

ACCORDING TO PROMISE



Part Three

C. H. Spurgeon



According to Promise

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13. The Rule without Exception

“Blessed be the LORD, that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised: there hath not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant” 1 Kings 8:56.

God gives good things to men according to his promise.

This is a matter of fact, and not a mere opinion. We declare it, and defy all the world to bring any evidence to disprove the statement.

Upon this point the writer is a personal witness. My experience has been long, and my observation has been wide; but I have never yet met with a person who trusted God, and found the Lord’s promise fail him. I have seen many living men sustained under heavy trials by resting in the word of the Lord, and I have also seen many dying persons made triumphant in death by the same means; but I have never met with a believer who has been made ashamed of his hope because of his temporal afflictions, nor with one who on his deathbed has repented of trusting in the Lord. All my observation points the other way, and confirms me in the persuasion that the Lord is faithful to all who rely upon him. About this matter I should be prepared to make solemn affirmation in a court of justice. I would not utter a falsehood under the pretext of a

pious fraud, but I would testify upon this important subject as an honest witness without reserve or equivocation. I never knew a man in the pangs of death lament that he trusted the Saviour. Nay, what is more, I have never heard that such a thing has happened anywhere at any time. If there had been such a case, the haters of the gospel would have advertised it high and low; every street would have heard the evil news; every preacher would have been confronted with it. We should have been met with pamphlets at the door of every church and chapel, reporting that such an one, who had lived a saintly life, and relied on the Redeemer's merits, had discovered in his last hours that he had been duped, and that the doctrine of the cross was all delusion. We challenge opponents to discover such an instance. Let them find it among rich or poor, old or young. Let the very fiend himself, if he can, bear witness to the failure of a single promise of the Living God. But it has not been said that Jehovah has deceived one of his people, and it never shall be said; for God is true to every word that he has ever spoken.

God never stoops to a lie. The mere supposition is blasphemous. Why should he be false? What is there about him that could cause him to break his word? It would be contrary to his nature. How could he be God and not be just and true? He cannot therefore violate his promise through any want of faithfulness.

Furthermore, the Omnipotent God never promises beyond his power. *We* frequently intend to act according to our word, but we find ourselves mastered by overwhelming circumstances, and our promise falls to the ground because we are unable to perform it. It can never be so with the Almighty God, for his ability is without limit. All things are possible with him.

Our promise may have been made in error, and we may afterwards discover that it would be wrong to do as we have said; but God is infallible, and therefore his word will never be withdrawn upon the ground of a mistake. Infinite wisdom has set its *imprimatur* upon every promise; each word of the Lord is registered by unerring judgment, and ratified by eternal truth.

Nor can the promise fail because of an alteration in the Divine Promiser. *We* change; poor, frail things that we are! But the Lord knows no variableness, neither shadow of a turning; hence his word abideth forever the same. Because he changes not, his

promises stand fast like the great mountains. “Hath he said, and shall he not do it?” Our strong consolation rest upon the immutable things of God.

Nor can the word of the Lord fall to the ground through forgetfulness on his part. With our tongues *we* outrun our hands; for, although we are willing, we fail in the performing because other things come in, and distract our attention. We forget, or we grow cold; but never is it so with the Faithful Promiser. His most ancient promise is still fresh in his mind, and he means it now as he did when he first uttered it. He is, in fact, always giving the promise, since there is no time with him. The old promises of Scripture are new promises to faith; for every word still proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord, to be bread for men.

Because of all this, the word of the Lord deserves all faith, both implicit and explicit. We can trust men too much, but we can never do so towards God. It is the surest thing that has been, or that can ever be. To believe his word is to believe what none can fairly question. Has God said it? Then so it must be. Heaven and earth will pass away, but God’s word will never pass away. The laws of nature may be suspended: fire may cease to burn, and water to drown, for this would involve no unfaithfulness in God; but for his word to fail would involve a dishonouring variableness in the character and nature of the Godhead, and this can never be. Let us set to our seal that God is true, and never suffer a suspicion of his veracity to cross our minds.

The immutable word of promise is, and ever must be, the rule of God’s giving. Consider a little, while I make a further observation, namely, that *against this no other rule can stand.* With the rule of God’s promise no other law, supposed or real, can ever come into conflict.

