

PROMISES PROMISES

How often over the years have you made a promise? A promise to a friend? Signed a legal contract? Took a military oath, Spoke a wedding vow? Made a playground promise? "I promise you..... "I promise, cross my heart and hope to die"; "Pinkie promise"; "...Til death do us part". So many promises.

Various sayings have sprung up about them. A few are:

- Keep every promise you make and only make promises you CAN keep.
- Never promise more than you CAN perform.
- And my personal favorite: Promises are like babies – easy to make but hard to deliver!

We sometimes, perhaps frequently, break our promises. However, God is faithful. The Bible records promises made and fulfilled. Today, we will take a bird's eye view of a few. Our overview will be like the scenery you see out of an airliner window – broad patterns. You can see mountain ranges, differences in the colors of the fields, big lakes, but not small details. So, too, we will do a broad look at a few blessed Biblical assurances.

One promise is that God meets our EVERY need. The prophet Elisha traveled around Israel performing miracles. One day a widow came to him begging for help: "My husband died and now my two sons and I don't have enough money to pay our creditor. The creditor is threatening to take my two sons and make slaves of them as payment for the debt."

Elisha asked the widow what she had in her house of any value. The widow replied that the only thing she had of value was a small jar of oil, probably olive oil.

The prophet Elisha told her to go to her neighbors and ask for ALL their empty jars. The widow and her sons were to take these jars inside their house, close the door and begin filling the empty jars with oil from her small jar. In faith, the widow kept pouring oil until, miraculously, all the jars were full. The woman told her sons to bring more jars, but they said there were no more to fill. The oil stopped flowing. The widow found Elisha and told him what had happened. Elisha said, "Go, sell the oil and pay your debts. You and your sons can live off the money that's left." Through his prophet, God provided for the widow's needs.

Our loving God- Father, Son and Holy Spirit - also meets our spiritual needs. Writing to the church in Philippi, Paul says, "My God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory." Provide all our needs according to the RICHES OF HIS GLORY? What a promise!

In the book of John, the "I am...." of Jesus are recorded. For example, "I am the Light of the World"; "I am the Vine"; "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life" and more – 7 "I am's" all together.

One of the "I am's" is, "I am the Bread of Life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." (John 6:35). Here Jesus promises that faith in him will "feed" our spiritual needs and longings. He can make us feel full and overflowing with God's presence, according to the 'riches of his glory.' Jesus is our spiritual food. Quite a promise!!!!

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Our next promise to consider is God's promise to answer prayers. In his book, His in a Life of Prayer, Norman Harrison tells the story of a sailing vessel proceeding slowly and cautiously through dense fog. This was before the advent of today's sophisticated navigation systems. The captain had been at the wheel for 24 long hours straight when a passenger approached him. The passenger said he needed to be in Quebec by Saturday for an important engagement. The ship would have to go faster so he could get there on time.

The captain told the man, "Look around. Can't you see what we're up against?" The passenger replied, "No. My eye isn't on the density of the fog, but on the living God who controls every circumstance of my life." He then knelt and said a simple prayer.

When the captain also wanted to pray, the passenger stopped him because the captain didn't believe the prayer would be answered. The passenger continued, "Besides I have known my Lord for 57 years and there has never been a single day that I have failed to have an audience with the King. Get up, look and you will find the fog is gone."

The captain looked and, sure enough, the fog was receding. The passenger got to his engagement on time. The prayer of a believer was heard and answered.

In Philippians 4:6 we are told, "Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praise shape your worries into prayers; letting God know your concerns."

And Matthew 7:7-6. "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; the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks. the door will be opened.”

We are to live our lives with our Lord as a constant companion; talking to him and believing he hears and answers our prayers.

The third promise we will consider is our faithful Lord’s promise to be with us in all circumstances. God is present in our lives every moment of every day. He is waiting to reach out to you, to support you or, when needed, carry you.

The people of Judah, one of the tribes of Israel, were conquered by King Nebuchadnezzar and taken into captivity in Babylon for about 50 years. The King had a 90 ft. high gold statue of himself cast and erected. He then assembled all the Israelite leaders for the statue’s dedication. The orders were that when the band started playing, everyone was to fall to their knees and worship the statue, and by association, Neb. himself. Anyone who refused to pay homage to the statue would be punished by being thrown into a red-hot furnace.

Three Israelites – Shadrack, Meshach and Abednego – refused to get down and to worship the statue, as that was idolatry. King N. was Outraged, King N called the men before him. They would be given a second chance. But, if they refused to kneel and worship again, they’d be punished. Derisively, the King asked, “Who is this God that can rescue you from my hands?” Shad, Mesh and Abednego replied that the God they serve is able to deliver them. But even if their God doesn’t deliver them, they still won’t worship the golden image.

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The king was out of his mind with rage. He ordered the furnace stoked super-hot, had the three men tied up and thrown into the furnace. The furnace was so hot that the heat killed the soldiers who put Shad, Mesh and Abednego inside!

Then King Nebuchadnezzar jumped to his feet and asked, "Didn't you put 3 men into the furnace? Now I see 4 men untied and walking around. The 4th man looks like a son of the gods." Some scholars believe the 4th man was an angel.

Calling for the men to come out of the furnace, the King saw they were unharmed, not even singed. Shad, Mesh and Abed trusted their God to care for them, even in a desperate situation, and their God took care of them as promised. King N praised the God of the Israelites after which he elevated Shad, Mesh and Abednego to prominent positions.

Wow! What a dramatic example of our ever-present ever-powerful God being with us during the most difficult times of our lives. The Bible promises, "I will never leave you or forsake you." (Deut. 31:6)

The 4th promise we'll consider is Jesus' promise to forgive our sins, ALL of them. Psalm 103 says, "He (the Lord, our Savior) does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our inequities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us." What a promise!! We aren't discarded as wretched sinners. By Jesus' death and resurrection, our SINS are discarded.

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Think about a chore we all have to do, such as taking out the trash. In West Bend that means rolling the garage cart out to the curb for pick-up by the garbage truck. Having lived on a lake, I was relieved when it was garbage day in summer, as the garbage contained the skin, bones and guts of fish that had been caught and cleaned. Fish guts and hot weather were a nasty combination!

Just as we need trucks to take away our smelly garbage, so we need to have Jesus remove the garbage (our sins) from our lives. No matter how stinky, how rotten or hurtful our sins are, Jesus takes them away.

Though we pay privately, or through taxes, to have our garbage removed, we have our sins removed for FREE. JESUS paid the price through his death and resurrection. 1 John 1:9 promises, "If we confess our sins, he (Jesus) is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

Today is garbage day. Take out your garbage through confession. Trust God's promise to take away our sins.

The truly final promise we'll consider is the promise of eternal life. During the Passover meal that Jesus shared with his disciples on the night Judas betrayed him, Jesus says that he will be leaving; going where his disciples can't come. Peter and the other disciples were confused, not understanding what Jesus meant.

Jesus comforted them, telling them that where he was going there's space for all of you. In John, we read, Jesus said, "My Father's house has many rooms. If that weren't so, would I have told you that I'm going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I

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will come back and take you to be with me, that you also may be where I am."

Our minds can't comprehend what Jesus' place will be like, but while we're living there, the Bible promises, "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain."
(Rev: 21)

How bountifully we are blessed!! God promises to take care of ALL our needs. To answer our prayers. To be with us throughout our life's journey. To forgive our sins and to live in his house eternally. "The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end. They are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness."
(Lamentations 3: 22-23)

Our response is, "Oh, give thanks to the Lord for he is good; for his steadfast loves endures forever."

God keeps his promises!!!