

GOD'S PROMISES BLOGS

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LIST OF PROMISES

God Promises to Meet Our Needs – Philippians 4:19

My God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:19

God Promises Spiritual Growth – Philippians 1:3-6

I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. Philippians 1:3-6

God Promises His Peace – Philippians 4:6-7

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6-7

God Promises to Help You Do Whatever He Wants – Philippians 4:13

I can do everything through him who gives me strength. Philippians 4:13

God Promises His Continual Presence – Deuteronomy 31:5-6

The LORD will deliver them to you, and you must do to them all that I have commanded you. 6 Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.” Deuteronomy 31:5-6

God Promises His Strength – Isaiah 40:31

But those who wait upon the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not be faint. Isaiah 40:31

God Promises His Restoration – Jeremiah 33:3

Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know. Jeremiah 33:3

God Promises To Use You – Philippians 2:12-13

Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose. Philippians 2:12-13

God Promises His Guidance – Proverbs 3:5-6

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. Proverbs 3:5-6

God Promises His Grace – 2 Corinthians 12:9

My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness. 2 Corinthians 12:9

God Promises to Never Leave Us – Hebrews 13:5

I will never leave you or forsake you. Hebrews 13:5

God Promises to Uphold Us – Isaiah 41:10

Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. Isaiah 41:10

God Promises to Use Everything for Our Good – Romans 8:28

We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose. Romans 8:28

God Promises an Escape from Temptation – 1 Corinthians 10:13

No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it. 1 Corinthians 10:13

God Promises to Always Be with Us – Psalm 118:6; Hebrews 13:6

The Lord is with me; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me? Psalm 118:6

So we say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?” Hebrews 13:6

God Promises to Hear and Respond – Jeremiah 29:11-13

For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. 12 Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. 13 You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. Jeremiah 29:11-13

God Promises to Never Condemn Us – Romans 8:1

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Romans 8:1

God Promises to Forgive Us - 1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9

God Promises to Always Be Available – Matthew 7:7-8

Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks the door will be opened. Matthew 7:7-8

God Promises to Always Hear Us – 1 John 5:14

This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. 1 John 5:14

God Promises We Cant Be Separated From Him – Romans 8:38-39

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. Romans 8:38-39

God Promises to Keep His Promises

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Galatians 5: 22-23

SPIRITUAL WARFARE PROMISES

God Promises His Presence – Joshua 1:9

Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go” Joshua 1:9

God Promises Compassion and Grace – Psalm 103:8

The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. Psalms 103:8

God Promises Patience and Love – Psalm 103:8

The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. Psalms 103:8

God Promises His Nearness – James 4:6-8

But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” 7 Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. James 4:6-8

God Promises Freedom – John 8:32

Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” John 8:32

God Promises He is Greater than Satan – 1 John 4:4

You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. 1 John 4:4

God Promises We Are A New Creation – 2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! 2 Corinthians 5:17

God Promises We Can Resist Satan - 2 – 1 Peter 5:8-9

Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. 9 Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings. 1 Peter 5:8-9

God Promises We Can Resist Satan - 1 – 1 Peter 5:8-9

Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. 9 Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings. 1 Peter 5:8-9

God Promises Us Power & Authority – Luke 9:1-2

When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, 2 and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. Luke 9:1-2

God Promises Protection – Luke 10:17-20

The seventy-two returned with joy and said, “Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.” He replied, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. 19 I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. 20 However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.” Luke 10:17-20

God Promises Sufficient Grace – 2 Corinthians 12:9-10

But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. 10 That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong. 2 Corinthians 12:9-10

God Promises Security – Matthew 12:20; Psalm 37:24

A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out, till he leads justice to victory. Matthew 12:20

though he stumble, he will not fall, for the LORD upholds him with his hand. Psalms 37:24

God Promises His Word is Powerful – Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Hebrews 4:12

God Promises Prayer I Effective – James 5:16

The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. James 5:16

GOD'S PROMISES BLOGS

GOD PROMISES TO MEET OUR NEEDS

(I help homeschool many of my grandchildren in the Bible. Part of that includes Bible memorization. In 2020 we started memorization promises in the Bible and I've been thinking about them a lot. I put together a series of blogs on Bible promises to share with you. I know they'll mean as much to you as they do to me.)

Philippians 4:19 And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

Paul is sharing his own personal testimony with the Philippians when he records this great promise of God. "My God," he says. He knows this by personal experience. When we have a personal relationship with God, we can say this as well. We can be assured of it because He "WILL" meet all our needs. Every single one. He may not meet them the way we expect, but He keeps His promise to meet them. If He doesn't change our circumstances, He promises to give us the grace to get through (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Of course, the key word here is "needs," not "wants." If it is a need God will provide it. He also meets many of our wants as well, but He never promises to meet them all. That is all by grace. If we think something is a need but He isn't providing it, then it is a want and not a need. That includes life when it is our time to die.

It seems we can do ourselves a big favor by not making our 'wants' into 'needs.' When it comes right down to it, there are very few actual needs we have, especially compared to our wants. When we do have a need, we really don't even have to ask God for it because He has already promised He would meet it. And who could know our needs better than God? (January 12, 2021 Doylestown PA)

Are there any wants in your life that you think are needs? Ask Him to show you if there are needs He is meeting in a way didn't expect, so you think they aren't being met?

GOD PROMISES SPIRITUAL GROWTH

I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. Philippians 1:3-6

This promise from Philippians is one of my personal favorites because it assures me that one day, I will be exactly what God created me to be. Often it doesn't seem like that will ever happen. In fact, sometimes it seems like I am losing ground instead of moving ahead. But God promises me that He will complete what He started at my salvation.

Growing in Christlikeness is the goal of all of us (Romans 8:28-29), but it is a lifelong process which we will never finish while on this earth. Paul refers to this process as a "good work," although many times it feels anything but "good." It seems I learn best from discomfort. And it definitely takes "work" for spiritual growth is a long, slow, hard process which is often painful. There is no such thing as instant spirituality, despite what some may claim.

I recently heard the process of spiritual growth compared to a rock tumbler. Rough stones are put in and tumbled around until they become smooth. The tumbler bounces the rocks against each

other for weeks or months until all the rough edges are removed. That's how stones in the bottom of a stream become smooth as well. God uses the rubbing of life's pains and troubles to smooth our rough edges to make us more like Jesus. We see that in Paul's life as well as Peter, John, Abraham and everyone who grew spiritually. We have God's promise that one day we WILL be smooth with all our imperfections and rough edges gone.

I can't do this in my life but God can and will. I don't always see it happening in my life but God promises it so I trust Him with this promise. It you aren't applying this promise to your life regularly you should! (January 18, 2021 Doylestown, PA)

What has God done in your life in the last year to make you more like Jesus? Where is He working now? What can you do to cooperate with the work He is doing?

GOD PROMISES HIS PEACE

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6-7

When we come to God for salvation, we have peace WITH God (Romans 5:1) because the enmity between us has been removed. We become His friends, no longer His enemies. In our daily life we need the peace OF (or FROM) God (Philippians 4:7) to fill us and be with us. "Don't be anxious" is God's command, but we can only stop anxiety by replacing it with peace.

Have you ever tried talking yourself out of anxiety, or ignore your fear and act like it didn't exist? How well did you do with that? What about whipping up peace on your own? Anxiety/fear can't just be removed, they have to be replaced by something stronger - God's peace.

God's antidote to anxiety/fear is to pray which includes thanking God for all the wonderful things He has done for us and all the bad He has prevented, most of which we aren't even aware. As we focus on God and trust in Him, He will give us peace in our "hearts" (emotions, subjective feelings) and "minds" (objective thoughts and plans).

All this is done "in Christ Jesus," the only place where true peace will be found. Hannaniah, Azariah and Mishael found this as they were being thrown into the fiery furnace (Daniel 3:8-25). Stephen experienced it as he was being stoned to death (Acts 7:59-60). Peter, who feared a servant girl, a few days later had peace and courage to stand for Jesus before all the religious leaders (Acts 4:8-13). (January 21, 2021 Doylestown, PA)

Do you have peace in your life? What is your biggest enemy to peace? How can you have victory over anxiety and fear?

GOD PROMISES TO HELP YOU DO WHATEVER HE WANTS

I can do everything through him who gives me strength. Philippians 4:13

The world is big today on affirmation: "You can do it," "Just do it." We convince our children that they can do anything they want. We even expect that of ourselves, which sometimes leaves us feeling like a failure when we aren't able to do anything and everything. Some even quote Paul as saying, "I can do all things" (Philippians 4:13). But Paul isn't saying we can do everything, he is saying that we can do everything God wants us to do "through Christ who gives me strength" (Philippians 4:13).

Every passage in Scripture must be taken in context and in Philippians 4 Paul is talking about the importance of being content in life, no matter if we have a lot or very little. The key, Paul says, is contentment. In addition, Paul says he "learned" to be content. A newborn baby is anything but content. It wants what it wants and wants it immediately. Patience and acceptance of life as it is doesn't come easy as children grow. It doesn't come naturally to any of us. On a scale of 1 to 10, how content would you say you are? Where would God place you on that scale?

There is no excuse to be anything but a 10 in contentment, because God promises to give us the strength we need to accept life as it is. If Paul can learn, through God's power, to be content with prison, persecution, near-death experiences, rejection, beatings and betrayal by friends, God will be able to give us contentment as well - but we must turn to Him for it.

If God wants us to be content, He will give us the strength to be able to do it. The principle is clear: if God wants you to do (or stop doing) something, then He will give you the strength to do it. A Christian can never say "I can" in their own power, nor can they say "I can't" with God's power available. (January 25, 2021 Doylestown, PA)

When is the last time you said, "I can't"? Confess that as sin. It is a lie. Memorize this verse, Philippians 4:13, and repeat it over and over all day.

GOD PROMISES HIS CONTINUAL PRESENCE

The LORD will deliver them to you, and you must do to them all that I have commanded you. Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you." Deuteronomy 31:5-6

When he was 120 years old, Moses turned over leadership of the Jewish people to Joshua (Deuteronomy 31:1-6). Through Moses, God promised Joshua and the whole nation they would finally enter their Promised Land by God's provision and protection. Remembering what God had done in the past (verse 4) would help them trust Him in the present. That's good advice for us today as well. Follow Joshua (which means "Jesus") and trust in God's promises by remembering His past deliverance.

I will never leave you or forsake you. Hebrews 13:5,

When the writer of Hebrews wanted to encourage Jewish Christians undergoing intense persecution to stay faithful, he quoted this same promise (Hebrew 13:5). As he closes his book, he reminds them of this promise to their ancestors. It was true in the past, and is still true today. "Never," under any circumstances, no matter what we do or don't do, will He leave or forsake us. He won't "leave or forsake." It is repeated for emphasis, to make sure we understand how certain it is.

Moses failed many times, and didn't enter the land with the others because of his sin. But still he affirms God has never in any way turned His back on him. The recipients of the book of Hebrews were being persecuted because of their faith and were wondering where God was. He was still with them despite all that was happening. His promise is still true for us today. No matter where we are in life, what we have done or what circumstances we find ourselves in, He is always with us. Always. Forever. Now there is a promise you can build your life on. (February 1, 2021 Doylestown, PA)

When does it mean most to you that God will never leave or forsake you? Think of hard times in the past when He was with you. Thank Him again for that.

GOD PROMISES HIS STRENGTH

But those who hope (wait upon) the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint. Isaiah 40:31

Isaiah ministered at the same time Jeremiah did, right before Jerusalem was destroyed and the nation of Judah went into captivity in Babylon. Even though judgment for sin was coming, God promised strength for those who trust in Him ("hope" or "wait").

For those going through unbelievably difficult times, God's promises are still true if they keep their eyes on Him. They will "renew their strength." Do you ever feel weary, tired out, don't know if you can go on? If you turn to Him, Jesus promises renewed strength.

