

Claiming the Exceeding Great and Precious Promises of God!

Recently a news story reported the death of a woman who was presumed to be a bag lady. She was the kind of lady who would walk everywhere, not owning a car. She dressed in shabby clothes and lived in an extremely low-rent apartment. She was even seen going to the food bank to receive some nourishment to eke out her presumably deprived existence for just a few more days. She was found dead in her apartment, her body weight between fifty and sixty pounds. She starved to death! The community was surprised and no doubt wracked with guilt for not knowing the seriousness of her health situation. The community also was surprised when they discovered in her top dresser drawer bankbooks and records of investments. The bag lady's wealth was found in about three different banks to be well over one million dollars. Imagine this, a millionaire who starved to death!

On a far less serious note, a man saved up for the cruise of his lifetime. He purchased a third class ticket and embarked with joy on his journey. Some of his acquaintances noticed that he never showed up for a meal in the elegant dining room. One man found him outside hunkered down on the deck eating cheese and crackers. When the man asked what he was doing, he replied, "I purchased the cheapest ticket to save money for this trip and I am not about to waste what little money I have to eat in that fancy dining room." The man laughed and said, "Why, you are mistaken, friend! Even the cheapest ticket on this liner entitles you to breakfast, lunch and dinner plus a bedtime snack. You don't have to stay out here on the deck eating your crackers and cheese!"

In our article today I want to address the outstanding promises of God. Peter said, "*Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises...*" (II Peter 1:4). There is no need for us to exist on cheese and crackers or live our life and die having never really claimed "*...the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus*" (Ephesians 2:7). To exhaust the promises of God in this type of venue would take up more space than we have available. Come with me and let us claim together five of the most outstanding promises of God!

1. God promises you time to do what needs to be done!

The promise to Jacob's son, Asher was, "*Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be*" (Deuteronomy 33:25). This promise may be enjoyed by us as well. God was saying I will give you shoes that will last for your entire journey through life. Even up to our last day on earth we may still be operating in usefulness! Missionary David Brainerd used to pray, "Lord, help me not to outlive my usefulness." That prayer was honored; even on his deathbed he was instructing and admonishing his younger brother and the powerful preacher of the Great Awakening, Jonathan Edwards. My father was influenced by this prayer and used to pray the same thing. When Dad died, he had tickets to India set aside to help organize a church there. You might say, "He

died with his boots on.” God promises we shall have time to get done what needs to be done and He will supply the ability for us to get those things done which fulfill His purpose for our life on this earth.

2. God promises temptations will not trump you.

Paul gives us this great promise: *“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but 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”* (I Corinthians 10:13). The Lord in His gracious wisdom is telling us that with each temptation we are assaulted, He supplies a power to do right, equal to the pull to do wrong! Make no mistake; we must be looking for an avenue of escape if we are to have help. Jesus said, *“Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak”* (Mark 14:38). When we look for a way out of the presence of temptation God supplies the power over temptation!

3. God promises that no opposition will overwhelm you.

Isaiah tells us of another great promise from God: *“No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD”* (Isaiah 54:17). Sometimes, we feel there is so much against us that we cannot possibly rise up from under our circumstances. Since all things work together for good to those who love God (Romans 8:28) and knowing that God is for us, we need not worry about those who would be against us (Romans 8:31). No one is left out of this promise because God says, *“This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD....”*

4. God promises that trials will not trample you.

A favorite verse of some of God’s choicest servants is: *“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; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee”* (Isaiah 43:2). What a majestic, marvelous metaphor! If we are caught in a maelstrom, we will not go under! If we go through life’s fires, we will not only survive, we will thrive because the flame shall not even kindle upon us! Although we may make the metaphorical application, this promise was quite literally true in the case of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego when they were cast into the fiery furnace: *“...upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them”* (Daniel 3:27).

5. God promises the cross will not crush you.

Jesus said, *“And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me”* (Luke 9:23). Notice this contrast: the Lord Jesus also said, *“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light”* (Matthew 11:28,29). On one

hand, Jesus is telling us to take up our cross - an instrument of restriction, a place of nailing, a place of death. On the other hand, our Lord tells us the yoke He gives us is easy and when He gives us a burden, it is light. To this world it may seem like a contradiction; for us it is a paradox. The world doesn't understand the grace that God bestows upon His children. Paul was smarting from the cross God had given him to bear which was called a thorn in his flesh. He asked God to relieve it three times; the Lord did not remove this discomfort, however he received this revelation from God: *"And 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"* (II Corinthians 12:9). The first promise of God that we discussed in point number one of this article says, *"... as thy days, so shall thy strength be"* (Deuteronomy 33:25). This complements the final promise very nicely when God tells us that His follower should, *"... take up his cross daily, and follow me"* (Luke 9:23). Therefore, we see daily strength is provided as we every day die to self and follow Jesus. This is the way God's promises work as they weave in and out of the Bible. God also desires these precious promises to weave in and out of our life giving forth a testimony that He, the Promiser keeps His promises. Let us not let these promises go unclaimed while we *"...turn...again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage..."* (Galatians 4:9). May God help us to ditch the crackers and cheese and feast on the riches of His grace by claiming these precious promises! *"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature..."* II Pet. 1:4.

-Pastor Pope-

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