

Two Promises

1

Gen 15:1

2

1 After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, “Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; Your reward shall be very great.”

Ex 33:14

14 And He said, “My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest.”

Have you ever made it a point to stop and pay attention to the promises that God has given to His faithful since time began in the Garden? We need to. You see it is the promises of God that are the very crux of our faith and the salvation that we seek. We believe in Christ as the Son of God because God has promised that when we do we can be saved. We choose to change our will to God’s will because He has promised that that is the only way to find the path that leads to Him and a home eternally in heaven. We proclaim that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and live our lives according to that confession because God has promised that there is no other way to be saved than through the name of Christ. And we faithfully obey all that God has said because we want to partake of all that He has promised. Our faith, our obedience, our salvation are all based on the promises of our creator, God.

Isn’t that what we are seeing in these passages? God makes a promise to Abram...

3

“Don’t fear, I am your shield”

And to Moses and the Israelites, God promises that...

“My presence shall go with you”

It is no accident that when we speak of making a promise to somebody it is spoken of as giving our word.

James 5:12

4

12 But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath; but your yes is to be yes, and your no, no, so that you may not fall under judgment.

Here James quotes Jesus who said the same thing in Matt. 5:37, indicating that our character should be such that our yeses and noes are understood to be absolute truth without the need for any superfluous oath taking. That is how man is to understand God’s word.

Titus 1:1-3

5

1 Paul, a bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness, **2** in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago, **3** but at the proper time manifested, even His word, in the proclamation with which I was entrusted according to the commandment of God our Savior,

God cannot lie, so everything, anything, He says is to be understood as the truth and His promise.

The Psalmist writes this of God's judgments in...

Ps 19:9-10

6

9 The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the Lord are true; they are righteous altogether. **10** They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.

The Lord's judgments are true, righteous, desirable, sweeter than honey. The Word of the Lord is His promise. This is an interesting analogy. Bee keepers will tell you that the sweetest of all honey coming from the comb is that which drips from the comb naturally. Most combs have to be taken out of the hive and heated so that the honey then runs off of it. Isn't that what is seen in the scriptures? Some passages reveal themselves like that honey that drips from the comb, and other passages seem to be like black walnuts, almost impossible to crack, but they need breaking open to get at the nourishment inside. That's what it means when we read...

2 Tim 2:15

7

15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. NASV

2 Tim 2:15

15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. KJV

I want to make a point here that I feel is very important. So many times we hear young Christians, and by that I don't mean young people in terms of age, I mean people who are relatively new in their Christianity, regardless of age, those that maybe haven't been exposed as much to some of the deeper studies, or maybe those who have been Christians for a while, but for whatever reasons haven't studied the scriptures in depth like they could have, say things like they wish they had the knowledge that some exhibit or they wish they understood more. That is step one. Recognizing the areas where we need to work on improving. Step two is making the commitment to work on them. Step three is recognizing the limits of our abilities. What I mean by that is; don't try to be something we are not. I could never have been a rocket scientist. I don't have the innate grasp of math and physics required for it. That's not because I didn't try, I took the higher maths and physics, I didn't like them because I didn't get the concepts very easily. I enjoyed music, all kinds, it appealed to me because the concepts made sense to me. I believe that this is what the scriptures talk about as "talents." There are those for whom memorization comes easy, wish I were one of those. I struggle with memorization. There are those that are naturals at seeing what others need in terms of help and supplying it. Those who teach, lead prayer, lead singing, getting in and helping do what needs to be done, these are all talents. What I am trying to illustrate is that we are all different and that includes in how we understand and get the big picture of the scriptures. Some people just don't grasp the intricacies of the scriptures as quickly as others might. Does that make them inferior, what a silly thought that is? Of course it doesn't. But sometimes that's how the reaction of others comes across.

The truly sad part of that is that that kind of reaction tends to make people less likely to ask questions and look for explanations and answers. Remember the Eunuch's response...

Acts 8:30-32

8

30 Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?" **31** And he said, "Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

"Unless someone guides me." We all need guidance, we all need teaching. That is why there are times we study the stories and the basic principles of the scriptures that are vital to the foundation of our Christianity and there times when we look into the deeper things of the scriptures to try and crack those walnuts of nourishment that are there. To do this, you don't have to be a deep theologian, a learned grammarian, a profound philosopher or baffling mystic. The honey of the meaning flows easily and sweetly out of the comb of the scriptures as pure love, pure joy, greatest comfort, and perfect truth. God expects us all to do our best to understand His scriptures to the best of our ability, and to not use whatever our ability might be as an excuse to not try, nor as a tool to try and prove superiority over others. Ultimately, we all need to work together to further the understanding and commitment of each other so that in the end we can all attain the goal of eternal life.

