

The Great Promises and The Great Escape

2 Peter 1:1-4

1 Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ:

2 Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,

3 According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:

4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

I. Introduction

1. On September 16, 1979, two German factory workers, Peter Strelzyk, and Gunter Wetzel, and their wives and kids, a total of eight persons, attempted a very risky plot, that could have very likely ended in their death. **[picture of families]**
2. Peter and Gunter lived in Communist East Germany and were tired of the oppression and fear of living under communist rule. Friends and family were disappearing or being shot for the slightest word spoken against the totalitarian government. The two men had decided it was time to attempt to escape to the West.
3. But the Berlin Wall was a highly fortified barrier between the East and West with watchtowers manned with armed soldiers, armed patrols walking the grounds, and land mines strategically placed near the wall. All of this was meant to keep anyone from the East from escaping to the West.
4. But Peter and Gunter had been working on an escape plan. They tactfully acquired 8,600 square feet of cloth from a department store, which buying that volume put them under suspicion. And with 2 weeks of sewing on a manually operated sewing machine, made a hot air balloon capable of holding 71,000 cubic feet of hot air. Other items they used included an iron frame for the gondola, sheet metal, clothesline, and 2 bottles of liquid propane, hoses, water pipe, a nozzle, and a piece of stove pipe. And they used a 250 CC motorcycle engine attached to a fan blade to fill the balloon.
5. Their first attempt to fly the family out of East Berlin was hindered by low clouds that wet the balloon making it heavier, which brought it down. They had to leave the balloon and walk 11 miles back to their car. The state security police discovered the balloon and started an investigation to find the perpetrators of this serious crime against the state.
6. With the state security hot on their trail, Peter and Gunter decided to make another attempt to escape as soon as possible. This time they doubled the size of the balloon, purchasing material from all over the country to avoid suspicion. It took them six weeks, but they were ready to try it again. **[balloon image]** (In an airshow in 1985)
7. The eight passengers got in the makeshift gondola, fired the burner, and the balloon began to lift. Only they didn't coordinate cutting the tether ropes on each side so the balloon tilted and the burner caught the side of the balloon on fire. They had brought a fire extinguisher for such an emergency and put the fire out quickly. As the balloon rose, the outside temperature was a bitter 18 degrees. They flew for 28 minutes. At one point the force of the hot air caused the balloon to begin to split at a seam, and as the air rushed out, it extinguished the flame. They had to relight the flame several times.

8. A state policeman in a watch tower sighted the balloon and reported it and immediately search lights began looking for it. And as the propane ran out, the balloon began to descend quickly. It landed safely but they did not know for sure where they were or if they had succeeded in crossing the border into West Germany. If it had landed in East Germany, they would likely have been shot immediately.
 9. The local border police who saw the balloon descend, quickly drove to the landing site. Peter and Gunter left the balloon and went to meet the police and asked the police if they had made it to the West. The West German police officer congratulated them, because in fact, they had made it. They had accomplished a great escape.¹ Disney produced a film called *Night Crossing* (1982) that tells this story.
 10. What is it that made Peter and Gunter risk their lives and the lives of their families, which included a 2-year old baby, to attempt such a dangerous escape? I'll tell you what it was—exceeding great and precious promises. Peter and Gunter, along with millions of others who had lived under the heavy oppression of a socialist government, longed for the promise of the freedoms of the West.
 11. And it didn't take these two families very long to discover that the liberty they found in the West was well worth the effort to make that dangerous border crossing.
- II. Our great promises
- A. Our prison
1. Well let me tell you of another great escape—a border crossing that was breached by a very risky and dangerous action that included torture and death.
 2. But before we see the great escape, I want to look at the great promises that brought us to the border.
2 Peter 1:4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.
 3. We were trapped in a prison of worldly corruption because of lust. But because of the precious promises—some exceeding great and precious promises—we can escape that prison.
 4. Those among us who have been saved, no doubt remember what God saved us from. Our prison may or may not have had steel bars, but it did involve a great escape from bondage, chains, and the corruption that is in the world through lust.
 5. It might have been lust for ungodly sexual sin, or lust for power and control, or lust for anger and violence, or lust for the temporary high from a chemical substance.
 6. Or, you just might have been a victim of someone else's bondage over you.
 7. But this vile sin had corrupted, tarnished, polluted, contaminated, and poisoned our souls.
 8. And add to that, the fear of death had its strong grip on our souls like the tentacles of a tumor.
- B. Precious promises

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/East_German_balloon_escape

1. But because there were some exceeding great and precious promises made a long time ago, we have an escape option.
2. In fact, that is what Christmas is all about—the fulfillment of some precious promises.
Isa 9:6-7
*6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a **son** is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The **mighty God**, The **everlasting Father**, The **Prince of Peace**.*
*7 Of the **increase** of his **government** and **peace** there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.*
3. This precious promise was for a Son to be born as a baby in Bethlehem, but this would not be any ordinary human baby. It would be the mighty God, the everlasting Father—the very God of eternity who would take on the flesh of a human and be called the Son of God.
4. And what makes that an exceeding great precious promise, was how that Child would bring an increase of God’s government and peace.
5. The God of peace would bring to us, individually, increasing power and influence in our lives that would bring increasing peace in our lives.
6. We don’t care for big government, unless that government is the growing influence of the Kingdom of God in our hearts!
7. We are going to come back to that point of increasing peace, but look at another precious promise of what that Child would endure that would make that peace possible for us.
8. But rather than being accepted in the world He came to save, He was despised and rejected:
Isa 53:3-5
*3 He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and **acquainted** with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*
9. How was He was acquainted with sorrow and grief? By carrying **OUR** sorrow and grief—and our sins—and our sickness:
*4 Surely he hath borne **our griefs**, and carried **our sorrows**: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.*
*5 But he was wounded for **our transgressions**, he was bruised for **our iniquities**: the chastisement of **our peace** was upon him; and with his stripes **we are healed**.*
10. By taking the stripes on His back, the nails in His hands, the thorns on His head, He was doing it as our substitute. He didn’t sin. He wasn’t imprisoned by lust and corruption. He was a perfect, sinless Man—God with human flesh.
11. But He bore **OUR** griefs, **OUR** sorrows, **OUR** transgressions, **OUR** iniquities, to give us **OUR** peace, and **OUR** healing.
12. In case that wasn’t clear, look at verse 12 of the same chapter that emphasizes that precious promise:
*Isa 53:12 Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath **poured out his soul unto death**: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and **he bare the sin of many**, and **made intercession for the transgressors**.*

