

OBTAINING PROMISES

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A SERMON

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“Who through faith...obtained promises.”

Hebrews 11:33

THE promises of God are to the believer an inexhaustible mine of wealth. Happy is it for him if he knows how to search out their secret veins and enrich himself with their hid treasures. They are to him an armory containing all manner of offensive and defensive weapons. Blessed is he who has learned to enter into the sacred arsenal, to put on the breastplate and the helmet, and to lay his hand to the spear and to the sword.

They are to the believer a surgery in which he will find all manner of restoratives and blessed elixirs, he shall find therein an ointment for every wound, a cordial for every faintness, a remedy for every disease. Blessed is he who is well skilled in heavenly pharmacy and knows how to lay hold on the healing virtues of the promises of God.

The promises are to the Christian a storehouse of food. They are as the granaries which Joseph built in Egypt, or as the golden pot wherein the unrotting manna was preserved. Blessed is he who can take the five barley loaves and fishes of promise and break them till his five thousand necessities shall all be supplied, and he is able to gather up baskets full of fragments.

The promises are the Christian's Magna Charta of liberty, they are the title deeds of his heavenly estate. Happy is he who knows how to read them well and call them all his own.

Yea, they are the jewel room in which the Christian's crown-treasures are preserved—the regalia, secretly his today, but which he shall openly wear in paradise. He is already a king who has the silver key with which to unlock the strong room, he may even now grasp the scepter, wear the crown, and put upon his shoulders the imperial mantle.

O how unutterably rich are the promises of our faithful, covenant-keeping God! If we had here the tongue of the mightiest of human orators, and if that tongue could be touched with a live coal from off the altar, yet still it could not utter a tenth of the praises of the exceedingly great and precious promises of God.

Nay, they who have entered into rest, and have had their tongues attuned to the lofty and rapturous eloquence of cherubim and seraphim, even they can never tell the height and depth, the length and breadth of the unsearchable riches of Christ which are stored up in the treasure house of God—the promises of the covenant of His grace. See then, my brethren, how needful it is that you and I should know the heavenly art of by faith “obtaining promises.”

Furthermore, all things under the covenant of grace are by promise. The law had blessings for works. What shall I say? It had only curses for transgressors, since the blessings were never obtained by any who were under the law. But the covenant of grace saith not, “Do this and live,” but it says, “I will,” and “thou shalt.” It says not, “He that doeth these things shall live by them,” but “At such and such a time will I visit you and ye shall be blessed.”

Mention anything you will which is contained in the covenant, and I will show it is by promise. Speak we of adoption? “Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.” “They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise, these are counted for the seed.” Speak you of inheritance? Then “God gave it to Abraham by promise,” we are the “heirs of promise,” “and this is the promise that he hath promised us even eternal life.”

The covenants are described by Paul as being the “covenants of promise.” Even the Gospel itself is in the first chapter of the Romans, at the second verse, spoken of as “The Gospel of God, which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy Scriptures.” Life eternal is described as the “promise of eternal life.”

We, brethren, look for the “promise of his coming,” and after that we, “according to his promise look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.” So that if we should begin at the beginning and run on till we come to the close of the catalog of divine blessings which are bestowed upon us through grace, we might say of them all, “These are *promised* covenant mercies.”

How needful then—in what a tenfold degree is it absolutely necessary that you and I should know how to obtain the promises and see them fulfilled, for if not—failing to obtain the promise, we have lost all things and are of all men the most miserable.

I would try this morning to explain the text, understanding it in two senses. First, some reader might think it means *obtaining the promises in themselves*. Perhaps, a more thoughtful reader would perceive that it may be better understood as *obtaining the fulfillment of the promises*, the phrase means certainly both, but we think that the mind of the Spirit is most fully expressed by the second sense.

I. It is certain that holy men of old, and that good men now, do BY FAITH OBTAIN PROMISES.

Let us give you an instance—the memorable case of Abraham. Abraham is bidden by God to offer up his son Isaac. He was already an heir of the promises, but not as yet had they been revealed to him in their utmost length and breadth. Obedient to the divine command he prepares to offer up his son Isaac, his only son, on whom his hope of posterity depended, counting that God was able either of stones to raise up children, or to raise up Isaac again from the dead. He unsheathes the knife to slay his son. He is prevented from the consummation of the deed. God accepts his sacrifice and rewards it with a promise.

