

Moments for YOU

Volume 52, Number 2

Theme: God's Promises



2 In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began:

FAITH'S CHECKBOOK

A promise from God may very instructively be compared to a check. It is given to the believer with the view of bestowing upon him some good thing. He is to take the promise, and sign it with his own name by personally receiving it as true. He is by faith to accept it as his own. He goes further, and believes that he has the blessing in having the sure promise of it and therefore he puts his name to it to testify to the receipt of the blessing.

This done, he must believingly present the promise to the Lord, as a man presents a check at the counter of the bank. He must plead it by prayer, expecting to have it fulfilled. If he has come to Heaven's Bank at the right date, he will receive the promised amount at once. If the date should happen to be further on, he must patiently wait until its arrival; but meanwhile he may count the promise as money, for the Bank is sure to pay when the due time arrives.

Some fail to place the endorsement of faith upon the check, and so they get nothing; others are slack in presenting it, and these also receive nothing. This is not the fault of the promise, but of those who do not act with it in a common-sense, business-like manner.

God has given no pledge which He will not redeem, and encouraged no hope which He will not fulfill. The sight of the promises themselves is good for the eyes of faith: the more we study the words of grace, the more grace we derive from the words. I believe all of God's promises, but many of them I have personally tried and

proven. I have seen that they are true, for they have been fulfilled to me.

I have endured tribulation from many sides. Sharp bodily pain succeeded mental depression, and this was accompanied both by bereavement and affliction in the person of one as dear as life. Never were the promises of Jehovah so precious to me as at this hour. Some of them I never understood until now; I had not reached the date at which they matured, for I was not myself mature enough to perceive their meaning.

How much more wonderful is the Bible to me now than it was a few months ago! In obeying the Lord, I have not received new promises; but the result to me is much the same, for the old ones have opened up to me with richer stores.

My brethren, God is good. He will not forsake you: He will bear you through. There is a promise prepared for your present emergencies; and if you will believe and plead it at the mercy-seat through Jesus Christ, you shall see the hand of the Lord stretched out to help you. Everything else will fail, but His word never will. He has been so faithful to me in countless instances that I must encourage you to trust Him too.

Condensed from *Faith's Checkbook* by C.H. Spurgeon

"God does not promise a smooth flight, but He does promise a safe landing."

—Unknown

"God's promises can never be broken by leaning on them."

—Howard Hendricks

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MOMENTS FOR YOU Vol. 52, 2nd Quarter, 2008. A quarterly publication sent free upon request as the Lord provides.

Publisher: Moments With The Book, PO Box 322, Bedford, PA 15522. A non-profit, tax-exempt corporation. Visit us online at www.mwtb.org **Senior Editor:** Tim Johnson **Editor:** T. Don Johnson



DOES GOD PROMISE HEALTH AND WEALTH?

One of the most unusual legacies of World War II has been what are known as the “Cargo Cults of the South Pacific.” Many Aboriginal island people ranging from northern Australia to Indonesia were first exposed to modern civilization through the allied armed forces. These tribal people had absolutely no opportunity to learn the ways of civilization, but for a brief period cargo planes would swoop in from the sky, unload their payload, and then take off.

Many of those tribal people concluded that the white men were gods. When the war was over and the troops were gone, tribesmen built shrines to the “cargo gods.” In fact, missionaries that have been sent to these areas receive a warm reception at first because the locals view their arrival as the “Second Coming” of the cargo god. But they are looking for cargo—not the Gospel. And missionaries say they find it very difficult to penetrate the materialism that is the essence of the cargo cults.

In recent years the Christian community has spawned its own variety of cargo cult which is easily as superstitious and materialistic as those of the South Pacific. Its leaders promise each believer financial prosperity and perfect health; anything less, they argue, is not God’s will!

Such teachers have corrupted the heart of New Testament Christianity. They have moved the believers’ focus off sound doctrine, worship, service, sacrifice, and ministry; and they have shifted it instead to promised physical, financial, and material blessings. Those blessings are the cargo that God is supposed to deliver to those who know and follow their formula.

In their religion the believer uses God, whereas, the truth of Biblical Christianity is that God uses the believer!

Today’s movement closely resembles some of the destructive greed sects that ravaged the early church. Paul and other apostles were not accommodating to or conciliatory with the false teachers who propagated these ideas in their day. They identified them as dangerous false teachers and urged Christians to avoid them.

