

VIGIL



“Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”

~ 1 Peter 5:8

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Promises

Exceeding Great and Precious Promises **James E. Rogers**

“He hath granted unto us his precious and exceeding great promises; that through these ye may become partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4). “Jonathan Swift stated: ‘Promises and Pie-Crusts are made to be broken’” (Ramsey 3). God cannot lie (Hebrews 6:18; Numbers 23:19; Titus 1:2) and is faithful (Psalm 36:5; 1 Corinthians 1:9; 2 Corinthians 1:18; 1 Peter 4:19). Because of the faithfulness of God to keep His promises, “C. H. Spurgeon said, ‘We should take a promise from the Bible, lay it like a check on the counter of the bank of Heaven and then come away with the cash’” (Cordle).

The promises of God are exceeding great and precious. They are such because of the faithfulness of God. It is through these promises that one may become a partaker of the divine nature. Since God is faithful and His promises exceeding great and precious, we may take comfort in this knowledge and enrich our lives as we grow in faithfulness.

GOD’S PRECIOUS AND EXCEEDING GREAT PROMISES (2 PETER 1:4)

Jesus granted precious and exceeding great promises to encourage use of the provisions which have been

made for Christians. The promises are made possible by the all-sufficient provisions. “Three facts determine the worth of promises—the value of the thing promised; the character of the promiser; and the conditions attached to it” (Spence and Exell 25). The value of the things promised by God cannot be estimated because they are beyond human ability to estimate. The character of the promiser is revealed in the Bible and in the work of God in creation. There is no higher character and every one of His promises is tied to this character. The conditions attached to the promises require that one participate in the plan in order to appropriate the promises. Peter explains **the character of the promises** in clear terms. First, they are **precious** (*timios*). “*Timios*, from *time*, honour, price, signifies . . . (b) in the metaphorical sense, held in honour, esteemed, very dear . . .” (Vine 2:38; 1:275). They are like proved faith (1 Peter 1:7). They are like the blood of the Christ (1 Peter 1:19). Second, they are **exceeding great**. The word, “. . . *megistos*, the superlative of *me-gas* . . .” (Vine 2:175), shows degree and intensity. Third, they are **certain**. This is true because God is behind them (Hebrews 10:23). “It has been put this way—

once we know Jesus Christ, every time we meet a promise which begins with the word ‘Whosoever,’ we can immediately say to ourselves, ‘That means me’” (Barclay 351). Fourth, they **allow one to partake of the divine nature**. “The change from the first person plural to the second is easy enough both in Greek and English . . . We have a similar change in 1 Peter i. 3,4; ii. 21,24” (Ellicott 3:444). “Partakers” is from *koinonoi*, “an adjective, signifying having in common . . . is used as a noun, denoting a . . . partaker” (Vine 3:161). This conveys “the idea of a *growth*” (Vincent 1:678). One becomes a partaker of the Divine Nature through obedience to the Gospel. Fifth, they **help one avoid the corruption in the world**. “Having escaped” is an aorist participle “used of coincident action. Moral emancipation is part of the *koinonia theias phuseos*. The idea of participation in the Divine Nature is set between the two pictures, one of hope . . . the other of despair” (Nicoll 5:126). The fact they escaped reminds us that sin enslaves (John 8:34). “Corruption” is from *phthoras*, “connected with *phtheiro* . . . signifies a bringing or being brought into an inferior or worse condition .

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God's Promises Are Sure!

Ronnie Hayes

EDITORIAL

Webster's Dictionary defines a promise as "a declaration that one will do or refrain from doing something specified" (921). The promises of God have many characteristics. Peter says, "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Peter 1:4). There is no doubt that the promises of God are great and precious. The promises of God are also sure. "Blessed be the LORD, that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised: **there hath not failed one word of all his good promise**, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant" (1 Kings 8:56). God promised the land of Canaan to His children and he fulfilled His promise. "And the LORD **gave unto Israel all the land which he sware** to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein" (Joshua 21:43). If God promises it, it will be done! Let's look at what can be learned from the fact that God's promises are sure.

