

Introduction:

In the last few days of last year and at the beginning of this new year, we've no doubt all heard many people wishing others a *"Happy New Year."*

With the circumstances that we see in our nation and the in the world, we might well question: **What are the possibilities for a happy 2013?** Sorrow, heartaches, and uncertainty characterizes much of what we see.

So, in the life of an individual, what exactly is the prospect for this to be a *"Happy New Year"*?

Let me say that if we look at our circumstances and surroundings, there is not much possibility for a *"Happy New Year."* But if we look beyond our circumstances and surroundings to our God and Saviour, there is a great possibility for us to have a Happy and Blessed New Year **through our faith in Him!**

If we are to advance this year, it must be based upon the promises of God to us!

Elijah relied on God's promises. After delivering his prophecy of *"no rain"* to Ahab, the Lord sent him out by the brook Cherith, telling him, in verse 4, *"And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there."*

In verses 5 through 7, Elijah obeyed God and dwelt by the brook Cherith. Ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning and bread and flesh in the evening, and he drank from the brook.

Elijah stayed there until God told him to move in verse 8.

In verse 7 through 9, when the brook dried up because of the long drought, God sent His prophet to the house of a widow in Zarephath. and told Elijah that He would find sustenance there.

When He got to Zarephath, He found there a woman in great destitution.

In the eyes of the world, she did not appear to be in any condition to take care of another person. Elijah didn't look at God and say, "What's up with this?" No, we see him responding in faith.

Elijah asked for a morsel of bread, look at what she said in verse 12 and then look at what Elijah told her to do in verse 13 and 14.

Now look at what she did in verse 15 and 16 and the results of what she did.

What did Elijah have? God's promise.

What did this widow have? God's promise.

What do we have? We have God's promises to provide all we need.

Now just exactly what is a promise?

A promise is an oral or written agreement to do or not to do something. A promise gives the recipient a basis for expectation.

Many promises in the Bible aren't listed as such, but they state what God can do for us if we just trust Him.

Turn to **2 Peter 1:1-4**. In this particular text we find that the promises of God are given to us in Christ; i.e. all of God's promises are based upon and find their fulfillment in Christ. **Paul said, 2 Corinthians 1:20—"For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us."**

Peter uses three words to describe the promises of God:

1. **Exceeding** = beyond natural limits (i.e. supernatural).
(Exp-supersonic-exceeding the sound barrier)
2. **Great** = large, surpassing all others.
3. **Precious** = of such great value that a suitable price is hard to estimate.

God's promises are graciously bestowed to us in Christ! Someone said that there are over 3000 promises for us to claim in God's Word!

**FAITH FOR A NEW YEAR
1 KINGS 17:1-16; 2 PETER 1:1-4**

What we must do is learn to depend more upon God's promises to us than our promises to Him.

We have all heard of *'foxhole religion'*. Promises made in such situations may or may not be acted on.

Our promises to God may not be very valuable, but **His promises to us are exceeding, great, and precious!**

So, What can we do with promises?

Promises can be taken several ways:

- 1) **Rejection** - We don't give it a second thought.
- 2) **Skepticism** - Maybe, maybe not.
- 3) **Acceptance** - We accept it and it gives us hope.

Our response usually depends on 2 factors:

- 1) **Who is making the promise?**
- 2) **Does our mind think it is "do-able"?**

What we need to realize is that a Bible promise is made by God Himself.

Many people have testified that God can be trusted; He has proven Himself to them. (*Hebrews 12:1*—"...so great a cloud of witnesses...")

But His promises are not universal - they are limited to those who seek Him and His divine nature. (2 Peter 1:4)

There are four things about promises that we need for our faith to expand in this new year before us:

I. KNOW THE PROMISES OF GOD.

The great and mighty promises of God mean nothing to most people because they don't know what they are.

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Of the many promises in the Bible, how many do we really know?

How can we have faith in His promise of peace, power, provisions, and all needful things unless we **KNOW** His promises?

It has been said that when God makes a promise — **faith believes it, then hope anticipates it, and patience quietly awaits it.**

Let me give you just a few of the promises God has given:

1. **Ask And It Will Be Given Unto You...**(Matthew 7:7-11).
2. **He Who Believes...Shall Be Saved...** (Mark 16:16).
3. **I Go To Prepare A Place For You...** (John 14:1-4).
4. **Come unto me, all ye that labour...and I will give you rest...** (Matt.11:28).
5. **With Him There Is No Variation Or Shadow Of Turning...** (James 1:17).
6. **God...will with the temptation also make a way to escape...** (1 Cor. 10:13).

In other words we can find a treasure of promises for God's presence and strength; for His forgiveness, mercy and pardon; for His blessings in daily life; for comfort when times are hard; and for deliverance.

KNOW THE PROMISES OF GOD.