God also promises those who faithfully follow Him that He will enable them to "soar," "run," and "walk." When we acknowledge that God is in control of all and that He promises to do what is best for our growth and His glory, then we can effortlessly glide above all the turmoil and fear as an eagle glides effortlessly on air currents far above us. He promises extra strength to "run" when extra effort is needed. The rest of the time He will help us in our normal, everyday "walk." He promises energy for that as well.

The key is trusting, waiting patiently on the Lord and His timing. Don't rush ahead of Him, don't lag behind Him. Trust and patience go together. When we have them, we have hope. Our part is to patiently trust in Him and His timing. His part is to take care of all the rest. That's a deal you can't pass up! (February 2, 2021 Doylestown, PA)

How patient a person are you? What do you need patience for in your life right now? In what ways does your impatience keep you from receiving God's help and strength?

GOD PROMISES HIS RESTORATION

Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know. Jeremiah 33:3

Jeremiah prophesied before and during the fall of Judea to Babylon. Despite the message of soon-coming judgment, God also showed the people there was hope in the future. In the previous chapter, Jeremiah bought real estate in Jerusalem as the city was about to be overwhelmed by the Babylonian army. God was showing there was hope in the future, the people would be restored. Even when King Hezekiah arrested Jeremiah for speaking of coming judgment and captivity (Jeremiah 32:3), he stayed faithful to his message.

God always provided an option for the people to repent. God said, "Call to me." They can turn from their rebellion and call on God instead of the false idols they had been calling on, and He promises to hear and answer ("I will answer you"). When we repent by confessing/admitting our sin (1 John 1:9), God promises to forgive and restore ("answer" prayer for forgiveness).

In addition, He promises to go far beyond restoring and "tell them great and unsearchable things they do not know." Sin and disobedience will be gone, replaced by blessing far beyond their imagination. That doesn't mean they won't still suffer the physical consequences of their sin, but there will future restoration and present blessing from God. He promised it, and He always keeps His promises!

The nation did go into captivity. Jeremiah himself was martyred. But 70 years later a remnant returned to the land, and 400 years after that the Messiah Himself came to Israel. He performed miracles and paid for the sins of the world. Certainly, that qualifies as something "great and unsearchable!"

This promise is great for a prodigal son who wants to return home (Luke 15:11-24). The truth also means that God will show us his great and unsearchable truths and blessings when we turn to Him for them. All we have to do is call on Him. (February 8, 2021 Doylestown, PA)

Is there a need for you to call on Him right now? Then do so.

GOD PROMISES TO USE YOU

Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose. Philippians 2:12-13

Paul thanked the Philippians for their faithfulness to God and encouraged them to stay faithful, because what was happening was really God working through them. He wants to remind them they cannot take credit for their good works, for the good they do is not of themselves but from God working in them.

We can learn from this that we should take no credit for our good works, but give glory to God for His work in us. It is natural for us to take credit for the good we do and to blame others, sometimes even God Himself, for the bad we do. The truth is that we should give God credit for anything good that comes from us and take full blame for the bad. When we take credit for what He does, we are stealing His glory, and that is something we should never do.

Paul further says God works in us to "will" and to "act." He puts a desire for godliness in us so we choose ("will") to do good, then He gives us the strength to carry out that desire ("act"). It's humbling to remember that we cannot even desire to do good if we are left operating by our old sin nature. Unbelievers can do human good, but nothing that counts in God's sight, because God doesn't look at the act. He looks at the motive behind it. Unless we are motivated by love for Him and the desire to please Him, any human good we do is as wood, hay and stubble and will not last in His sight (1 Corinthians 3:10-15).

The final part of this special promise is that all God works in us is for "His good purpose." Often, we ask Him to bless our plans or bring about our desires. We are to do what He wants, not try to get Him to do what we want ("Your kingdom come, Your will be done" Matthew 6:10). We are to daily live in faithfulness to Him ("continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling") and in love toward all the saints (Ephesians 1:15). His purpose includes all believers ("Our Father in heaven...give us...forgive us...deliver us..." Matthew 6:9-13). That doesn't mean a smooth and easy life, though. His "good purpose" for us is to become more Christlike in all we say and do (Romans 8:28-29): a sometimes slow and painful process.

God had a plan and purpose for Ruth's life. She showed great faith and love, and He worked in her and through her to bring about His plan, even when she was a young widow in a foreign land. God's plan was for her to be the great-grandmother of King David and have the Messiah as one of her descendants. (book of Ruth)

God also worked in Abigail's life. She was in a very difficult marriage to a cruel man, Nabal. She faithfully followed God's leading in her life. He used her to help David and allowed her to eventually become David's wife (1 Samuel 25). God promises to work in us to use us for His glory as well. He will make us like Christ and work through us to do His will on earth.

Sometimes we feel useless and want to quit, but remember His promise. We cannot depend entirely on ourselves to mature and grow into serving Him according to His purpose; He is behind it all, working in us when we let Him. What better goal can we have for life as we start each new day. (February 15, 2021 Doylestown, PA)

Spend some time thinking of the good He has done through your life and how He is using you now. Thank Him for it.

GOD PROMISES HIS GUIDANCE

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. Proverbs 3:5-6

I'm sure you are familiar with this promise, but it may not be saying exactly what you think. Let's look at it and see just what is being promised here.

First of all, we see 3 conditions we must meet for this promise to be true. What are the conditions? God expects us to 1) trust 100% in Him (hard to do), 2) trust 0% in ourselves (even harder to do) and 3) always 100% acknowledge our total dependence on Him (most difficult of all to do). These are all inner heart attitudes, not simple outer actions. They must be our inner desire, even if we struggle and sometimes fail in them. God knows our heart, and He knows if we truly desire to have these three or not. In other words, before He will show us His will, we must be totally committed to following it no matter what.

We can't ask God to show us His will just so we can consider it with our other options, then decide if we want to follow Him or not. We must sign on the dotted line before we are shown the contract. That's what faith is all about. That's our part. Then God will do His part.

When we do this, God promises He will make our paths "straight." Our misunderstanding of this promise centers on the meaning of "straight." We read it and we think, "smooth," "easy," "direct," "downhill." That's not what the word means. It has the idea of "clear," "understandable." God promises He will reveal His will for us in a clear, understandable way, something we can follow and know we are following Him. We won't be confused about what is right and wrong - the Bible and His Spirit within us will show us that.

Abram was fully committed to following God, and the Lord led him from Ur to Canaan (Genesis 11:27-12:9). Elijah was totally devoted to following God and was directed to a brook, then a widow's home, and finally to the conflict with the prophets of Baal (His path wasn't easy, but God made the way clear and Elijah followed (1 Kings 17-18). The magi, king-makers from the east, were seeking God's will with all their hearts, and He led them thousands of miles to see the new-born Messiah/King (Matthew 2:1-12). Proverbs 3:5-6 promises that when we want to follow God, He will direct our lives in that direction.

What He is not saying is that when we trust Him all will go smoothly and easily. It won't. We'll clearly know when we are living for Him, or for ourselves - He'll make that plain. His Spirit will convict us. And with His help, as promised in Hebrews 13:5; Philippians 4:19, etc., we will be able to follow. This verse promises awareness of God's will for our lives, but it doesn't promise that way will be easy and smooth. It wasn't for Jesus, and it won't be for those who follow Him, either. Are you confused about a decision or direction in your life? Make sure you are trusting Him and committed to following Him no matter the cost. Don't expect the path to be easy, but you can be sure it will be what God wants, and He will guide you step by step.

Are you willing to do whatever He wants and go wherever He wants you to go, no matter what it is? If so, tell Him now that you'll follow 100% no matter what.

GOD PROMISES HIS GRACE

My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. 2 Corinthians 12:9

Sometimes the words we pray must make the angels shake their heads in disbelief. Often, we ask God to do something He has already promised to do. How many times have I asked God for grace for myself or for someone else? I should have saved my breath. He has already promised to do just that. As I look back on my life, it's clear that His grace has always been sufficient, just as He promised. No matter how bad things have been, His grace has seen me through it.

Paul says the same thing in 2 Corinthians 12. He had a miserable affliction that he three times begged God to remove, but God never did. Instead, God answered Paul's deep desire for relief in another way. He didn't remove the problem, but rather enabled Paul to live with it and to therefore grow in understanding because of it.

How many times do we think God doesn't answer prayer because our circumstances don't change? If we would look more closely, we would see that God took care of those circumstances in a different way - He enabled us to endure them.

Rahab was a Gentile female prostitute, but seeking for God. His grace was sufficient to save her physically and spiritually (Joshua 2) and place her in the genealogy of Jesus (Matthew 1:5). Noah, too, found God's grace great enough to save him and his family from the world-wide flood that destroyed everyone else (Genesis 6-9). Lot didn't deserve grace (Genesis 18-19) but God's grace was great enough to deliver him from Sodom and Gomorrah.

The whole premise of this promise is that when we are facing something utterly beyond our ability, something that causes us to admit our helplessness and come to Him begging for help, He will always be there for us. It's in times when we admit we need grace that we will recognize His grace in our lives. It's when we are totally at our end that we most need and appreciate His help and provision. I think of this verse often when in India. I feel my weakness most clearly at those times, and in contrast I can recognize it is only His power that gets me through. There have been other times in my life where I was in that same totally helpless position and felt Him carrying me. God allows those times in all of our lives so we will turn to Him and acknowledge our need of Him. Have you been there? Are you there now?

We usually ask God to remove burdens and difficulties in our lives, but if He doesn't remove them we should ask for His help to endure them instead. Often our prayers aren't answered because we are telling God what to do when He has another plan for us. This is true in spiritual warfare as well. We can get discouraged when deliverance from demonic oppression doesn't come quickly, but God promises enough grace to help us persevere.

Don't always beg God to remove the difficulties in your life. Look for His grace instead. There is a saying, "sometimes the Lord calms the water, sometimes He calms the child." You don't even have to ask Him for grace, because He already promised it. Lean on His grace, let His grace carry you when your way is stormy. After all, His grace IS sufficient!

When has God's grace been most evident in your life? Where can you see God's grace working for you now?

GOD PROMISES TO NEVER LEAVE US

(At the start of 2021 I began a series of blogs about God's promises. Our faith as Christians is based on knowing and believing what God assures us in His Word, yet many Christians struggle because they are ignorant of these declarations. The following weeks will continue the series of blogs I started on the promises of God. If you have a favorite Bible promise please send it to me!)

Joshua had a big challenge ahead of him. As if taking Moses' place wasn't enough of a challenge, he was to lead the Jews into the Promised Land and drive out the strong nations entrenched there. When Moses turned over leadership, he had important advice for Joshua: ***"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you."*** Deuteronomy 31:6

Moses didn't tell him, "You can do it!" The truth was that Joshua couldn't do it – not by his own strength and ability. That's why Moses said "God can do it!"

The writer of Hebrews quotes Moses' words and applies them to times of financial difficulty and material loss. Whether we have difficult decisions and battles to fight, like Joshua, or are facing personal challenges, like the writer of Hebrews refers to, God is with us. ***I will never leave you or forsake you.*** Hebrews 13:5

The emphasis in the verse is on the word "never." ***"NEVER*** will I leave you..." is how the Greek is structured. Under no conditions or circumstances will He desert us or turn His back on us. We never have to pray for Him to not depart, for He already said He won't. That's a promise, and God never breaks His promises!

Sometimes we think no one cares or understands, that even God has left us. When the situation we face is hard and painful, we may feel He must have left us. The truth is that He can't and He won't. He promises to never turn from us. He never left Moses. He was with him at birth and through his years in Egypt; with him for the 40 years he was a shepherd in the wilderness; with him when he returned and led the Jews to freedom. Moses wasn't perfect during those times: he murdered a man, had an anger problem, and struggled as a father and husband. Yet, God never left Moses.

God never left Joshua, either. He was with him at Jericho and throughout one battle after the next. He was with Joshua as he conquered and subdued the Promised Land. Joshua didn't have to do it alone. He couldn't have. He didn't have to, for God was always there as He promised.

He will never leave us, either. If we are in danger like Daniel was, He will be with us. If we don't always sense His presence, as the disciples during the storm on the Sea of Galilee while Jesus slept in the boat, He is still with us. Even if we leave Him, He will never leave us. He promised!

