

Promises of God

Have you heard of the generosity that exists in our country? People can make amazing promises. Consider a person who has said he will leave 2.2 Billion to the city of Trail. 2.9 Billion to Rossland and 1.16 Billion for road improvement projects in the Kootenays. In a further unprecedented act of generosity, he said he would donate 1.4 Trillion dollars towards Canada's current deficit.

That is truly amazing generosity isn't it?

Well, it would be if he owned more than a 1994 Pace Arrow motorhome...

All the good intentions in the world, do not allow us to give away that which we do not possess.

I am reminded of the young man who was approached about his overdrawn account at the bank. He replied: "How can I be overdrawn, I still have cheques left?"

Has anyone ever made you a promise that was broken? You know, a commitment that was not delivered on?

Well... I have some good news for you this morning. We have promises from the Lord God almighty, and in a world where there may be broken promises, we have a God who can be counted on to deliver what he said he will deliver.

Did you know that the Word of God is full of promises for us?

Why don't we step back for just a second and look at what a promise actually is intended to be... If you have your dictionaries with you this morning, and I will be reading from the Merriam-Webster edition, turn with me to Promise:

"A declaration that one will do or refrain from doing something specified...that gives the person to whom it is made a right to claim the performance or forbearance of a specified act."

When we examine the promises of God, we find that frequently God has stated a promise. Now when we read a promise from God, there is a significant difference from many of the promises of this world. If God has said it we can count on it. God does what he says he will do.

Just one little teeny tiny kicker here... We can count 100% on God's assurance regarding what he will do. The expectation here is that we as his children will walk by faith, trusting him while we wait for Him to deliver on that promise. God will always deliver on his promises, but they are often in his timing instead of in ours.

Let's take a peak at 2 Corinthians 1:20-22 MSG

Whatever God has promised gets stamped with the Yes of Jesus. In him, this is what we preach and pray, the great Amen, God's Yes and our Yes together, gloriously evident. God affirms us, making us a sure thing in Christ, putting his Yes within us. By his Spirit he has stamped us with his eternal pledge—a sure beginning of what he is destined to complete.

Let's check out the ESV as well

For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory.

So we have a bit of an idea of what a promise from God is. How is this different from a command from God? Put simply, a promise from God is when He has said He will do something. A command from God is something that we must do. In either case there is one thing that we MUST do. Do you know what that is?

- If we have a command from God it is not optional, we are expected to obey, we must do it.
- If we have a promise from God it is not optional, we are expected to believe that he will do it.

D L Moody once said that: "God never made a promise that was too good to be true." I think this quote is interesting because it tells us that God expects to deliver on his promises. It is significant because we can rely on and trust the promises of God absolutely.

I have quoted Jeremiah 29:11 a lot! Do you know why?

I quote this verse because it is a promise from our almighty God. *"I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."*

If we look very closely at the context surrounding this verse we see it was given to those in captivity. Those whom I would assume would like to be delivered immediately and prospered on the spot. Now sometimes God will do this, but in the context here we actually have a 3 score and 10 time frame... In short, 70 years.

So... what can we really take from this promise. Well we can assert several things:

- God has plans for you
- God helps his children
- God intend no harm to you
- God give us his assurances and thereby hope for our future
- God has a handle on everything
- God keeps his word. In this particular instance 70 years

Have you ever heard another Christian say: "God will never leave you or forsake you"? I have, lots of times and it is just as true today as it was yesterday and will be tomorrow. When I read the text in Hebrews 13:5, I am reminded of this and that I don't have to go through life's struggles or trials alone. Further, I don't go through the Joys alone either. When I consider that he has plans for me, that he helps his children, that he will keep me from harm, He has given me hope; and not just me but all of us. Consider the promise from Joshua 1:5 where he says that as he was with Moses so he will be with us and it concludes with a reemphasis of that same promise to never leave us or forsake us.

I have heard the teaching that Jesus has done it all so we have nothing left to struggle with. He has the victory, so we will experience no struggle, no strife or turmoil. I have heard it and I do not subscribe to it...

In John 16:33 what do we find?

We find the truth that yes Jesus has overcome the world, Jesus has also said to us to take heart and have peace... He also says: "You will have tribulation."

Ah so we will have this tribulation, he has said we will, but remember he will never leave us or forsake us. We may go through it but he is with us and can see us safely through.

Let's look at Romans 8:28 next:

And we know that God causes ALL THINGS to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

Do we hold onto that faith and trust God and strive to persevere or stress and be anxious.

James 1:4 NIV

Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

Philippians 1:6 WEB

being confident of this very thing, that he who began a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.

