

A sepia-toned illustration of a winding road leading up a hill to a castle and crosses. The road is light-colored and curves through a landscape of dark, silhouetted trees and rolling hills. In the background, a large, multi-towered castle sits atop a hill. To the right of the castle, three large, simple crosses are visible against the sky. The overall tone is warm and historical.

Gracious God, Great Joy!

Luke 2:1-20

Luke 2:1-7

Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth. This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. And everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own city. Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child. While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Luke 2:8-12

In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night.

And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them,
and the glory of the Lord shone around them;
and they were terribly frightened. But the angel said to them,
“Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news
of great joy which will be for all the people;
for today in the city of David there has been born
for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.
This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby
wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

Luke 2:13-15

And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

“Glory to God in the highest,

And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.”

When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds began saying to one another,

“Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us.”

Luke 2:16-20

So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger.

When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child. And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds.

But Mary treasured all these things,
pondering them in her heart.

The shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them.

Main Point

The depth of your joy will be in direct proportion to the depth of your understanding of God and His promises and the depth of your gratitude for His grace.

Gracious God, Great Joy

A sepia-toned illustration of a winding path leading up a hill to a castle and crosses. The path starts in the foreground, curves through a valley, and leads up a hill towards a large, multi-towered castle. On the hill, there are three large crosses. The background shows rolling hills and a hazy sky.

God has the power to do
all that He pleases.

God's Power to Do All His Will

He orchestrated Octavian Augustus' rule.



Luke 2:1-2

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This was the first census taken while Quirinius
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that **a census** be taken **of all the inhabited earth.**

This was the first census taken while Quirinius
was governor of Syria.

Daniel 2:20-21

Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever,
For wisdom and power belong to Him.
It is He who changes the times and the epochs;
He removes kings and establishes kings.

Proverbs 21:1

The king's heart is like channels of water
in the hand of the LORD;
He turns it wherever He wishes.

God is in control of who rules
and how they rule, and He turns them
to do all that He pleases.

God's Power to Do All His Will

He orchestrated Octavian Augustus' rule.

He moved Joseph and Mary
to Bethlehem.



Luke 2:3-5

And everyone was on his way to register for the census,
each to his own city.

Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth,
to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem,
because he was of the house and family of David,
in order to register along with Mary,
who was engaged to him, and was with child.

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to Judea, **to** the city of David which is called **Bethlehem**,
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in order to register **along with Mary**,
who was engaged to him, and was with child.

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to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem,

**because he was of the house and
family of David,**

in order to register along with Mary,
who was engaged to him, and was with child.

Micah 5:2

But **as for you, Bethlehem** Ephrathah,

Too little to be among the clans of Judah,

From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel.

His goings forth are from long ago,

From the days of eternity.

Caesar Augustus thought he was doing his own will for his own purposes, but he was simply an instrument in God's hands to move Joseph and Mary to where God wanted them to be.

God's Power to Do All His Will

He orchestrated Octavian Augustus' rule.

He moved Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem.

He arranged their accommodations.



Luke 2:6-7

While they were there,
the days were completed for her to give birth.
And she gave birth to her firstborn son;
and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger,
because there was no room for them in the inn.

Luke 2:6-7

While they were there,
the days were completed for her to give birth.

And she gave birth to her firstborn son;
and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger,

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Jesus' birthplace,
including his place of birth,
was arranged by God
and ensured by God's power.