The law of deserving is sometimes set up against it, but it cannot prevail. “Oh,” says one, “I cannot think that God can or will save me, for there is no good thing in me!” You speak rightly, and your fear cannot be removed if God is to act towards you upon the rule of deserving. But if you believe on his Son Jesus, that rule will not operate, for the Lord will act towards you according to the rule of his promise. The promise was not founded upon your merits; it was freely made, and it will be as freely kept. If you inquire how your

ill-deservings can be met, let me remind you of Jesus who came to save you from your sins. The boundless deservings of the Lord Jesus are set to your account, and your terrible demerits are thereby neutralized once for all. The law of merit would sentence you to, destruction as you stand in your own proper person; but he that believeth is not under law, but under grace; and under grace the great Lord deals with men according to pure mercy as revealed in his promise. Choose not to be self-righteous, or justice must condemn you; be willing to accept salvation as a free gift bestowed through the exercise of the sovereign prerogative of God, who says, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." Be humbly trustful in the grace of God which is revealed in Christ Jesus, and the promise shall be richly fulfilled to you.

Neither doth the Lord deal with men according to *the measure of their moral ability*. "Oh," says the seeker, "I think I might be saved if I could make myself better, or become more religious, or exercise greater faith; but I am without strength. I cannot believe; I cannot repent; I cannot do anything aright!" Remember, then, that the Gracious God has not promised to bless you according to the measure of your ability to serve him, but according to the riches of his grace as declared in his word. If his gifts were bestowed according to your spiritual strength, you would get nothing; for you can do nothing without the Lord. But as the promise is kept according to the infinity of divine grace, there can be no question cast upon it. You need not stagger at the promise through unbelief, but reckon that he who has promised is able also to perform. Do not limit the Holy One of Israel by dreaming that his love is bounded by your capacity. The volume of the river is not to be computed by the dryness of the desert through which it flows: there is no logical proportion between the two. With half an eye one can see that there is no calculating the extent of infinite love by measuring human weakness. The operations of almighty grace are not limited by mortal strength, or want of strength. God's power will keep God's promise. It is not your weakness that can defeat God's promise, nor your strength that can fulfil the promise: he that spoke the word will himself make it good. It is neither your business nor mine to keep God's promises: that is his office, and not ours. Poor helpless one, attach your heavy wagon of incapacity

to the great engine of the promise, and you will be drawn along the lines of duty and blessing! Though you are more dead than alive, though you have more weakness than strength, this shall not affect the certainty of the divine engagement. The power of the promise lies in him who made the promise. Look therefore away from self to God. If you are faint, swoon away upon the bosom of the divine promise, if you count yourself dead, be buried in the grave where lie the bones of a promise, and you shall be made alive as soon as you touch them. What we can or cannot do is not the question; but everything hinges upon what the Lord can do. It is enough for us to keep our own contracts without attempting to keep God's promises. I should not like my fellowman to doubt my solvency because a beggar who lives in the next street cannot pay his debts. Why, then, should I suspect the Lord because I have grave cause to distrust myself? *My* ability is quite another question from the faithfulness of God, and it is a pity to mix the two things. Let us not dishonour our God by dreaming that *his* arm has waxed short because our arm has grown weak or weary.

Neither must we measure God by the rule of our feelings. Often do we hear the lamentation — “I do not feel that I can be saved. I do not feel that such sin as mine can be forgiven. I do not feel it possible that my hard heart can ever be softened and renewed.” This is poor, foolish talk. In what way can our feelings guide us in such matters? Do you feel that the dead in their graves can be raised again? Do you even feel that the cold of winter will be followed by the heat of summer? How can you feel these things? You believe them. To talk of feeling in the matter is absurd. Does the fainting man feel that he will revive? Is it not the nature of such a state to suggest death? Do dead bodies feel that they will have a resurrection? Feeling is out of the question.

God gave Solomon wisdom as he had promised him, and he will give you what he has promised, whatever your feelings may be. If you look through the Book of Deuteronomy, you will see how often Moses uses the expression “*as he promised.*” He says (Deuteronomy 1:11), “The Lord bless you as he hath promised you:” he cannot pronounce on Israel a larger benediction. That holy man viewed the dealings of the Lord with constant admiration, because they were “*as he promised.*” In our case, also,

the rule of the Lord's dealings will be "as he promised." Our experience of divine grace will not be "as we now feel," but "as he promised."