The fact that God's promises are sure **proclaims God's nature**. The writer of Hebrews wrote, "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us" (Hebrews 6:17,18). Robert Milligan wrote in his commentary on *Hebrews*, "Every promise of God is, like himself, absolutely unchangeable" (233). Man will give his word and do everything in his power to honor his

promise. Even so, sometimes events that we cannot control happen and our promise goes unfulfilled. Not so with God!

God's promises are sure and **proven by fulfillment**. Someone could ask, "How am I to know that God's promises are sure?" There is a simple test prescribed by God. All you have to do is wait to see if what one prophesies or promises comes to pass. If it doesn't, the prophet is proven false. "But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die. And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him" (Deuteronomy 18:20-22).

God promised a Messiah. "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14). Was God faithful to His promise? Of course He was! "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (Matthew 1:21-23). God also promised the church (cf. Isaiah 2:2,3; Joel 2:28-32; Micah 4:1,2; Matthew 16:13-20). Acts 2 is the fulfillment of that promise. On that day of Pentecost,

Peter proclaimed that what was taking place was God's promise. Peter said, "But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel" (Acts 2:16). After the conversion of about 3,000 (Acts 2:41), they were added to the church. "...praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47). Once again the promises of God are proven sure by their fulfillment.

The sureness of God's promises **provide hope for God's children**. One's hope, and faith should not be based on some emotional feeling but upon substance. The writer of Hebrews states, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). Because there is evidence for one's hope, we can place confidence in God's promises. Just as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego said, "...our God whom we serve is able..." (Daniel 3:17). All can have confidence in God! This confidence in God's promises will give us assurance in our conversion. Paul said to Timothy, "...for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (2 Timothy 1:12). Our conversion is safe in God! God's promises are sure, in that we can be confident. This confidence will cause us to trust in our conversion. Therefore causing us to preserve our commitment. Because God's promises are sure, I'm not going anywhere! Paul wrote, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness" (2 Timothy 4:7-8). God's promises should assure we stay the course.

Some Promises Are False (2 Peter 2:19)

Sam Willcut

The subject of promises is a subject that offers assurance to the student of the word of God (Hebrews 13:5-6). Christians base worship, service, allegiance and obedience to God upon his promises with an attitude of trusting faith. In fact, we base our agreement in the new covenant upon certain promises. Some think that they can be selective in what they want. However, to enter into covenant with God shows, on one hand, that God obligates himself to fulfill all of his promises and do all he says. On the other hand, we are to accept all that the Lord has set forth in his word. We must remember that. I am afraid that sometimes when people obey the gospel, they do not consciously accept the gospel by agreeing and entering into a covenant relationship to the Lord with a promise to do all of the things that the New Testament teaches.

One beautiful trait of our Almighty God is that he always keeps his promises (cf. Joshua 22:4). Therefore, the apostle Paul said, “God is faithful” (1 Corinthians 1:9). He is omniscient enough to remember what he promised, powerful enough to do what he promised and gracious enough to fulfill what he promised. Our God is not as man—he has integrity, because he cannot lie (Titus 1:2). When God made certain promises to Abraham, he fulfilled them all (cf. Galatians 3:6-4:31). When God promised to deliver the firstborn of the Israelites through the Passover sacrifice, he kept his promise (Exodus 12). When God promised to return a remnant from captivity after seventy years (Jeremiah 25:11; 29:10), he did so. When he promised to send the Messiah, he did so (Acts 2:36). In fact, the entire Old Testament hinges on certain promises of redemption that God has made to

humanity (cf. Genesis 3:15), and the New Testament is an announcement of the fulfillment of those promises, with instructions to appropriate the necessary provisions. Satan has attempted to thwart every promise God has made, yet come up short every time.