Paul warned Timothy about “men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness” (1 Timothy 6:5). Even way back then, Paul was dealing with those who thought godliness was a ticket for money. Paul further said to Timothy, “They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness” (1 Timothy 6:9-11).

Know this: these false teachers are driven by a love for money! They develop a religion to accommodate their lusts. Peter wrote, “There shall be false teachers among you, who ... with feigned words make merchandise of you” (2 Peter 2:1-3).

You show me a person who preaches the “Money Gospel,” and I’ll show you a person who has been corrupted by the love of money. Paul said covetousness is idolatry and forbade the Ephesians to be partakers with such people (Ephesians 5:5-7).

Condensed from a message given by John F. MacArthur, Jr.

THE PROMISES OF THE GOSPEL

A PROMISED JUDGMENT

It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment. (*Hebrews 9:27*)

He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead. (*Acts 17:31*)

After thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. (*Romans 2:5*)

A PROMISED ESCAPE

Eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began. (*Titus 1:2*)

The gospel of God, which He had promised afore by His prophets in the holy Scriptures. (*Romans 1:1,2*)

This is the promise that He hath promised us, even eternal life. (*1 John 2:25*)

The promise of life which is in Christ Jesus. (*2 Timothy 1:1*)

THE PROMISED SAVIOUR

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. (*Isaiah 53:5*)

God according to His promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus. (*Acts 13:23*)

Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began. (*2 Timothy 1:9*)

Christ ... who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the

world, but was manifest in these last times for you. (*1 Peter 1:19,20*)

RECEIVING THE PROMISE

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (*John 3:16*)

If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.... For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. (*Romans 10:9,13*)

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. (*Ephesians 2:8,9*)

UNPOPULAR PROMISES

Various counts have been given for the number of promises found in the Bible. Depending on who's counting (and what they count as a promise), there are anywhere from a few hundred to several thousand of them. You will find a good listing of many of the encouraging ones on pages 14 and 15, but for balance we must also look at a few "unpopular promises."

"In the world ye shall have tribulation" (*John 16:33*). When you're going through tough times, what kind of promise do you want from God? A promise of better circumstances or freedom from difficulty? Those would seem nice, but the reality is that God has promised us tough times. Now, that may not sound like an exciting promise, but surely we all can testify to the truth of it. Sometimes life is hard! The real beauty of this promise, however, isn't just how well it mirrors our experience; its true splendor shines out in the rest of

the verse: “Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”

No matter how many trials and tribulations we endure in this world, the One who has overcome it all stands with us, holds our hand, and comforts us. He weeps with the mourning (John 11:35), has compassion on the fainting (Matthew 9:36), identifies with the imprisoned (Matthew 25:43-45), and lays down His life for sinners (Romans 5:8). Yes, Christ has overcome the world, and we who have trusted Him as our Saviour will one day be set free from all of its troubles. Until then we can be of good cheer, “Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you” (1 Peter 5:7).

“All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12). Here is another “unpopular promise.” We may not wake up in the morning and pray, “Lord, please allow me to be persecuted today!” but if we live according to His pattern and leading, we are guaranteed to face persecution of one kind or another. Jesus said, “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake” (Matthew 5:11).

As with the previous “unpopular promise,” the real blessing comes from the context. If you read the whole chapter you will see that even though things are getting worse and worse in this world, there is a limit to what God will allow. Not only that, but Paul encouraged Timothy (and us) to not give up: “Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of.” Also, by reading and studying God’s Word “The man of God may be perfect [complete], thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:14,17).

“The trying of your faith worketh patience” (James 1:3). Some people wonder if they should pray for patience. Well, if you do, be forewarned by this promise: patience is learned through hardships (see also Romans 5:3). Some people say I’m not the most patient person—which is exactly why God needs to hurry up and give me patience already! Does it ever seem that God isn’t working fast enough, or things in your life are progressing too slowly?

God’s desire for Christians is that they be mature, and reaching spiritual maturity is a process which takes time. Sometimes that process includes joys which bring us to our feet in praise, and sometimes we encounter trials which bring us to our knees in prayer. Both are needed, and James encourages us to “Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire” (James 1:4).