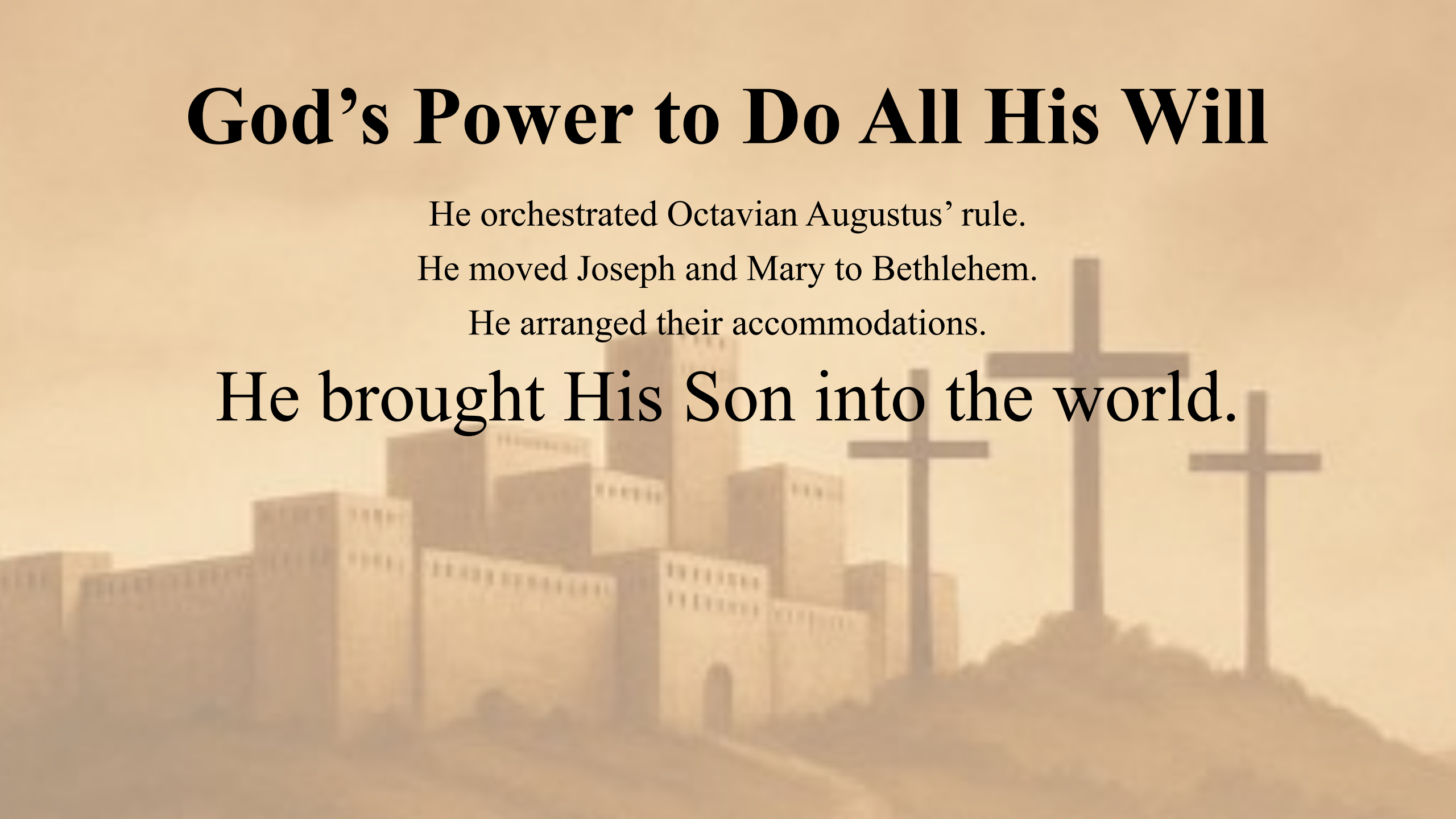
God's Power to Do All His Will

He orchestrated Octavian Augustus' rule.

He moved Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem.

He arranged their accommodations.

He brought His Son into the world.



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Luke 1:35

The angel answered and said to her,
“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power
of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason
the holy Child shall be called **the Son of God.**

Hebrews 1:5-6

For to which of the angels did He ever say,
“You are my son, today I have begotten you”? And again,
“I will be a father to Him and He shall be a son to Me”?
And when He again brings the firstborn into the world,
He says, *“and let all the angels of God worship Him.”*

John 3:16

For God so loved the world, that He gave His
only begotten Son, that all those believing in Him
shall not perish, but have eternal life.

Gracious God, Great Joy

The background is a sepia-toned illustration. A winding dirt path leads from the bottom center towards a city built on a hill. The city consists of several rectangular buildings of varying heights. On the right side of the hill, there are three large, simple crosses. The foreground is filled with dense, dark foliage, possibly trees or bushes, which are rendered in a soft, painterly style.

God has the power to do all that He pleases.

God is gracious to make promises.

A Gracious Promise Maker

His choices highlight His grace.



Luke 2:8-9

In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night.

And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them,
and the glory of the Lord shone around them;
and they were terribly frightened.

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and the glory of the Lord shone around them;

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While they were there,
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And she gave birth to her firstborn son;
and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger,
because **there was no room** for them **in the inn**.

Luke 2:6-7

While they were there,
the days were completed for her to give birth.
And she gave birth to her firstborn son;

and **she** wrapped Him in cloths, and **laid Him in a manger,**
because there was no room for them in the inn.

