

Standing on the promises

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I recently spoke with a man who believed God existed, but felt that He was unknowable. There are many people who share this belief and it is common among those who do not know Christ. While that can be said of non-believers, the greater tragedy is when a believer lacks an ongoing personal knowledge and experience of God's working in their lives.

Praise God that He has prepared a way for us to experience Him in our daily lives.

In 2 Peter 1:3-4 we find two verses that speak to the opportunity for a believer to have an ongoing, meaningful, relationship with God.

"³ His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, ⁴ by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire."

These words were written by Simon Peter, who had been one of Jesus' 12 disciples and was now one of the prominent leaders of the early Christian church. If we had known him before, we would have thought him an unlikely follower of Christ. He had been an impulsive, strong-spirited fisherman most of his life, until he met Jesus Christ. He had seen Christ heal the blind, cleanse the leper, calm the storm, and even bring the dead back to life. He and others had lived with Jesus over a period of three years. He knew Jesus intimately. Now his life was surrendered to Jesus Christ and had been changed from the inside out by the Holy Spirit. He was a totally different person, and it was all because of Jesus. It is from this knowledge of Jesus Christ that He writes to encourage other believers. Peter had observed Christ's "divine power" externally and had been changed by Christ's "divine power" internally.

In Peter's day, false teachers often did not acknowledge the fact that Jesus was God in the flesh, but this was and is one of the essential beliefs of Christianity. The angel Gabriel, in Matthew 1:23, declares,

“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel’ (which means, God with us).” In John 1:1,14 the Apostle John writes of how, *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.”* The Apostle Paul, writing in Colossians 2:9 says, *“For in Him,”* referring to Christ, *“the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.”* Jesus Himself even declares His own divinity in John 10:30. In this verse we find these words, *“I and the Father are one.”*

Paul describes Christ’s power in Colossians 1:16 when He writes that *“all things were created by, through and for Jesus Christ.”* Ephesians 3:20-21, *“Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us.”* Our sufficiency depends on the power of God. Not our works, but His Spirit working in us. As we abide in Him His Spirit works in our lives.

“His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness.”

Every believer has been granted or gifted everything that we need for life and godliness. This word used in the original language meant that we have been made self-sufficient. Not that we, ourselves, have everything that we need for life and godliness, but that the Spirit of Christ who now lives in us provides all that we need for life and godliness.

We are now empowered to live a godly life, regardless what is happening around us, because the power of Christ is constantly at work within us.

In Christ we have found all that we need. His grace is sufficient. His love is unconditional. His power is almighty. His knowledge includes all things. It is as we grow to "know" Him more that we finally understand His goodness and His glory. It is similar to a son who walks without fear when he is with his father because, based on his experience, he knows that his father will protect, provide, guide, and love him.

Philippians 2:13 pictures it with these words, *“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to act for his good pleasure.”* Yes, we are called to live out our faith, but from beginning to end it is only possible through God’s power working in us. It is never a question of God’s sufficiency, the question is if you are abiding in Him so that His power is active in your life.

“Through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence.”

This is referring to a knowledge of Christ. It is an intimate relational knowing, not just a knowledge of the details of his life with no personal relationship. If you want to enjoy God's provision, you must come to know Him more, but how does that personal knowledge take place? God initiates it. God draws us to Himself (John 6:44). This word excellence is also translated “goodness”.

We see God’s goodness throughout scripture. In Exodus 34:6, *“I am compassionate, I am gracious, and I am abounding in lovingkindness.”* In Lamentations 3:22-23, it says, *“The Lord’s lovingkindness indeed*

never ceases, His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Thy faithfulness.” Psalm 121 says, “I will lift up my eyes to the mountains; from whence shall my help come? My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth. He will not allow your foot to slip; He who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The LORD is your keeper; the LORD is your shade on your right hand. The sun will not smite you by day, nor the moon by night. The LORD will protect you from all evil; He will keep your soul. He will guard your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forever.” Just like a child, we receive the full benefits of the Father as we stay near to Him.

“By which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises.”

It is like a good father whose promises are sure because his character is good. The promises exist because his goodness exists. This is true with God. His glory and goodness result in guaranteed care for our every need. These guarantees in His Word are the promises that He tells us of.

2 Cor. 7:1, “Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.”

It is as we become familiar with and start to live in the reality of the Promises of God that we begin to experience Him and His love and provision for us. With each passing experience we have with Him we grow in our sense of awe and worship. It is through this increasingly intimate relationship with Jesus Christ that He becomes our truest of realities. It is through Him that we are transformed to be like Christ. He is not just the giver of the Promises, He himself is the promise.