If you will at your leisure read in Genesis twenty-two, commencing at the fifteenth verse, and proceeding onwards, you will see it was then that God conferred on Abraham that great charter wherein it was written, “In blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the seashore, and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.” Now, it was his act of faith which, not meritoriously, but of grace, obtained that noble promise.

Brethren, if you would obtain a promise, your faith must do exploits. When you have made some sacrifice for God, and have been willing in the teeth of human reason to do God’s Word as God bids you, you shall then stand on a vantage ground from which you may reach another and a higher promise than as yet you have ever been able to grasp in the hand of your faith.

It is true the promise is not through the law, but through the righteousness of faith, but to him who like Abraham staggereth not at the promise through unbelief, it shall surely be given to be “heir of the world.” To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundantly. The Spirit of God shall whisper into your soul some promise which shall come home with as much power to you as though an angel from heaven had spoken it to you, and you shall through one act of faith obtain the promise which before was beyond your reach.

Another notable instance is given us in the case of David, where it was not so much faith, as an act consequent upon faith, which brought him the promise, namely, a noble wish to serve God by building a house for Him. David had been storing up much gold and silver that he might build a house for God, for he said, “Behold I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of the covenant of the LORD remaineth under curtains.” He was not permitted to build the house, but as a reward for his desire to do this for his God, Nathan was sent, and then it was that the covenant was made with David, in which he rejoiced even when expiring, because it was “ordered in all things and sure.”

Then Nathan said to him, “And it shall come to pass, when thy days be expired that thou must go to be with thy fathers, that I will raise up thy seed after thee, which shall be of thy sons; and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build me an house, and I will establish his throne for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son; and I will not take my mercy away from him, as I took it from him that was before

thee: but I will settle him in mine house and in my kingdom for ever: and his throne shall be established for evermore.”

Now, brethren, if you and I would obtain the promise, if we would have them spoken home to us with a force as great as if they consisted of novel words for the first time uttered by some seraphic lips, we must resolve to do some great thing for God, and He who expects the grace-indited wishes of His children, will in return lead them into some inner chamber of new delights which they had not known before.

To quote yet another instance. Joshua was about to invade the land of Canaan, and therefore before his arduous enterprise the Lord gave him a new promise. His faith led him to the brink of Jordan, the borders of the promise land, and then and there he by faith obtained a blessed promise, which we will read for our comfort, remembering that venturing in the path of duty upon great enterprises, we may expect like him to win new promises.

“There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I sware unto their fathers to give them. Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.”

One more instance may not be amiss. God sometimes gives His people fresh promises by faith just before a trial is about to come upon them. It was so with Elijah. God said to him, “Go to the brook Cherith, behold I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there.” This was at the beginning of the famine. There he abode, and God fulfilled the promise, for by faith Elijah had obtained it.

Acting upon faith, still dependent upon God, he abides at Cherith, and as the result of this faith, God gives him a fresh promise, “Arise, get you to Zarephath—I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain you.” The faith which received the first promise obtained the honor of a second.

So with you and with me. If we have had a little promise, and up till now have realized it, if we have lived upon it and made it the stay and support of our souls, surely God will give us another and a greater one, and so, from promise to promise speeding our way, we shall find the promises to be rounds of the ladder which Jacob saw, the top whereof shall reach to heaven.

Doubt and be distrustful about the promise that you have, and you cannot expect God to increase His revelation to your soul. Be afraid, stagger through unbelief at that which was laid to your heart yesterday, and you shall not have a new one tomorrow. Oh, that we had power to act as Samson did, who having the promise of God that he should smite the Philistines, with the jaw-bone of an ass laid them heaps on heaps, never reckoning the odds, but having God with him in child-like simple faith he dashed upon his foes and overcame them. We should go from strength to strength, receiving grace upon grace if we had faith to mount from promise to promise.

But I hear someone say, “Is there such a thing as receiving promises now? They are in the Bible, and we can read them, but can they ever come to us as if they were our own?” Oh, yes, dear friends, and that is the best way in which God’s people get at the sweetness of them. I believe in God the Holy Ghost. I believe in His immediate operations in the soul of man. This is the dispensation of the Holy Spirit, and would therefore be strange if He did not speak in us now as much as in the age of types and shadows.