What are you facing today? Are you facing it with God or in your own strength? Are you believing the lie that you are alone and no one cares? Whatever is going on in your life, this short promise is one you should memorize and repeat daily.

GOD PROMISES TO UPHOLD US

Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. Isaiah 41:10

Why are there so many promises about fear? Could it be because we human beings are so prone to fear? It's something I've struggled with my whole life. I bet many of you have, too. That's why God gives us these wonderful promises to carry us through any and all fear.

"I am with you," Hebrews 13:5. God promises He will always be with us no matter what. It's a promise He makes many times in various ways.

"I am your God," as our God, our Master and Lord, He will give guidance, provision and protection. As His servants, we are to trust, obey and serve Him. In medieval days the lord was responsible for his people. He would lead them wisely, provide for their needs, and be there to defend them from danger. That describes God as our Lord. The people under the medieval lord were to put their faith in their lord and do whatever he asked. That's how we should respond as well.

"I will strengthen you," assumes we are weak and needy. Unless we recognize our weakness, we won't turn to Him for help. The longer I live as a Christian, the more I become aware of my inability to do anything without Him. The good news is that I don't have to – He promises enough strength for whatever I need. It's all His doing, working in and through me.

"I will help you," assumes we will not sit back and let God do everything for us. We must do our very best while always realizing it is God's strength working in us.

"I will uphold you," assumes we would fail without Him – which we would. We never have to fail or fall because He always promises to uphold us when we turn to Him for strength and help.

"With My righteous right hand," reminds us God is holy and just, therefore He can't and won't do anything wrong. "Right hand" refers to His power and authority to do what is right. God can and will do the right thing in our lives. We can count on it!

Isaiah, who wrote this, faithfully served God for over 50 years. He was persecuted by his fellow Jews. They rejected and mocked him and his message. Tradition says he was cruelly martyred. Through all of that, though, he had these promises from God, the same promises we have today.

God gives us strength *when* we need it – not ahead of time. The Jordan River parted when the priests' feet hit the water, not before (Joshua 3:8-13). The mouths of the lions were shut when Daniel was in the lion's den, not before (Daniel 6:21-22). God will give us what we need to face whatever He has for us: illness, grief, pain and suffering, even death (Psalm 23:4).

"Do not fear" is a promise for us, but is also a command for us. God can command it of us because of His promise to be with us through it – whatever it is. Think of it this way, God's commandments to us are also His enablement for us.

GOD PROMISES TO USE EVERYTHING FOR OUR GOOD

We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose. Romans 8:28

This familiar verse is sometimes misused to say that no matter what happens, God will turn it around so it becomes good. That isn't what He is promising. Sin is still sin. Evil is still evil. God can and does bring good results despite sin or evil, but He doesn't change them into something good. Abuse, loss, loneliness, suffering and pain are never good, but somehow God works in the situation to bring something good for His people. It may not seem so at the time, but that's His promise, and God keeps His promises!

Paul was a trained Jewish theologian who persecuted and killed Christians (Acts 7:27-8:3; 9:1). God used "all" things in his life for God's glory. He used Paul's theological training to help him write doctrine in the New Testament. God used his persecution of Christians to expose Paul to the faith and testimony of those who died for their faith. He also used it to humble Paul and show his salvation was all by grace. Paul never forgot these things and was forever grateful for them.

A mistake we make with this verse is thinking only in material terms. We think when we lose a good job that God owes us a better one, or when we lose something in the service of God that He will give us more and better back. However, most of the 'good' He does for us is spiritual, not physical. He uses physical suffering and material loss to teach us trust, patience, compassion. Gentleness and other Christlike qualities He also forms in us as He molds us into Jesus' image (Romans 8:29). These spiritual traits are of much more worth than any earthly possessions anyway, for they last for all eternity.

God is always working. He keeps the universe, the church, and you and me functioning. He is working for "good." It may not be health or financial or relational improvement, instead it could be growing in faith and trust, learning to depend on Him, or having others see how we respond to tragedy. The ultimate goal, as the next verse (Romans 8:29) tells us, is to be "conformed to the likeness of His Son." The best "good" God can do for us is to help us become more like Jesus. And that doesn't come by everything in life being easy and perfect!

This promise doesn't apply to everyone, though. There are two conditions given. 1. We must use our free will to respond to His love for us by "loving Him". 2. We do that because He has "called us" through His sovereignty. The verse only is true for believers who are living for Him. Suffering in the lives of unbelievers or believers who are not following the Lord are for the purpose of bringing them to Him. That is 'good.' But for us who are His and living for Him, He has much more, and all of it is "good."

Take a few minutes to think of some of the most recent difficult experiences you've had. How can you apply Romans 8:28 to them? What 'good' came from them?

Are you going through trying times now? Keep on the lookout for God's 'good' through it. It'll be there. It must, for God promises it will be.

GOD PROMISES AN ESCAPE FROM TEMPTATION

No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it. 1 Corinthians 10:13

Every time you come to a fork in the road there are two options: go right or left. You can't go both. With no option you just keep going straight. Life is that way as well. Every time we are tempted to sin, we also have the opportunity to resist and keep from sin. Satan and our flesh tempt us to disobey God and meet our needs our way, but God also provides an escape from that, a chance to trust and obey Him.

Paul tells us 3 things about temptation in this verse that should be a comfort and help. 1. Every temptation we face is "common to man." It's not beyond what others face, it's what all mankind experiences. Jesus Himself faced every temptation we face – and didn't give in to any of them (Hebrews 4:15). Joseph's temptation to give into Potiphar's wife's advances is common (Genesis 39). He couldn't excuse it as something unusual or unique to him.

2. Every temptation we face is never too much or "beyond what we can bear." That's an important promise because often we feel we face more and worse situations than others. We say "It is too much" and "I can't bear it," but those are lies. The truth is that it isn't too much to resist. We never have to sin. Joseph couldn't use the excuse that the temptation to sleep with Potiphar's wife was too great for him to overcome. As strong as it must have been, he wasn't forced to give in and sin.

3. With every temptation God always “provides a way out, so we can stand up under it.” We don’t have to battle it toe to toe because God always makes it possible to run from it, either physically (like Joseph from Potiphar’s wife in Genesis 39) or spiritually. Note that it says: God “provides” a way out. It is always there, but we have to go through it. He doesn’t force us against our free will. We must physically remove ourselves from the area of temptation and/or spiritually separate from it by claiming God’s truth over the lies we are tempted to believe. Joseph resisted by running from the physical presence of the temptation so he wouldn’t give in.

It seems Joseph was also tempted to gain revenge on his brothers when they came to Egypt for food (Genesis 42-44). When we are hurt by someone, we are tempted to become bitter and seek revenge. This, too, is a common temptation but not beyond what we can resist. God always provides a way to resist, and that is what Joseph did when he revealed himself to his brothers and forgave them (Genesis 45:1-15).

We spiritually separate, or escape from temptation by filling our hearts and minds with God’s truth. Knowing and quoting Bible verses is the best way to have victory over temptation. Jesus did just that (Matthew 4:1-11). It’s our sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17). “How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. ... I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you” (Psalm 119:9,11).

When someone goes into a dangerous situation, they always plan a way out before they enter. Living life as a Christian is dangerous because we face many temptations from the flesh and Satan. We need a plan of escape as we start each and every day. Do you know where your greatest temptations will come from? What is your plan of escape when they hit? What must you do to remove yourself from it physically, socially, emotionally or spiritually? Being prepared ahead is the best way to have victory.

What is your escape when you see or hear something that tempts you to sinful thoughts, when you are hurt and want to hurt them back, or when you face whatever temptation seems to be Satan’s most successful in getting you to sin?

GOD PROMISES TO ALWAYS BE WITH US

The Lord is with me; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me? Psalm 118:6

Psalm 118 is a Psalm of praise for deliverance from the writer’s enemies. Even though he was surrounded and overwhelmed, God rescued him and defeated his enemies, so he is praising God. You could wonder why God didn’t just keep him from being attacked in the first place. But then he wouldn’t have seen God’s power, increased his faith and praised God. God taught him he didn’t need to fear his enemies.

We don’t know if David wrote this Psalm, but many he did write are about this same theme. For many years Saul and others tried to kill David. Time after time God delivered him. Similarly, when Paul was returning to Jerusalem he was warned that his enemies there would arrest and imprison him, but he wasn’t afraid and continued on his mission.

The writer of Hebrews quotes this special promise as well. ***So, we say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?” Hebrews 13:6***

The fear of man is a big problem today, even among Christians. We fear what others think of us, if they will criticize or reject us, mock us or turn from us. Ask yourself, though: “What can man do to me?” No one wants to be disliked, but if God likes us does it really matter what others think? We

shouldn't treat others in such a way that they turn from us, but neither do we need to let them manipulate us and dictate what we say, wear, think or do to gain their approval.

So, "What can man do to me?" A lot, really. They can cause us emotional or physical pain. But they can only do what God allows, and then He promises to bring good out of it in our lives (Romans 8:28). It's not so much what they do, but our anticipation of the pain they can cause that causes us to fear them. Yet if God is our helper, we have a far greater power on our side than anything man can bring against us.

We can't fear both God and man. It's one or the other: either terror of man or deep respect for God. When we focus on God and His promises, our minds can explain reality to our emotions and be victorious over them. Our faith is all based on God and His Word, not on the circumstances we face. Faith feeds on the promises of God. Does yours?

What is your greatest fear of people? What past experiences have contributed to this fear?

GOD PROMISES TO HEAR & RESPOND

For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. Jeremiah 29:11-13

Because of their disobedience to God, He eventually let His people go into captivity in Babylon. God directed Jeremiah, who was still back in the land, to write a letter to the ones who had been taken away captive. God gave them several assurances, promises from Him.

"I know the plans I have for you." God has plans for each one of us. He created us, knows us and has unique plans for every one of us. Life is not empty or meaningless. We are not worthless or meaningless. God has plans for us. We are needed and valuable to God Himself. That should be very reassuring to know!

We don't have to try to sell him on our plans for ourselves, but should simply trust Him with His plans for us as He gradually unveils them to us. We shouldn't compare His plans for us with His plan for someone else. God has different plans for each of His children, but all are equally good for His glory and our growth.

Sometimes the plans may seem difficult, like God's plans for Job to glorify Him. Job suffered, but God is still glorified through his faithfulness, and Job was blessed at the end and for all eternity. His servant Lazarus experienced death only to be brought back to life. Showing His power over death brought great honor to Jesus, and Lazarus' experience must have brought blessing to him.

"Plans to prosper and not to harm you." These are good plans that are to our spiritual benefit. Even in captivity as a consequence of sin, God has something good for His people. That should be comforting to us as well. Sometimes we fear submitting to God's will because we are concerned, He may want us to do something too difficult or painful. But God has no plans to harm us, just to grow us.

"Plans to give you hope and a future." Even when it seems God has deserted us or we have gone far from Him, He still has good plans for us. His plans for us are better than any plans we could have for ourselves. The prodigal son had run far from his father, but the father still had a place and a future for him when he returned (Luke 15:11-32).

"I will listen to you." God promises to hear us and respond to our need. The truthfulness of this promise is seen throughout the Bible, as well as in our own lives.

Then comes the condition: that we “*call upon Him and come and pray to Him.*” When the Jews truly turn to God for help, He will be there waiting to take care of them. He is the same with us today. When we seek Him, He will hear and respond.

When we call, though, we must “*seek Him with all our heart.*” There can be nothing casual about this. It can’t just be idle curiosity on our part. It must be total, sincere, fully committed pursuing of God Himself in all areas of our lives. Jacob sought God’s blessing so much in his life that he wrestled with the Angel of God and wouldn’t let go until he was blessed (Genesis 32:24-28).

If we only seek Him out of selfish motives, for our own benefit and ease, then He won’t hear us. But if we seek Him selflessly, with a desire to serve and follow Him no matter what, He will hear and answer. Could this be why so many Christians don’t hear from Him, they are seeking Him for their selfish ends, not His godly ones? Could that be true of me? Could it be true of you?

