

Philippians Chapter 3

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Date: 31 July 2016

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[0 : 0 0] reading please. We're going to be reading from Philippians and chapter 3 and if you've got one of the church Bibles you'll find that on page 1180, 1180 Philippians chapter 3. As you're finding that, just an introduction. The Apostle Paul is writing this letter to the people of Philippi. He was a Pharisee. He was one of the high-ranking, high-flying religious people of his day. He was a man who gloried in his traditions and really in who he was and he was also very proud of being part of what is called the circumcision, referring to the, as it were, the elite amongst those who were the chief of the Jews, the Pharisees, the Sadducees and teachers of the law. But things changed and Paul considered everything but loss and he encourages us to take and follow his example because his life was changed in coming to know Jesus. Our lives are changed and we come to know

Jesus and we are to follow a new way, a new path. So let's read chapter 3 of Philippians and I'll begin at the beginning and read the whole chapter. Further, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord.

It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again and it is a safeguard for you. Watch out for those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh, for it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus and who put no confidence in the flesh. Though I myself have reasons for, such confidence. If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more.

Circumcised on the eighth day of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, in regard to the law, a Pharisee, as for zeal, persecuting the church, as for righteousness based on the law, faultless. But whatever were gains to me, I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ. The righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. I want to know Christ, yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so somehow attaining to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.

Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it, but one thing I do, forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, I press on toward the goal, to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus. All of us then, who are mature, should take such a view of things, and if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. Only let us live up to what we have already attained. Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do. For, as I have often told you before, and now tell you again, even with tears, that many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their God is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things, but our citizenship is in heaven, and we eagerly await a savior from the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies, so that they will be like his glorious bodies.

[5 : 16] Thank you, Graham, for leading us so far in our worship. Please, would you turn back to the reading that was read to us from Philippians on chapter 3?

And if you have the church Bible, the red Bible, that's page 1180. Just while you're turning there, can I again say thank you to those of you who have been praying for us while we've been down in Devon this week, been taking a funeral for a dear saint on Tuesday, and then catching up with some of our old fellowship there, and with our eldest son, Tom, and his wife, Jess.

So thank you for your prayers for that. Let's briefly pray together. Lord, your word is life, your word is truth, your word is light, and yet, Lord, we still need your Holy Spirit's help that we may receive, that we might see, that we might know your truth imparted to us.

So send him the Spirit of truth upon, speaker and hear it alike. And we ask this in your name, Lord Jesus. Amen. The Rio Olympics are to begin at the end of this week.

There's to be the opening ceremony on Friday. Great deal in the news about that. We don't know what that opening ceremony will be like. No doubt it will be spectacular with fireworks and all sorts of things going on.

[6 : 49] And as part of that ceremony, there will be a procession. All the athletes from all the countries represented will be entering the stadium with the name of the country before them.

And for those men and women, it will be the fulfillment of what they have hoped for for years and years, perhaps even for four years at least since the last Olympics. It has been their hope of getting there, to getting to the Rio Olympics, which has driven them to endure all sorts of sacrifices in their diet, in their lifestyle, driven them to hardship with their bodies and their minds and their training.

Day by day, week by week, month by month, their one thought, their one hope was to get a place at the Olympics. The Apostle Paul, as he writes here in Philippians, speaks about his great hope.

A hope which drove him daily. A hope which moved him to sacrifice, to hardship. A hope which moved him in his life in everything that he did.

But a hope which was much more certain and sure and definite than a place on the Olympic team. It's here in chapter 3 and verse 14. I press on towards the goal to win the prize which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus.

[8 : 15] Here's the answer to a very vital question which every single believer, every single Christian, every single member of the Church of Jesus Christ struggles with day by day.

That faces in this world today. How can I keep on living faithfully for Jesus day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year?

Now we know that this is for all of us because here in chapter 3 and verse 15, all of us then who are mature should take such a view of things.

We are all to think in this way. We are all to have this hope. We are all to be helped, encouraged to live for Christ and to press on for Christ day by day.