I am not a disciple of the Quakers, although I believe a descendant of one of their early martyrs, but in some matters I heartily agree with them, as for instance, in their testimony to the special and direct monitions, directions, and illuminations of the Holy Spirit. Surely, I know that God the Holy Spirit has dealings with His people today, as much as ever He had with the prophets of old, and there are times

when He takes an old text out of the Word, and re-writes it upon their souls, so that it is as really a revelation fresh from heaven, as though it had never been written in that Book before.

Bilney, that blessed martyr of Jesus Christ, was much wounded in conscience, by reason of the great sin which, through the weakness of the flesh he had committed, by subscribing to Popish errors, at that time he could get no comfort of soul because of his deep and continual sense of sin. The Spirit of God took this text, and made it a balm for all his wounds, “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.” Bilney kept that, believing it to be as much his own as if it had never been uttered by Paul, and he went to the stake and burned right bravely for Christ, in the strength of the promise so opportunely given to him.

Beza says that once when he had been long in great sorrow and deep distress, this text came with power to him, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.”

Mr. Calamy gives us an instance of a young woman who died triumphantly, being sustained by that well-known word of our divine Lord, “Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.” That man of God, Watts Wilkinson, spoke of that promise, “What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shall know hereafter,” as being often a very sweet consolation to him in mysterious dispensations of providence.

It is not for me to speak at any length of what texts have been my own, but there have been turning points in my history in which I have had promises from God, which have been *to me* as marked and as distinctly from heaven as if they had been spoken by seer or prophet who met me in the way. Never shall I forget one instance, which accounts for my being here at this very hour.

When I had resolved to enter college, walking across Midsummer Common, just outside of Cambridge, revolving in my mind the joys of scholarship, and the hope of being something in the world, that text came to my heart, “Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not,” “Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto thee.” All was given up, everything was renounced, the finest prospects seemed to melt into thin air, merely on the strength of that text, believing that God, even our God, would most certainly fulfill to me His promise if I could keep His precept.

Now, if I had told that to another, he might have laughed, but to me it was as solemnly the Word of God as if the heavens had opened, and I had seen them written out in lightning flashes, or heard the thunders of God roll through the sky. I suppose some of you have known the same.

One other instance I cannot fail to narrate. When the cholera was here last time, I wended my way from house to house among the sick and dying. I was one day sad at heart, and thought surely my own time was come, for I had seen many deaths and had been at many graves.

Walking down the Dover Road, I saw in a window, upon a paper fastened to the glass with four wafers, this verse, “Because thou hast made the LORD, even the Most High, thy habitation, there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.” I stopped, attracted by the paper in the window, and read it, and this verse I am certain was as much a revelation to my own heart, and I as much obtained that promise as though an angel had brought it with swift wings from on high.

Your experience, brother Christians, will furnish similar instances, and though we may be sneered at as fanatical by those who do not understand spiritual impressions from the Holy Ghost, yet know we, and we speak only of what we have tasted and handled of the good Word of God, that there is such a thing as still obtaining the promise afresh from heaven—money from the mint of God like new coin all unworn. Faith, and faith alone, can know the secret of obtaining promises.

Thus I have tried to explain the first meaning of the text.

II. As for the second it is somewhat more practical. By faith these men obtained not merely the giving of the promise, but THE FULFILLMENT OF IT.

Now, I shall want your earnest attention, and I hope also your memories will be at work while I try to give some practical regulations for obtaining the fulfillment of the promise. Some persons, however, who have bad memories may think they will get no good.

I remember what an old preacher once did when visited by one of his members who said he feared he gained no good for his memory was bad, whereas, in the opinion of all who saw his holy and heavenly walk, he was one of the most profitable of hearers. Two dirty glasses were produced, and into one of them the minister poured water, and after rinsing a while, he poured it out again, and setting it down by the side of the other he said, "Has not the water had effect even though none remains." So let us hope that you may get good even should your memory retain but very little.

God's promises may be divided into two classes. Some of them are unconditional. They are promises of grace, and of these faith does not obtain the fulfillment, but God fulfills them according to His own sovereign will and pleasure according to the purpose of His grace. I mean promises such as those which relate to the calling of the elect at God's time, their being brought out from death to life, their quickening, their conviction, and regeneration.

