

Christianity 101

The Promises of God! Part 2

A Bible Study of The Mount Zion Church

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Promise (Noun) a declaration or assurance that one will do a particular thing or that a particular thing will happen.

Students learned, in the previous lesson, God wants to be our God and us to be His people. The fundamental promise made to Abraham in Genesis reveals the responsibility God willingly takes on to care for those who willingly choose such a covenant relationship.

On the surface, one could overlook the huge undertaking required to fulfill God's responsibility. Mankind has an opportunity to respond to God's desire to restore the relationship we shared in Eden. When we carry out our portion of God's relational promise (to be his people), we open the door to all of the subsequent promises which satisfy God's original purpose for our lives. He always intended to be our God and always intended for us to be His people. The basis of receiving "The Promises of God" begins with a real relationship with God. We cannot access what is intended for His people without the relationship of being His people. By the end of this lesson, students will be able to clearly explain the necessary parameters to ensure the promises of God are manifested in our lives!

⁷ I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. Genesis 17: 7



How does one position themselves to receive the promises of God? This quintessential question is one in which many have wrestled.

1. Can we deserve God's promises?
2. Can we earn them?
3. Are God's promises simply blessings which indicate His pleasure with mankind?

To begin, students would be wise to understand God's posture with mankind. We are sinners by birth and by choice. This is supported by many scriptures from our sin lesson, but it bears reminding that we deserve nothing from God because we have broken the relationship with God by sinning. Yet, through God's mercy and grace, we are offered a new relationship with through Christ Jesus. This leads to a discussion on righteousness.

What is Righteousness???

Since we cannot truly approach a holy God due to our sin, we have to approach God with an advocate who pleads our case before God. We are deserving punishment, but when we accept Christ, we stand before God with our savior who pleads our case before God and reminds God that our sins have been paid for by Himself (1 John 2: 1-2). This allow us to be considered righteous.

The simplest definition of righteousness is for someone to be in proper alignment with the standard. Another word we can use is just or justified. Justified is to be considered right or perfect. God is the one who sets the standard for our living. He has determined what constitutes us as being right or justified. In addition to our righteousness through Jesus Christ, there is also a desire by God for us to live (behave) righteously daily. Numerous verses indicate God's expectations and what is His definition of right living. Micah 6: 8 describes our requirements towards others. We are to be just in our dealings, be merciful in our dealings, and be humble. Titus 2: 11-12 teaches that we are to be self-controlled and to say no to ungodly behaviors. While many Old Testament followers of God thought that God desired sacrifices, Proverbs 21: 3 suggests that sacrifice doesn't make us right. It is doing right and being just that God expects of us.

Righteousness clearly has a component of obedience attached to its meaning. We cannot be right with God if our behavior is against His will. Even if we have accepted Christ, willful disobedience to God puts us at odds with God. Obedience leads to many of the promises of God. For example, Deuteronomy 28:1 states If you fully obey the Lord your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations on earth. The behavioral component is fully obeying the commands while the promise is that God will elevate His people above all others.

IF/THEN

One can observe that many of God's promises have an if/then structure. If we meet the condition then God will fulfill His part.

In John 15: 10 we read:

10 If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.

In Matthew 6: 14-15 we read:

14 For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

In these and many other promises made to us by God the Father or Jesus Christ (God the Son) the if/then proposition appears.

- A note of warning. This does not mean we can earn salvation. We are brought into the relationship with God through Jesus and Jesus only. Ephesians 2: 8-9 is a reminder **[that] by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.**

Our behavior does not make us children of God. Acts of righteousness or right living are characteristics God desires of His children. When we meet the standard, we make our heavenly Father pleased. When God is pleased with our IF, He can do his THEN. A perfect verse to understand this is 1 John 3: 21-23 **Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from him anything we ask, because we keep his commands and do what pleases him. And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us.**

Notice the last sentence. The command is in this order, relationship first, behavior second!



Have you ever tried to get God to do something for you without doing your part? Why does this fail?

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The pattern is clear when we analyze God’s structure for receiving His promises. The examples are easy to see. Try to identify it for yourself.

1 Kings 2: 3-4 ³ and observe what the LORD your God requires: Walk in obedience to him, and keep his decrees and commands, his laws and regulations, as written in the Law of Moses. Do this so that you may prosper in all you do and wherever you go ⁴ and that the LORD may keep his promise to me: ‘If your descendants watch how they live, and if they walk faithfully before me with all their heart and soul, you will never fail to have a successor on the throne of Israel.’

1. What is the part that we must do?
2. What is the part God will do?

It really all comes down to obedient living. We must seriously try to meet God’s expectations for our living. The error in many Christians’ thinking is that one will reap the benefits of a child of God simply by accepting Christ. Accepting Christ solves our eternal need to be saved. Beyond salvation, God wants to express His goodness in our lives and show the world the benefits of His blessings on a daily basis. Obedience to God’s word allows God to show off and bless us in unique ways such as:

- A. Prosperity
- B. Protection from Enemies
- C. Elevated Positions
- D. Possessions
- E. Peace

A concluding view of God's Promise to Abraham brings us back to where we began in Lesson 1. The intent of God is to create a people who are His. Observe the promise one final time in totality from Genesis 12: 1-3. Identify the if statement and the then statement. What behavior does God expect Abram (later changed to Abraham) to display? Where is the relationship portion of this promise?

Genesis 12: 1-3

12 The LORD had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you.

²"I will make you into a great nation,
and I will bless you;

I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing.^[a]

³I will bless those who bless you,
and whoever curses you I will curse;
and all peoples on earth
will be blessed through you."

This first promise which began God's plan to start with a group of people and save the world encompasses the full pattern of God's promises. We cannot ignore the relational part of the promises because they are meant for the people of God. We cannot ignore the obedience part because behavior is a component of righteous living. We cannot ignore God's ability to make His promises happen. He has shown over and over again that He can absolutely fulfill every promise He makes.

Closing Prayer: Lord help us to see that you want to do everything in our lives that you have said in your word. Help us to do our part so that we open ourselves to be blessed by you. Amen.