Do you believe God has plans, good plans, for you? Are you willing to patiently trust Him for them to come about? Are you seeking His plan for your life with all your heart and being?

GOD PROMISES TO NEVER CONDEMN US

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Romans 8:1

I quote this a lot, both in my teaching and counseling. I also remember it when I sin. These words begin what is perhaps the most outstanding chapter in what is perhaps the most outstanding book in the Bible – Romans. Having laid out the need and provision of salvation in Romans 1-7, Paul shows the difference Christ makes in a life, starting with no judgment on us or for us.

Paul uses the strongest Greek possible to emphasize that there is absolutely, irrevocably, and completely “**NO**” verdict of sin coming against us any time ever. We may still suffer the natural consequences of sin in this life, but the eternal guilt and punishment are forever gone. Paul, who persecuted the church and killed Christians, is the very one writing this. This promise must have meant a lot to him personally.

Satan’s lies tell us that we aren’t forgiven, we are too bad to be with God, He is done with us and it is too late for us. Lies, every one a lie. There is **NO** condemnation!!! Satan can’t take away our salvation, but he can take the joy of it when we live under a cloud of guilt and shame.

Paul killed Christians, but was forgiven. David was a murderer and adulterer, and was also forgiven. Peter denied the Lord three times, but was restored. None of God’s people face judgment for sin, because Jesus took that punishment and paid the price for our sin.

Sometimes it can be hard to accept God’s forgiveness and to forgive ourselves. God doesn’t condemn us, but we condemn ourselves. It may be done out of feelings of worthlessness, or it could be pride that keeps us from wanting to admit our sin. But when we do this, we cut ourselves off from the source of joy on our own, no help from Satan needed. If you struggle with this read Psalm 103.

Remember, since God doesn’t condemn us, we shouldn’t be condemning each other. If God has forgiven a person, who are we to withhold forgiveness? If God doesn’t place them under guilt, how can we do so. If they are forgiven, restored and unconditionally loved by God, how can we do anything less?

Do you know why there is no condemnation on us? It’s because Jesus took all of it on Himself. It’s all been paid for, so there is no reason for us to condemn ourselves. Now He is in heaven interceding for us (Romans 8:34) and, as our advocate, defending us when Satan says we deserve condemnation for our sin (1 John 2:1).

Do you put yourself under condemnation, or do you accept God's wonderful gift of forgiveness?

Do you put others under judgment for that which God has forgiven them?

GOD PROMISES TO FORGIVE US

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9

This is a wonderful promise we often quote and use. However, it is a promise with a condition. The condition is mentioned first. For this promise to be true we must “*confess our sins*”. That means admit to God Himself that we have sinned. It means not making excuses, blaming someone else, or trying to do good to make up for the sin. Sometimes people use confession as a self-centered way of removing the guilt so they feel better. They don't think about the awfulness of their sin against a holy God, they just want to stop the shame and guilt. Nor are we to punish ourselves, as if our suffering could add to the work of Jesus on the cross.

We all sin (see verse 8 and 10). The hardest part of confessing is humbling ourselves to admit, to ourselves first of all, that we failed and sinned. Then comes accepting forgiveness and forgiving ourselves, the next hardest part.

God doesn't force us to confess, but He waits until we do. The father of the prodigal son was waiting and willing to forgive his son, but couldn't do so until the son returned and admitted his sin (Luke 15:11-32). The son had to hit bottom before recognizing his need and repenting. That is true today as well. Chances are each one of us has had to hit bottom at one time or another. But, as the verse says, God is faithful.

When the condition of admitting our sin is met, then the blessing comes: forgiveness! God is “*faithful*.” He can be counted on to keep His Word to forgive. He is also “*just*.” He can't and won't ignore sin, and sin must be paid for, so He took His wrath for that sin out on Jesus on the cross. And because He is just, the sin is paid for and He won't make us suffer for a sin that has already been paid for.

As a result, God will “*forgive us our sin*.” He removes it as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12), forgets it (Isaiah 43:25) and covers it with the blood of Jesus (Romans 4:7).

He not only removes the sin we confess, but when we have this attitude of wanting all our sins gone, He forgives even the ones we aren't aware of. He will “*cleanse us from ALL unrighteousness*.” That includes wrong thoughts, good we should do but don't, and good we do for selfish reasons. It's ALL gone!

Then it's up to us to live in this forgiveness and not take advantage of it. We must use the same standard in forgiving others who sin against us. We must forgive immediately, as God does with us, even before confession is made. The sin still may block fellowship, as it does with God, but when personal reconciliation is attempted, we must be like God and put all their sin behind us and restore the relationship.

Imagine, having your sin totally and forever removed just by taking the blame for it. It sounds so easy it makes me wonder why we sometimes wait so long.

Is there any sin you need to confess, to admit to? Is there a forgiven sin for which you are having trouble forgiving yourself? Is there anything for which you need to apologize to another person? Is there anyone who has sinned against you that you need to forgive?

GOD PROMISES TO ALWAYS BE AVAILABLE

Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks the door will be opened. Matthew 7:7-8

The Sermon on the Mount contains many promises, and this is one of them. It is actually one promise stated in three ways: ask and you will get, seek and you will find, and knock and the door will open.

“ASKING” is something done verbally. The speaker must initiate the conversation with a question. The question won’t be answered nor the request filled until it is asked. When we ask for something that is in His will (1 John 5:14-15) He promises to provide it. If it is a true need, direction, comfort, forgiveness, strength, forgiveness or anything else, we will receive it from Him.

Esther sought direction and guidance about what she should do to save her fellow Jews from annihilation (Esther 4:15-16). God was with her and led her to approach the king, who responded favorably and saved the whole nation.

“SEEKING” is done visually. Again, we initiate by looking for something: an answer, a solution or insight. We may seek comfort, encouragement, peace, reconciliation for a relationship, meaning and purpose in life, friendship and companionship, or victory in a struggle. God promises He will provide it for us.

The woman at the well was seeking truth in life, and wanted something to quench the inner thirst she was feeling (John 4:1-26). She found what she was looking for when Jesus gave her living water, the gift of eternal life.

“KNOCKING” is something we do physically. Once again, we initiate by knocking on a door until it is open. It could be an opportunity we seek or a closer relationship with God we desire. Whatever it is, when we knock, He will open.

Nehemiah went knocking on the door of opportunity when he heard about the bad situation in Jerusalem (Nehemiah 1). He prayed, and God opened the door for him to bring his request for help to the king. Artaxerxes not only allowed him to return to Jerusalem, but also helped make the trip a success.

This promise, in 3 forms, is not something to use to gain wealth, health and fame. It speaks of a general lifestyle of coming to God for whatever we need and finding Him always ready to meet our needs. He is not distant and uninterested, nor do we have to beg or jump through hoops to get His attention. He is available whenever we come to Him, like a loving parent is for his child. If the child is casually curious or distracted, he won’t receive much attention or help from the parents. But if he is determined to connect with the parent and gain their assistance, and perseveres in contacting them, he will have it. Jesus told several parables about perseverance to illustrate this same point (persistent widow in Luke 18:1-8 or the persistent friend in Luke 11:5-13).

The best word in the verse is the little verb “will.” That’s where the promise lies. He doesn’t say “can” or “might,” God says He WILL. And when God says He will do something, He does it!

I have been praying for many years for my children and grandchildren to have a hunger and thirst to grow closer to God and better know His Word. I ask God to put a desire to ask, seek and knock into their hearts which will last their whole lives. I pray that for myself as well. I challenge you to make that your prayer as well.

On a scale of 1 to 10, where do you stand on the “ask-seek-knock” meter? How serious are you about connecting with God and His Word?

GOD PROMISES TO ALWAYS HEAR US

This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. 1 John 5:14

When a parent says to a child, “Did you hear me,” he isn’t wondering if sound registered through their ears. He is asking if the child understands and will respond to what was said. So, too, when God says He “hears” us, He means the request registers and He will respond appropriately. He promises that will happen every time we ask Him about something.

This is not a blank check to get whatever we want whenever we want it, but assurance that He will give us what we need. It means we are asking “*according to His will*,” wanting what He wants for us. We don’t presume to know what is best for us, instead we trust Him to answer in the way that is best for our growth and His glory. God always gives His best to those who leave the choice to Him.

God put it in Elijah’s heart to pray for the widow’s son to come back to life, and when he prayed it happened (2 Kings 4:32). It was God’s will for the Jews to totally defeat their enemies, so when Joshua prayed for the sun to stand still so the enemies couldn’t escape in darkness, God did so (Joshua 10:12-15). Samson prayed for his strength to return so he could avenge himself on his Philistine enemies, and God granted his request (Judges 16:4-30).

God does the same for us. He reveals His will to us in our spirit or mind, then when we pray accordingly, He answers that prayer. First, we must want to have His will done more than anything else. Then, we must deeply desire to know His will. When He guides us in His direction, we must follow. We can’t make our own plans and then try to convince Him to put them into effect. We can’t make our will become His will for us. We must want and follow His plans for our lives.

This promise was written by John, Jesus’ closest friend on earth, the cousin He loved in a special way (John 20:2). It was written about 70 years after Jesus returned to heaven, so John certainly has a lot of experience behind this statement. He knew it was true!

Yet for Him to hear and respond, we must first “ask.” We must humble ourselves and recognize our need. We ask for Him to do what is best, not to do what we think is best. We must learn to pray the problem, not the solution. God has better solutions than we have, many of which we haven’t even thought. So, don’t tell Him what to do to take care of something, just talk to Him about the issue and tell Him you trust Him to handle it in the way that is best for your growth and His glory. You’ll see many more prayers answered if you do this instead of giving Him a list of things you expect Him to do for you!

Does it seem He isn’t answering a prayer of yours at the moment? Try praying the problem and leave the solution up to Him. Go ahead, close your eyes and pray the problem right now, trusting He knows best how to take care of it!

GOD PROMISES WE CAN’T BE SEPARATED FROM HIM

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. Romans 8:38-39

Many years ago, I memorized Romans 8 because it is a special chapter in a special Bible book. It starts with a wonderful promise that there is no condemnation for believers (verse 1) and ends with another great promise – we can’t be separated from God. There are many other promises in between. Read it and count them.

Paul could have just said “nothing will separate us from the love of God in Jesus,” but he wanted to emphasize that truth so there is no doubt or exception to this promise. Thus, he uses a series of all-inclusive extremes to show everything possible included in God’s commitment to us.

“Death nor life.” Nothing that happens in life can come between us and God. Absolutely nothing. Not even death can separate us from Him (Colossians 2:11-14; 1 Corinthians 15:51-54). We have no need to fear death, for it brings us closer to God, not further.

“Angels nor demons.” Satan and his demons try to do all they can to separate us from God, but it can’t be done (1 John 14:4), and they know it. So, they tell us lies and try to use fear so we don’t believe and trust in God’s continuing presence in our lives. They can’t turn God from us, so they try to turn us from God. They can’t take our salvation, but they can take our joy and peace. Have they taken yours?

That’s what Satan tried to do with Job (Job 1-2). He tried to turn God against Job by accusing Job of obeying Him for material gain. It didn’t work. Then He tried to turn Job against God by taking everything but his wife from him, but that didn’t work either. Satan couldn’t forcibly come between God and Job, and he couldn’t do it by lies, deception, accusations, or pain and suffering. It just couldn’t be done, and it can’t be done with us, either.

“Present nor the future.” There’s nothing we can do now to turn God against us. Our salvation is eternal and secure, as is God’s presence in our lives. There’s nothing we can do in the future to change our relationship with God, so don’t live in fear.

“Any powers.” No demon, no government authority, no human being, no force of nature, not even Satan himself can separate us from God’s love.

“Height nor depth.” No matter how far we travel from God, we can’t get away from Him, either. No matter how high we go into the heavens or how low into the depths of the sea, He is still there loving us. Jonah ran from God and ended up in the belly of a large fish in the depths of the ocean (Jonah 1), but God was still with him and delivered him.