Now, man being before grace utterly dead, powerless and lifeless, it is clear that no faith on his part obtains these promises nor even helps to obtain them, but God, when the predestinated hour is come, saith, "It is a time of love," and beholding the infant cast out and in its blood, He says unto it, "Live!"

I ought to add, indeed, that even those promises which might be called conditional are only conditional in a certain sense, for whereas they are conditional in one passage of Scripture you find them unconditional in another. They are conditional only in the order of our attainment and enjoyment of them, but in the plan, purpose, and decree of God, they are all based on unconditional oaths and declarations of eternal love. God saith, "I will" and "they shall," and here the promises all rest.

With regard to many of the promises which have some sort of description appended to them, we must by faith answer the description, or we cannot claim the blessing. Most of them have this condition—"For these things will I be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them."

There are three ways of "obtaining the promise." Many of them only need the outstretched hand to grasp them, you may go with believing faith at once and take the promise, "Ask and ye shall receive." There are many of the promises so readily attainable, that if you are in Christ you may this morning see them fulfilled by simply believing them. Believe them to be true, and you shall have what they promise you.

Some of God's promises are like checks, you present them at the counter and the cash is given, you have but to take the promise stamped by God's own hand, signed and sealed, believe it to be God's, and you shall have the mercy right now. This is true of a very large number of the promises.

Of some others I must give a second direction. You must not simply believe them, but exercise importunate prayer about them. "Knock and it shall be opened." These promises are not to be had for the mere believing. Of some kind of devils it was said, "This kind goeth not out but with prayer and fasting." Of some sort of promises it may be said, "This kind is not fulfilled but by prayer and persistence."

You must knock, and if the gate open not you must knock again, and continue to do so until God shall give you the favor. You are certain to have the blessing if you know how to wrestle with the angel, and declare that you will not let him go unless he shall bestow it upon you.

A third kind of these promises are not even to be fulfilled by prayer or by faith alone, you must obtain them by earnest seeking after them. "Seek and ye shall find." Where God has appended to the promise a something that is to be done, diligently do it and you shall obtain the blessing.

I hold in my hand a book which is very precious to me. It is my treasure house, next to the Bible the most valuable indeed, because it is all Scripture—*Clarke's Scripture Promises*. When I have a trial or trouble, since the promises are here all put under different heads, I can turn at once and find just the promise I want. There are many of these sparkling jewels which cannot be won by prayer, nor be

obtained by an act of faith alone, for instance such as these, “Those things which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do; and the God of peace shall be with you.”

Now, that promise requires something to be done by the Christian, and then the God of peace shall be with him. “Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.” If we refuse to obey God’s commandments, our faith will be a dead faith, and our prayer will be presumption, we must obey the Lord’s will, and then we shall have the blessing.

“Whatsoever we ask we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.” “If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love.” “Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God.”

But here you see, with regard to promises of this kind, and they are very numerous indeed, the *act* of faith must be matured into the *work* of faith, it is not the bare act of faith that gets some promises, not the utterance of faith in prayer, but with these there must be the work, and the fruit, and the patience of faith, or otherwise the clusters hang too high for our reach.

Those three rules contain the pith of what I have to say, but to guide beginners in the divine life a little more fully, let us give a few other regulations.

1. Child of God, babe in grace, would you obtain the promises? Take this advice first—*meditate much upon them*. There are promises which are like grapes in the winepress, if you will tread them the juice will flow. Many a time a believer, when he is like Isaac walking in the fields, meditating in the cool of the day upon a promise, unexpectedly meets his Rebekah, the blessing which had tarried long comes on a sudden home. He sought retirement to meditate upon a promise, and lo! “being in the way God met with him.”

Thinking over the hallowed words will often be the means of fulfilling them. “I was in the spirit on the Lord’s day,” saith John, “and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet.” Just so. It was his being in the Spirit, his meditating upon spiritual things that made him ready to behold the King in His beauty, and to hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Especially, young Christian, meditate much upon those promises which relate personally to Christ. While you are thinking them over, the faith which you are seeking will insensibly come to you. That word which saith, “The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin”—think that over, masticate and digest it, and in the very act of meditation faith will be born in your soul.