God's choice to use lowly shepherds
to proclaim the gospel and His choice
to lay His Son, the Messiah and Lord,
in a lowly manger loudly testify
to His great grace.

A Gracious Promise Maker

His choices highlight His grace.

He promised a gracious Savior.



Luke 1:28-31

“Greetings, **graced one!** The Lord is with you...
...you will conceive in your womb and bear a son,
and you shall name Him **Yahweh saves.**”

Our God of grace made
a gracious promise to send His Son
to graciously save us.

Luke 2:10-11

“Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”

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Luke 2:10-11

“Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news
of great joy which will be for all the people;
for today in the city of David there has been born

for you a Savior, **who is Christ the Lord.**”

The news brought by the angel brings forth great joy when it is understood in connection to His promise of salvation!

And your joy will deepen as you deepen your understanding of the grace of that promise.

2 Corinthians 8:9

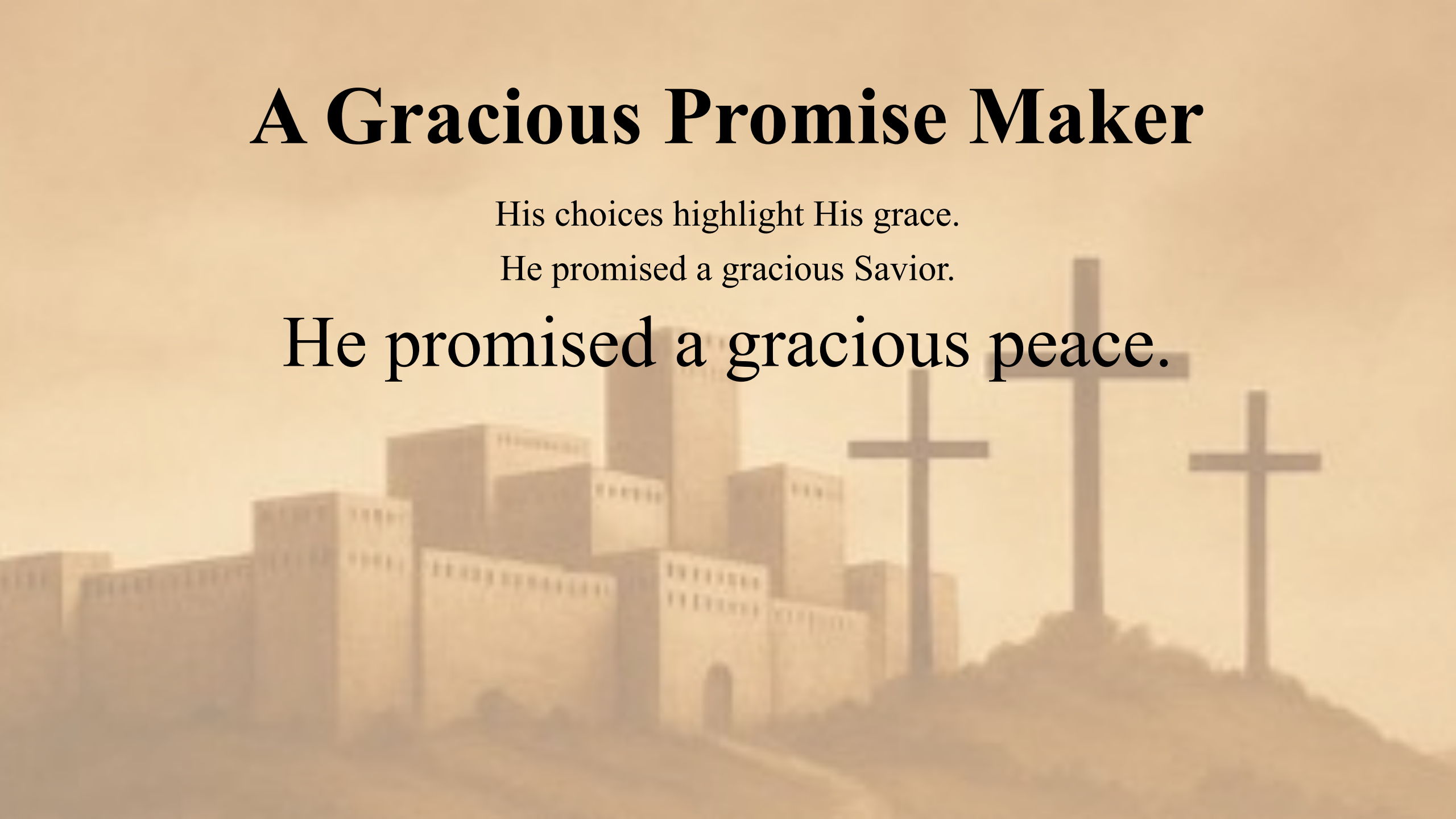
For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor,
so that you through His poverty might become rich.