Even though it's hard, even though it entails sacrifice, even though it entails suffering, even though there seems to be at times no let up, we are encouraged to be motivated towards this type of living.

[9 : 17] So what was it that kept Paul going? What was it that was his hope? What was it that motivated him to persevere in times of trouble and trial? There must have been times, surely, in Paul's life when he felt like throwing in the towel.

There must have been times in his life when he thought, this is just too hard for me, this is just too discouraging, this is just too tough, and I don't want to have to make these sacrifices or hardships anymore.

He was a human being. He was a man. He was like us, flesh and blood. He must have had those times as well. Certainly he talks about some of the difficulties that he did face.

In 2 Corinthians chapter 4, he speaks about this. Verse 8 and 9. And yet, in this same passage here, he tells us the secret.

He tells us what drove him. He tells us what his hope was just a little later on in verse 16. We do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.

[10 : 40] For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. What sustained his hope and kept him going was the attainment of something he hadn't yet taken hold of.

There was something yet that he longed for. Something yet that he wanted which he hadn't yet achieved. Now, he shared a little bit of his testimony, doesn't he, in this passage about the great achievements that have taken place in his life.

About the great transformation that has changed him from being a legalistic, religious, hard-nosed persecutor. To becoming a man who proclaimed the good news of Jesus Christ.

A man who counts all things in the past as lost. And the future as the thing to live for. He tells us about how he's gained great joy and rejoicing. There at the beginning of verse, chapter 3.

Further, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord. And then in chapter 4, verse 1. Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and my crown, stand firm in the Lord and his ways.

[11 : 50] And he goes on, verse 4. Rejoice in the Lord always. I'll say it again. Rejoice. So in all these things that he went through. There was something there that caused him to rejoice. It wasn't that he had just grit, determination.

It wasn't just that he sort of put his head down and charged at life. And sort of deflecting the bullets as he went. He was able to rejoice. He was able to be delighted. He was able to live to the full.

Yet in the midst of all these struggles and temptations and trials. There was something he still wanted. Something that eluded him. In spite of having that joy.

In spite of having that determination and perseverance and pressing on day by day. He speaks of something yet missing. Something yet that he focused on day by day.

Something yet that moved him and drove him. He says there in verse 12. Not that I've already obtained all this. Or have already arrived at my goal. But I press on to take hold of that which Christ Jesus took hold of me.

[12 : 53] Elsewhere when he writes. He speaks about this thing. This longing. That which drove him. That which he. Was he. What he wanted more than anything else. He speaks of it being like an Olympic gold medal.

Though in his day it was a crown. They would have a laurel wreath. A crown on their heads. Which would fade away. He speaks about his being an unfading crown. He speaks elsewhere as well.

About being like a farmer. Working and toiling. Looking for that bumper harvest. That great ingathering. Of riches for his labors. And here he speaks of it here.

Verse 14. As the goal. The prize. The crowning achievement of the Christian life. What is it? Simplistically. Simply.

Simply. Plainly. We call it. Heaven. Heaven. That I might. Take hold. May take hold of that. For which Christ Jesus. Take hold.

[13 : 47] Of me. He goes on and speaks about what it is there. Our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a savior. From there. The Lord Jesus Christ. This hope of the Christian.

This hope of Paul. This hope of every believer. Of heaven. Is in stark contrast. Contrast to the hope. And the dreams. And the desires. Of the people. Who are not Christians.

The people who do not know Christ. He says this. Verse 18. I. As I have often told you before. Now tell you. Again. Even with tears. Many live as enemies. Of the cross of Christ.

Their destiny. Is destruction. Their God. Is their stomach. Their glory. Is their shame. Their mind. Is set on earthly things. There is a great contrast. There is no.

Fence sitting. Place. There is no sort of medium. Place. In which you can be. You either are in Christ. Heaven bound. Or as Paul puts it. You are an enemy of Christ.

