

“Exceeding Great and Precious Promises”

“Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature.”

—II Peter 1:4

THIS IS A SUPERLATIVE expression—“exceeding great and precious promises.” There are others assuring us that God “is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think,” and “is able to make all grace abound”

toward us, “having all sufficiency in all things.” (Eph. 3:20; II Cor. 9:8) Many similar statements are recorded in the Scriptures. They generally relate to what our loving Heavenly Father will bestow upon those who put their trust in him.

The Apostle Peter’s salutation at the commencement of his second epistle is, “Grace and peace be multiplied unto you,” who “have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” (II Pet. 1:1,2) The Apostle Paul uses similar expressions to strengthen

our resolve towards faithfulness. Contrasting our afflictions with the glory to be received, Paul says, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."—II Cor. 4:17

It is like our Heavenly Father to give freely, and to do so in a most superlative manner. The measure is "pressed down, and shaken together, and running over." (Luke 6:38) God's love has no limit; his grace has no measure; his power has no boundary known to men. Out of his infinite riches, he gives and gives and gives again. Jesus said to the people that God is full of mercy and compassion, even "kind unto the unthankful and to the evil." He admonished his followers to be the same, "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful."—vss. 35,36

Peter states in the opening words of his second epistle that God "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. 1:3) Nothing has been forgotten or omitted, on God's part, to complete our calling and election. It is for this very purpose also that he has provided us "exceeding great and precious promises," that they might assist us in attaining to the divine nature.

The promises given to us from God and our Lord cover every feature and phase of our spiritual and temporal experiences. It was so with the patriarchs and prophets. We are exhorted to be followers of them who, through faith and patience, will inherit the promises given to them.—James 5:10,11

For the comfort and encouragement of the followers of Christ Jesus during the present Gospel Age

we read, “When God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.”—Heb. 6:17-20, *English Standard Version*

Let us recall a few of the many great and precious promises by means of which, if faithful, we will become partakers of the divine nature, changed from human to spiritual. We realize, too, that God himself is the author of this great change and is operating within us toward that goal. “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.”—James 1:18

The faithful people of old saw many of God’s promises afar off. Today, however, we are privileged to see many of these great promises in course of fulfillment. Like the patriarchs, we should be “persuaded of them,” and embrace them, confessing that we are “strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”—Heb. 11:13

MANY PRECIOUS PROMISES

“The LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.”—Ps. 84:11

“They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength.”—Isa. 40:31

“Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee.”—Ps. 55:22

“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.”—Isa. 26:3

“Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me. ... The LORD will perfect that which concerneth me.”—Ps. 138:7,8

“He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.”—Ps. 91:11

“In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go ... I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”—John 14:2,3

“He that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.”—John 6:35

“I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever.”—John 6:51

“I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper.”—Heb. 13:5,6

“My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”—Phil. 4:19

“Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”—Rev. 2:10

“What he had promised, he was able also to perform.”—Rom. 4:21

“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the

flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”—II Cor. 7:1

Why are we slow at times to claim as our own these wonderful words of life, joy, comfort and peace—these exceeding great and precious promises? Let us be assured, these promises are not given to excite a vague hope of some unknown and elusive future prospect, nor to be a vehicle for false anticipation. They are predetermined promises of God himself, the Almighty Creator, personally given to each of us as his children, that we might be satisfied in that lifelong desire of heart to become New Creatures, complete in Christ Jesus.

COMPLETE IN CHRIST

In the first chapter of the Book of Psalms is beautifully illustrated how we can become complete in Christ. This psalm is a commendation of a godly life and what can make a person God-fearing, or spiritually minded. Its opening verses give an expression of admiration for the one who lives a godlike life, which it then describes in a simple and engaging manner by telling what such a person avoids, what they delight in, and what they resemble. The first verse says how happy, or blessed, “is the person, who does not take the advice of the wicked, who does not stand on the path with sinners, and who does not sit in the seat of mockers.” (Ps. 1:1, *International Standard Version*) Such a one will revere the laws of nature, and they will welcome and obey the slightest revelation from the Word of God. They will be so happy to know Christ that they will find in him the spirit and source of all love.