Christians can often act like children at an all-you-can-eat buffet. We want big helpings of candy and ice cream and completely ignore the meat and vegetables! It’s times like these that our loving Father has to come and remind us that a healthy Christian life is not merely sweet, but sometimes sour, bitter, or tough. If our view of life is that Christians don’t suffer, and that God will prevent us from experiencing trials, then we’d better open our eyes, because that’s not what God’s Word promises.

God’s “unpopular promises” are really blessings in disguise, because while Christians face trials like everyone else in the world (and sometimes more!), God’s promise is that He will use those trials to strengthen our dependence upon Him, deepen our faith, increase our patience, and make us more like Jesus Christ (Romans 8:28,29). —T. Don Johnson

PRECIOUS PROMISES

“To them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ: grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, 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: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises” (2 Peter 1:1-4)

All who have been born again by the grace and power of God through faith in Jesus Christ have a rich resource in the precious promises of the Bible. Here are some of them.

Everlasting Life

He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. *(John 5:24)*

Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. *(John 11:25)*

This is the promise that He hath promised us, even eternal life. *(1 John 2:25)*

Believer's Security

Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out. *(John 6:37)*

I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. *(John 10:28)*

Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. *(Philippians 1:6)*

Peace

Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. *(John 14:27)*

Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. *(Philippians 4:6,7)*

Help in Temptation

God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. *(1 Corinthians 10:13)*

The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations. *(2 Peter 2:9)*

For in that He himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted. *(Hebrews 2:18)*

Strength

Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart. *(Psalm 27:14)*

They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint. *(Isaiah 40:31)*

He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in My infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. *(2 Corinthians 12:9)*

Christ's Presence with the Believer

Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them. *(Matthew 18:20)*



I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. (*Matthew 28:20*)

Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. (*Hebrews 13:5*)

Wisdom and Guidance

Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths. (*Proverbs 3:5,6*)

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. (*James 1:5*)

Answered Prayer

The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry. (*Psalm 34:15*)

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. (*Matthew 7:7*)

If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. (*John 15:7*)

This is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask any thing according to His will, He heareth us. (*1 John 5:14*)

Help in Difficulty

Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me. (*Psalm 23:4*)

When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned. (*Isaiah 43:2*)

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. (*Hebrews 4:16*)

Comfort

The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. (*Psalm 34:18*)

He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds. (*Psalm 147:3*)

Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you. (*1 Peter 5:7*)

Christ's Return

I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. (*John 14:3*)

The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. (*1 Thessalonians 4:16,17*)

Blessings Now

Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. (*Matthew 6:33*)

The Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly. (*Psalm 84:11*)

Eternal Blessings

Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. (*1 Corinthians 2:9*)

God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. (*Revelation 21:4*)

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PROMISE CHECKLIST

If you want to follow the advice of the great hymn “Standing on the Promises,” you need to be sure you are on solid footing. Our spiritual lives must be founded on what God *has said*—not merely on what we *wish* He had said or what we *think* He might have said. We need to be sure we are not misquoting the Lord when we claim a biblical promise for ourselves.

The basic rules of proper interpretation that apply to the whole Bible also form the starting point for our interpretation of biblical promises. The rules of interpretation can be summed up in one word—context.

The context of the immediate setting: Look at the verses that immediately precede and follow the promise. Does your interpretation fit the context?

The context of the whole Bible: Consider the passage in its relation to the whole Bible. God does not contradict Himself. The interpretation of the promise must be in keeping with all of Scripture. This step requires a growing knowledge of God’s Word and a dependence on the Holy Spirit to guide your understanding.

As we read the Scriptures, we can learn how to interpret and apply God’s promises. Considering the context of each promise, use the following questions as guidelines for its interpretation and application.

1. The terms of the promise.

- Does the promise have conditions to fulfill?
- Do you meet the conditions?
- What will happen if you fail to measure up?
- What characteristics of God can increase your confidence in His promises?

2. The people of the promise.

- Is the promise given to all people of all time?
- Is a specific individual mentioned?
- Are only believers in view?
- Is the promise to obedient believers only?
- Are you included?

3. The method of the promise.

- Does the Scripture imply obvious fulfillment?
- Could the promise be fulfilled spiritually?
- Could the promise be fulfilled physically?
- How is God’s faithfulness demonstrated?
- What are some of the options in your situation?

4. The time of the promise.

- Can fulfillment be expected soon?
- Will it be fulfilled in heaven?
- Can God fulfill this promise a number of times?
- Why would God possibly delay fulfillment?
- Are you willing to trust God’s timing?