[14 : 44] And you are destruction bound. There is no middle ground. You can't sort of have. Your cake and eat it. You can't have one foot in one camp. And one in the other. You are one or the other. And for those whose lives.

Are without Christ. Then we have a different set. Of purposes. A different set. Of lifestyles. A different set of goals. The person without Christ.

Is motivated. By everything. That they can see. Feel. Touch. Taste. And smell. The things of this world. Paul says it quite. Graphically.

Doesn't he. Says. Their God is their stomach. It doesn't just mean. That they are greedy. In the sense of. Wanting more food. But really. The inner desire. The inner hunger.

The inner lusts. Of the heart. Of the things. That drive people. Why do they go to work. In the morning. Why do they do sport. Why do they do anything at all. It's simply for.

[15 : 41] Short term. Immediate. Gain. Satisfaction. Pleasure. Whatever. And of course. Those. Those. Those desires.

Those longings. Those motivations. Are very different. For every person. They can be the simple pleasures. Yes. Of a good meal. Of being able to feed yourself. For some people. That's all they live for.

They live from hand to mouth. Many people in this world. Simply survive. And work. So they might exist. And live another day. But for many. It's the pursuit of.

Accomplishments. And achievements. Yes. In the sports world. In Olympics. In the political arena. Reaching that place. Of the cabinet. Or prime ministership. In the arts.

Or in the career. To get to the top of the ladder. In their particular. Line of business. But there are many people. Who are motivated. By other desires. What we might say. Very good intentions.

[16:36] They're motivated. To do out good to others. They give up their home. And their. The.
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The. The. The. The. The. The. The. The. The. Polar patients. In Africa.

They give up their time. To raise money for charity. They'll spend themselves. In the helping of those. Who are less fortunate. But they're still driven by. The immediate. They're still motivated. By the here. And the now.

We know there is a very darker side of that. Where people are driven by lusts. Whether that be sexual. Whether that be financial. Whether that be power.

And any number of goals. That control them. Whatever these appetites. Whatever these. Whatever these. Desires. These motivations. Good or bad.

Virtuous or shameful. They're all rooted in. The world. They're all rooted in the present. So Paul says here. Their mind is set on.

[17 : 33] Earthly. Things. Paul weeps over these people. He doesn't think it's. Well it's just a shame. Or it's just a lifestyle choice.

Or it's just a matter of. Whether you. Want to be that way or not. He weeps over these people. Dear friends. We should too. We should be weeping. Over the state of our nation.

We should be weeping. Over the people. That we meet with in the streets. We should be weeping. Over those who are. Empty. In seeking. And looking for things. In this world. To satisfy.

Yet never satisfied. Never content. Never reaching. Ultimately. What their. What their. What their true potential is. The reason that of course.

He is so sad. Is because he knows. Not only that these people. Are unhappy in this world. But he says. Their destiny is destruction. To live for this world. To.

[18 : 26] To make everything that we. Is our goal. And our purpose. And our. In this world. Is to. To be destroyed with this world. Just as this world. Must come to an end. Just as life in this world.

Must come to an end. So the ultimate destiny. Is eternal. And unending. Death. Jesus makes that plain. And clear. Again. And again. And again.

There is. Only. Emptiness. Only. Destruction. For the Christian. That is so different. For the believer. That is so different. The destiny of the believer.

Is not destruction. The destiny of the believer. Is not. That they might live out this life. For 70. 80. 90 years. If they are very blessed. To live that long. And then to go into a world.

Of eternal sorrow. The destiny of the believer. Of the person. Who has put their faith in Christ. Is very different. We have that saying. Don't we? Home is where the heart is.

[19 : 22] And so Paul declares. That our citizenship. Is in heaven. The citizenship. Isn't in the UK. Or in Britain. Or the EU. Or wherever it may be. The country that we owe.

Our allegiance to. The place which is our homeland. Is not to be found. In this physical world. It's in heaven. We are journeying to that place.

