

CHAPTER 9

Believing God's Promises

A **command** from God (see Chapter 8) is something man should do; a **promise** from God is something God will do. A command must be obeyed; a promise must be believed. When God gives a command He says, "**YOU WILL**" ("THOU SHALT" -- see Deuteronomy 6:5; Matthew 4:7,10); when God gives a promise He says, "**I WILL**" (see Exodus 6:6-8; How many "**I WILL's**" do you find in these three verses? _____).

It is important to be able to tell the difference between a *command* (God telling me to do something) and a *promise* (God telling me that He will do something). Look up the following verses and put a "C" before the verses which contain a command and a "P" before the verses which contain a promise:

_____ John 14:1	_____ John 14:16	_____ 1 Thess. 5:17
_____ John 14:3	_____ 1 Thess. 4:16	_____ 1 Thess. 5:24
_____ John 14:15	_____ 1 Thess. 4:18	_____ Psalm 23:6

What is a **promise**? A promise may be defined as follows: "Words said or written, binding a person to do or not to do something." When a person makes a promise he is giving his word that he will do something or not do something.

People make promises and people sometimes break promises. Here are some promises that different people might make:

- A) "If you let me borrow \$5.00, I'll pay you back tomorrow."
- B) "I'll meet you at the ball field at 1:00 p.m. next Saturday."
- C) "Have a good trip to California. I'll write to you every week!"
- D) "Mom and Dad, I will do better on my next report card."
- E) "I'll be sure to pray for you."

What would each of these people have to do in order to keep these promises? Can you think of some things that might happen so that these promises would not be kept?

Many times people break their promises and they must take full blame for it. Maybe they forgot, maybe they changed their mind or maybe they just failed to do what they said they would do. Sometimes people break their promises because of circumstances and situations beyond their control (bad weather, a flat tire on the road, sickness, etc.).

Men may break their promises, but there is One Person who never breaks His promises. A man may not keep his word but there is One Person who always keeps His Word! There is a faithful, promise-keeping God in heaven! Look up each of the following verses and complete the sentence following each verse:

1. Titus 1:2 God always keeps His promises because _____

2. Hebrews 6:18 God always keeps His promises because

3. Numbers 23:19 God always keeps His promises because

4. Joshua 23:14 God always keeps His promises because

5. Romans 4:21 God always keeps His promises because

6. Hebrews 11:11 God always keeps His promises because

Are there any circumstances that are beyond God's control? Does God ever get sick? Is God ever surprised by bad weather? Does God ever have transportation problems? Would God ever say, "I wanted to keep that promise but something very unexpected came up and I was not able to"?

Conditional Promises

Many of God's promises are **conditional** (when you see this word "conditional" just think of the little word "if"). God promises to do something **IF** man does something. God will do His part **if** man does his part. Sometimes our parents might give us a conditional promise: "**If** you finish all of the food on your plate, then I will give you some dessert!" Let's look at some conditional promises found in the Bible:

1. **ACTS 16:31**. What must the sinner do?

_____ If the sinner does this, then
what does God promise to do? _____

2. **ROMANS 10:9**. What must the sinner do?

_____ If the sinner does this, what does God promise to do?

3. **JAMES 4:7** (the last part of the verse). What must the believer do?

_____ If the believer does this, what does God
promise? _____

4. **JAMES 4:8** (the first part of the verse). What must the believer do?

_____ If the believer does this,
what does God promise to do? _____

5. **JAMES 4:10**. What must the believer do?

_____ If the
believer does this, what does God promise to do?

If we are careful to do our part, God will surely do His part!

Unconditional Promises

When God gives an unconditional promise, there are no "if's," "and's," or "but's" about it! God says, "I WILL DO SOMETHING" and it does not matter if men like it or don't like it, believe it or don't believe it--God is still going to do it! An unconditional promise means that GOD WILL do what He promised no matter what! Here are some examples:

1) JOHN 14:3--Jesus said, "I will come again."

If certain people do not want Jesus to come again, will that change the promise? If men do not believe that Jesus will come again, does this affect God's promise? Jesus is going to keep this promise no matter what! The only wise thing to do is to believe what God says!

2) HEBREWS 13:5--God says, "I will never leave thee."

God will never leave the believer! That's God's promise! But what if the believer sins? Will God break His promise then? No, God keeps His promise and God will be right there with that sinning believer, convicting him and dealing with his heart until things are made right!

3) MATTHEW 17:23--Jesus said that on the third day after His death He would rise again.

There were many people who did not want Jesus to rise again from the dead (Matthew 27:62-66). Did that change the promise? There were many people who did not believe that Jesus would rise again from the dead (including the Lord's own disciples). Did that change God's promise? God is going to keep His Word no matter what!

God's Promises Must Be Mixed With Faith

God's wonderful promises do us no good unless we believe them! Consider Hebrews 4:1-2. The children of Israel were given a promise but they did not believe the promise. God's Word will not profit us unless we mix it with _____ (verse 2).