However, not everyone is as God. Some who make promises do not (or cannot) fulfill them. Thus, some promises are false. In speaking a great deal of false teachers, Peter characterizes them as ones who make empty promises (2 Peter 2:19). He begins by describing them as “*wells without water*” (2 Peter 2:17), illustrating that as one who is thirsty and aspires for the promise of water within, they are dry—they disappoint and do not deliver. In addition, Peter describes their false promises as “*clouds*” that promise needed rain for crops, but instead of delivering such a blessing, they just move along with “*a tempest*” (2 Peter 2:17). In other words, they cannot deliver what they promise. Nevertheless, to allure careless people into their deception, Peter states that they use “great swelling words of vanity” by utilizing “the lusts of the flesh” (2 Peter 2:18).

Now, consider this false promise—the promise of “*liberty*.” Yet, Peter remarks, “...They themselves are the servants of corruption.” How many times have we seen this in our day? One may declare to another, “Do you mean that your preacher preaches against sin? Do you mean that he preaches against dancing? Do you mean that he preaches against the sin of wearing immodest apparel? Are you telling me that he preaches against social drinking? Why do you continue to worship there? Come and worship with us, because we have liberty. We do not worry about sin, because we

have grace.” Others will make declarations of the promise of liberty without worrying about the commands of the New Testament, because we should not be concerned about law. Nevertheless, one will never find liberty apart from law! Without any law, anarchy and chaos would reign supreme, not freedom and liberty.

This is one of the greatest tools of Satan—he makes promises that he cannot keep. For example, he will encourage the sinner through his temptations to say, “Well, I know what I need to do to become a Christian, but I am just not ready to tie myself down with Christianity. I am not ready to become a servant of Jesus Christ, because I am enjoying my freedom.” In such cases, one may think that he has liberty in the world, but the truth is that he is not free at all (John 8:34; Romans 6:16; 2 Peter 2:19). He is a servant (*doulos*—bond slave) of corruption. Therefore, if one is not serving God, then he is serving Satan (cf. Matthew 6:24). Thus, even people of the world walk in the steps of their master, Satan, and make false promises, which they cannot deliver. This is why we must always be watchful and careful (cf. Matthew 7:15-19).

While some may offer false promises, God will not. God has promised to take care of our needs—physically, emotionally and spiritually. Therefore, when God promises something to the church, we do not need to despair.

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Thy Word Is Truth

Hugo McCord

In John 14:6 Jesus speaks of himself as “the truth,” but in John 17:17 of scripture as being the embodiment of all religious truth: “thy word is truth.” Both the Old Testament and the New Testament make up “the word of truth” (Psalm 119:43; 2 Corinthians 7:6; Ephesians 1:13; Colossians 1:5; 2 Timothy 2:15; James 1:18).

“What God has said isn’t only alive and active! It is sharper than any double-edged sword. His word can cut through our spirits and souls and through our joints and marrow, until it discovers the desires and thoughts of our hearts” (Hebrews 4:12, CEV).

Precious and meaningful is the thought that God’s word is able to:

1. put faith in our hearts: “faith comes from hearing ...the word” (Romans 10:17, NIV).
2. sanctify us: “Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth” (John 17:17 KJV).
3. convert us: “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul”) (Psalm 19:7, KJV).
4. save our souls: “the word... is able to save your souls” (James 1:18, NIV).
5. cause the new birth: He chose to give us birth through the word” (James 1:18, NIV).
6. cause the newborn to grow: “like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word that by it you may grow” (1 Peter 2:2, NASV).
7. live in us: “you are strong, and the word of God lives in you” (1 John 2:14, NIV).
8. work in us: “the word of God, which is at work in you” (1 Thessalonians 2:13, NIV).
9. guide us: “You guide me with your counsel” (Psalm 73:24, NIV).
10. lead us: “O send out your light and your truth; let them lead me” (Psalm 43:3, NRSV).