We've been looking at 1 Peter. On Sunday evenings. And how Peter speaks about. The Christian believer. Being a pilgrim. A sojourner. An alien in this world. Somebody who's passing through. Who's traveling on.

Like Paul. Every Christian. Has their eyes set upon heaven. Has their eyes set upon. Something yet to come. Something. Which is. Not. Yet. Seen. But is real.

And certain. And definite. It. The reason why our eyes. Are set upon that. The reason that it motivates. And drives us.

[20 : 22] Is because that. Is why. Christ. Saved us. That's why Christ. Saved us. The very reason he saved us. Was that we might be with him. In heaven. Notice in verse 12.

Not that I've already. Obtained all this. Or have already arrived at my goal. But I press on. To take hold of that. For which Christ Jesus. Took hold. Of me. Paul says.

I press on. I keep going. I keep following Jesus. I keep living for him. In this world. So that one day. I can take hold of. That I can own. For my own possession. That I can enjoy.

To the greatest satisfaction. That for which Christ Jesus. Took hold of me. That for which Christ Jesus. Made me a Christian. And brought me into that. Powerful love. Of his salvation.

How important it is to notice this. That Paul speaks about. Him being saved. As Christ Jesus. Taking hold of him. Often we think of. A Christian. As somebody who takes hold of Christ.

[21 : 21] There's a certain element of truth in that. But it's firstly. Primarily. Christ Jesus. Taking hold of us. Like the sailor. Who's drowning. Being plucked to safety. By the helicopter winchman.

So we were hopelessly. Helplessly. Lost. Until Christ reached down. Into this world. And in his loving embrace. Took hold of us. And lifted us.

To salvation. And why did Jesus save us? Why did he go to the. Come into this world? Why did he reach down. Into the muck and mire. Of a world which is polluted. And God hating.

Why did he go to the cross. And suffer and die? Why did he endure such hostility. From human men and women? To what end? So that we might be saved.

So that we might be taken up with him. That we might belong to him. The ultimate purpose. That Jesus took hold of us. And yes there are purposes. For why Christ took hold of us.

[22 : 19] Just as he did Paul. Remember how really Paul's testimony. About being. Coming a Christian. Was really a sense of Jesus Christ. Taking hold of him. If you know the story. He's on the road.

He's traveling from Jerusalem. To Damascus. He's there because he. He's journeying to arrest. Christians. He says something like that. Earlier on doesn't he? Verse 6 of this chapter. Persecuting the church.

Wherever he went. He found people. Who followed Jesus. And he put them in prison. Or he put them to death. Like Stephen. And there he was. Without warning. As he's riding along. Suddenly the Lord Jesus Christ.

Takes hold of him. Out of the blue. He comes and speaks to him. He comes and lays him down flat. He comes and shows him. That he is the sovereign God.

That he Jesus Christ. Is the almighty and powerful one. He took hold of him. That he might be a messenger. To the world. God said.

[23 : 17] The Lord Jesus said. To Anais. The man who was to go. And speak to Paul. And tell him about Christ. He said. This man is my chosen instrument. To carry my name.

Before the world. Before the non-Jews. Before the Gentiles. Paul was saved to preach. And proclaim the gospel. As he writes in 1 Corinthians. For Christ did not send me to baptize.

But to preach the gospel. He was saved. So that as he preached. He might also write. And give to us. Parts of the scripture. Which are given to us from the Lord. 1 Corinthians 11.

For I received from the Lord. What I passed on to you. Paul had a purpose in life. So have we. Christ has taken hold of us.

Saved us. Yes he saved us. To serve him. Just as Paul did. Yes to witness for him. In a world. To be light in a dark world. To be salt in a tasteless world.

[24 : 13] But he didn't save us. For any of those reasons. Primarily. He took hold of us. While we were drowning. In our sin. And he rescued us. Primarily. Firstly. And foremostly. For eternal life.

For heaven. To be with him. That's why he went to such ends. To save us from destruction. So that we might be. In heaven. With him.

