our sins, to save us from the wrath of God for the sins that we've committed against him.

And on the third day he rose again and he appeared to his disciples. He appeared to those who followed him and then he ascended to heaven where he is at right now interceding for us on our behalf.
And as such he is our great high priest. We don't need another priest. We don't need another sacrifice. We don't need animals to sacrifice to atone for our sins. We have something better, incredibly better, the Son of God who has saved us, who is the anchor of our soul.
Now I want you to think about this. When we think of anchors, we think of boat anchors, right? Whatever kind of anchor is there. But we think of anchors that go down.
But our anchor goes up. Our anchor is in heaven. And because our anchor is Jesus, he lifts our face, he lifts our focus to him.
[37:31] So for whatever reason you may not feel confident, if you know Jesus, trust. He is your anchor. And he is an anchor who will keep you, who will never forsake you.

And that should give us confidence in all times. And if you don't know him, then friend, he's brought you here to hear that good news. And again, like Abraham, it's not about what you must do.
It's just you hearing God call to you. And you turning to him. And repentance of your sin and faith. And God will give you a confidence unlike any other. Now, how should we adjust our lives according to what we've heard?

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I think it's this. Be confident in God's priest. Be confident in God's priest, who is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. And we'll close by letting God's word have the last word.
Be confident in this. Since then, we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens. Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are yet without sin.
[38:42] Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Let's pray.

Lord, we thank you for the promises that you have made to us in your word. Lord, we thank you that as you have declared to us, as you've revealed to us in your word, that you are a promise keeper. God, unfortunately, in this sin-cursed world that we live in, we have been the recipients of those who have not kept their word to us, who have broken their promises to us, Lord.
And unfortunately, as a result of that, we can be tempted to think that you would do the same. But God, I pray that through your word this morning that you would remind us and continue to remind us that you are a God who keeps his word to us, that you are good, that you are faithful, that in Christ we are anchored to you, and that you'll preserve us until that glory day when we are with you in your kingdom forever.
And so, God, I pray that for us we would live confidently in you, that we would live boldly for you, and that the purpose that you have given us, the pledge that you have made to us, and the promises that you have extended to us through your high priest, Jesus Christ, would cause us to be confident people in a world that needs to hear the good news of who Jesus is and what he's doing.
[40:17] We pray that you would help us do it, and we trust that you will for your glory. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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