“Anything else in all creation.” In case he missed anything, Paul makes it clear nothing can separate us from God’s love. That includes us. We can’t do anything to separate ourselves from Him. There’s no sin for which He will turn us out. His unconditional love in Jesus will always be given to us, forever! He will never leave us or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5).

These special verses should be memorized by anyone who struggles with thinking they may have lost their salvation. If you fear being rejected by God or the possibility of turning from Him and being eternally lost, these are great verses and great promises to give you the truth and peace you need.

Are you “convinced” of this truth as Paul was? What difference does it make in your life knowing and believing these things?

GOD PROMISES TO KEEP HIS PROMISES

In recent blogs we’ve looked at many promises of God, but there are hundreds of others in the Bible. Tune your attention to notice them when you read or listen to the Bible. Make a list of ones that speak to you. Write them down for future use. They are good ammunition to have when you need them!

It’s also good to keep a record of promises God has kept in your life. It’ll encourage you, and you’ll praise Him for all He has done. He is faithful to keep His promises, you know. He cannot lie or

break a promise (Hebrews 6:18). He kept them in the past. He promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and their descendants that He would return them to the land He promised, and He did (Zechariah 8:7-8). They are there now.

God promised Noah He would save His family (Genesis 6:17-18; 9:9-17). He told Ishmael he would bless his descendants (Genesis 17:18-20). Moses was assured God would spare the Israelites if they obeyed Him (Exodus 19:5). All these promises were kept.

There are many Old Testament prophecies promising a coming Messiah or Savior. God's faithful promise was fulfilled in the New Testament when He sent Jesus to atone for our sins. God promised to send His Son (Matthew 1:21-22) to die for our sins (1 Thessalonians 5:9-10) and give us eternal life (John 3:18). Here are some other promises God has made to us.

I can do everything through Him who gives me strength. Philippians 4:13

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:7

My God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:19

My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness. 2 Corinthians 12:9

I will never leave you or forsake you. Hebrews 13:5

Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know. Jeremiah 33:3

This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. 1 John 5:14

God has been faithful to His people as well (1 Corinthians 1:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:3). He's been faithful to me. Has He kept His promises to you as well?

"God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?" Numbers 23:19

"Forever, O Lord, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens. Your faithfulness endures to all generations; you have established the earth, and it stands fast." Psalm 119:89-90

"Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness." Lamentations 3:22-23

"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful." Hebrews 10:23

Take a few minutes to think of God's faithfulness in your life. What fulfilled promises stand out in your mind?

SPIRITUAL WARFARE PROMISES BLOGS

GOD'S PROMISES HIS PRESENCE

Satan is a liar. He always was and always will be. "You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44). He lied to Eve in Eden when he tempted her to disobey God and told her "You will not surely die" (Genesis 3:4). In contrast, Jesus is the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6) and His truth brings freedom (John 8:32) not bondage.

God gave us His Word so we could learn and follow the truth and not be misled. The Bible not only teaches us His truth, it reassures us of His promised involvement in our lives. There are hundreds of promises in the Bible. Victor Storms counted 7,487 promises from God to man in the Bible. These promises are like checks from God to be used as needed. They are only good on this earth though - no need for them in heaven. Some Christians know God's promises and rely on them at the necessary times. They live in peace and victory. Other Christians don't know the great resources available to them and live full of anxiety and defeat. Which are you?

These promises are especially important for spiritual warfare, where we face an enemy that is wiser, stronger and more experienced than we are. We need to know and use God's battles to win our battles against our enemies, just like Joshua needed them to have victory as the Jews moved into the Promised Land. "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9). Joshua followed God's promises and they led him to victory in their physical wars. The same is true for us in our spiritual battles.

This starts a series of blogs about promises we can use for spiritual warfare. Knowing and using the promises of God is very important, especially when fighting Satan and his demons. If not fear, confusion, deception and feelings of helplessness which overwhelm us and we'll be taken captive to live in bondage. God can and will set us free as we use His Word as our offensive weapon, the sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17). That's how Jesus had victory when tempted by Satan in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11).

There is no one weapon that fits all circumstances, we must know which to use when. You use a fly-swatter to kill a fly, not a shotgun. But a flyswatter wouldn't stop a grizzly bear. In spiritual warfare we need to know all the promises at our disposal so we know which one to use when. This series of blogs will help you understand the promises, the checks from God, the weapons we have available to us so we know how and when to use them. The better we know them the more efficiently we can use them and the sooner we will have victory. So read these blogs, memorize them so you always have them with you and use them in your daily life.

Quoting Scripture is our "sword of the Spirit" (Ephesians 6:10-18) and that is how Jesus had victory over Satan's temptation (Matthew 4:1-11). This is a great verse to counter fear and remind us of where the real power lies! Memorize Joshua 1:9 this week. "Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9). When will you need this weapon? Use it to fight fear, discouragement and weakness.

(My blogs about my India ministry are currently in a series on the promises of God as they relate to daily Christian life. If you would like to be on this mailing list contact me at jerry@schmoyer.net.)

GOD PROMISES COMPASSION & GRACE

The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. Psalms 103:8

We are looking at promises from God to use in our spiritual warfare. Knowing and using them make all the difference between defeat and victory. God's promises in this verse are to assure us of gracious, loving treatment. All His dealings with us will be done with compassion, grace, lack of anger and abounding in love. What wonderful promises!

Satan tries to defeat us in our minds and thoughts by telling us lies about God, like he did to Eve (Genesis 3:4). He told her that God wasn't good, that He was withholding good from her (Genesis 3:5). When she believed that lie, she was open to disobeying God. And the rest, as they say, is history. Let's look at these promises about God's character and treatment of us in more detail.

1. COMPASSIONATE

Satan's lie is that God is impatient, that He has run out of patience with us because of our failures and sin. Therefore, He doesn't care about us - no one does! Have you ever heard that lie? How did you respond? I hope with the truth that verses like this promise. God always understands, even when no one else does. Jesus understands because He is God and knows all things, but also because He went through everything we go through and knows by experience (Hebrews 4:15-16). He hurts when we hurt.

We may expect too much of ourselves but He never does for He knows we are weak and prone to failure (Psalm 103:14). Satan has no compassion; he is totally self-absorbed in himself. He is pride personified. God is the opposite. He is other centered. His focus is on us, not Himself. Or else why would He have left perfect heaven to come to a sin-infested world to die a painful death on a cross for those who mock and reject Him? God is compassionate. Don't ever think differently. That's a promise you can count on.

2. GRACIOUS

How can God be so compassionate to me when I don't deserve it? That is grace, and that's the second characteristic of God we are promised we can count on. Satan lies and tells us that we don't deserve God's compassion and mercy - and it's true that we don't. But deserving it has nothing to do with it because it is freely given by grace. God's grace depends on the giver, not the recipient. When God promises to show grace, He shows it, no matter what we have or haven't done. We don't earn it or deserve it. It is free. That's why it is called "grace."

Satan's lies tell us we have failed too many times, sinned too badly and that it's too late for us. That is true of him, but not of us! God never runs out of grace for it is part of His very nature. It's not a supply He draws from, it is His very essence to be gracious. And the less we deserve it the more His grace is seen. If we didn't need it, it wouldn't be grace. The more undeserving we are the more His grace is seen, and He is glorified in that.

He never runs out of grace or mercy, they are "new every morning" (Lamentations 3:22-23). Satan, in contrast, has no grace or mercy on anyone. He has never shown anyone compassion, not even his own demons. When the final judgment comes, he will be shown no mercy, either (Revelation 20:1-10).

We'll finish this verse in the next blog. In the next week memorize Psalm 103:8. Have it handy in your mind and heart. You'll refer to it often!

GOD PROMISES PATIENCE AND LOVE

The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. Psalms 103:8

In the last blog we started looking at the 4 character traits God promises to show us in His dealings with us. We saw He promised to always be compassionate and gracious to us. Now we'll look at His promises to be patient and loving.

3. SLOW TO ANGER

If you grew up in a household where anger was expressed inappropriately you may still live in fear of anger. It may be programmed into you that the authority figure in your life is angry, or can get angry at any time. Satan builds on this to whisper his lies that God is angry at you. That's why you struggle and have problems in life. He may even go so far as to say you never had salvation or, if you did, God in His anger took it back. But God promises He is slow to anger.

As His children, we know we will never face His anger. Romans 8:1 promises that. He will and does show anger at sin, at those who harm others. His righteous indignation is real. Jesus expressed it twice when He chased the money changers out of the temple (John 2:13-16; Matthew 21:17-23). Even then, though, He is slow to show anger. He is patient, giving much time for unbelievers to turn to Him.

Satan rules through fear. Many of the world's largest religions are based on fear. A parent may use fear to control a child, but that does not produce a secure, mature adult. God, our perfect Father, never uses fear to manipulate or punish us. If you think otherwise, you are believing a lie of Satan's.

4. ABOUNDING IN LOVE

Not only does God not get angry at us, but He overflows with love for us. That may be hard to believe and accept, it has been for me. It seems too good to be true. It's not something we often experience in human relationships so to imagine it in our relationship with God can be difficult. Satan's lies tell us we are guilty and full of shame. He tells us we are unlovable - no one has loved us and no one can really love us. He tells us we are rejected and no one could love us if they really knew us. If we don't love ourselves it can be very difficult to believe someone else can love us, especially our perfect, all-knowing God.

God assures His love for us is unconditional 'agape' love. Since there are no conditions for us to meet there can be no way we can break them and disqualify for His love. Besides, He did the most for us before we were even born. Before we could do anything to deserve His love, He left heaven and came to earth to go to the cross for our eternal sin-debt. If He loved us that much when we didn't know Him, how could He love us less now when we do desire to love and follow Him, even though we fail at it?

Satan doesn't know what love is. He operates in the realm of hate and revenge. He tries to feed that same hate into us if we let him (John 8:44). When we believe his lies, we block God from working in us through His Holy Spirit (don't grieve, Ephesians 4:30: don't quench, 1 Thessalonians 5:19). The fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) are gone so we don't have His supernatural love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control in us.

David committed adultery and murder, and Paul murdered Christians, but God had compassion on them both. He loved them and was gracious to them. He loves us and is gracious to us as well. Don't let Satan tell you anything different!

Memorize Psalm 103:8. Have it handy in your mind and heart. You'll refer to it often!

GOD PROMISES HIS NEARNESS

But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." 7 Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. James 4:6-8

Wouldn't it be great if God promised a sure-fire way to have victory over Satan and demons? Well, He does! We have been talking about Bible promises we need to use in our spiritual warfare. James 4:6-8 contains wonderful promises that Satan will flee from us and God will come near us. However, there are some conditions to be met for this to happen.

Condition 1: **be humble, not proud.** Satan's fall was because of his pride and he uses pride as a tool to control many people today. Ask God to show you if there is any pride in you. Ask a trusted mate or friend to tell you when they see you acting prideful. When they are honest with you, don't react with defensiveness, explanations or justification. Humbly learn from them. You don't want to be proud, do you? No one does. It's an easy sin to see in others but very hard to see in ourselves. Yet if we want Satan to flee and to be close to God, we cannot be proud.

Condition 2: **submit yourself to God.** Trust Him with your life and future. Yield to His will. Obey His Word. Model your life after Jesus. Submission is first of all an attitude and then an action. To have victory over Satan you must first willingly submit 100% to God's leadership and lordship in your life.

Condition 3: **resist the devil.** This is a continual attitude of refusing his thoughts and turning from his temptations. 'Resist' is an active word and speaks of courage and forcefulness. It is something we must do nonstop, not just once in a while. We need to have a warrior attitude, seeing sin as an enemy to defeat whenever it comes near us.

Condition 4: **come near to God.** This starts in our mind and heart when we commit to follow His truth. It is then seen in our actions of prayer, worship, Bible study and faithful living. We keep our minds set on God alone (Romans 12:1-2) and that will then be seen in our actions.