II. USE THE PROMISES OF GOD. (2 Peter 1:4)

Ephesians 3:6—"That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, **and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:**"

From these verses we find a positive aspect:

We become sharers in the *Divine Nature* by becoming partakers of the promises.

FAITH FOR A NEW YEAR
1 KINGS 17:1-16; 2 PETER 1:1-4

Too many people live poorly while wealth and abundance are stored nearby.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon used to tell of the poor woman who framed a check for \$12,000.00 which had been given to her by a dying friend. She had no idea of its worth and so retained it as a keepsake. Mr. Spurgeon helped her turn it into cash so she could have a comfortable living.

We need to turn the promises of God into present possessions, however we must:

- 1. Keep promises in context.**
 - a. Many Bible promises are not particular guarantees to us, but are meant for certain people and specific times.
 - b. Other promises are only fulfilled completely in heaven.
- 2. Discover any attached conditions.**
 - a. Example of James 4:7. Resist devil - and submit to God.
 - b. Example of John 3:16. Eternal life is conditioned on believing in Jesus.

KNOW THE PROMISES OF GOD...USE THE PROMISES OF GOD...

III. EMBRACE THE PROMISES OF GOD. (Hebrews 11:13)

Don't just distantly acknowledge them! Challenge your faith each day! When faced with situations of temptation or when faced with fears of the future, embrace His promises!

As God comes through for you, keep track of His faithfulness and tell others of His faithfulness.

Search the Bible on regular basis, not just in crisis situations. Believe God for His promises. (Hebrews 11:6)

FAITH FOR A NEW YEAR
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What kind of faith pleases God? Certainly a...

1. "Worshiping faith" like that of Abel
2. "Walking faith" like that of Enoch
3. "Working faith" like that of Noah ...but also a
4. "Waiting faith" seen in the patriarchs (Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph)!

The faith that pleases God is one that *"embraces the promises"* made by God...Patiently waiting for their ultimate fulfillment, even if it doesn't happen in one's lifetime.

But with conviction and confidence of *"things hoped for"* and *"evidence of things unseen"*...We *"obey"* God's calling on our lives; We *"sojourn"* here on earth with His purposes in our lives; We *"offer"* up whatever sacrifices He asks of us; We *"receive strength"* from God to do whatever He bids us; And we will *"make mention"* of His promises from generation to generation!

This is the kind of faith God wants us to have.

*KNOW THE PROMISES OF GOD...USE THE PROMISES OF GOD...
EMBRACE THE PROMISES OF GOD...*

IV. RELY ON THE PROMISES OF GOD.

Some people know the promises, even try to use them; but they still are fearful and afraid. Why is that? It could be because of DOUBT!

Because they are not sure God is faithful to perform what He has promised. In childlike faith we need to believe what God has said and rest our soul on His Word!

I want to give you some Guiding Principles for Believing the Promises of God:

- A. We must understand that everything we do in our Christian life is to be based upon faith in the promises of God.**

FAITH FOR A NEW YEAR
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Galatians 2:20—"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

The life that we live right now, is by faith in the promises of God

When we get saved it is by believing the promise of God.
(note: Ro. 10:13)

We read our Bibles, pray, and tithe because God has promised to bless us!

B. All of God's promises depend upon God's faithfulness and power to fulfill His promises.

We have to ask ourselves two questions concerning this principle.

- 1. Is God faithful?** (i.e. Does He keep His Promises?)
Hebrews 10:23, "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)"
- 2. Is God able?** (i.e. Does He have enough power to keep His promise?)
Jeremiah 32:17, "Ah Lord GOD! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee:"

C. All of God's promises are all true, but some of them only become effectual to those who believe them.

(i.e. They are conditional.)

D. No person really believes the promises of God until he acts upon them by faith. Faith and works are inseparable.

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James. 2:17, "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone."

We can say, "I believe the promises of God!", but if we never act upon them we don't really believe them.

God's promises are of no value to us **until we act upon them!**

So, we must learn to believe God's exceeding great and precious promises. It will change the way we pray and it will change the way we live! Let's determine to become promise believers!

God makes good on His promises! The Word of God is a testimony to that fact.

God will do for you what He has done for others if you will just trust Him.

George Mueller said, "Remember, it is the very time for faith to work when sight ceases; the greater the difficulty, the easier for faith. As long as there remain certain natural prospects, faith does not get on as easily as where natural prospects fail."

i.e. The greatest faith is born in the hour of despair. When we can see no hope and no way out, then faith rises and brings the victory.

J. Hudson Taylor's favorite verse was, "*Have faith in God.*" As a man who lived by faith, he often said, "*I have trembled and failed again and again, but God has never failed.*"

Here is the basis of faith for the New Year: *KNOW THE PROMISES OF GOD...USE THE PROMISES OF GOD... EMBRACE THE PROMISES OF GOD...RELY ON THE PROMISES OF GOD.*