“So that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.”

Yes, John 1:12 says you become children of God. Romans 8:9 says the Spirit of God dwells in you. If the Spirit dwells within you, you possess the divine nature. Galatians 2:20 says, *“I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ lives in me.”* God lives in me. What? *“Know you not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit?”* Colossians 1:27, *“Christ in you.”*

The word “partaker” means sharer or partner. We partake of the Holy Spirit who lives in us. There is a sense in which our new life in Christ is a new nature, the divine nature, and we have escaped the corruption that marked us prior to our conversion.

We must make a distinction here. Some people of Peter’s day and of our day believe that we can become God. That is not what is being said here. Because of sin, we are all spiritually dead without Christ and are slaves to our sinful nature. Christ came to die on the cross for our sins. He paid our penalty so that we could be reunited with God. As we surrender our lives to Him we become spiritually alive for the first time in our lives. The Spirit of God begins to live in us and to work in us to empower us to be the people we were created to be.

As we consider God's promises we must make sure that the promises which we are standing on are promises that apply to us.

Some prayers in scripture were made from God to specific people for specific situations. We would be irresponsible to begin claiming every prayer that is in scripture, without first discerning if the promise is indeed for us.

For those promises that do apply to us, do we really believe the truth? Do we really believe what He has promised us in His Word?

Satan seeks to draw us away from believing God's Word and thus living under His promises. We see it in Satan's interaction with Eve. His temptation of Eve was based on causing her to doubt the truth, the authority and the goodness of God's Word. We see it even when Satan was tempting Jesus in the wilderness (Matthew 4:3). God had said, "*You are my Son in whom I am well pleased*", but when Satan comes to tempt Jesus he immediately seeks to bring doubt. He says, "*If, you are the Son of God . . .*" Satan knows that God's Word has incredible power to save and to transform one's life, so he attacks our belief in God's Word.

Satan loves to stir doubt within our hearts. Imagine we are struggling financially and we are presented with an unethical way to receive more money. Or we are offered a job that will keep us out of church or will cause us to neglect our family. Satan brings the doubts: "Will God really meet all of your needs if you seek Him first? Wouldn't it be safer to take it into your own hands and do it your way?"

Or maybe it is the Christian single who is really wanting to get married, but they have been waiting for a long time. It seems like the longer they follow God's guidelines to purity and to not be unequally yoked that it makes it worse. At that point Satan comes in and breeds doubt: "Those standards are too old fashioned. The Bible doesn't really apply to your situation at this time in history. Do what you have to do to find love. God will understand."

Some don't experience the intimacy found through God's promises because they are not believers of Christ. Some miss out on life and godliness because they are playing the part of the prodigal. Others, because they do not know and believe in the promises. Ignorance and unbelief.

If you are the prodigal (Luke 15), it may be that you are ashamed or not believing in the forgiveness of God. 1 John 1:9 tells us that "*if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to forgive us of all unrighteousness.*" If that is not enough, if you are the prodigal, but too scared to come home, because of your fear of God's response, think of the story of the prodigal son. How did the Father respond when the son came home? He lavished the full blessings of the father upon him. First of all, the father ran to him, even though it was shameful for men to run and to show their legs. He called for the shoes because the young man was his son, not his servant! He called for a robe and for a ring! That reinstated the young man to full status, rights and authority of the Father. Then he killed the fattened calf and threw a party, because his lost son had come home!

Today if you have run away from God and are trying to take the first step back towards Him, know that the Father waits with open arms and an everlasting love. Turn from your sin, selfishness and rebellion, and come home.

Learn, believe and act on the promises of the Father and find everything that you need for life and godliness.

Below you will find a list of promises from scripture. In the days ahead begin to familiarize yourselves with some of these promises that mean the most to you. As you expand your familiarity with these promises, you will be even better prepared to walk by faith and know the power of Christ in your life.

1. James 1:5 – *“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.”*
2. Proverbs 3:5-6 – *“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.”*
3. Isaiah 26:3 – *“You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.”*
4. 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.”*
5. Jeremiah 29:13 – *“You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.”*
6. James 4:7-8 – *“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.”*
7. John 3:16 – *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”*
8. 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.”*
9. Rom. 8:38-39 – *“Nothing in all creation is able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*
10. Heb. 4:16 – *“Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”*
11. Romans 8:28 – *“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.”*