Many a man who has thirsted for the promise while he has been considering the divine record, has found the favor which it ensured, gently distilling into his soul, and he has rejoiced that ever he was led to lay the promise near his heart.

I think it was Martin Luther who says that some passages of Scripture are like trees which bear fruit, but the fruit does not easily drop. You must get hold of the tree, says he, shake it, and shake it again, and again, and sometimes you will need to exhaust all your strength, but at the last shake, down drops the luscious fruit. So do you with the promise, shake it to and fro by meditation, and the apples of gold will fall. Let the promise, like the problem of the philosopher, be revolved in your soul, and at last your spirit shall leap for very joy while you say, “I have found it, I have found it, the very thing that my soul has sought after.”

2. Secondly, young man in Christ Jesus, do not only meditate upon the promise, but *seek in your soul to realize it as being the very Word of God*. Say to your soul, “If I were dealing with a man’s promise I should look most carefully at the man who had covenanted with me. If I had a bond or note of hand I should estimate most carefully the credibility, the respectability, and solvency of the man whose name was endorsed thereon. So with the promise of God, my eye must not be so much fixed upon the greatness of the mercy—that may stagger me, as upon the greatness of the promiser—that will cheer me.

My soul, it is God, even your God, God that cannot lie who speaks to you. This word of His which you are now considering is as true as His own existence. He is a God unchangeable, and therefore this

promise has not been revoked. He has not altered the thing which has gone out of His mouth, nor called back one single consolatory sentence. Nor does He lack any power, it is the God that made the heavens and the earth who has spoken to me and said, "Thus and thus will I do." Nor will He, nor can He, fail in wisdom as to the time when He will bestow the favors, for He knows when best to give and when better to withhold.

Therefore, seeing that it is the word of a God so true, so immutable, so powerful, so wise, I will and must believe the promise. See, my brethren, you have already arrived at the faith which obtains the promise. I think we ought to be ashamed of ourselves, every one of us, that we dare to doubt God. Thinking this over the other day a horror of great darkness fell upon my soul, while I mourned that ever I should have been guilty of the infamous blasphemy of doubting God.

To doubt an honest man is to cast a slur upon him, but to doubt God who cannot lie, to doubt God who by an oath has sworn—what! is this to make God a liar, or even a perjurer! Our soul shrinks back from infamy so accursed. Did ever fiend in hell commit a more detestable iniquity than that of doubting the veracity of a God of perfection and truth?

Come, soul, there is the promise, there it stands before you. You say, "I dare not believe it," but I say, "How dare you doubt it? where did you get your arrogance from? how can you speak so exceeding proudly as thus to think of God and say of Him, that He has promised what He cannot or what He will not perform? Lay much to heart then young Christian, the fact that the promise is the very Word of God, and surely you will not find it hard to believe, and so to obtain the promise.

3. Then in the third place, *be sure that you do, in the power of the Spirit of God, what the precept annexed to the promise asks of you.* Follow the example of Moses. Moses knew that there was a promise given to the people of Israel that they should be the world's blessing, but in order to obtain it, it was necessary that Moses should practice self-denial. What did he? He refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, counting it better to suffer the reproach of Christ than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. If the promise commands you to deny yourself you can not obtain it without doing so. Do it, and you have obtained it.

Or suppose that the promise requires at your hand courage—use courage. David felt he had a promise from God that He would keep him. He knew that in his past experience God had been faithful. "Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them." He advanced to the conflict, and the Lord was his deliverer. Go you forth with your sling and your stone, for you will never obtain the promise if you are afraid to face your gigantic foe.

Or does the promise require obedience at your hand? Be obedient. Remember how Rahab, the harlot, hung out from her window the scarlet line, because that was the test of her faith. So do you. Whatsoever Christ has said unto you do it. Neglect no command, however trivial it may seem. What if it be non-essential! what have you to do with that? Do what your Master tells you, asking no questions, for he is an ill servant who questions his Lord's commands. Doubtless you too, like the Ethiopian eunuch, shall go on your way rejoicing when you have been obedient.