11. keep us from sin: “I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you” (Psalm 119:11, NIV).
12. keep us pure: “How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word.” (Psalm 119:9, NIV).
13. give us wisdom: “the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple” (Psalm 19:7, NRSV).
14. give us understanding: “I gain understanding from your precepts” (Psalm 119:105, NIV).
15. light our path: “Your word is a lamp unto my feet and light for my path” (Psalm 119:105, NIV).
16. revive us: “Thy word has revived me” (Psalm 119:50, NASV).
17. give us nourishment: “It is written: Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4, NIV).
18. induce reverence: “Establish thy word to thy servant, as that which produces reverence for Thee” (Psalm 119:38, NASV).
19. counsels us: “Your statutes are my delight; they are my counselors” (Psalm 119:24, NIV).
20. warns us: “By the ordinance of the Lord is your servant warned” (Psalm 19(, 11, NIV).
21. restrict us to the written word: “so that you may learn from us the meaning to the saying, “Do not go beyond what is written” (1 Corinthians 4:6, NIV).
22. give us insight: “I have more insight than all my teachers, for Thy testimonies are my meditation” (Psalm 119:99, NASV).

23. help us when we are afflicted: “If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction” Psalm 19:9,11, NIV).
24. strengthen us: “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His might power... Take.. The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Ephesians 6:10m, 17, NIV).
25. supply all our needs: “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 (2 Peter 1:3, NIV).
26. bring peace to us: “Great peace have they that love thy law (Psalm 119:165, ASV).
27. bring peace to us: “Great peace have they that love thy law (Psalm 119:165, ASV).
28. put joy in our hearts: “The precepts of Jehovah are right, rejoicing the heart” (Psalm 19:8, ASV).
29. bring comfort in the hour of death: ”Therefore comfort one another with these words” (1Thessalonians 4:18, NASV).
30. give hope: “remember your word to your servant, in which you have made me to hope” (Psalm 119:49, NRSV).

Deceased 2004

Grounded In Christ

Jerry L. Martin

We have so many promises from God that are wonderful reminders that He loves us and will never forsake us. His promises are an expression of His love toward us and the anchor for our souls that ground us firmly in Christ. Paul puts it this way, "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us. Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God (2 Corinthians 1:20-21). The word "stablisheth" in the King James Version is translated in other versions as "grounded" and carries the meaning "firm or steadfast." Every promise we have of God is firm, sure, and unmovable. Paul points out in the context under consideration some reasons for us to be grounded in Christ.

Our confidence in God and His promises grounds us. God, as our creator, spoke everything into existence and He sustains His creation with the word of His power. He is true and faithful in every thing. "But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay" (2 Corinthians 1:18). Paul reminded Titus that God's promises to us can be counted on because God can be counted on. "Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness; In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began" (Titus 1:1-2). In like manner He reminded the Roman Christians, "Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen" (Romans

16:25-27). We can count on the promises of God because He is true and trustworthy.

Our confidence in what God has promised in Christ grounds us. "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us" (2 Corinthians 1:20). God planned before the foundation of the earth to provide all spiritual blessings through and in His Son. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love" (Ephesians 1:3-4). He has removed us from contaminants of the world and has placed us in the redemptive protection of His Son. "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: (Colossians 1:13-14). Paul reminded Timothy that it is in Christ that we have the promised assurance of salvation. "Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel: Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound. Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" (2 Timothy 2:8-10). Our confidence in what God has promised and confirmed through the Spirit grounds us. "Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts" (2 Corinthians 1:22).

God has not left us to wonder what His will for our life is. He revealed not only His promises to us but has given us the instructions necessary for us to appropriate the benefits of those promises. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for

correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). It is the Spirit revealed and filled Word of God that has the power to prick our hearts, mold our lives, direct our steps and protect our souls. "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12; Romans 1:16; Psalm 119:105; 11; Ephesians 6:17). When we follow the teachings of the Spirit we are truly grounded in Christ (1 Peter 1:22-25).

God has provided us with all that we will ever need to sustain us in this life and prepare us for eternal life. The apostle Peter reassured us with these words: "Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, 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: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Peter 1:1-4). It is only in Christ that we can ground our faith and realize our hope. "If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister". (Colossians 1:22, 23).

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The First Commandment With Promise

Bobby Liddell

Paul, great apostle of faith, wrote by inspiration to the Ephesian church instructing them in Christian living--including the proper relationship of children and parents.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:1-4).