Think of a seed. When planted in the ground a seed can grow up into a wonderful plant and bring forth much fruit. But if that seed is kept on your kitchen table or on some other hard surface, it will never do anyone any good. God's Word is like that seed. God's promises must be planted deep in our hearts and we must believe what God says. Suppose your Father says, "I will put \$20.00 into your coat pocket so that you will have money to spend in town." If you do not believe this, then you could go to town and the money would do you no good, because you cannot spend something that you do not believe you have. The smart thing to do would be to believe what your Father said, reach into your pocket, grab the money and use it wisely!

God cannot lie (Titus 1:2)

It is impossible for God to lie (Heb. 6:18).

Examples of Faith

1) THE PROMISE OF A SON NAMED ISAAC.

In Genesis 18:10 God gave a promise to Abraham. Did Sarah believe this promise (Genesis 18:11-12)? _____ Did Abraham believe God's promise (see Romans 4:19-21)? _____ Is God able to keep His promises (Genesis 18:14)? _____ Did God do exactly what He had promised to do (Genesis 21:1)? _____

2) THE PROMISE THAT ISAAC WOULD HAVE CHILDREN.

God gave Abraham another promise. He told Abraham that his son Isaac would have children (see Genesis 21:12 and 17:19; remember, the word "seed" means "children" or "descendants"). In Genesis 22, God gave Abraham a command: SACRIFICE (KILL) YOUR SON ISAAC (see verse 2). Thus, God gave Abraham a PROMISE and a COMMAND:

THE PROMISE: Isaac will have children

THE COMMAND: Kill Isaac.

Abraham was faced with a great problem: **HOW CAN A DEAD SON HAVE CHILDREN?** Abraham probably was thinking something like this: "I must obey God and sacrifice my son. God has promised me that Isaac will have children, but how can a dead Isaac have children? There is only one way that God can keep His promise. God will have to raise up Isaac from the dead!"

When Abraham took the knife to kill his son (see Genesis 22:10), he knew that God would raise up his son from the dead (see Hebrews 11:19) because he believed that God must keep his promise! This is why Abraham told his servants the following amazing prediction (see Genesis 22:5): Isaac and I will go and worship God and **we will come again!** Both of us will walk up there I will kill Isaac and both of us ("we") will walk back again because God will bring my son back to life. I will not return with a dead Isaac on my shoulders.

As it turned out, God did not allow Abraham to kill Isaac, but God did allow Abraham to prove that he really did believe God's wonderful promise about his son!

3) THE PROMISE OF A SON NAMED JOHN.

Zacharias and Elisabeth were old and childless just like Abraham and Sarah (Luke 1:5-7). What promise did God give to Zacharias (Luke 1:13)?

_____ Did he believe this promise (Luke 1:18-20)? _____
 Did God keep his promise even though this man did not believe it (Luke 1:57-60)? _____

4) THE PROMISE OF A SON NAMED JESUS.

What promise was given to Mary in Luke 1:31?

This promise seemed impossible because in order to have a baby you must have a father, and in this case there was no father. Is God able to keep His promises even though it may seem impossible (Luke 1:37)? _____ Did Mary believe the promise (Luke 1:38)? _____

Claiming God's Promises

Here are some promises that God has given to believers:

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| A. Deuteronomy 31:6,8 | F. Hebrews 13:6 |
| B. John 10:28-29 | G. James 1:5-7 |
| C. John 15:11 | H. 1 Peter 5:7 |
| D. 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 | I. 1 John 1:9 |
| E. Philippians 4:13 | J. 1 John 3:22; 5:14-15 |

Below are some phrases that describe how we might feel at times or that describe a situation we might be in. We need to learn to claim the right promises for each and every situation in which we find ourselves. Put the letter of the promise that you would claim next to each of the following (in some cases you may use more than one promise):

- _____ When I am afraid of what others might do to me
- _____ When I do not know what to do or how to do it
- _____ When I am sad and discouraged
- _____ When I wonder if my prayers will be heard and answered
- _____ When I worry about losing my salvation
- _____ When I am in need of strength
- _____ When I face a difficult task (something that seems too hard for me to do)
- _____ When I feel all alone
- _____ When I need forgiveness and cleansing
- _____ When I feel that no one cares about me

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A pastor once was preaching and he made the statement: **"GOD SAID IT, I BELIEVE IT, THAT SETTLES IT!"** A little girl was in the audience and she raised her hand and when acknowledged she said, "Pastor, you're wrong!" The surprised Pastor said, "What do you mean? Why am I wrong?" The girl answered, **"Pastor, God said it and that settles it whether you believe it or not!"**

THE SAFEST AND SMARTEST THING
A PERSON CAN DO
IS TO BELIEVE WHATEVER GOD SAYS!

As the children's song says:

"Faith is just believing what God says He will do!"
He will never fail us His promises are true.
If we but receive Him, His children we become (John 1:12),
Faith is just believing this wondrous thing is done!"

