

Really?



Gary Wilkerson November 18, 2019

The Promises of God Are Beyond Our Comprehension

The great promises that God has given us through Jesus are beyond anything a human could think or imagine. He has freed us from bondage and slavery to sin. He has placed us beside himself in heavenly places. He has given us our identity in him. If these incredible promises don't build up our confidence, there's something wrong with our view of God. It means we're not seeing his glory as fully and clearly as we should.

Is this true for you? If your reality is something different from what God has promised, there's a problem. You're free, but you're still sinning; you're no longer under Satan's dominion, but you feel bound up; you have the mind of Christ, but you're often discouraged.

Whenever I'm tempted toward despair, I turn to a certain Bible passage that restores my spirit: "...the Israelites continued to groan under their burden of slavery. They cried out for help, and their cry rose up to God. God heard their groaning..." (*Exodus 2:23-24, NLT*). It's incredible to think that God hears our heart's cry. The next verse goes even further, ramping up our encouragement: "He looked down on the people of Israel and *knew it was time to act*" (*2:25, my emphasis*).

God knows the exact time to act on behalf of his people. He saw the dilemma that the Israelites faced: exhaustion, defeat, the loss of all hope that they would ever be set free. What Israel didn't know is they were on the brink of a breakthrough. Sometimes when we're closest to freedom is the moment our enemy chooses to unleash a flood against us. Satan knows his time is short, and whenever he sees us nearing our breakthrough, he refocuses his fury against us. Ironically, the closer Israel was to freedom the harder it became for them to hope.

The first generation of Israelites enslaved in Egypt had known the glorious reality of God's promises. Things were different for the generation we read about in Exodus 23, a people who had known only slavery. They had a dark lineage of over 400 years of bondage, and none of them could imagine the reality of God's Abrahamic covenant with them.

I thank God that he heard their cry. What awesome encouragement this story offers to any follower of Christ who's suffered a bondage they think will never end. Maybe you've cried out and feel you haven't been heard. You've received counseling, but it hasn't worked. At times you feel on the brink of despair. Don't be afraid to cry out as the Israelites did: "They cried out for help, and their cry rose up to God. God heard their groaning" (*Exodus 2:23-24*).

Sometimes we're so far down that all we have is our cry.

You don't have to pray some complex theology for God to respond to you. All it takes is your heart's simple cry, "Lord, I'm calling on you to help. I don't know what else to do. Your Word promises me deliverance from my enemies, salvation from my sin and overcoming victory in Christ. Why don't I see any of these promises manifesting in my life? I'm about to lose hope."

Here's what happens when you cry out to him: "God heard their groaning, and he remembered" (*Exodus 2:24*). The Hebrew word for "remembered" here means to bring to the forefront of the mind. It's not as if God forgot his covenant with Abraham that had promises to give Israel a land of their own, a land flowing with milk and honey, multitudes of children, and to make them a blessing to other nations. When God "remembered," it means he was about to bring the reality of his promises to the forefront of their lives. His desires for them were about to become manifest.

This passage says, "God...knew" (*2:24-25*). What exactly did God know? He knew his people's pain and how distant his promises were from being tangible realities for them. To God, however, they were already a reality. Even though Israel was in bondage, God's promised realities were within their reach.

The same is true for us today. Take the great traits of unconditional love in 1 Corinthians 13, which seem impossible for any one of us to attain. "Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance" (*1 Corinthians 13:4-7*).

Are these manifestations of love a reality in our lives? None of us lives them out fully, yet we know that by grace we're capable of manifesting each one of these expressions of love. Therefore, our cry to God is, "Lord, make this a reality in my life. This is your promise to me!"

This ought to be the cry of everyone who despairs of their situation: "Lord, this is your promise to me!"

Jesus' first promise to us is abundant life. "I came that they may have life and have it abundantly" (*John 10:10, ESV*). This means life overflowing, streams of living water spilling over the riverbank of our soul. Is this kind of abundant life a reality for you? If not, you should be crying, "Lord, hear my soul's cry! You promised me this. Please, unstop whatever may be damming up your flow of abundant life. Uncork it, and let it loose in my life!"

His second promise is dominion over sin, Satan and death. These no longer reign over us because Jesus now does. "Sin is no longer your master, for you no longer live under the requirements of the law. Instead, you live under the freedom of God's grace" (*Romans 6:14, NLT*). He has put the very power of his Spirit in our hearts, giving us victory over sin and filling us with joyful strength.

"Put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm" (*Ephesians 6:13*). God equips us to quench every fiery dart that the enemy fires at us. Now our faith doesn't diminish whenever Satan tells us, "You don't walk in true love, you don't experience victory over sin, you don't overflow with rivers of living water." The work of the Holy Spirit enables us to say, "He has made me holy, blameless and faultless before him. I am inseparable from his love. Therefore, I am more than a conqueror against any weapon Satan tries against me."

What God did to bring the children of Israel out of Egypt, he also wants to do with this generation.

Even while Israel was in slavery, the Abrahamic covenant was in place for them. Likewise today, no matter what kind of bondage you struggle with, the new covenant is in place for you. God's flow of blessings to you is so super abundant they're almost ludicrous to consider. Paul says the Lord is "able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think" (*Ephesians 3:20*). In other words, as we consider all of God's new covenant promises to us, our reaction ought to be, "Really? Whoa!"

So why isn't the abundant life a reality for many Christians? It isn't because God withholds blessings from us. Jesus makes that clear in the Sermon on the Mount: "You parents—if your children ask for a loaf of bread, do you give them a stone instead? Or if they ask for a fish, do you give them a snake? Of course not! So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask him" (*Matthew 7:9-11*).

The problem is that most of us don't believe the abundant life is the norm for the Christian life. We consider those promises and say, "Would God actually promise those things to me? Come on, really?" When we do this, we put ourselves back into bondage under a kind of mental slavery. We don't recognize the devil's voice persuading us, "You can't attain that. God didn't mean it literally. Do you actually think you can have that? Really?"

Tragically, a lot of Christians become convinced, "I don't deserve to have everything God promises. It's too good to be true for someone like me. I'm just glad to be saved and free from sin, to have a little joy every once in a while. I don't need to be some super-blessed Christian."

That isn't enough! Why? It falls short of what God says he wants for us. The promises of God aren't just high aspirations; they are bedrock realities for every single believer. They always have been and always will be. We face continual conflicts in this life, but we are not in a war we'll never win. We are meant to have every victory he promised.

Are you still under a mental bondage of some kind? Have you stopped believing the promises of God? Don't let the enemy rob your expectation of what God can do. The Lord's promises aren't a question mark but an exclamation point. That is our reality. Did he really say you could be free? That abundant life is your reality? That you are a conqueror in Christ? Really? Yes, he did—really!

[Download PDF](#) [1]

Links

[1] <http://worldchallenge.org/printpdf/31461/>