The commandment, from our Creator, to children preceded the promise from God. Our Heavenly Father, Who gave the Law through Moses to Israel, commanded His people after the Exodus from Egypt, "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee" (Exodus 20:12). The word honor literally means to be heavy; thus, the significance is that a child should give weight to his parents. This word came to be used in the sense of giving honor, and that is how the King James translators rendered it. We say of one who speaks with authority, "His words carry a lot of weight." Not literally, but the idea is that people should listen to him by listening to his words, for they are authoritative, commanding, and important.

Children are to honor and obey father and mother. This is the very first responsibility of every child. Why? It is "right" to do so, as God's Word plainly states. This means it is holy, righteous, and, of course, suitable to revere and to mind parents. It is always right to do right. More importantly, because the Lord said do so. Surely, we all understand the need to do what the Lord commands. This two-fold answer to the question,

"Why honor and obey parents?" should be sufficient motivation for all who want to please the Lord, and demonstrate their love for Him, by doing right.

Obedience to parents involves the child's both hearing what they say to him and doing what they decree; that is, a child is to listen attentively to parents, and to do as they direct him to do (as long as their commands are not contradictory to God's), for God has given them the responsibility to direct their offspring. When a child respects his parents, obeying them, as God commanded will not be difficult, distasteful, or despised. Knowing father and mother love him, and that their God-given roles as parents put them in places of importance and authority over him, the child will joyfully submit to the training (discipline) his parents give—both instructive and corrective training. Children need both.

Let us focus on the promise which followed the commandment, "the first commandment with promise." God assured, in His promise, that children who obey and honor father and mother will be blessed; they will see good, and will live long. Our God keeps His promises (cf. Titus 1:2).

The first part of the promise is: "That it may be well with thee" (cf. Deuteronomy 5:16). The only way things can be well (good) with one is for him to do well. There is no goodness without God, but there is abundant goodness with God. God reveals, and experience shows, that families who reject God's plan for the home suffer in sadness, confusion, disarray, and separation from God and good. In homes where God reigns, their happiness, understanding, order, and fellowship with God bless the family. Children play an essential part

in making the home what it ought to be, and in securing God's blessings upon the home. It will surely be well with children who obey God by obeying their parents and that because of their respect for them.

The second part of the promise is: "Thou mayest live long on the earth" (cf. Exodus 20:12). The obedient child's life will be drawn out, or lengthened, on the soil which the Supreme, Self-existent, Eternal One has created and given as a dwelling place to man. How can this be? In a general sense, the obedient child will live longer by obeying his parents' instructions to avoid the life-shortening (and soul-robbing) bad habits which steal one's health. He will not engage in activities, which could endanger his physical well being. Nor will he neglect the healthy, safe, and beneficial lifestyle, which his parents urge him to follow. In another sense, such a child will benefit from God's blessing through His providence. Our God has promised it will be so.

Do we believe God? Will we follow His commands to us? If so, we will honor father and mother, obeying them as they command us, in keeping with His will. So doing, we will know the good that comes from God, and will have the prospect of rejoicing in many days of happy life which our omni benevolent Father has promised. Above all, we will be blessed eternally in that home awaiting in Heaven.

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The Promise of Eternal Life

Tom Larkin

Of all of God's "exceeding great and precious promises" (2 Peter 1:4), surely the promise of eternal life is the most thrilling to the heart of a Christian. "Eternal" indicates only part of the nature of this promise. Eternal life is more than eternal existence. Those who will "be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord" (2 Thessalonians 1:9) will exist forever in hell. But this existence cannot be called "living." In fact, the Bible refers to it as "the second death" (Revelation 20:14).

Eternal life is more than eternal existence – it also involves the quality of life that is to be enjoyed. Even in this life, the faithful child of God enjoys a superior quality of life. In Christ we enjoy an "abundant life" (John 10:10). Those who are baptized into Christ walk "in newness of life" (Romans 6:4). But something more awaits the faithful in heaven. In Mark 10:30, Jesus said that "now in this time" the faithful enjoy a quality of life described as "an hundredfold." In contrast, he said that eternal life is "in the world to come." This "now and then" picture illustrates that something better awaits the faithful in heaven.