While writing thus for the comfort of others, I feel bound to confess that, personally, I am the subject of very changeful feelings; but I have learned to set very small store by them, either one way or the other: above all, I have ceased to estimate the truth of the promise by my condition of mind. Today I feel so joyful that I could dance to the tune of Miriam's timbrel; but perhaps when I wake tomorrow morning I shall only be able to sigh in harmony with Jeremiah's lamentations. Has my salvation changed according to these feelings? Then it must have had a very movable foundation. Feelings are more fickle than the winds, more insubstantial than bubbles: are these to be the gauge of the divine fidelity? States of mind more or less depend upon the condition of the liver or the stomach: are we to judge the Lord by these? Certainly not. The state of the barometer may send our feelings up or down: can there be much dependence upon things so changeable? God does not suspend his eternal love upon our emotions that were to build a temple on a wave. We are saved according to facts, not according to fancies. Certain eternal verities prove us saved or lost; and those verities are not affected by our exhilaration's or depressions. O my reader, do not set up your feelings as a test by which to try the truthfulness of the Lord! Such conduct is a sort of mingled insanity and wickedness. If the Lord has said the word, he will make it good, whether you feel triumphant or despondent.

Again, *God will not give to us according to the rule of probabilities*. It does seem very improbable that you, my friend, should be blessed of the Lord that made heaven and earth: but if you trust the Lord, you are favoured as surely as the Blessed Virgin herself, of whom it is said that all generations shall call her blessed; for it is written, "Blessed is she that believeth: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord." "O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee!" It may seem improbable that an old sinner, steeped in vice, should, by believing in Jesus, at once begin a new life; and yet it shall be so. It may seem very unlikely that a woman living in sin

should hear that word, “He that believeth on him hath everlasting life,” should immediately lay hold upon it, and at once receive everlasting life; yet it is true, for all that; and I have seen it so. Our God is a God of wonders. Things improbable, yea, impossible, with us, are everyday things with him. He causes the camel, despite its hump, to go through the needle’s eye. He calleth the things which are not as though they were. Do you laugh at the very idea of your being saved? Let it not be the distrustful laugh of Sarai, but the joyous expectancy of Abraham. Believe on Jesus, and you shall laugh all over, inwardly and outwardly, not from incredulity, but for quite another reason. When we know God we do not cease to wonder, but we begin to be at home with wonders. I Believe the promise of God’s grace, and believing, you shall live in a new world which shall be always wonderland to you. It is a happy thing to have such faith in God as to expect as certain that which to mere human judgment is most unlikely. “With God all things are possible” it is therefore possible that he should save every soul that believeth in Jesus. The law of gravitation acts in all cases, and so does the law of divine faithfulness: there are no exceptions to the rule that God will keep his covenant. Extreme cases, difficult cases, yea, impossible cases, are included within the circle of the Lord’s word, and therefore none need despair, or even doubt. God’s opportunity has come when man’s extremity is reached. The worse the case, the more sure is it to be helped of the Lord. Oh, that my hopeless, helpless reader would do the Lord the honor to believe him, and leave all in his hands!

How long will it be ere men will trust their God? “O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?” Oh, that we would settle it in our minds that we would never again distrust the Faithful One!

“Let God be true, but every man a liar.” The Lord himself saith, “Is the Lord’s hand waxed short? Thou shalt see now whether my word shall come to pass unto thee or not” (Numbers 11:23). Let not the Lord speak thus to us in anger, but let us believe and be sure that the solemn declarations of the Lord must be fulfilled. Speak no longer one to another, saying, “What is truth?” but know infallibly that the word of the Lord is sure, and endureth forever.

Here is a promise for the reader to begin with: let him test it, and see if it be not true: — “Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will

deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me” (Psalm 50:15).

14. Taking Possession of the Promise

“I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it.” Genesis 28:13.

Timorous souls find much difficulty in laying hold upon the promises of God as being made to themselves: they fear that it would be presumption to grasp things so good and precious. As a general rule, we may consider that *if we have faith to grasp a promise, that promise is ours*. He who gives us the key which will fit the lock of his door intends that we should open the door and enter. There can never be presumption in humbly believing God; there may be a great deal of it in daring to question his word. We are not likely to err in trusting the promise too far. Our failure lies in want of faith, not in excess of it. It would be hard to believe God too much: it is dreadfully common to believe him too little. “According to your faith be it unto you,” is a benediction from which the Lord will never draw back. “If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.” It is written, “they could not enter in because of unbelief;” but it is never said that one who entered in by faith was censured for his impertinence, and driven out again.

