

Precious Promises

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these ye might be
partakers of the
divine nature,
having escaped the
corruption that is
in the world
through lust.”*
—II Peter 1: 4

IN THIS SCRIPTURE, THE Apostle Peter has recorded God’s assurance that he will bestow abundant favor and grace through his precious promises to those who love and trust him. The apostle directed this second letter “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.”—II Pet. 1:1-3

EXCEEDING AND GREAT

Peter emphasizes that God’s promises are not only full of his wondrous grace, but they are also ‘exceeding great and precious.’ These words add considerable depth of meaning and dimension to whatever blessings God may desire to give to his people during this present Gospel Age. They are

directed especially toward those who have responded to the heavenly calling through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Thus, may grace and peace be multiplied unto all who continue to abide in the promised blessing of sharing in his future kingdom of righteousness and Truth.

As a help in attaining this wonderful spiritual inheritance, God gives his people valuable instructions for their spiritual growth and attainment. Peter further wrote, “Beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”—vss. 5-11

These are important lessons for the Lord’s people to learn. ‘If these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.’ The word ‘if’ points to the attached conditions that God has set forth, and our need to fulfill them as the terms of our consecration. We are thus instructed to add virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity

to the foundation of our faith. If we cultivate these graces of the Holy Spirit, which our Heavenly Father has outlined for our spiritual growth, we will attain the fruitage he desires in us and which will prepare us for an abundant entrance into Christ's future kingdom. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."—Rev. 2:10

Knowledge is to gain understanding and enlightenment of God's Word. We learn to know his will and purpose, and especially as it may relate to our faith. It applies to those who receive the exceeding great and precious promises, and have accepted them as their own. "This I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ."—Phil. 1:9,10

Temperance, or self-control, is that virtue which keeps one moderate, gentle, and properly balanced. "Let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." (I Pet. 3:4) "Let your moderation be known unto all men." (Phil. 4:5) "Every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible."—I Cor. 9:25

Patience is that grace of character which enables one to bear affliction and calamity with calmness and cheerful constancy of mind. "Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and

have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.” (James 5:10,11) “In your patience possess ye your souls.” (Luke 21:19) “We glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience.”—Rom. 5:3

Godliness allows us to view and discern every experience from God’s standpoint. Those who possess this characteristic are dignified and just. They are more inclined toward peace and are opposed to strife. The Psalmist David waited to know what God’s will was for him. “David went thence to Mizpeh of Moab: and he said unto the king of Moab, Let my father and my mother, I pray thee, come forth, and be with you, till I know what God will do for me.” (I Sam. 22:3) We read that David’s heart smote him for his actions against Saul. “It came to pass afterward, that David’s heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul’s skirt. And he said unto his men, The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the LORD’S anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD. So David stayed his servants with these words, and suffered them not to rise against Saul. But Saul rose up out of the cave, and went on his way.” (chap. 24:5-7) “Know that the LORD hath set apart him that is godly for himself: the LORD will hear when I call unto him.”—Ps. 4:3

Brotherly kindness is a virtue that possesses an affinity for others of like mind. In spiritual matters, it is manifest in the desire for fellowship, care, and concern of others. Paul said, “Let brotherly love continue.” (Heb. 13:1) “Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring

one another.” (Rom. 12:10) His concern for the spiritual welfare and growth of the Lord’s people is also manifest. “Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.”—II Cor. 11:28

Love covers all of the other virtues of which the Apostle Peter spoke. “Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.” (I John 4:15,16) Our Lord Jesus is the perfect example and pattern of our Heavenly Father. “Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.” (II Cor. 8:9) “Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.”—John 13:1

MEN OF FAITH

Abraham was an outstanding example of faith, and under very difficult circumstances he continued to trust God. “By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” (Heb. 11:8-10) “By faith

Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called.”—vss. 17,18

Let us be diligent to intensify our faith with fortitude and singleness of purpose. The Apostle James has well said, “Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.”—James 1:6-8

Daniel the prophet is another fine example of unwavering faith during times of adversity. He was determined to follow God’s law and took a stand for his convictions. “Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.”—Dan. 1:8

He also knew that the king had signed a petition that could restrict his privilege of prayer and put him in great danger. The record states, “All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counsellors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions. Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not.” (Dan. 6:7,8) However, Daniel continued to pray to God although knowing of the king’s

pronouncement. "Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime."—vs. 10

This is a great lesson for the Lord's people to also have the same spirit of faith and confidence as Daniel. Let us learn to put our trust in God and dare to be a Daniel. We must be ready to stand alone if necessary. "Take heed, and be quiet; fear not, and neither be fainthearted."—Isa. 7:4

GRACE ABOUNDS

The Apostle Paul encouraged the church at Corinth by saying, "God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work: (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever. Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;) Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God. For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God; Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men; And by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you.

Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.”—
II Cor. 9:8-15

Paul was quoting from the previously written words of the psalmist, who said, “Praise ye the LORD. Blessed is the man that feareth the LORD, that delighteth greatly in his commandments. His seed shall be mighty upon earth: the generation of the upright shall be blessed. Wealth and riches shall be in his house: and his righteousness endureth for ever. Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness: he is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous.”—Ps. 112:1-4

Those who possess Godly fear, or reverence, receive the light of Truth by keeping the commandments of God. “A good man sheweth favour, and lendeth: he will guide his affairs with discretion. Surely he shall not be moved for ever: the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance. He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD. His heart is established, he shall not be afraid, until he see his desire upon his enemies. He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor; his righteousness endureth for ever; his horn shall be exalted with honour. The wicked shall see it, and be grieved; he shall gnash with his teeth, and melt away: the desire of the wicked shall perish.”—vss. 5-10

When writing his letter to the church at Ephesus, Paul also reminded them of the precious promises of God. He told them, “That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able

to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.”—Eph. 3:16-21

NO LIMITS TO GRACE

The love of God has no limit, his grace has no measure, and his power has no boundary that is known to men. “Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.” (Ps. 55:22) “The LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. O LORD of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.” (chap. 84:11,12) “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.”—Isa. 26:3

Jesus said, “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.” (John 15:7,8) Paul wrote, “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.”—Heb. 13:5,6

The promises given to us from our loving Heavenly Father cover every feature and phase

of our temporal experiences and spiritual growth. Growth in grace and mercy are distinct characteristics and mark the true child of God. Jesus said to the people, "Love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful."—Luke 6:35,36

THE HEIRS OF PROMISE

When the Apostle Paul wrote to the Hebrew brethren, he spoke of God's unchangeable promises that had been confirmed by his unconditional oath many centuries earlier. "When God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife."—Heb. 6:13-16

Our Heavenly Father could not swear by anyone greater, so he sealed the covenant with his oath. This is the anchor of our soul and the firm foundation of our faith. "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew 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: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;

Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.”—Heb. 6:17-20

These wonderful promises assure us that ultimately all mankind will be blessed by the antitypical seed of Abraham—the heirs of promise under the administration of Christ’s future kingdom. “If ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”—Gal. 3:29

THE FATHER OF LIGHTS

We put our trust in God’s unconditional oath and receive his exceeding great and precious promises. Accepting the heavenly calling through Christ Jesus, we become partakers of the call to the divine nature, and our hearts and minds are being changed from the human nature to that which is spiritual. We realize that God is the author of this great change, and that his Holy Spirit of Truth is operating within us. “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.”—James 1:17,18

Faithful men of old saw many of these exceeding great and precious promises that are now being revealed with greater light and understanding. “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.” (Heb. 11:13) It was God’s ultimate plan that we might share as members of a new and spiritual creation.

WATERS OF LIFE

It is written, “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.”—Ps. 1:1-3

The man that is like ‘a tree planted by the rivers of water’ points to the meek and lowly of heart who is not in sympathy with the ways of the world or the worldly-wise. He draws his supplies of refreshing waters from the river of abundant life and blessing, and brings forth the fruitage of the Spirit. We also read, “All my springs are in thee.”—chap. 87:7

Using the symbol of water, Jesus taught a most remarkable lesson. “He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” (John 7:38) This wondrous grace was also manifest when he spoke to the woman of Samaria who was drawing water from Jacob’s well. “Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”—John 4:13,14

When the mind and heart is filled with the exceeding great and precious promises of our loving Heavenly Father, we become more aware that the blessings of life will ultimately flow to all mankind. The promise of life in the truest sense causes a

swelling and springing up within, which finds expression through the tongue.

THE HOLY SPIRIT OF PROMISE

In his letter to the church at Ephesus, Paul wrote, “In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory. Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him.”—Eph. 1:11-17

THE FULNESS OF CHRIST

Paul encourages us to strive for the stature of a full grown man in Christ Jesus. “Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”—chap. 4:13

“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.”—II Pet. 1:4 ■