Eternal life is a quality of eternal existence that can be fully enjoyed only in the presence of God. We enjoy communion with God now as members of the church, but in heaven our communion will be full and free. In this life, we can overcome temptation and receive forgiveness when we sin, but in heaven no temptation will beckon and sin will never enter to defile. Here and now, we have assurance of God's care in the midst of sickness and trouble, but in heaven there will be no sickness, sorrow or death.

That which will make eternal life so wonderful is the fact that it will be lived in the presence of God! As

Wendell Winkler so aptly stated of our God, "He will be there to forever heal my broken heart, to calm my apprehensive soul, to wipe away my every blinding tear, to smooth my every wrinkle, to relieve my every pain, to quell my every doubt and to give me life forever more!" (FHU Lectures, 1999). Truly, the promise of eternal life is one of God's exceeding great and precious promises.

Some misconceptions exist concerning the manner in which we possess eternal life. Some wrongly assert that since the child of God has been given eternal life, and since eternal life never ends, the child of God can never be lost. In view of the hundreds of Biblical warnings against apostasy, this doctrine, popularly known as "once saved, always saved," is simply untenable and has been renounced by many.

Without a doubt the Bible teaches that the faithful possess eternal life in some sense. Jesus said, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life . . ." (John 3:36). Again, he said, "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life . . ." (John 5:24). John explained that one purpose of his writing was so "that he may know that ye have eternal life" (1 John 5:13). In view of such passages there is no denying that we have eternal life. The question is, "How do we possess eternal life?"

A part of the answer is seen when we recognize that the Bible teaches that eternal life is yet to come. Paul said that we may "lay hold on eternal life" after laying up a good foundation against "the time to come" (1 Timothy 6:19). Further, he wrote that eternal life comes after "patient continuance in well doing" (Romans 2:7). And he said of those who are made free from sin and who bear fruit unto holiness that they have eternal life in "the end" (Romans 6:22).

Jesus also spoke of eternal life as yet to come. Disciples who sacrifice in order to faithfully follow Jesus "shall inherit" (future tense) eternal life (Matthew 19:29). In Mark's account Jesus told his disciples that eternal life is "in the world to come" (Mark 10:30). In his parable that pictures the judgment scene as a shepherd dividing his sheep from the goats, Jesus made it clear that eternal life is entered after the judgment (Matthew 25:31-46).

How can these seemingly contradictory teachings be harmonized? How can we have eternal life and yet eternal life be something that we receive at a time to come? The harmony is found in the fact that eternal life is ours in promise and in hope. Paul opened his epistle to Titus by referring to the "hope of eternal life" (Titus 1:2), and later in the same epistle he spoke of those who are "made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:7). John tells us that eternal life is that which God has promised (1 John 2:25).

We do possess eternal life, but we possess it in promise. That promise is conditional upon our faithfulness. God will give eternal life to all of those who live faithfully in Christ Jesus. As we live by God's will, we lay hold on eternal life (cf. 1 Timothy 6:12). We do possess eternal life, but we possess it in hope. That hope will sustain and comfort us in this life and will be fulfilled when we enter into heaven to live in God's presence forever more.

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Exceeding Great and Precious Promises by James Rogers -----Continued from page 34

It is used . . . (c) ethically, with a moral significance, (l) of the effect of lusts . . .” (Vine 1:243) “In both the instances in 2 Peter 1:4; 2:19 *phthora* again means 'corruptibility' and not moral corruption Moral failure consists in succumbing *en epithumia* (1:4) to corruptibility as though this were the one essential thing . . .” (Friedrich and Bromiley 9:104). They have escaped from the world’s evil system.

When one obeys the Gospel plan of salvation, he begins, as a Christian, to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18; 1:5-11). As we grow, let us stand on the promises of God and look forward to standing with

Him in eternity. Let every sinner obey the plan of salvation and every saint live faithfully for God. God has done His part. Will I do mine? I am so thankful for “his precious and exceeding great promises.”

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