Or is the promise made to those who bear a good report of the land? Remember who Caleb and Joshua were, the only two who obtained the promise out of all the host that came out of Egypt, because they alone, "faithful among the faithless found" honored God, and would not dare to distrust Him. So do you honor God.

Let a scoffing world hear your unvarying testimony that your God is good and true. Let not your wretched face whisper to men that you have a hard Master. Let not your groanings and your murmurings make young men suspect that God is tyrannical to His own children, and that they have no joys, no comforts, no delights. Be not as the hypocrites are, of a sad countenance, bow not your head like a bulrush, afflict not your soul, for this is not the service which God demands of you.

Better the palm branch than the willow, fairer the wedding garment than the mourner's weeds. He whom we serve is no Egyptian taskmaster, His yoke is easy, His service pleasure, His reward unspeakable. "Rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say, rejoice." Be not cast down and troubled, as

though the child of God had a cruel parent, and a miserable home, but lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh, and to the timbrel and the harp, march you on to the promised inheritance of the people of God. So shall you by joy of heart, not bringing up an evil report of the land, inherit the promise.

4. But fourthly, another rule. Some of the promises you will not inherit even so, unless you shall *imitate the men who by faith and patience inherit the promise*. Good old Spurstow says some of the promises are like the almond tree, they blossom hastily ere in the very earliest spring, but says he, there are some that are like the mulberry tree, they are very slow in putting forth their leaves. Then, what is a man to do if he has a mulberry tree promise that will not put forth its leaves? Why, he is to wait till it does. If the vision tarries, wait for it till it come, it will not tarry, the appointed time shall surely bring it.

But some men, because God hears not their prayers today, turn like silly children and cannot think that their Father is true. Oh, be you men and add to your faith patience. Wait for His coming as the husbandman waits for the precious fruit of the earth, knowing that there is a time for every purpose under heaven, and while it is always your time to sow, wait till God appoints the time to reap. It is yours now to pray, He shall give you your time to dance when you shall rejoice because the promise has been fulfilled.

5. In the next place take care if you would get the promise that you *select some one that is suitable to your own case*. Being much troubled in heart upon one occasion there was one promise which came home to me. It was this—"His soul shall dwell at ease," and in the strength of that promise my soul learned to dwell at ease in the midst of reviling and misrepresentation and persecutions multiplied. You may find a choice word which will meet your condition that will just suit you.

Have you had five troubles, six, and seven? What do you say to this, "He shall deliver thee in six troubles, yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee." Have you two troubles at once, both of them enough to overwhelm you? You have it here, "When thou goest through the fires thou shalt not be burned." That is one trouble warded off. "When thou goest through rivers they shall not overflow thee." Here is another trouble subdued. There are two at once, fire and water—one to burn and the other to drown. "I will be with thee," saith He, and that word meets both.

Is it sickness, "I will make all thy bed in thy sickness." Is it failure in business, crops, harvest and the like? "At destruction and famine thou shalt laugh." Or is it death? "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

Get hold of just that promise which is suitable to your case. You say, is there one? Why, would you have a list of blessings, you have them here in the catalog of promises, promises of peace, honor, success, plenty, promises of preservation from trouble, support under it, deliverance out of it, promises in sickness, child-bearing, old age, famine, want, war, slander, reproach, promises to the stranger, the exile, the poor, the helpless, the fatherless, the widow, the prisoner, the captive, the dying, promises of justification, pardon of sin, adoption, union and communion with the church, access to God, promises of wisdom, knowledge, divine teaching, promises beyond mention—promises of every grace and of every blessing—we cannot pause to mention them all.

The fiery sword at the gate of the garden turned every way to keep men out of paradise. Oh, blessed be God, this sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, turns every way to keep our enemies from breaking our peace. There are very few medicines which will heal all things, in fact, none. But we may say, there is a promise in the Scripture for every disease, no matter what it may be there is one meant expressly for that case.

And if there should be a person who is the only man in the world who ever had a certain trouble, still he will find a promise exactly to fit his case, for this inspired Book is a universal medicine. Here, O sick souls are all kinds of remedies, and it is not possible that human need should be wider than the divine supply.