But why should we press on then? Why should we persevere? If we are going to heaven. And Christ has taken hold of us. And we're saved. Why should we persevere? Yeah. Why should we press on? Why shouldn't we just. Take it easy.

And put our feet up? Paul describes. What heaven will be like. He describes. What he's seeking. And pressing on for. In two words. A goal.

And a prize. What motivated him. It should motivate us. A goal. And a prize. First of all. A goal. A goal.

[25 : 10] A goal is to do with direction. It's to do with journey. Rather than destination. It's heading somewhere. The football player is always heading for the goal.

If he's always running in the opposite direction away from the goal. He's not much of a football player is he? He needs to be running to the goal. Pressing forward. Christian has a goal. To which we're headed.

To press on for. We're not aimlessly wandering around in this world. We aren't like Alice in Wonderland. Lewis Carroll is going to be appearing in Whitby we're told on Thursday.

Well this is from his book. Alice in Wonderland. Where she meets the Cheshire cat. Alice asks the cat. Would you tell me please which way I ought to go from here?

That depends a good deal on where you want to get to said the cat. I don't much care where said Alice. Then it doesn't matter which way you go said the cat. That's the truth isn't it?

[26 : 09] For many people life is simply getting through the next day. There is no goal. There is no purpose. There is no motivation. It's just the next holiday perhaps.

Or it's the weekend perhaps. Or it's something else. But it's really aimless. It's got no goal at the end. The destination ultimately is the one that they're avoiding and that they fear most of all death.

Again what a comparison it is between the believer and the unbeliever. If I ask you dear friends each one of you. What is the goal of your life? What are you aiming for?

Where are you heading? What would you answer? Could you answer? Could you honestly say the goal of my life is that I'm pressing on to be with Christ? I'm pressing on with that goal of that upward call of being in his presence.

It's good to have goals. It's good to have small goals that we set each day. They're important. A goal perhaps to save up for that holiday. A goal that we set our sights upon.

[27 : 13] A goal in our education as a young person. To go to university to achieve some degree. A goal in our relationship to be married or to have children or whatever it may be. But Paul speaks of the goal.

I press on towards the goal. It's not one amongst many goals. It's the true goal. It's the only goal that counts. It's the only goal worth having. It's the only goal which we are to center our hearts, our minds and our strength upon.

It's the only goal we have to be focused upon. Because when all else is gone. When life has ceased. When this world has been wrapped up as a scroll the Bible says.

And burnt in a fire. When everything in this world has ceased to be. There will still remain heaven. There will still remain that one goal. There will still remain that one thing.

There will still remain that one thing. That's the goal. That secures the prize. Heading for that goal secures the prize.

[28 : 13] During the recent 2016 Euros in France. There were dozens of goals. Some spectacular. Some amazing. But there was only one goal that really mattered. And that was a goal scored by Ed Ayer in the final.

The Portuguese player. It was the greatest goal of the whole competition. Not because it was the most skillful. The most acrobatic. Not because it showed off the greatest level of performance.

Because it was the one goal. That was scored in the final. That secured Portugal. As the European champions of 2016. All the honor. All the prestige.

All the praise that goes with that title. It was that one goal. That won the prize. And Paul is pressing on to the goal. Why? To win the prize.

Yes the goal is heaven. And why is the goal heaven? Because the prize that awaits us there. Remember what Paul says here.

[29 : 13] The goal and the prize. Of men and women without Christ. Is destruction. That's all that they have. That's all that's before them.

Whatever they've done. However they've lived without Christ. Whatever they've persevered. Whatever they've accomplished. No matter how amazing. Many Olympic medals they win at the end. Ultimately.

All of it is destruction. For the Christian. The goal that we're pressing for. The goal that we're pursuing. The goal that we're working at. Is not that. It's to win a prize.

Not loss. But gain. Paul himself declared. In Ephesians. As he's thinking about his own forthcoming death. For me to live is Christ. To die is gain. And what's that prize like?