A Gracious Promise Maker

His choices highlight His grace.

He promised a gracious Savior.

He promised a gracious peace.



Luke 13-14

And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude
of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

*“Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.”*

Luke 13-14

And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude
of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

“Glory to God in the highest,

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Luke 13-14

And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude
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*And on earth peace among men with
whom He is pleased.”*

Micah 5:2

But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
Too little to be among the clans of Judah,
From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel.
His goings forth are from long ago,
From the days of eternity.

Micah 5:3-5a

Therefore He will give them up until the time
When she who is in labor has borne a child.

Then the remainder of His brethren
Will return to the sons of Israel.

And He will arise and shepherd His flock

In the strength of the LORD,
In the majesty of the name of the LORD His God.

And they will remain,
Because at that time He will be great
To the ends of the earth.
This One will be our peace.

Micah 5:3-5a

Therefore He will give them up until the time
When she who is in labor has borne a child.
Then the remainder of His brethren
Will return to the sons of Israel.
And He will arise and shepherd His flock
In the strength of the LORD,
In the majesty of the name of the LORD His God.
And they will remain,
Because at that time He will be great
To the ends of the earth.

***This One* will be our peace.**

When you understand that Jesus
is your peace, you will understand
the foundation of your joy.

Romans 5:1 and 10

Therefore, **having been justified by faith**, we have peace
with God through our Lord Jesus Christ...

Romans 5:1 and 6

Therefore, having been justified by faith, **we have peace
with God through our Lord Jesus Christ...**

For while we were still helpless,
at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

Gracious God, Great Joy

A sepia-toned illustration of a winding dirt path leading up a hill towards a city. The city is built on a hilltop and features several tall, thin crosses. The foreground is filled with dense, dark foliage, and the overall atmosphere is peaceful and spiritual.

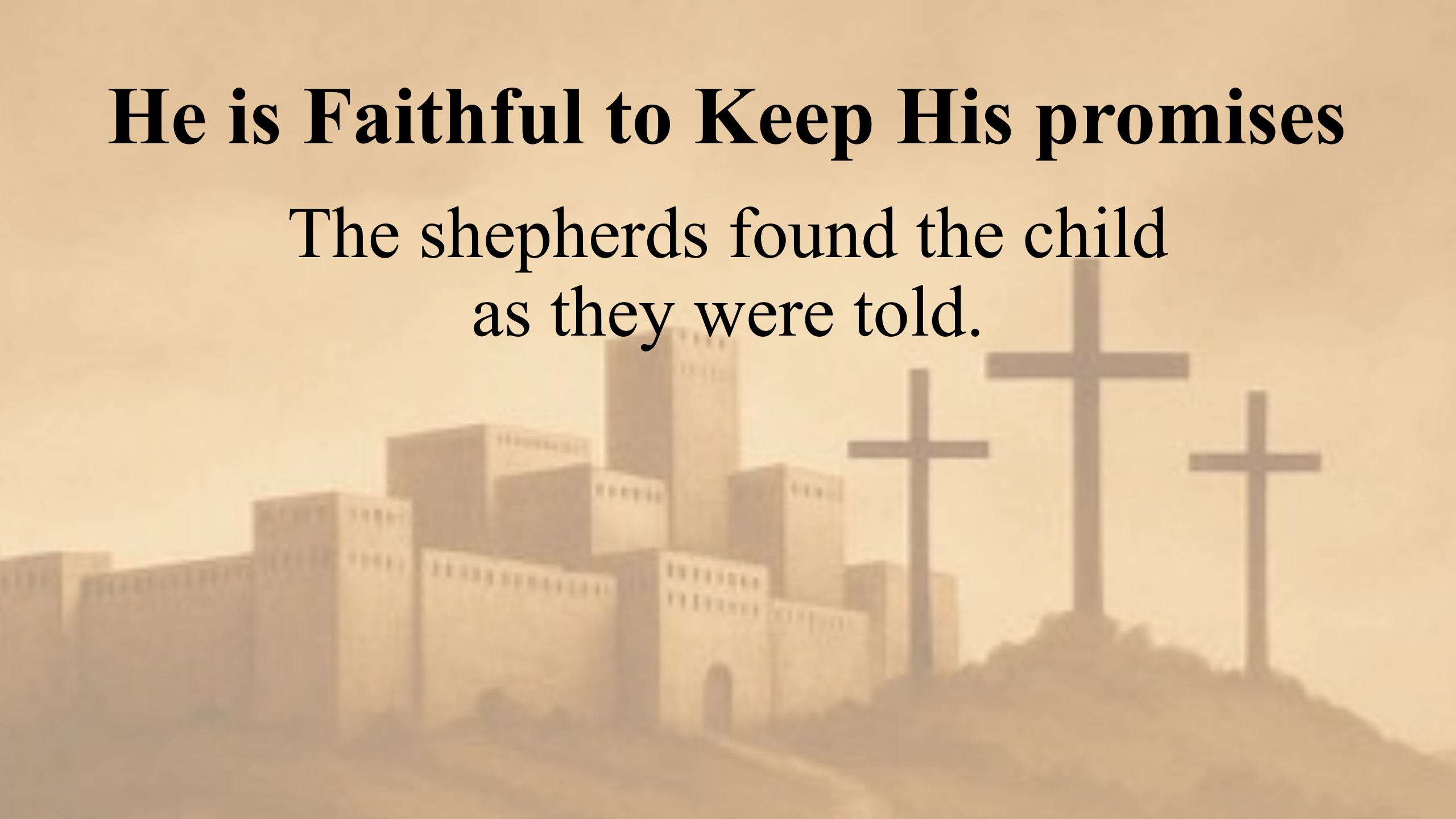
God has the power to do all that He pleases.