Condition 5: **wash your hand and purify your hearts.** This means we cannot have sin in our life. Our actions and thoughts must all be holy and pleasing to God. What we do must be done to serve Him and not for selfish reasons. When we sin, we must admit it and ask for forgiveness (1 John 1:9). We can't dabble with sin, even just hang around near it, or Satan won't flee and we won't be near God.

OK, now comes the good part – the promises when we do commit to God and live for Him.

Promise 1: **Satan will flee.** Satan lies and says he won't ever leave us, we'll never be free of him, following God won't work, God doesn't want us, etc. He tries to instill fear and discouragement in us, because they open the door for his demons to gain a foothold and work in our lives. But God promises that Satan WILL flee. Who are you going to believe?

Sometimes our victory is instant, but other times it is gradual. When Joshua conquered the Promised Land, it was little by little, battle by battle. It was gradual. Win this land, settle and populate it, then move ahead to take back more land. Our victories are often like that: gain some ground over Satan, grow and become strong in those areas, then move into another area to gain more ground back as well. Be patient. A good warrior must patiently persevere. Satan is good at that. We must be better.

Promise 2: **God will come near.** When Satan's demons lose ground, God claims and fills that place. God promises that when we turn to Him and strive to live for Him that he WILL come near to us. He doesn't sit back and wait for us to get it all right and live a perfect life. As soon as we make

the first step to Him, He rushes to our side to be with us and help us. It doesn't matter if we "feel" like He is with us or not. He says He is and He never lies, so He is. Trust His promise, not your feelings.

Promise 3: **God gives us more than enough grace.** When we take the first step He is there helping and assisting. It's all by His grace, not by anything we do to earn or deserve it. It's grace alone.

When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness, He met these conditions (Matthew 4:1-11). As a result, Satan fled and God was with Him. It worked for others. It'll work for you as well. Try it and see.

This is a longer promise to memorize but well worth it. Which of these conditions are most difficult for you to meet? Which part of the promise do you need most right now?

GOD PROMISES FREEDOM

Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." John 8:32

Everyone wants freedom. It's built into us to be unrestricted and unhindered. We don't want anything or any one forcefully controlling us. Yet very few people are truly free. Many are in physical bondage; even more are in emotional or spiritual captivity. Everyone seeks freedom, for their body and especially for their soul. Yet there is only one way to liberty and that is through Jesus. He not only makes it available; He promises it to those who know Him and His teaching. His truth is what sets us free.

Satan's lie is that there is no truth, or, if there is, no one can know it. He tells people there are no absolutes, you can make your own truth and it'll be truth to you. But Jesus promises there is truth, and that we can know it and apply it. What wonderful provisions He make available for us.

Stephen knew the truth and taught it in his synagogue (Acts 7). Paul listened to him but rejected the truth and took part in his stoning to silence his words. But what Stephen had taught stayed with Paul and after he became a Christian, he taught the same truth. It had set Stephen free and then it also set Paul free. Ezra also taught God's truth to the people (Ezra 7:10) and they accepted it and found freedom in obeying God's Word. The same happened when King Josiah found the law of God which had been lost and neglected. He had it read and applied and God greatly blessed the people (2 King 22).

Truth is important because it brings freedom. Satan's lies say we will never be free from the sin or difficulty we face because it is too strong for us. We hear, "Others may be free, but never you," or "God won't free you." But God promises that freedom is available, and it comes through knowing and applying His truth. We know Satan is a defeated foe (1 John 4:4) and when we commit to living for Jesus and resisting Satan there will ultimately be victory (James 4:6-8). We know Jesus has given us power and authority over demons (Luke 9:1-2; 10:17-20). Knowing God's truth about spiritual warfare and applying it to our lives will enable us to win our battles and gain freedom.

Freedom doesn't mean an absence of battles or challenges. Freedom starts within, in our own minds and hearts. First, we must find freedom from fear and anger, lust and jealousy, pride and greed. Freedom doesn't have to do mainly with our circumstances without, but our bondage within. Truth starts within and that's where freedom first begins as well. God never promised to remove our trials and hurts, but He did promise to give us peace within (freedom from fear and stress). We can be free from fear, guilt, shame, anger and all the rest by knowing and following Jesus. It's available to every believer.

The Ethiopian Eunuch read God's Words of truth and listened as Philip explained them to him (Acts 8). He accepted their truth and found freedom from his guilt and emptiness. The people Jesus healed found freedom from physical bondage, but the greater freedom came to those who saw the truth of who He was and were freed from their sin. His truth made them free as well.

I grew up in liberal Christianity. I was intrigued by the occult and explored various cults but nothing satisfied until I came to Jesus and found His truth for all my needs. I'm still learning and growing, but I do know that truth is only found in Him, and that His truth does indeed set us free. Have you found that as well?

Memorize John 8:32. When might you need to apply this truth to your life? When can you use it to help someone who isn't a believer?

GOD PROMISES HE IS GREATER THAN SATAN

You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. 1 John 4:4

Have you ever looked for a Bible verse that clearly and specifically says God is greater than Satan and his demons? There is – 1 John 4:4. This is a favorite verse of mine and I return to this promise often. It's a tool that has many uses and applications, one you need to be very familiar with. It's most effective when used in our warfare.

The promise is clear: Satan can't and won't win because God is greater than Satan. He cast Satan out of heaven in the beginning, and He'll send Satan to hell for all eternity (Revelation 20:1-10). Satan can't win. He is a defeated foe! Therefore we don't have to fear him. Fear is one of his strongest and most effective weapons, but when we believe this promise we need never fear Satan or demons. We are not helpless against him. Satan cannot do anything he wants; only what God allows. We see that clearly in the case of Job (Job 1-2).

We don't have to fear Satan's power. Nor do we have to be deceived by his deceptions. Since God is greater, we can have victory, no matter what lies Satan tells us. Satan is all bluff and bragging but can't back up his claims. Jesus gave power and authority to His disciples to cast out demons (Luke 9:1-2; 10:17-20). Paul had victory over Satan's demons (Acts 16:16-40). We have that same victory over Satan (Romans 16:20).

This promise should bring us encouragement and confidence. We need to share this truth with others who are struggling. We should quote this verse so demons are reminded of it as well. It's a great promise to claim and use. Demons are never too great, Satan is never too strong, there is always victory in Jesus!

Memorizing this verse is a must. Knowing it is basic equipment for spiritual warfare. This promise alone will get you a long way toward winning your battles!

GOD PROMISES WE ARE A NEW CREATION

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! 2 Corinthians 5:17

The world God was created was perfect and so were the people in it. Adam and Eve were faultless until they sinned. Then they fell, and all of us are born with that sinful nature. But God didn't

leave us in that fallen state. He paid the price for all those sin so He could recreate us, make us a new creation in His sight. 2 Corinthians 5:17 explains how this happens.

There are 3 amazing promises in this verse for anyone who is “in Christ.” That refers to all who believe in Him, who have received His free gift of salvation (Ephesians 2:8-9). He promises 1) we are a new creation, 2) that the old has gone, and 3) that the new has come. These all are parts of one promise, but it is stated in three ways so we will completely understand all that is given us.

First, we are told **we are a new creation**. In the verse before this promise, 2 Corinthians 5:14-16, Paul said we died with Christ and no longer live for ourselves. Our old sin nature is no longer the stronger, controlling force in our lives. At salvation His new nature is put into us, the “new creation” He makes us. It is stronger than our old sinful nature, so we no longer need to be captive to sin. We can still sin, but we no longer have to sin for His power is us I greater than the power of sin. In Genesis man is physically created, the old creation. But now in Jesus we have newness of life (Roman 6:4). We aren’t under sins control any longer (Romans 6:12-23). We still sin (1 John 1:8-10) but we aren’t under the control of sin’s power. That’s a great promise!

Second, Paul explains this by saying “**the old has gone**.” We don’t have to live as we did before salvation, when we were dead in sin (Ephesians 2:1-9). We can use this verse to claim our new birth in Jesus (John 3) and break any claim demons make to us through generational or ancestral openings. All that is gone.

Third, because the old I gone, “**the new has come**.” There are many changes that take place at the moment of salvation, many special benefits and blessings that become ours as children of God. When we put our faith in Jesus and are born into His family, He shower us with many special blessings and privileges that we don’t have before salvation. He promises that all our sin and shame are gone (Colossians 1:14) and we are His children (John 1:12) both by new birth (John 3) and adoption (Ephesian 1:5). God call us His friend (John 15:15) and unconditionally loves us (roman 8:35-39). We can talk to Him any time (Ephesian 2:18; 3:12) and receive guidance and wisdom whenever needed (1 Corinthians 2:16). He promises to provide for all our need (Philippian 4:19). Another benefit of being a new creation is the victory we can have over sin (Romans 6:2; Galatians 2:20) and over Satan and his demon (Colossians 1:13; Luke 10:18-20). This is because God lives within us (1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 3:16). We are secure in Him and can never lose our salvation (2 Corinthians 1:21-22; Romans 8:31-39). When we die, we know we will be with Him forever in heaven (Ephesians 2:6; Philippians 3:20). All this and much more is what we are promised as being His children.

The Bible is full of examples of those who have become His new creation at salvation. Rahab, the ex-prostitute from Jericho, is one. Mary Magdalene, who was possessed by seven demons (Luke 8:1-3), is another example of a changed life. Many other names could be added to the list, including mine and yours!

This verse is easy to memorize. It’s good to quote whenever you are faced with difficulties, temptations or when you feel God isn’t as close as you’d like Him to be.

GOD PROMISES WE CAN RESIST SATAN - 1

Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. 9 Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings. 1 Peter 5:8-9

Lions. The Bible refers to them several times. Usually, their majesty and power are in focus when we think of Jesus as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah (Revelation 5:5). But sometimes their deadly violence and their stealth cunning are in view. That's when they are used as a picture of Satan. Peter refers to him as "a roaring lion looking someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8-9). He should know. He was devoured by Satan a time or two himself. But then haven't we all...

When we are told to "resist," we know that some pressure is being applied against us. This command presumes there is a force working to overthrow us that must be resisted. If we don't resist it will overwhelm us and knock us down. It will sweep us away. That is exactly what Satan wants to do. The command to "resist" alerts to the fact that a power coming against us can overpower us unless we put all our energy and resources into opposing it.

You might wonder what the promise is in this verse. Actually, there are two. First, it is clearly implied that **we can resist Satan**. We don't have to give in to his temptations, or to his demons' attacks on us or our loved ones. We aren't at their mercy, even though they are much more cunning and powerful than us. They are accountable to God, who has sovereign control over all they can do (Job 1-2). Don't believe their lies that we'll never be free, that we can't defeat them or that they'll oppress us forever. Jesus resisted Satan (Matthew 4:1-11) and with His help so can we.

The second promise, unstated but obviously implied, is that **when we resist, he will have to back off**. We see this in James 4:6-8. Both James (first book written in the New Testament) and Peter (one of the last written) agree. This is not just theology to them; it is practical experience speaking. By writing this they testify to the truth of their statements. I can testify to it as well, and so can you.

Joseph resisted when Potiphar's wife tried to seduce him. David resisted killing Saul when he had an opportunity. Daniel resisted the opportunity to compromise to avoid the lion's den. Jesus resisted Satan's temptations in the wilderness. Unfortunately, there are many examples of those who didn't resist and sinned: Eve in Eden, Peter when asked if he knew Jesus, Samson with Delilah, David with Bathsheba and Jonah when he ran from God.

However, as in most promises, there are conditions to be met as well. If God gave these promises without conditions, we'd not live in obedience to Him, we'd just come to Him when we needed help and then keep living as we did after He did what we wanted. Wait a minute - don't we do that sometimes anyway? God is not a magic gene we come to for help. He's not here to serve us. We are here to serve Him. His purpose is to make us like Jesus, not to hang around so He is available whenever we get into a situation we can't handle on our own. So of course, promises have conditions. God can only help those who are committed to Him, open to Him and trusting in Him. As a pastor, people sometimes came to me when they needed help in a tough situation. I was only able to really help them when they trusted what I said and took my advice. That's how it is with God as well.