Jacob, according to the text with which we have headed this chapter, took possession of the promised land by stretching himself upon it, and going to sleep. There is no surer way of taking possession of a promise than by placing your whole weight upon it, and then enjoying a hearty rest. *“The land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it.”*

How often have I found the promise true to my own self when I have accepted it as truth, and acted upon it! I have stretched myself upon it as upon a couch, and left myself in the hands of the Lord; and a sweet repose has crept over my spirit. Confidence in God realizes its own desires. The promise which our Lord made to those who seek favours in prayer runs thus, — “Believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.” This sounds strange, but it is true; it is according to the philosophy of faith. Say, by a realizing

faith, “this promise is mine,” and straightway it is yours. It is by faith that we “receive promises,” and not by sight and sense.

The promises of God are not enclosures to be the private property of this saint or that, but they are an open common for all the dwellers in the parish of Holy Faith. No doubt there are persons who would, if they could, make a freehold of the stars, and a personal estate out of the sun and moon. The same greed might put a ring-fence around the promises; but this cannot be done. As well might misers hedge in the song-birds, and claim the music of lark and thrush as their own sole inheritance, as propose to keep promises all to themselves. No, not the best of the saints can, even if they wished to do so, put a single word of the God of grace under lock and key. The promise is not only “unto you, and to your children,” but also “to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” What a comfort is this! Let us take up our common-rights, and possess by faith what the Lord has made ours by a covenant of salt.

Words spoken to Jacob belong equally to all believers, Hosea says of him, “Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him: he found him in Bethel, *and there he spake with us.*” So that Jehovah spake with us when he spake with the patriarch. The wonders which God displayed at the Red Sea were wrought for all his people, for we read, “*there did we rejoice in him.*” (See Psalm 66:6.) It is true we were not there, and yet the joy of Israel’s victory is ours. The apostle quotes the word of the Lord to Joshua as if it were spoken to any and every child of God, — “He hath said, I will never leave *thee*, nor forsake *thee*” (Hebrews 13:5), the fact being that no word of the Lord ends with the occasion which called it forth, or spends itself in blessing the individual to whom it was first addressed. All the promises are to believers who have faith enough to embrace them, and plead them at the throne of grace. What God is to one who trusts him, he will be to all such according to their circumstances and necessities.

The Bible has its eye upon each one of us as it utters its words of grace. A Bampton lecturer has well said, “We, ourselves, and such as we are, are the very persons whom Scripture speaks of; and to whom, as men, in every variety of persuasive form, it makes its

condescending, though celestial, appeal. The point worthy of observation is, to note how a book of its description and its compass should possess this versatility of power, this eye, like that of a portrait uniformly fixed upon us, turn where we will.”

*“Eye of God’s word! where’er we turn,
Ever upon us thy kind gaze
Doth all our depths of woe discern,
Unravel every bosom’s maze.”*

*“What word is this? whence know’st thou me?
All wondering cries the humbled heart,
To hear thee that deep mystery,
The knowledge of itself, impart.”*

This singular personality of the word to each one of a thousand generations of believers is one of its greatest charms, and one of the surest proofs of its divine inspiration. We treat our Bibles, not as old almanacs, but as books for the present, new, fresh, adapted for the hour. Abiding sweetness dwells in undiminished freshness in the ancient words upon which our fathers fed in their day. Glory be to God, we are feasting on them still; or if not, we ought to be: and can only blame ourselves if we do not!

The wells of Abraham served for Isaac, and Jacob, and a thousand generations. Come, let us let down our buckets, and with joy draw water out of the old wells of salvation digged in the far-off days when our fathers trusted in the Lord, and he delivered them! We need not fear that we shall be superstitious or credulous. The promises of the Lord are made to all who will believe them: faith is itself a warrant for trusting. If thou *canst* trust, thou mayest trust. After being fulfilled hundreds of times, the words of promise still stand to be yet further made good. Many a time and oft have we stooped down to the spring-head in the meadow, and quaffed a cooling draught; it is just as full and free, and we may drink today with as much confidence as if we now stooped for the first time. Men do not keep their promises over and over again: it would be unreasonable to expect it of them. They are cisterns, but thou, O Lord, art a fountain! All my fresh spring are in thee.