Still, brethren, get the one promise that suits you, and that one will be more useful to you than all the rest. Ahab had a great garden, he put Naboth's into it, he had large vineyards, and corn fields, and orchards, and subject-kings and tributaries, but Ahab suffered famine. There was a poor woman, she had nothing, only a little cruse, that was all, no fields, no orchards, no granaries, that one little cruse, however, was inexhaustible, and she knew no lack.

Ah, blessed be God, and there be times with the child of God when everything else is gone, he has only one little cruse, one promise left, but that an inexhaustible one, and he and his house shall live upon it, he shall go in the strength of it all the days that the famine shall last. It is not having many promises, it is appropriating one, and pleading it before God, that shall make us mighty.

6. Again, young believer, would you obtain the promise? Then *be careful that you are thankful for promises you have already obtained*. We must thank God for the mercies we have, or else we shall not have others. In the early days when the Puritans settled in New England they were always having fast days. They had a fast day because their bread was getting short, another fast day because the Red Indians invaded them, another fast day because a ship had not arrived that they expected, and they had so many fast days that they began to get exceedingly weak.

At length, one very wise brother said, "Did they not think it would be as well, now and then, to vary the thing, and to have a feast day occasionally? Would it not be quite as acceptable to God if instead of mourning over mercies they wanted, they were to thank Him for mercies enjoyed?" So they instituted what is called the Thanksgiving Day, which became a perpetual ordinance afterwards—the thanksgiving for mercies received.

Brethren, there is reason and wisdom in such a course. How dare you go and ask for anything else till you have been thankful for what you have? What do you do with poor people who depend upon you? You gave the man some relief yesterday, and he walked away with an ungrateful face, shrugging shoulders, as much as to say, "That's all!" Sometimes when you have given charity to a very greedy person, have you not seen him stand and look at it? What has been your rule when he comes next time? You have sent him away empty, and very properly is he punished.

But how is it the Lord does not serve you the same? You ask Him for a mercy and you get it, and you either look at it as though it were not worth having, or else you enjoy it for a time, and then forget you have ever had it, and never think of thanking Him, and then you knock at His door again, and expect that He will wait upon your lusts when you will not wait upon His throne with thanksgiving. Oh! let us be thankful for the blessings we have, and then we shall attain grace to win the promise we have not.

There is a young man up there who had a little light yesterday, he had been in the darkness before, thank God for the first gleam young man, and you shall have the full daylight soon. There is a young woman there who has been bowed down with a great weight of sin, but her conscience is somewhat at peace, she hopes she has a little faith in the Lord. Oh! bless God for that little faith, and you shall find it grow, but if you will not thank Him, it may be for many a day you shall walk in darkness, and see no light till you shall come to value God's mercies at their proper rate.

7. And lastly, and not to keep you longer, if you would have your faith stirred up, *look at the examples of all who in olden times, and in our own times, by faith have obtained the promise*. Sinner, look you at the many now in heaven who had no more to trust to than you have—the naked promise of God. God says to them as He does to you, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." They trusted Christ and they are saved. Do you the same and you shall find Him true.

*"I ask them whence their victory came,
They with united breath,
Ascribe their conquests to the Lamb,
Their triumph to His death."*

And you! saints of God, look to your noble ancestors. What a pedigree is yours! Through what a host of martyrs, confessors, prophets, and apostles has our blood descended, and all these bear their testimony that not one good thing has failed of all that the Lord God has promised.

Among them all there is no exception, not one of them will impugn the veracity of God. They tried Him on the rack, in the gloomy dungeon, and at the stake. They tried Him in the Roman amphitheater, when their bones were cracking between the jaws of lions. They tried Him in Nero's garden, when the pitch smeared on them was flaming up, an awful sacrifice to God.

They tried Him when then they lay in moldy dungeons rotting, or burning with fever. They tried Him in the tracks of the wild goats, when they wandered about in sheep skins and goat skins, destitute, afflicted, tormented. They tried Him in the bitterness of life, and in the agonies of death, and they all say to you—"Trust in the Lord, believe in Him, so shall He bring it to pass, and you shall attain the promise. Falter not, hesitate not, waver not, but with the unstaggering faith of Abraham, say, 'He that hath promised is able also to perform,' and you shall see it with your eyes and you shall eat thereof. You shall have His presence and blessing in this world, and in the world to come life everlasting."

God help us so to do for Jesu's sake. Amen.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.