We'll look at these conditions in detail in the next blog. Now just focus on the promises. Satan can be resisted and, when he is, he will have to back off. It worked for others; it'll work for you as well.

Start memorizing 1 Peter 5:8-9. You'll have two weeks to complete it. What temptations do you most often give in to? Where are you weakest in following Jesus? When in these situations, quote this promise over and over.

GOD PROMISES WE CAN RESIST SATAN - 2

Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. 9 Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings. 1 Peter 5:8-9

In the last blog we started looking at the promises in this verse. We saw that it assumes that 1) we can resist Satan and 2) when we resist, he will have to back off. Great promises! But there are conditions to be met for this to happen. We can't just live any way we want then expect God to always show up and win our battles for us. There prerequisites we need to have.

The first quality required of us to have victory over Satan's lion-like attacks is to be **self-controlled**. Impulsive emotionalism opens us to disobedience and sin. God's Word tells us to let our mind explain reality to our emotions. Self-control is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). We need His Presence to keep from sin and to obey His Word. We need His power so we can act and not react. We need His control so we overcome temptation. We need self-control to live a godly, Christ-honoring life.

Similar to this, but mentioned separately, is that we are to be **alert**. Satan is sneaky, deceptive and deceitful (John 8:44). He deceived Eve in Eden. Many today don't even believe in Satan and demons, and that includes many born-again Christians. If they do believe he exists, they write him off as of no consequence. He is glad for this, for those who downplay him, or deny his existence, are not alert to his tricks and traps. That makes it very easy for the lion to get close enough to capture and destroy them.

Too many Christians have an entitlement mentality today when it comes to their faith. They focus on what they expect, even demand God do for them. Foremost in their minds is what they get out of it, what they feel God owes them. Satan uses this lack of alertness to sneak in and capture them. God says we are in a battle (Ephesians 6) and we need a warrior mentality. If you were walking around a jungle in Africa somewhere, or in an inner-city slum, you'd be alert to any danger around you. We need to have that same mentality as we progress through the 21st century world we live in. We need to be keenly aware of deception or temptation from what we watch on TV, what we listen to at work and who we let influence us. It's a jungle here as well – so be alert!

We need a firm foundation from which to stand against Satan's lion-like attacks. Peter says that footing is our faith, "**standing firm in the faith.**" "The faith" refers to the body of truth we have in God's Word. It is the doctrine, the theology, the content of our faith. We need to know God's Word and promises, we need to apply them to our lives and we need to stand strong in them when attacked. It's only when we know God's truth and apply it to our lives that we can "resist." We can't do it in our own strength, only in Gods. That's where knowing and using His promises comes in.

We may think this is too hard, too much, and we can't resist, we can't stand. We may get the idea that we are the only one who has such great problems and so many terrible attacks. But Peter makes it clear that **our brothers and sisters throughout the world are going through the same thing**. Our battles aren't unique to us. We don't face anything worse than others face (1 Corinthians 10:13). We are not alone. We are all in God's army. We are all soldiers of the king standing against His enemies. We need His armor to defend ourselves and to push on to victory (Ephesians 6:10-20). We need to have a front-line mentality. We are in a death struggle, a battle to the finish.

Being light in a dark world is serious business. Living like Jesus draws the attention and the attacks of the enemy. But God is faithful. He will be with us. He stood by Daniel when he was thrown to physical lions in his day (Daniel 6) and he'll be with us as we face our lions today. We can resist and we can have victory. God says so. God promises it!

Finish memorizing 1 Peter 5:8-9. Pray daily for self-control and alertness so you can be aware of Satan's attempts to trap you. Ask God to help you stand firm in your faith.

GOD PROMISES US POWER AND AUTHORITY

When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, 2 and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. Luke 9:1-2

When we travel to India each year to train pastors we arrive at large, modern airport. It looks like it could be located in any major US city except for one thing. Soldiers with automatic weapons are walking around everywhere. The orders they gave were quickly obeyed. Most were very young men. If they hadn't been in uniform with their rifles no one would have paid them any attention. The uniform and weapon showed that they were representing the authority and power of the Indian government and therefore were to be obeyed. Like those young men, we don't have any authority or power in ourselves, but when we represent Jesus and have His authority and power, then the forces of evil must obey.

The promises here are that Jesus gives power and authority to His followers to have victory over Satan and demons. Let's look at each of these separately.

Authority, 'exousia' in the Greek, is used 108 times in the New Testament and refers to the right to use power. He gave the disciples the authority to enforce His spiritual commands and laws. Policemen have authority, a badge, which allows them to enforce the laws of the government. It's not their own authority but that which comes from their government. It is delegated authority, like a husband has to a wife and a parent to a child. Everything Jesus did was because God had given Him authority to do it (John 5:19). He had laid aside His own divine authority (Philippians 2:6-8) to live life as any other human being. All He did was by God's own authority given to Him, as it is to us as well.

Jesus has given us that same authority to use today (John 14:12; Matthew 28:18-20). Satan deceives us into thinking we are powerless victims but that is a lie. As God's children we have access to the same resources Jesus did when He lived on earth. God has given us His full blessing because we are His children. We are born into His family; He is our Father (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6) and we are His children (John 1:12; 1 John 3:2). He put His Holy Spirit inside us (John 14:17). He gives us an equal inheritance with His Son, Jesus (Romans 8:14-17).

Not only did Jesus give His disciples authority, He also gave them **power**. A policeman needs authority, a badge, but sometimes he needs power to enforce that authority – a club or gun. 'Power' is used 118 times in the New Testament and refers to power, might, strength and force. Our word 'dynamite' comes from it. God has also given us His power as well as His authority (Acts 1:8; Luke 10:17).

We also have this power available to us (Acts 1:8; John 14:12). It is His power that transforms us into a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17) as He makes us a new man (Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10). His power delivers us from temptations and trials when we rely on Him (1 Corinthians 10:13; 2 Corinthians 12:14). He has power to put His divine nature in us (2 Peter 1:4), give us abundant life now & eternal life in heaven (John 3:16; 10:10).

Jesus gave His followers power and authority to drive out ALL demons (Luke 9:1) – none are greater than His power. He did not enable His followers to cure all diseases, though. He said we could drive out ALL demons but didn't say we could cure ALL diseases. Some He will remove in

response to our prayers, but only with demonizing are we assured that ALL must obey and yield. When Jesus returns all disease will be gone, but we don't have authority to remove all of it now.

Sceva was a Jewish exorcist who tried using Jesus' name as a ritual chant to remove a demon from a man. He was doing it in his own strength for he wasn't a believer in Jesus. The demon knew this and knew he didn't have to obey Sceva so he attacked and severely injured Sceva and his 7 sons (Acts 19:14-20). The power and authority is not in us, nor in using Jesus' name as a lucky charm. It is only found in Jesus who works through us when we are closely connected to Him.

Always remember the power and authority you have in Jesus. You can pray and preach in His name and power. Use it to encourage people when they need it, give counsel with the wisdom of God's Spirit, rebuke demons in Jesus' name, ask God to heal if it is His will, claim protection for your family and yourself, teach His Word with authority, witness to others with power, forgive those who hurt you and show unconditional love to all. We don't have to live in defeat nor do we ever have to fear Satan or his forces. We have everything we need for victory in Jesus, but we must use the power and authority He gives us because on our own we can do nothing (John 15:5).

This short verse is important to memorize and use. When do you need Jesus' authority in spiritual warfare in your own life? When do you need His power to have victory in your spiritual battles? When those times come, ask Him for them and trust Him to work through you.

GOD PROMISES PROTECTION

The seventy-two returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name." He replied, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. 19 I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. 20 However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven." Luke 10:17-20

In the previous blog we saw Jesus giving His disciples the assignment to spread His message. He gave them power and authority to prove they were representing Him. Power over demons and disease showed God's power. If the physical body, which can be seen, can be healed and restored, then so can the spiritual soul which cannot be seen. Sure enough, Jesus kept His promise and worked through the disciples, as we see in Luke 10:17-20.

The first promise is for **power and authority**, as seen in Luke 9:1-2. "I HAVE given you" Jesus says indicating it happened in the past, it is already done. It's not something for them to wait for in the future. The Greek tense indicates the action is completed and the results continue on. Jesus had given to them, and therefore to us as well, two things: "power" and "authority."

Jesus says they can "**trample on snakes and scorpions**," pictures of Satan and demons in the Bible. Jesus' power over demons was from God, but those who didn't want to recognize this needed to find a different way to explain His power because clearly it was super human. The only other power source in the universe besides God is Satan, and so they were forced to say that what Jesus did was by demonic powers (John 7:20; 8:48-52; 10:20-25). They said Jesus was an imposter, a deceiver (Matthew 27:63; John 7:12, 47). When Herod heard about Jesus' miracles, he thought it was some kind of supernatural 'magic', somehow John came back to life (Matthew 6:14-16).

The second promise here is that "**nothing will harm you**." That is important to remember because fear is one of Satan's greatest tools against us. Demons are bullies that act like they have more power than they really do. Of course, we alone are no match for them, but with God's power and authority working through us we don't have to fear them. They have to submit (Romans 16:23).

The disciples said, “even the demons submit to us **in your name.**” Now, in the present, we have authority and power over him in Jesus’ name (John 14:12; Matthew 28:18-20; Luke 9:1; 10:1, 17-19; Acts 1:8). It’s not our name or authority, but only through Him that we can have this victory. There is no excuse, no reason for us to fear or give in to demons. We don’t have to be defeated by them – following Jesus brings victory. It may be slow and gradual in coming, but it does come.

Another important lesson from this is that **Jesus sent the disciples out to minister** (Luke 10:1). The way we learn is by doing, not by waiting, by letting someone else do it, or by trying to learn everything there is to know. We will never know it all, never feel competent, never be on top of everything – we must keep depending on God which is how He wants it (2 Corinthians 12:9). All you need to know to begin your own spiritual warfare is that Jesus is greater than Satan (1 John 4:4). That is enough to start. God will be with you; honor your attempts and help you learn. God knows when we start this work, we will not be experts but will learn as we go. Read worthwhile books, talk with others who do this in a Biblical way and do whatever it takes to learn more about spiritual warfare. Fight wisely, or the demons will not leave, or if they do they will come back even stronger (Matthew 12:44-45; Luke 11:25-26). Do your best with God’s strength and keep growing in wisdom and skill.

Not only did Jesus send them out, but He **sent them out by twos**. As much as possible have someone with you to pray for you, to help you and encourage you, for extra wisdom, and so you can train them (or learn from them) so that they can then go on their own and train someone else. Especially when getting started, try to have someone else with you when you confront the demon’s realm.

Jesus concludes this passage with a warning: **“Do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”** Some can become distracted by their spiritual warfare abilities, even feeling pride at the power Jesus gives us. Jesus warns against that, reminding us that our salvation is what we are to focus on, not our spiritual warfare successes.

This is a longer verse to memorize but well worth it. If you struggle with fear it is a great reminder of Jesus’ victory over Satan and demons, and then ours through Him. It is well worth memorizing.

GOD PROMISES SUFFICIENT GRACE

But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. 10 That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong. 2 Corinthians 12:9-10

God’s promises only seem to be important when we really need them. When things are going fine, we don’t think of them, but when we are in over our heads and need a lifeline, we reach out for something true and solid to hang onto and that’s when God’s promises mean the most. That’s certainly true of me. I have been going to India for many years. Ministering to pastors there is a great blessing and wonderful privilege. It’s an amazing opportunity and I thank God for it. I also thank Him for His presence and promises, for without them I wouldn’t be able to minister there. This promise, **“when I am weak, then I am strong,”** has been especially precious to me in India. I have faced physical, emotional and spiritual weaknesses while in India unlike anything I have ever experienced elsewhere. I’ve had this promise to hang on to. “When I am weak, then I am strong.” In fact, the weaker I was, the stronger I was. The less strength I had, the more I depended on His and always found His sufficient for whatever I needed. I became very weak, but He never did!