Is it like the 60 million. That somebody won this week. On the Euros. Is it like the gold medals. And the silver medals. And the bronze medals. That the athletes will win. At the Olympics in Rio.

[30 : 12] See all these prizes can be measured. Even 60 million pounds. Can be measured. It can be weighed. It can be counted. But the prize to which we're pressing on.

Dear friends. The prize to which Paul is looking. The prize which we know that we shall have. When we reach the goal. Is something which is immeasurable. It has no limit to it.

Here's 2 Corinthians 4. Paul says. An eternal glory. That far outweighs them all. Ephesians 1.18. The riches of his glorious inheritance.

Hebrews 12. We're receiving a kingdom. That cannot be shaken. Or removed. 1 Peter 1.4. An inheritance. That can never perish. Spoil or fade.

Kept in heaven for you. Notice how words fail to describe. The glory. The wonder. The joy. The blessing. The delight. Of heaven.

[31 : 07] And of the treasures that are there for us. It makes every single treasure in this world. Even the bullion. Gold. In Fort Knox.

It makes every treasure in this world. By comparison. As valuable as a plastic ring. In a Christmas cookie. Worthless. Nothing compares. Nothing comes close.

And the wonderful thing is for you. Dear believer. And me. It's ours already. It's there. It's waiting for us. It's going to be our joy. And we shall receive it.

Your name's written on it. Nothing in heaven or hell. Or earth. Can prevent you from reaching that goal. Or taking it away from you. That's why we press on.

That's why we don't give up. That's why we persevere. That's why we can keep on going. No matter what the world says. No matter how hard things are. No matter even when our legs turn to jelly.

[32 : 04] And our hands are hung limp at our sides. We can strain on and press on. Because we're pressing to the upward goal.

The upward call. To win the prize. Which God has called us to have. In Christ Jesus. Just listen to these words of Jesus.

As we finish this morning. Ask yourself whether they apply to you. Ask yourself again. What am I living for? What is my goal? See the wonderful thing is that this goal.

We can live out wherever we are. We don't have to be on the mission field to live out this goal. We don't have to be necessarily on a beach team to live out this goal.

We can live out this goal in our school. We can live out this goal in our university. We can live out this goal in our workplace. We can live out this goal in our home. We can live out this goal in the shops.

[33 : 00] We can live out this goal wherever we are. It's simply the motivation that drives us. Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth.

Where moth and rust destroy. Where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven. Where moth and rust do not destroy.

Where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is. There your heart will be also. We're going to sing together as we close this morning.

A hymn which speaks... A hymn which speaks... A hymn which speaks...

A hymn which speaks... A hymn And it's a glory now in the kingdom of God that drives all power away.

[34 : 19] Christ has been blessed in sin for me, and Christ is in the hope of heaven.

My highest calling and my deepest joy to make this will my throne.

Peace of hope that lifts my great head, the consolation strong against this bread.

And when the world has lost in its deepest place, my life I see there.

Well, grace and some peace, future's clear, it is to service in my name.

[35 : 17] For I am saved in everlasting arms, and they will lead me home. I am saved in everlasting arms, and I will lead me home.

Peace of hope that strikes the test of time, and there's my eyes beyond the lengthy grave.

I see the matchless beauty of the divine, where I behold his chains.

When suffering sins, and sorrows cry, and every longing search is mine.

When joy unspeakable will come by soon, for I am truly born.

[36 : 32] Father in heaven, we thank you again for the promise of home in heaven.

We thank you for the assurance that Jesus, who has taken hold of us, will bring us safely there, and we shall enjoy and delight in all those treasures.

We pray, O Lord, that you would help us, particularly those of us who struggle, and those of us, Lord, who are finding it tough. Help us, Lord, to know our eyes lifted up, to see that goal, that prize that is awaiting, and to press on to the finishing line.

We ask again, O Lord, that you would help us to live as you lived, as those who know and are certain of the one in whom we believed, for he is faithful and able to do all that he has promised.

Amen.