God gave Abram a promise. He said do not fear...

9

"I am a shield to you"

On the surface this seems to be a fairly straightforward and basic principle. God would protect Abram. This illustrates something that is so often found in the scriptures. Many of the passages we read, and some might argue that most or even all, have , on the surface something that can be readily seen and applied and then with closer inspection and understanding deeper and deeper meanings can be seen. God says "I am a shield to you." What a comfort, what a strength, what reassurance that had to be for Abram. His God promised that He would be his shield. But as we begin to look deeper into this thought, we begin to see questions arise. Protect him from what, protect how, and maybe more important to us, what is the application for Christians today?

Abram was called out of his homeland to go to land that God would show him.

Gen 12:1

10

12 Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you;

Do you think that maybe he felt a little apprehension about leaving the home that he had always known to go somewhere he had no familiarity with? Was knowing that his God, the Lord Jehovah, would be there to protect him a comfort ? How could it not be.

1 Thess 2:12

11

12 so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

Paul talks about this calling, giving an indication that it carries with it some inherent responsibility...

12

“Walk in a manner worthy”

Implicit in God’s calling us to Him through Christ is that our walk is to be in manner worthy of the calling. Abram was to face difficulties and perils on his journey to an unknown land and God had promised him that He would be his shield to protect him in that journey.

1 Thess 5:23-24

13

23 Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. **24** Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.

Paul seems to expand on his thoughts from earlier in the book to the Thessalonians when he talks about God sanctifying them and preserving them. Take special note how he ends this thought...

14

“Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass”

It is God who has called, and it is God who sets those that answer apart, and it is God who will preserve those that answer, and it is God who will keep His promises to those who answer His calling. Abram answered and God was faithful to keep His promises to Him. His descendants became a great nation of people, they occupied the land that God had promised to Abram, and through his lineage, Jesus Christ came and the whole of mankind was blessed. God was faithful.

This brings us to the second of the passages we began with...

Ex 33:14

15

14 And He said, “My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest.”

Here we see another promise, this one to the Israelites. God says...

16

“My presence shall go with you”

I see a lot of similarity between this and the promise He gave to Abram about being a shield to Him. God said “don’t fear Abram, I will be your shield,” meaning I will protect you, I will keep from harm, I will deflect any danger that comes your way, and now to the Israelites He is saying that “I will be with you.” To me the same implications are there. God is saying as long as I am with who or what could possibly stand against you. Isn’t that what He says through Paul in...

Rom 8:31

17

31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?

God promises, has always promised, to be with those who answer His calling. But it is the latter part of this passage I want to spend a few minutes on...

18

“I will give you rest”

Jesus makes this same statement in...

Matt 11:28-30

19

28 "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. **29** Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and **YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS.** **30** For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

One of the things that both my mother and father told me before they passed away was that they were ready to go home, they were ready to have rest. God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, have promised rest for those who answer the calling. This life can be overwhelming. It can be difficult, it can be seemingly unbearable, it can be wearisome. There are two dynamics to this idea of the rest that is promised.

20

1) Rest now

Gal 5:1

21

1 It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.

When we respond in faith to God's call that He gives in His Word through His Son Jesus Christ, we are made free from our sin.

Rom 6:22

22

22 But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.

When we have been freed from sin we receive the promised rest NOW, in this world, being made free from the sin that enslaves us. And note what Paul says in the latter part of this passage from Romans, the benefit that can be derived is the second part of this...

23

2) Rest later

We call this rest...

"Eternal Life"

Rom 6:23

24

23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

25

God has promised to be with those who will answer His call. If you have not yet answered that call, why? I would ask you to be honest and truthful, not with me or anyone else, but with yourself. Why haven't you answered? If you don't think you know enough yet, there are many here that would be happy to guide you. If you just don't believe, take a trip to the high country and spend the night looking at the stars, then ask yourself if you truly believe that it's just an accident of nature.

If it's because you just haven't found the time, there is no better time than right now.