Come, reader, imitate Jacob! As he laid him down in a certain

place, and took of the stones of the place for his pillows, so do thou. Here is the whole Bible for a couch, and here are certain promises to serve as pillows; lay down thy burdens, and thyself also, and take thy rest. Behold, this Scripture and its promises are henceforth thine, — “*the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it.*”

15. Endorsing the Promise

“I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me” Acts 27:25.

Paul had received a special promise, and he openly avowed his faith in it.

He believed that God would fulfil every detail of that promise. In this way he set to his seal that God is true. We are each one of us bound to do this with those words of the Lord which are suitable to our case. This is what I mean by the head-line — *endorsing the promise.*

A friend gives me for the Orphanage a check, which runs thus, “Pay to the order of C. H. Spurgeon, the sum of 10 pounds.” His name is good, and his bank is good, but I get nothing from his kindness till I put my own name at the back of his check or draft. It is a very simple act: I merely sign my name, and the banker pays me: but the signature cannot be dispensed with.

There are many nobler names than mine, but none of these can be used instead of my own. If I wrote the Queen’s name, it would not avail me. If the Chancellor of the Exchequer placed his signature on the back of the document, it would be in vain. I must myself affix my own name. Even so each one must personally accept, adopt, and endorse the promise of God by his own individual faith, or he will derive no benefit from it.

If you were to write Miltonic lines in honour of the bank, or exceed Tennyson in verses in praise of the generous benefactor of the orphans, it would avail nothing. The choicest language of men and of angels would count for nothing; what is absolutely requisite is the personal signature of the party who is named as the receiver. However fine might be the sketch which an artistic pencil might draw upon the back of the draft, that also would be of no sort of

service: the simple, self-written name is demanded, and nothing will be accepted instead of it. We must believe the promise, each one for himself, and declare that we know it to be true, or it will bring us no blessing. No good works, or ceremonial performances, or rapturous feelings, can supply the place of a simple confidence. "He that cometh to God *must* believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Some things may be or may not be, but this *must* be.

The promise may be said to run thus, "I promise to pay to the order of any sinner who will believe on me the blessing of eternal life." The sinner *must* write his name on the back of the draft; but nothing else is asked of him. He believes the promise, he goes to the throne of grace with it, and he looks to receive the mercy which it guaranteed to him. He shall have that mercy: he cannot fail to do so. It is written, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life;" and so it is.

Paul believed that all in the ship with him would escape *because God had promised it*. He accepted the promise as ample security for the fact, and acted accordingly. He was calm amid the storm; he gave his comrades sage and sensible advice as to breaking their fast; and, in general, he managed matters as a man would do who was sure of a happy escape from the tempest. Thus he treated God as he should be treated, namely, with unquestioning confidence. An upright man likes to be trusted; it would grieve him if he saw that he was regarded with suspicion. Our faithful God is jealous of his honour, and cannot endure that men should treat him as if he could be false. Unbelief provokes the Lord above any other sin: it touches the apple of his eye, and cuts him to the quick. Far be it from us to perpetrate so infamous a wrong towards our heavenly Father; let us believe him up to the hilt, placing no bounds to our hearty reliance upon his word.

Paul openly avowed his confidence in the promise. It is well that we should do the same. Just at this time, bold, outspoken testimonies to the truth of God are greatly needed, and may prove to be of seven-fold value. The air is full of doubt; indeed, few really and substantially believe. Such a man as George Muller, who believes in God for the maintenance of two thousand children, is a rare personage. "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find

faith on the earth?" Therefore let us speak out. Infidelity has defied us; let no man's heart fail him, but let us meet the giant with the sling and stone of actual experience, and unflinching witness. *God does keep his promise, and we know it.* We dare endorse every one of his promises. Ay, we would do it with our blood if it were needful! The word of the Lord endureth forever, and of this we are undaunted witnesses, even all of us who are called by his name.

16. The Promise Used For This Life

“Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come” 1 Timothy 4:8.