Christ Jesus and his Word will be the law of their being, and toward the Master's example their mind and heart will gravitate. In the Lord they will discover his songs of hope, joy and peace continually. "He delights in the LORD'S instruction, and meditates in his instruction day and night. He will be like a tree planted by streams of water, yielding its fruit in its season."—vss. 2,3, *ISV*

Jesus, using the figure of a well of water, reveals similar expressions and observations of the life of such a one. Jesus said, "The one who believes in me ... will have rivers of living water flowing from his heart." To the woman of Samaria Jesus declared, "Whoever drinks the water that I will give him will never become thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become a well of water for him, springing up to eternal life."—John 7:38; 4:14, *ISV*

A deep well obtains its water not from the surface only. Indeed, it depends on localized rain which seeps into the ground, but it also is supplied by means of natural springs and streams which feed it from a wide area. Thus, the man spoken of in Psalm 1 draws his supplies of refreshment and life from his Creator, and can say, "All my springs are in thee."—Ps. 87:7

To the Lord's dear people today come the words of Paul. "[I] cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers," he wrote, "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. 1:16,17) As the mind and heart are filled and fed with the things of God and of Christ Jesus our Lord, as well

as looking forward to the blessings of life that will soon flow to all mankind, then life in the truest sense finds a swelling, springing up within, which finds expression through our heart, mind, tongue and actions.

PRODUCTIVE OF FAITH AND FRUITAGE

All of the great and precious promises and assurances from the Word of God are productive of strong and enduring faith, as well as abounding spiritual fruitage. Peter continues concerning the promises by which one can be partaker of the divine nature by saying, “Beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith” other qualities—moral character, knowledge, self-control, endurance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. “If you possess these qualities, and if they continue to increase among you, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in attaining a full knowledge of our Lord Jesus.” (II Pet. 1:5-8, *ISV*) Jesus said plainly, “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit.”—John 15:8

Faith alone is not sufficient to insure an entrance abundantly into the heavenly kingdom. Other virtues and qualities of character need to be developed and maintained to the end of our earthly course. For this reason, how necessary it is to accept the apostle’s word and give all diligence to regulate our conduct of life by furnishing faith with these virtues. Thus, all our contributions of effort and faith will give proper response to the promises that God has so graciously given to assist us.

The Bible is full of examples of faith for our benefit. Abraham stands out admirably in this respect. “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.” (Heb. 11:8) Not knowing where he was going, he believed. It was as though Abraham said to sight, “Stand back;” to the laws of nature, “Hold your peace;” and to a misgiving heart, “Silence, thou tempter, I still believe God.” Later we see his great faith manifested again. “By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: ... Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.” —vss. 17,19

To have the type of faith which Abraham exhibited implies strength of will, the power of resistance, and humble submission to God’s instructions. We need this mindset early in our walk of faith, and all along our pilgrim journey. Such a focus encourages singleness of purpose, firm decisions of acceptance and resistance, whereas “a double minded man is unstable in all his ways.”—James 1:8

Daniel is another great example. He purposed in his heart not to defile himself with the king’s meat or wine. (Dan. 1:8) Later, he knew the writing was signed that “whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days,” except it be asked of the king, “he shall be cast into the den of lions.” (Dan. 6:7) Knowing this, Daniel went into his house, and his windows being open, he kneeled three times a day and prayed, and gave thanks before God, as he had always done.—vs. 10

Let us have the same spirit of confidence and restfulness—unmoved, unperturbed, strong and faithful—as did Daniel. Let us emulate these stalwarts of faith and fortitude.

“Dare to be a Daniel; dare to stand alone;
Dare to have a purpose firm; and dare to make
it known.”

LOVE—THE SOURCE OF GOD’S PROMISES

Christ Jesus is our example, copy and pattern. (John 13:15; I Pet. 2:21) God, our Heavenly Father, is the Creator and the Potter who shapes our lives. (Isa. 64:8; Rom. 9:20-23) Together, it is their mutual love which is the source of all the promises of the Scriptures. “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) “The love of Christ, ... passeth knowledge.” “Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.” “God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.”—Eph. 3:19; John 13:1; I John 4:16

Paul urges that we reach the unity, or oneness, of faith, “and of the knowledge of the Son of God,” to the “measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” (Eph. 4:13) Indeed, faith in the exceeding great and precious promises requires growth to maturity in Christlikeness in order to be assured of an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Peter concludes, telling us to give all diligence to make our calling and election sure, for if we add these fruits and graces of the Spirit—the works of faith—which are gained by embracing the exceeding great and precious promises, we shall never fall. “For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”—II Pet. 1:10,11 ■