

Praying God's Promises

The following quotes are from Tom Yeakley, Praying Over God's Promises.

1. Key Scripture

Luke 18:1 (NIV) Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.

Acts 13:32-33 (NIV) We tell you the good news: What God promised our fathers³³ he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. As it is written in the second Psalm: 'You are my Son; today I have become your Father'.

Romans 4:16 (NIV) Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring--not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all.

Romans 4:20-21 (NIV) Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God.²¹ being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.

2 Corinthians 1:20 (NIV) 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.

Titus 1:2 (NIV) ...a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time,

2 Peter 1:3-4 (NIV) His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.⁴ Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

1 John 2:25 (NIV) And this is what he promised us--even eternal life.

Numbers 23:19 (NIV) God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?

Nehemiah 9:8 (NIV) You found his heart faithful to you, and you made a covenant with him to give to his descendants the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Jebusites and Girgashites. You have kept your promise because you are righteous.

Psalms 119:140 (NIV) Your promises have been thoroughly tested, and your servant loves them.

Psalms 145:13 (NIV) Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures through all generations. The LORD is faithful to all his promises and loving toward all he has made.

2. Commands, Principles and Promises

A. Commands

Commands are God-given laws. They demand obedience on our behalf. The most well-know are called the Ten Commandments, given to Moses on Mt. Sinai during the Exodus of the nation of Israel from Egypt (Ex 20). Nine of these commandments are repeated in the New Testament, the exception being the command concerning the keeping of the Sabbath. (p.12)

John 13:34-35 (NIV) A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.³⁵ By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

B. Principles

Principles are spiritual truths from the Bible that are found through using accepted rules of interpretation. ...an example of a biblical principle is found in Rm 14:23... The context concerns whether or not a believer should eat meat or become a vegetarian. Paul declares that all food is clean and therefore may be eaten by Christians (Rm 14:20). But, in addition to considering the effects on others if we eat meat, we must also examine ourselves to see if we have doubts about it. If we do have doubts, it is better not to eat meat... (p.13)

Romans 14:20 (NIV) Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong for a man to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble.

Romans 14:23 (NIV) But the man who has doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin.

C. Promises

...The Bible also contains numerous promises for believers. The dictionary defines a promise as 'a declaration that gives the person to whom it is made a right to expect or claim the performance of forbearance of a specified act.' Thus, a promise is a statement we can trust, one in which we can put our full confidence. But promises are only as good as the character and resources of the one who makes the promise. (p.14)

D. Types of Promises – General Promises and Specific Promises

There are two types of promises found in the Bible, general promises and specific promises. Both require faith for their fulfillment. Rm 4:16 reminds us that 'the promise comes by faith...' Yes, faith is important in receiving what has been promised, but it is not a great amount of faith that is necessary. What we need is faith in a great and faithful God. As we grow in our knowledge of God, His character and greatness, our faith will also grow. Some promises are conditional upon our fulfilling certain acts of obedience before we will see God's fulfillment. Without our meeting these conditions, the promise will not be fulfilled. (p.15)

General promises are given to many people and for all time. Key words in general promises are 'believe' or 'obey.' Some examples of general promises are: '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' (Jn 3:16). (pp.15-16)

...God sometimes gives to individuals **specific promises** that relate to their own unique situations at a certain time. These special passages of Scripture are impressed upon our hearts by the Holy Spirit and we have an inner assurance that this is part of His special leading in our lives. The immediate context of the passage may refer to another person, place or time, but we hear God's voice speaking to our hearts concerning our current situation. Though such personal promises are a means of God to reveal and confirm His will to us, we must remember that this is a very subjective process. 'The heart is deceitful above all things' (Jer 17:9) and as such, we are capable of reading into certain passages of Scripture what we want to see. We can deceive ourselves if we are not careful. (p.16)

General and specific promises are given to believers for guidance and encouragement. Though general promises are many, specific promises are few. We should not expect to have specific promises given to us very often and when we do find one, we must be certain that it is God speaking to us. A key is to have an attitude of expectancy as we approach the Scriptures, longing to meet with God and to hear His voice, and expecting to fellowship with Him through His Word. Most of the time, we will find encouragement and comfort from the general promises in the Word. But occasionally, the Lord will also impress upon our hearts some passages of Scripture that will be very specific to our current situation or need. These special promises also are to be believed and acted upon. (p.17)

3. Promises and Discerning God's Will

As a means of discerning God's will, specific promises are helpful. However as this is a subjective process, these promises should be used in conjunction with the other means which the Lord uses to guide us. These means of guidance are: clear commands and principles from the Word of God, inner conviction from the Holy Spirit when we pray about the matter, counsel from mature believers, wise thinking, and providential circumstances. All fine means will be used by the Lord to guide us. Because specific promises and inner conviction (peace) are very subjective and easily influenced by other factors, we should be sure it is God speaking to us and not our own desires. Objective counsel and a broad knowledge of the Scriptures will help keep us from error. Also, it should be understood that the Lord will never lead a person, through a specific promise, to do something that would be contrary to or in opposition with another portion of His inspired Word. God does not contradict Himself! (p.18)

4. Thoughts About Promises

A. Promises are better understood to be given and not claimed

On occasion people say they are "claiming" a promise from God. This idea is understandable and may be OK. But perhaps a better way to express this idea might be to say: "I have received a promise from God, and I am acting in faith on that promise." Using the word "claiming" implies we are actively picking and choosing promises we want and that sound good to us. But we are better off to understand that it is God who gives us the promises, the Holy Spirit speaks to our hearts in a special way and affirms that particular passage of Scripture for a situation in our lives. "Receiving" promises is a better description than "claiming" promises.

B. This is not a "prosperity gospel" or a "name it and claim it" gospel

The "prosperity gospel" some promote is the idea that it is God's will for all believers to be healthy, prosperous and successful. All you have to do is have faith. You can have anything you want if you have faith. You can be healed from any disease if you have faith. There will always be money in the bank if you have enough faith.

When we talk about claiming promises in prayer, we are not talking about a 'name it and claim it' belief system. God never promises us a carefree or trouble-free life when we walk in obedience to Him and seek to live in dependence on Him. There is no promise of prosperity. The clearest example is that of Jesus Himself. Jesus led the perfect life—a sinless life in complete submission to the Father. Yet, he died an early death by crucifixion and at His death, His only possession was His robe. This was hardly a prosperous life by the world's terms! Claiming promises does not give us the right to expect and experience the world's best, but it does give us the right to expect God's best! (p.75)

When claiming promises in prayer, we are not seeking to bind God in some solemn oath, forcing Him to act according to our own desires... Rather, we come to Him in humility and reverence, acknowledging His Lordship over us and His right to act as He pleases. We come asking Him and pleading with Him to fulfil His promises, not demanding that He performs according to our wishes... (p.76)

C. Conclusion

God wants dependent children, not independent ones! He desires that we depend on Him daily, and as a source of encouragement to do so, he has given us many promises. These promises are given that He may demonstrate His goodness and faithfulness as well as glorify Himself through their fulfillment...

The Lord is waiting for us to take on His 'great and precious promises.' Like precious gems, they await our discovery and possession. But, just as gemstones must be cut and polished, so we must add to these promises faith and patience if we are to see the brilliance of their fulfillment. With the mix of these three elements (promises, faith, patience), the answers of God are released. (p.100)