A sort of affectation prevents some Christians from treating religion as if its sphere lay among the common places of daily life. It is to them transcendental and dreamy; rather a creation of pious fiction than a matter of fact. They believe in God, after a fashion, for things spiritual, and for the life which is to be; but they totally forget that true godliness hath the promise of the life which now is, as well as of that which is to come. To them it would seem almost a profanation to pray about the small matters of which daily life is made up. Perhaps they will be startled if I venture to suggest that this should make them question the reality of their faith. If it cannot bring them help in little troubles of life, will it support them in the greater trials of death? If it cannot profit them as to food and raiment, what can it do for them as to the immortal spirit?

In the life of Abraham we perceive that his faith had to do with all the events of his earthly pilgrimage; it was connected with his removals from one country to another, with the separation of a nephew from his camp, with fighting against invaders, and specially with the birth of the long-promised son. No part of the patriarch's life was outside the circle of his faith in God. Towards the close of his life it is said, “and the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things,” which includes temporals as well as spirituals. In Jacob's case the Lord promised him bread to eat, and raiment to put on, and the bringing of him to his father's house in peace; and all these things are of a temporal and earthly character. Assuredly these first believers did not spirit away the present blessings of the covenant, or regard it as an airy, mystical matter to believe in God.

One is struck with the want of any line of demarcation between secular and sacred in their lives; they journeyed as pilgrims, fought like Crusaders, ate and drank like saints, lived as priests, and spake as prophets. Their life was their religion, and their religion was their life. They trusted God, not merely about certain things of higher import, but about everything, and hence, even a servant from one of their houses, when he was sent on an errand, prayed, "O Lord God of my master, prosper the way which I go!" This was genuine faith, and it is ours to imitate it, and no longer to allow the substance of the promise, and the life of faith, to evaporate in mere sentimental and visionary fancies. If trust in God is good for anything, it is good for everything within the line of the promise, and it is certain that the life which now is lies within that region.

Let my reader observe and practically use such words of God as these, — "Ye shall serve the Lord your God, and he shall bless thy bread, and thy water; and I will take sickness away from the midst of thee"(Exodus 23:25). "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed" (Psalm 37:3). "Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler. Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee" (Psalm 91:3-7). "He shall deliver thee in six troubles: yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee"(Job 5:19) "He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; he shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure"(Isaiah 33:15,16). "For the Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly" (Psalm 84:11). "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the

servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord” (Isaiah 54:17).

Our Saviour intended faith to be our *quietus* concerning daily cares, or he would not have said, “Therefore I say unto you, take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?” (Matthew 6:25, 26.) What else but the exercise of faith concerning temporal things could he have meant when he used the following language? — “And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things” (Luke 12:29,30).

Paul meant the same when he wrote, “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6, 7).

He who is gone to prepare heaven for us will not leave us without provision for the journey thither. God does not give us heaven as the Pope gave England to the Spanish King — *if he could get it*: but he makes the road sure, as well as the end.

Now, our earthly necessities are as real as our spiritual ones, and we may rest sure that the Lord will supply them. He will send us those supplies in the way of promise, prayer, and faith, and so make them a means of education for us. He will fit us for Canaan by the experience of the wilderness.

To suppose that temporal things are too little for our condescending God, is to forget that he observes the flight of sparrows, and counts the hairs of his people’s heads. Besides, everything is so little to him, that, if he does not care for the little, he cares for nothing. Who is to divide affairs by size or weight? The turning-point of history may be a minute circumstance. Blessed is the man to whom nothing is too small for God; for certainly nothing is too small to cause us sorrow, or to involve us in peril. A man of God once lost a key: he prayed about it, and

found it. It was reported of him as a strange circumstance. Indeed, it was nothing unusual: some of us pray about everything, and tremble lest the infinitesimal things should not be sanctified by the word of God and prayer. It is not the including of trifles which is any trouble to our consciences, but the omission of them. We are assured that, when our Lord gave his angels charge to guard our feet from stones in the way, he placed all the details of our life under heavenly care, and we are glad to commit all things to his keeping.