13. What that means is that He willingly gave His life to carry our sins and to intercede on our behalf.
14. That is something! Those are just a few of the great promises that made our great escape possible.
15. Jesus opened the prison doors, so we just need to obey the plan:
Acts 2:38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

III. Our great escape

A. Once it had a grip

1. The two German factory workers, Peter and Gunter, looked at the risks of their escape from the Socialist government's oppression well worth the benefits of freedom they would receive.
2. I remember my own escape, which happened three years before Peter and Gunter and their families' escape.
3. I was not in bondage under an oppressive Socialist government, but I and my family were under bondage from the torments of sin that were wreaking and terrorizing our family.
4. But to my delight, just in time, there were some exceeding great and precious promises that allowed for an exceeding great escape.
5. And many of you here this morning have testified of how the bondage of sin had a strong grip on you, but you also found a great escape through great promises.
6. Those great promises delivered from the bondage of alcohol, meth, marijuana, cocaine, heroin, anger, violence, habitual lying, pride, sexual sins, perversion, and all sorts of iniquities and transgressions.
7. Because Jesus was *wounded for our transgressions*, and *bruised for our iniquities*, we were able to walk away from them by the power of Jesus' righteousness.

B. But the promises opened the door

1. We have something in common, you and I—like precious faith:
2 Peter 1:1 Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ:
2. And what is so wonderful about this precious faith we have found, is that God's peaceful influence will increase more and more as we grow in knowledge of Him and His Word:
2 Peter 1:2 Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,
3. As you grow in knowledge of God, you will grow in the grace and peace of God. The more Word, the more grace and peace you will receive. I don't know about you, but I need that.
4. In fact, the is the kind of life God called us to and empowers us to live:
2 Peter 1:3 According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:

5. When we increase in our knowledge of God, His divine power gives us everything we need for life and godliness because He called us to glory and virtue.
 6. He did not call you so you would continue living in darkness and sin. He called you to glory and virtue and provides you all you need to do that.
 7. But our calling to glory and virtue is tied to growing our knowledge of Him.
 8. That is why reading the Word of God is so important. Faithfully attending church exposes you to more and more of the Word. Praying opens your own heart to receive more of the Word.
- C. The Spirit in us = partaker of divine nature
1. For in that knowledge of Him that we gain through studying scriptures, we learn of exceeding great and precious promises. And it is those precious promises that allow us the great escape.
2 Peter 1:4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.
 2. The gospel message of Jesus dying for our sins and conquering death itself, made the path to our freedom. We just need to obey the gospel:
Acts 2:38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.
 3. We were trapped in a prison of worldly corruption because of lust. But because of the precious promises—the exceeding great and precious promises—we can escape that prison.
 4. The other great promise included in this verse, is once we have escaped, God allows us to be a partaker of the divine nature.
 5. What that is talking about is what happens to us when we receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. More than just asking Jesus to forgive you and accepting Him as your personal Savior, this is the “meat” of what it means to be saved.
 6. Also called the “promise of the Father,” the Holy Ghost was God’s way of putting His Spirit, His Breath, His Life, His power on the inside of us.
 7. We must receive the gift of the Holy Ghost to keep us from being lured back into prison. It is the power to keep us living in God’s promises.
 8. The promise of the Father, as spoken through the Prophet Ezekiel, will actually give us a new heart:
Ezek 36:25-27
*25 Then will I sprinkle clean **water** upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I **cleanse you.***
*26 A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will **take away the stony heart** out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.*
*27 And I will **put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.***
 9. And how will God’s Spirit in us, help us keep God’s judgments or commandments?
Jer 31:33 But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After

*those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and **write it in their hearts**; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.*

10. When God takes away our stony heart, He gives us a heart on which He can write His laws.
11. And those sinful things that we used to do by nature, end. Because the Holy Ghost inside of us allows us to partake of the divine nature:
*2 Peter 1:4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be **partakers of the divine nature**, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*
12. And that word “partaker” means a partner, companion, accomplice.
13. Once you receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, you become God’s “partner in crime,” but the only crime you commit, is escaping from the devil’s prison of corruption that is in the world through lust.
14. That new nature then tells you, “I’ve found a better way.” The Happy Goodmans recorded a song by that name:

IV. Conclusion

1. Great promises and The Great Escape.
2. Obeying this gospel message by repenting, being baptized, and being filled with the Holy Ghost is just the beginning. That is the escape.
3. If we were to read the rest of 2 Peter 1, we would see how God intends to add to that start of faith several other things...
2 Peter 1:5-7
5 And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;
6 And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;
7 And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.
4. It is a better way with joy so sweet!
5. If there is such great promises of a great escape, why aren’t more people following Jesus on this path of escape.
6. There is an open door but there are many adversaries;
7. *1 Cor 16:8-9*
8 But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost.
9 For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries.
8. That is why we need the Holy Ghost, the divine nature within us. For open doors also have an adversary hanging about them, like armed guards in a watch tower, seeking to stop us.
9. But the Lord goes before you!