You see, we are always weak. it’s just that we don’t always realize it. For some foolish reason we think we have strength and resources comparable to what we face in life. That’s why God lets us

sometimes see our weakness, so we can better give credit where it is due - to His strength getting us through life. What could you face without Him? Where would you be if His Spirit and presence left you entirely on your own? What if you had to live life just by your own resources? What would your life look like now? What kind of shape would you be in? This promise isn't just for when things get really really bad. It's for every day of our lives.

There is another promise in this verse. One is that is just as important as the one we first looked at. It is that **His grace is sufficient**. Paul was writing from personal experience. He had a thorn in his flesh, something he describes as an angel/messenger of Satan (2 Corinthians 12:7-8). It was a demon. The demon was causing him tremendous pain and great difficulty in his ministry, so he prayed 3 times to have the demon removed. But God didn't remove the demon. You would think if anyone would have their prayers answered it would be Paul, but not so. He wasn't delivered from the demonic oppression. God doesn't always deliver us, either.

BUT, when God doesn't deliver us from demonic oppression, He always helps us to endure what comes against us. That's what He did with Paul. Paul discovered God's grace was sufficient to enable him to handle the pain and oppression and to keep on with life and ministry anyway. God doesn't always remove what we face, even when it is demonic. That's an important lesson to remember in spiritual warfare. God never promised to always remove every demonic work in against us. But He does promise to give us grace to sustain us if He doesn't remove it.

I counsel with many Christians who insist God deliver them right away. If it doesn't happen, they go from church to church, or deliverance counselor to deliverance counselor. They insist God wants them delivered instead of considering God may have a reason for allowing the demonizing to remain. They become focused entirely on their problem. Eventually they may even turn from God because He doesn't seem to be handling their situation the way they want it handled. God will always take care of our needs. However, He just doesn't always do it the way we demand. If you have been struggling with a situation for some time, especially a demonic one, and it isn't going away, turn to God for His sufficient grace to see you through.

God's grace was sufficient for Paul. It was sufficient to sustain Joseph through years of prison, Daniel in Babylon, Job through his suffering and countless believers who have faced martyrdom. It'll be sufficient for you as well.

Why would God ever allow a demon to have access to Paul of all people? God allowed it to keep Paul humble. With his great talent and gifts and his very successful ministry he could have gotten proud. Paul was a very confident, self-assured person anyway. He had to be to carry out the ministry God gave him. But he also needed to remain humble and dependent on God. This "thorn in the flesh" did just that. It pointed out his weakness and drove him to God where he could experience God's sufficient grace.

GOD PROMISES SECURITY

A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out, till he leads justice to victory. Matthew 12:20

Though he stumble, he will not fall, for the LORD upholds him with his hand. Psalms 37:24

How awful it must be for a child to not feel secure in the love and acceptance of a family. I can't imagine what it would be like to live in fear of no longer being a part of that family and always having to wonder if I would be rejected for something I did (or didn't do). Yet that is how many of God's children live their lives. Satan and his forces feed them lies that they aren't good enough for

God, they have lost their salvation, God won't forgive them this time or it's too late for them to repent. Nothing could be further from the truth. The verses above assure Christians that God will never turn from us or turn us away from Him. This is illustrated in three ways in these verses.

1. A bruised reed He will not break. Reeds grow in still water and are hollow, so it is easy to cut a few flute-like holes in one and make music by blowing through it. They were very delicate and easily break. When that happened, they would be discarded as useless and another made in its place. God promises He will not do that to us, no matter our sin or failure. Even when we aren't making music for Him, when our lives have turned in rebellion, He still holds onto us. This is great assurance that no matter what happens He won't reject us.

2. A smoldering wick He will not snuff out. To produce light, oil was poured in a shallow bowl and twisted threads were partly submerged in the oil. The other end of the material was lit and, as oil was drawn into the wick, it burned producing a feeble light. It wasn't much but was better than darkness. Sometimes the wick wouldn't burn efficiently and there would be no flame, just smoke. When this happened, they would simply throw away the faulty wick and use another. Wicks, like reeds, were inexpensive and plentiful. Again, God says He won't throw away a wick that is smoking and not producing light. It's bad enough when our lives don't reflect the light of Jesus, but even when we stink and pollute the space around us, He still keeps us and won't remove us. Like the prodigal son, even when we are in rebellion and sin, we are still His son (Luke 15:11-32).

3. We may stumble but not fall, for the Lord upholds us. The picture here is of two people walking when one trips and starts to fall but the other grabs hold of them and keeps them from going down. That's what God does for us when we stumble. We may suffer earthly consequences of our sin, but God doesn't let us fall from His love or grace. He just won't let us go (Romans 8:31-39). Often, we have a hard time forgiving ourselves when we trip over a sin, but God never does. He knows how weak and sin-prone we are (Psalm 103:14).

Jesus says we are safe in His hand, and around His hand is wrapped God's hand, making us doubly safe and secure (John 10:28-29). John told Nicodemus we must be born again (John 3:3) and, to carry out the analogy, once a person is born, they can't be unborn. There is no judgment for us (Romans 8:1) so how can we ever be rejected? Noah, Rahab and Lot are good examples of believers being safe from judgment even when everyone else around them falls. Nothing can come between us and God, not Satan and not even ourselves (Romans 8:31-39).

We can still sin after salvation (1 John 1:8-10) but we don't lose our salvation. Lot is an example of this (2 Peter 2:7), as is David (Romans 4:6-8) and Peter (John 21:17). Satan can't take our salvation, but he can take our joy if we let him. We can ruin our testimony by sin, but not lose our salvation. Satan can try to put fear of rejection in us, get our eyes on ourselves instead of Jesus, tell us God is harsh and unloving or that our sin will turn Him from us, but those are all lies. Even when we are broken, smoking and stumbling, He is with us and never leaves us. Never.

There are many good verses about our security of salvation in this article. If you struggle with this lie, write out several of them and start memorizing them. It's the only way to speak truth to your mind and give you peace.

GOD PROMISES HIS WORD IS POWERFUL

For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Hebrews 4:12

When I was 10, I heard the plan of salvation and turned my life over to God. Immediately I had a strong desire to know and follow His Word. A love for the Bible has been with me my whole life. It's not just a book, it's the living, life-changing Word of God. Hebrews 4:12 explains how this is so. The passage lists 3 descriptions and 2 result from God's Word. First the descriptions:

Description 1. The Word of God is living. It isn't a dead book with words that just sit on the paper. It is full of life. It contains life and shows the way to eternal life, but it itself is alive as well. It has to be, to produce life. The Bible is the word of life. Jesus Himself is identified as the Living Word in John 1:1-14. His life shows God's Word in action. Jesus and the Bible both reveal God's truth, His living Word.

Description 2. The Word of God is active. Not only is it alive, but it is moving and working. It changes the heart and lives of those who read it and let it come alive in them. It convicts, encourages, teaches, comforts, guides and much more. It works in the lives of unbelievers as well – that's why so many do all they can to silence it by rejecting its truthfulness. The Word of God accomplishes God's purposes (Palm 19:7-11; 107:20; 147:15, 18; Isaiah 40:8; 55:11; Galatians 3:8; Ephesians 5:26; James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23),

Description 3. The Word of God is sharper than any double-edged sword. It is precise and effective, like a fine surgeon's scalpel in a skilled hand. It cuts right to the heart of the matter in our heart and conscience. It convicts of sin, shows wrong motives and removes anything ungodly or sinful. Paul uses the same word picture for the Bible calling it the sword of the Spirit in Ephesians 6:17.

Having said what the Word of God is, we now see what it does.

Effect 1. It penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow. Because it is very sharp and is controlled by the skillful hand of God Himself, it penetrates beyond our defenses, hardness, excuses and any walls we put up to block God out. It penetrates our deepest most innermost being, the totality and depth of our existence. When involved in spiritual warfare, use this sword by quoting Scripture. God will take those words and drive them home where they need to go. It may be to show truth to demons so they will fall back. It could be to convict someone of their need of Jesus, or to bring a sinning believer back to God. Use His Word. Pray it, quote it, think it, be immersed in it (Palm 119:9,11). That's why memorizing it is so important. It's the only way you'll always have it with you and available for the Spirit to bring to the forefront of your mind to use at the proper times.

Effect 2. It judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. God alone can rightly weigh the thoughts and intentions of our heart. We can fool everyone else, even ourselves, but God knows and will use His Word to convict us of His truth. We cannot impress or fool Him. He sees right through hypocrisy and pretense, and His Word slashes through us to show us our sin. That doesn't mean people will respond with confession and change when convicted. Many times, anger flares up, excuses are made, others are blamed or any number of things are done to avoid facing the inner conviction His Spirit brings.

In spiritual warfare, quote God's Word to have living power which penetrates. Our words are flat and dead, but God's Word is alive and active and has power over Satan, sin and demon. It alone gets to the root of the issue, to close openings and defeat strongholds. It is a great privilege and awesome responsibility we have in being given God's Word to handle and use. Wield your sword with skill and precision. Use it well. It is the difference between victory and defeat.

This is a verse all Christian should know and use. If you haven't already memorized it, do so this week. God's Spirit will bring it to mind when you need it and help you apply it most effectively.

GOD PROMISES PRAYER IS EFFECTIVE

The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. James 5:16

When I was a young boy, I remember seeing a plaque on someone's wall saying "Prayer Changes Things." It was so simple yet so profound. We want prayer to change things, but sometimes we wonder if it really does. Do our prayers do anything to influence the sovereign God of the universe? The answer is definitely yes. God says so. He promises they do in James 5:16. There are 2 conditions given before the promises are stated.

Condition 1: **We must pray.** This seems so obvious we hardly need to say it, but it must be stated. How many people today are satisfied with their prayer life? How many of us really tap into the wonderful resource of prayer as we should? James says we don't have because we don't ask (James 4:2-3). We underestimate the power of prayer. Someone said that prayer isn't preliminary to the battle, prayer IS the battle. How true that is! It doesn't matter how many wonderful promises about prayer are in this verse, they don't do us any good if we don't pray. By the way, how is your prayer life these days?

Condition 2: **We must be righteous.** Prayer is for God's children, those born into His family who have received His righteousness by faith in Jesus (Romans 5:1-11). We are righteous in God's sight when we come to a saving knowledge of Jesus. But there is a double meaning in the word here, for the verse also means we must do our best to live a righteous life. When we sin, we must admit (confess) our sins (1 John 1:9). A child cannot live in rebellion and disobedience to their parents and expect their parents to do whatever they want when they demand something. Broken relationships must be restored first. That's true of God and His children as well. "We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does His will" (John 9:31).

All right, now the promises to praying believers not willfully living in sin:

Promise 1: **Prayer is powerful.** Prayer does have the power to change things. Samson prayed and God gave him strength to defeat his Philistine enemies (Judges 16:28). Elijah prayed and a dead boy came back to life (1 Kings 17:17-24). He prayed again and fire came down from heaven burning up his altar, stones and water (1 Kings 18:38). Elijah prayed and the rain stopped. Years later he prayed again and the rains returned (James 5:17-18). Joshua prayed for the sun to stand still and it happened (Joshua 10:12-13). The Bible is full of hundreds of examples. I'm sure you have heard stories from friends about the power of prayer. You should take a minute to make a list of times when God answered your prayers in a powerful way. Unless we write them down, we have a way of forgetting them.

Promise 2: **Prayer is effective.** Prayer isn't a way for us to get God to do what we want. That's not what it means that prayer is effective. It refers to the fact that praying makes a difference. "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened" (Matthew 7:7-8). Abraham's prayer to have Lot delivered from Sodom before judgment was effective (Genesis 18:16-33). Nehemiah's prayer to go back to Jerusalem to help the people there was also effective (Nehemiah 1). The list can go on and on. Prayer is effective. God says so!

Prayer and the Word are powerful weapons in spiritual warfare. Make sure there isn't sin in your life and don't neglect your time with God in prayer. Don't just pray for what you want, spend your time thanking and praising Him as well as praying for others. When praying for yourself remember to pray the problem, not what you think is the solution. Prayer does change things.

This is a short but powerful promise to memorize. But don't just learn it, practice it!