So yes we may have turmoil, but we have Gods promise that he wont leave us or forsake us, we have his assurance that something good will come out of our struggle, we see that we must not give up. We see that our perseverance makes us mature and complete Christians lacking nothing. And finally, we see in Philippians that If God is working in us, he will complete the work.

Here is the thing... We need to read God's word and understand his promises to us, they give us the strength and the joy to endure. You see we really need to be willing to accept all God's promises, not just cherry pick the ones we like.

When we read a promise do we worship him and give him the glory and by faith accept him at his word or do we bypass worshiping him and try to demand that God do things for us in our way and in our timing?

Trust me when I say, I have found that a right heart makes a huge difference.

One other pitfall that some Christians fall into is the lack of understanding that some promises from God are provisional. For the Computer coders in the group this is the If / Then conditional that is often overlooked.

Let me give you a concrete example.

2 Chronicles 7:14 NIV

IF my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray AND seek my face AND turn from their wicked ways, THEN I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

Need another example? How about Deuteronomy 11:22-23

IF you carefully observe all these commands I am giving you to follow—to love the Lord your God, to walk in obedience to him AND to hold fast to him—THEN the Lord will drive out all these nations before you, and you will dispossess nations larger and stronger than you.

Oh but pastor that is Old Testament... True. Okay how about James 4:10

Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

Still conditional...

John 3:16

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

If we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ Then we shall not perish, but have eternal life

But not all are conditional...

Consider Genesis 9:8-17 wherein we find that God has unconditionally promised not to destroy the earth by flood again. Or perhaps Genesis 8:20-22 wherein God has unconditionally promised not to curse the ground any more for man's sake. One of

my favourites is God's unconditional promise that Jesus Christ will come again. Or maybe the promise that Paul tells us about in that God has promised an unconditional resurrection of all the dead. Acts 24:15

The list is massive, but what I want you to take away here is that we can always have faith that God will deliver on his promises and secondly that some of the promise outcomes are conditional on what we decide to do. For example: We don't believe in Jesus Christ we don't have that eternal life in his presence.

Since we are promised that we will be raised, it is really a question then of where the person will spend eternity. There are different outcomes for the righteous in Christ vs. those who do not believe.

So... Changing Gears for a minute...

Are we prepared to receive God's promises and honour God? 1 Samuel 2:30

Remember that difficulty with our timing vs. his?

Hebrews 10:23-24 tells us what to do...

Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds,

Remember that whole perseverance thing we talked about and that conditional thing? Turn with me to Hebrews 10:36

You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised.

Remember that a promise from God is also our assurance from God that He gives to us so we can walk in faith while we wait for him to deliver. And we know he will because he is faithful.

Seek and discover his promises for you!

2 Corinthians 7:1

Therefore, since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.

But can we do it? Are we strong enough?

2 Peter 1:3-4

His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has

given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

He not only gives us his promises but he sets us up for success. We have the gift of faith, we have his word and we have his assurance that all things work together for good for those who love him and are called according to His purposes

Final take-aways this morning:

- God has given you everything you need
- He will never leave you or forsake you
- God always keeps his promises
- Some promises are conditional upon our own actions
- We need to read understand and utilize God's promises in our faith
- We need to understand that to release God's power is to walk in his will
- He has plans for each of us. Plans to prosper us and give us hope

In 2 Corinthians 1:20 earlier we read:

For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God.

God's promises are straight forward, yes some are conditional, but in a world of broken promises, God delivers. God doesn't give us a maybe he gives us a clear and have a concrete and definitive result. This is a reflection of the God we serve. He is truth!

So let me distil this for everyone. We need to have faith and believe. Although it may sometimes seem slow to some of us, his timing is perfect. God wants us to succeed, he sets us up for success and he expects us to have faith.

God wants all who are willing to believe in him to come to him. In fact, it is so important on it hinges eternal life. We need to see the urgency on our part to have faith and pursue his promises. We need to see the urgency of his will to have the good news reach the people. We need to see that the amazing promise of eternal life has a flip side in light of conditional promises. Peter is pretty clear in 2 Peter 3:9 when he says: "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise (to return), as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

You see his command is to go therefore into all nations making disciples and baptising them... that is non-negotiable.

If you read the word of God regularly you will frequently come across his promises. I encourage you to understand them and embrace them for they give strength. You see it doesn't matter whether you are anxious, discouraged, afraid, lonely, poor, rich etc. There are promises from God for you. So seek them out! And if you try you will not fail, for just a bit farther down from the promise of Jeremiah 29:11 we read in Verse 13:

You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

My friends the promises of God are rich and many. Even better you can count on them being fulfilled. That is real hope!

Prayer