

HOW TO RIGHTLY APPLY THE PROMISES OF GOD?

Introduction:

- ▶ The Holy Bible is replete with promises from God.
- ▶ The promises of God speak about God's faithfulness and love.
- ▶ The promises of God give us hope and encouragement in our earthly pilgrimage.
 - The psalmist declared, "This is my comfort in my affliction, that your promise gives me life" (Ps 119:50).
- ▶ But the promises of God can be misunderstood and misapplied to our own discouragement and sometimes to our detriment.

Note: If the promises of God are not rightly understood, the crafty devil may use them to deceive you:

Matthew 4:5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written,

"He will command his angels concerning you," and

"On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone." (citation of Psalm 91:11-12)

Application: We must know how to rightly apply the promises of God.

1. Are the promises given to specific individuals?

Is this song true?

Every promise in the Book is mine,
Every chapter, every verse, and every line.
All the blessings of his love, divine,
Every promise in the Book is mine.

Genesis 12:1-3, Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make

your name great, so that you will be a blessing. **I will bless those who bless you**, and **him who dishonors you I will curse**, and **in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.**”

- ▶ **Galatians 3:9**, So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith. [How are we blessed?]
- ▶ **Galatians 3:13**, Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree” — **14 so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.**

Greg Koukl [Stand to Reason]: if you’re claiming a promise, you want to be careful that you don’t take someone else’s promise and bank your hopes on something that doesn’t belong to you.

Extra: Psalm 2:8, Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.

2. Are the promises covenant-bound to a nation? [national promise]

Deuteronomy 28:1 “And if you faithfully obey the voice of the LORD your God, being careful to do all his commandments that I command you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth.

- ▶ v. 3, Blessings on the field
- ▶ v. 4, Blessings on the cattle
- ▶ v. 5, Blessings of victory over the enemies
- ▶ v. 11, Blessings of prosperity
- ▶ **Deuteronomy 28:13**, And the LORD will make you the head and not the tail, and you shall only go up and not down, if you obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you today, being careful to do them,

Deuteronomy 28:15, “But if you will not obey the voice of the LORD your God or be careful to do all his commandments and his statutes that

I command you today, then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you.

Deuteronomy 28:58, “If you are not careful to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that you may fear this glorious and awesome name, the LORD your God, **59** then the LORD will bring on you and your offspring extraordinary afflictions, afflictions severe and lasting, and sicknesses grievous and lasting.

Extra: 2 Chronicles 7:11 Thus Solomon finished the house of the LORD and the king’s house. All that Solomon had planned to do in the house of the LORD and in his own house he successfully accomplished. **12** Then the LORD appeared to Solomon in the night and said to him: “I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for myself as a house of sacrifice. **13** When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people, **14** if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land. **15** Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayer that is made in this place. **16** For now I have chosen and consecrated this house that my name may be there forever. My eyes and my heart will be there for all time.

Note: This doesn’t mean the OT promises do not at all apply to us.

2 Corinthians 6:16, What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, “I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. (citation from Lev. 26:11-12; Eze. 37:27).

Hebrews 13:5 Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” (citation from Joshua 1:5) **6** So we can confidently say, “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?” (citation from Psalm 118:6)

Note: Not all promises apply to us. We must learn how to rightly apply the promises of God, which is the message of this sermon.

Observation: Though some promises are given to only individuals and covenant-bound (to a nation), we can learn some lessons from them. We can learn about God's character and works. They teach us, correct us, rebuke us, and train us in righteousness. All Scripture is profitable.

3. Are the promises universal/absolute?

Psalm 55:22, Cast your burden on the LORD, and he will sustain you. (cited also in 1 Peter 5:7)

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.

Luke 11:9 And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. **10** For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. **11** What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; **12** or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? **13** If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

4. Are the promises conditional?

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

A pronouncement of blessing resulting from obedience:

Philippians 4:14-19, 14 Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble. 15 And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only. 16 Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again. 17 Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. 18 I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. 19 And my God will supply every need

of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. 20 To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

5. Are the promises understood comprehensively [not in isolation]?

John 14:13-14, Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.

John 15:7, If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

1 John 5:14-15, And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.

6. Are they general principles or absolute promises?

Note: Do not confuse principles (general truths) with promises (certain fulfilment).

Proverbs 10:22, The blessing of the LORD makes rich, and he adds no sorrow with it.

Proverbs 22:6, Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.

Psalms 113:9 He gives the barren woman a home, making her the joyous mother of children. Praise the LORD!

Hebrews 4:16, Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

7. Have you understood the promise contextually?

Note: It is dangerous to apply the promises by discarding from its context.

Examine the historical, cultural, or textual context.

Jeremiah 29: 11 For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.
12 Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear

you. **13** You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.

Context: Judgment upon Israel due to their disobedience. They will be conquered and taken into exile by Babylon for 70 years. False prophets prophesied that they will not go into exile and that the Lord will deliver them. The Lord pronounced His judgment that they will go into exile but He also gave them the hope that He will bring them back to the promised land.

Jeremiah 29: 8 For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let your prophets and your diviners who are among you deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams that they dream, **9** for it is a lie that they are prophesying to you in my name; I did not send them, declares the LORD. **10** “For thus says the LORD: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. **11** For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. **12** Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. **13** You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.

- ▶ Not a personal promise but a promise to the nation of Israel
- ▶ The promise is made to give hope and comfort to those who were facing God’s judgment (exile)
- ▶ The promise is made for the survivors of exile.

8. Are the promises present enjoyment or future fulfilment?

Matthew 5:5, Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Revelation 5:9-10, “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, **10** and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.”

Matthew 5:4, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

❖ **Revelation 21:4** says, “[God] will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore.”

Hebrews 10:36, For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised.

Hebrews 9:15, Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance,

Questions for Reflection and Discussion:

1. What is the significance of biblical promises and what is one of the devil’s schemes?
2. What have you learned about individual, covenant-bound (national), and universal promises? In which category do you view the following promises: 2 Chronicles 7:14; Psalm 2:8; Proverbs 28:13-14?
3. How have you benefited from learning general principles and absolute promises?
4. How important is it to understand promises whether they are present enjoyment or future fulfilment?
5. How have you been encouraged and exhorted through this message?