

August 25, 2019

## Standing On The Promises

*“As His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, (4) by which have been given to us exceedingly great and **precious promises**, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust,” 2 Pet. 1:3-4.*

The preceding verses contain so much information in words so few. Several chapters could easily be written by way of discussing such things as *“His divine power,”* or *“life and godliness,”* or *“glory and virtue,”* or *“the divine nature,”* or what is involved in escaping *“the corruption that is in the world through lust.”* But our focus in this article has to do with the **“promises”** of God, which are herein described as *“exceedingly great and precious.”* God’s *“promises”* to His faithful children are not just *“great and precious;”* they are **“exceedingly great and precious!** There is simply no way in which the value these *“promises”* can be overstated. That being the case, it therefore behooves us to give serious consideration to God’s *“promises”* to His children.

When we assemble to worship God, it is not uncommon for us to sing that beautiful hymn **“Standing on the Promises,”** a song written by R. Kelso Carter in 1886. This hymn, when sung *“with the spirit,”* and *“with the understanding”* (I Cor. 14:15), inflames our courage, rekindles our zeal, deepens our love, and strengthens our faith. There is simply no better place to stand than that of *“standing on the promises of God,”* *“promises”* (plural) that are *“precious,”* *“great,”* and, yes, even **“exceedingly great!”**

### God’s “Promises” are of Two Types:

**1. Some are unconditional.** They will be fulfilled without our meeting any required conditions. For example, the Bible clearly teaches that Jesus will come again (Acts 1:11; I Thess. 5:2), that the dead will be raised (John 5:28-29), and that there will be a day when every person will stand before the Lord in judgment (2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 20:12,15). These promises will be fulfilled regardless of whether or not we will have made due preparation.

**2. Other promises of God are conditional.** God has promised *“the remission of sins,”* but to whom is this promises given? It is given to *“cut to the heart”* believers in Jesus Christ who obey the command to *“repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ...,”* Acts 2:37-38. God has promises salvation, but to whom is this promise given? It is given to the one who *“believes and is baptized,”* Mark 16:16. God has promised *“eternal salvation,”* but to whom is this promise given? It is given *“to all who obey”* Jesus Christ, Heb. 5:8-9. God has promised *“rest”* to the burdened, sin-sick soul. But to whom is this promise made? It is made to those who *“come”* to Jesus, to those who take His *“yoke”* upon themselves and do His will, Matt. 11:28-30. God has

promised the privilege of eating of the “*tree of Life*” to certain ones. But to whom is this promise given? It is given to those who “*do his commandments,*” Rev. 22:14. God has promised to give “*the crown of life*” to certain ones. But to whom is this promise given? It is given to His beloved children who are “*faithful unto death,*” Rev. 2:10, “*faithful*” even if it results in martyrdom for the Lord, Rev. 2:10. Yes, the promises just alluded to in this paragraph, are indeed “*exceedingly great and precious,*” but let us not forget that they are **conditioned** upon one’s obedience and continued faithfulness to the Lord.

But please do not misunderstand! The fact that these promises are conditional does not mean that salvation is something a person earns and therefore receives because it makes God obligated to us! Were it not for the amazing “*grace,*” rich “*mercy,*” and “*great love*” of God (Eph. 2:4-5), no sinner could possibly be saved. Jesus stated that after we have “*done all*” the things which “*are commanded*” of us, we are still “*unprofitable servants;*” we have simply “*done what was our duty to do*” (Luke 17:10).

### **The Foundation Pillars Beneath Every Promise of God**

God’s promises to His faithful children are “*exceedingly great and precious*” (2 Peter 1:4) because of **Who** is making these promises, because of what has been called “the foundation pillars” upon which His promises stand. These “pillars” include the following:

**1. God’s infinite holiness.** Isaiah, caught a glimpse of God’s holiness, when he saw the seraphims exclaiming “*Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts,*” which resulted in his saying “*Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts*” (Isa. 6:3,5). Once he had a glimpse of God’s infinite holiness, he became painfully aware of his own shortcomings!

**2. The Omnipotence of God.** Jesus said “*with God all things are possible*” (Matt. 19:26). Indeed, God is not just mighty; He is “**Almighty**” (Gen. 17:1). He spoke the universe into existence (Gen. 1:1-3; Psalm 33:6)! In fact, “*He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast*” (Ps. 33:9). Nothing is “*too hard*” for God (Jer. 32:27)!

**3. The Omniscience of God!** The psalmist exclaimed, saying, “*Great is our Lord, and mighty in power; His understanding is infinite*” (Ps. 147:5). The apostle John penned these words: “*if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things*” (I John 3:20). Because of His omniscience no one can “pull the wool over the eyes of God! In fact, “*there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account*” (Heb. 4:13)!

**4. The Infinite Goodness of God!** David praised God, saying, “*O, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For his mercy endures forever*” (I Chron. 16:34). In Ex. 34:6 God is described as “*the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abounding in goodness and truth.*” David said of the Lord: “*Good and upright is the Lord; therefore He teaches sinners the way*” (Ps. 25:8). Because of His infinite goodness, we are not surprised to learn that “*Every good and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning*” (Jas. 1:17).

Reflecting upon these “foundation pillars” to which we have just alluded, we affirm the following: God’s **holiness** will not let Him lie or fail when He makes a promise; His **omnipotence** enables Him to perform what He promises; His **omniscience** will not let him forget what He has promised, and his **goodness** will not permit Him to disregard His promises. God’s character and nature is such that, as someone has observed:

“God has never made a promise that was too good to be true,” and “God has never over-promised and he has never under-delivered.”

As we thus go back and ponder the above “foundation pillars,” we can therefore exclaim in song: “Standing on the promises of Christ my King, thru eternal ages let His praises ring; Glory in the highest, I will shout and sing!”

### **The Results of His Great Promises:**

If we are fully aware of these promises and the magnitude thereof, and if we truly reflect upon the “foundation pillars” beneath God’s “*exceedingly great and precious promises*,” then: they will deepen spirituality in us (2 Pet. 1:4); they will fortify us during trials (Heb. 13:5.); they will replace fears and anxieties with peace of mind (Phil. 4:6,7), and they will comfort us as death approaches (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

In view of the preceding, we think it appropriate to conclude this article by briefly examining 2 Cor. 1:20, which reads as follows: “*For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.*” The **reality** of these promises is that that are “*of God.*” The **range** of these promises is encompassed in “*all.*” The **repository** of these promises is “*in Him.*” The **reliability** of these promises is couched in the words “*Yes, and in Him Amen.*” The **results** of these promises are that they redound to “*the glory of God.*”

Friend, in view of all the above, we conclude that there is no better place to stand than that of “standing on the promises of God!” We ask, where are **you** standing?

\*\*\* — B. Witherington