God is gracious to make promises.

God is faithful to keep His promises.

He is Faithful to Keep His promises

The shepherds found the child
as they were told.



Luke 2:12 and 16

“This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger.

Luke 2:12 and 16

“This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

So **they** came in a hurry and *found their way* to **Mary**
and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger.

Luke 2:12 and 16

“This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary

and Joseph, **and the baby** as He **lay in the manger**.

The Lord’s word to these shepherds was a faithful word,
and they found things just as they had been told.

He is Faithful to Keep His promises

The shepherds found the child as they were told.

The shepherds were sent to bring
the good news.



Luke 2:17

When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child.

Luke 2:17

When they had seen this, **they made known the statement**
which had been told them **about this Child.**

What statement?

Luke 2:10-11

“Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news
of great joy which will be for all the people;
for today in the city of David there has been born
for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”

Luke 2:17

When they had seen this, they made known the statement
which had been told them about this Child.

What statement?

Luke 2:10-11

“Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you **good news**
of great joy which will be for all the people;
for today in the city of David there has been born
for you **a Savior**, who is Christ the Lord.”

Romans 10:14-15

How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard?

And how will they hear without a preacher?

How will they preach unless they are sent?

Just as it is written,

*“How beautiful are the feet of those
who bring good news of good things!”*

Romans 10:14-15

How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard?

And how will they hear without a preacher?

How will they preach unless they are sent?

Just as it is written,

***“How beautiful are the feet of those
who bring good news of good things!”***

The Promise of Good News to Come

Isaiah 52:7

How lovely on the mountains
Are the feet of him who brings good news,
Who announces peace
And brings good news of happiness,
Who announces salvation,
And says to Zion, “Your God reigns!”

The Lord promised to send good news, and He kept His promise by sending His lowly messengers with the good news of His Son!

He is Faithful to Keep His promises

The shepherds found the child as they were told.

The shepherds were sent to bring the good news.

Our gracious God continues
to send His messengers.



Luke 1:76-77

“And you, child, will... give to His people the knowledge of salvation consisting in the forgiveness of their sins.”

Luke 24:46-49

Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

You are witnesses of these things.
And behold, **I am sending forth the promise**
of My Father upon you.

Acts 1:8

You will receive power
when the Holy Spirit has come upon you;
and **you shall be My witnesses** both in Jerusalem,
and in all Judea and Samaria,
and even to the remotest part of the earth.

Our gracious God made a gracious promise to save us and then promised to make sure that we would hear that promise, believe it, and be saved.

For Reflection

Do you understand that the grace of God
is the ground of your joy?

Have you experienced that grace?

Do you understand that the depth
of your joy is directly tied to the depth
of your understanding of and gratitude
for God's grace to you?