It is one of the abiding miracles of the present dispensation that in Christ we have continual peace under all trials, and through him we have power in prayer to obtain from the Lord all things necessary for this life and godliness. It has been the writer's lot to test the Lord hundreds of times about temporal needs, being driven thereto by the care of orphans and students. Prayer has many, many times brought opportune supplies, and cleared away serious difficulties. I know that faith can fill a purse, provide a meal, change a hard heart, procure a site for a building, heal sickness, quiet insubordination, and stay an epidemic. Like money in the worldling's hand, faith in the hand of the man of God "answereth all things." All things in heaven, and earth, and under the earth, answer to the command of prayer. Faith is not to be imitated by a quack, nor simulated by a hypocrite; but where it is real, and can grasp a divine promise with firm grip, it is a great wonder-worker. How I wish that my reader would so believe in God as to lean upon him in all the concerns of his life! This would lead him into a new world, and bring to him such confirmatory evidence as to the truth of our holy faith that he would laugh sceptics to scorn. Child-like faith in God provides sincere hearts with a practical prudence, which I am inclined to call — sanctified common-sense. The simple-minded believer, though laughed at as an idiot, has a wisdom about him which cometh from above, and effectually baffles the cunning of the wicked. Nothing puzzles a malicious enemy like the straightforward unguardedness of an out-and-out believer.

He that believes his God is not afraid of evil tidings, for his heart has found a calm fixity in trusting in the Lord. In a thousand ways this faith sweetens, enlarges, and enriches life. Try it, dear reader,

and see if it does not yield you an immeasurable wealth of blessedness! It will not save you from trouble, for the promise is, “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33) but it will cause you to glory in tribulations also, “knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us” (Romans 5:3-5).

*My faith not only flies to heaven,
But walks with God below;
To me are all things daily given,
While passing to and fro.*

*The promise speaks of worlds above,
But not of these alone;
It feeds and clothes me now with love,
And makes this world my own.*

*I trust the Lord, and he replies,
In things both great and small.
He honours faith with prompt supplies;
Faith honours him in all.*

17. Searching Out the Promise

“Thou hast promised this goodness unto thy servant” 2 Samuel 7:28.

King David knew what the Lord had engaged to give him, and he referred to it specially in his prayer as “this good thing.” (*Revised Version.*) We greatly need to be more definite in our supplications than we usually are: we pray for everything in such a way that we practically pray for nothing. It is well to know what we want. Hence our Lord said to the blind man, “What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?” He wished him to be aware of his own needs, and to be filled with earnest desires concerning those needs: these are valuable ingredients in the composition of prayer.

Knowing what we need, the next business is to find that the Lord has promised us this particular blessing, for then we can go to God

with the utmost confidence, and look for the fulfilment of his word. To this end we should diligently search the Scriptures, looking much to the cases of other believers which are like our own, and endeavouring to light upon that particular utterance of divine grace which is suitable to ourselves in our present circumstances. The more exact the agreement of the promise to the case, the greater the comfort which it will yield. In this school the believer will learn the value of plenary, ay, of verbal inspiration; for in his own instance he may have to dwell upon so slight a matter as the number of a noun, as Paul did when quoting the promise made to Abraham he remarks "Now to Abraham and his *seed* were the promises made. He saith not, And to *seeds*, as of many; but as of one, And to thy *seed*, which is Christ" (Galatians 3:16).

We may rest assured that somewhere in the inspired page there is a promise fitting the occasion. The infinite wisdom of God is seen in his having given us a revelation which meets the innumerable varieties of his people's conditions. Not a single trial is overlooked, however peculiar it may be. As there is food specially adapted for every living thing upon the face of the earth, so there is suitable support for every child of God in the volume of inspiration. If we do not find a fitting promise, it is because we do not look for it; or having found it, have not yet perceived its full meaning.

A homely comparison may be useful here. You have lost the key of a chest, and after trying all the keys you possess, you are obliged to send out for a smith. The tradesman comes with a huge bunch of keys of all sorts and sizes. To you they appear to be a singular collection of rusty instruments. He looks at the lock, and then he tries first one key and then another. He has not touched it yet; and your treasures are still out of your reach. Look, he has found a likely key: it almost touches the bolt, but not quite. He is evidently on the right track now. At last the chest is opened, for the right key has been found. This is a correct representation of many a perplexity. You cannot get at the difficulty so as to deal with it aright, and find your way to a happy result. You pray, but have not the liberty in prayer which you desire. A definite promise is what you want. You try one and another of the inspired words, but they

do not fit. The troubled heart sees reasons to suspect that they are not strictly applicable to the case in hand, and so they are left in the old Book for use another day; for they are not available in the present emergency. You try again, and in due season a promise presents itself, which seems to have been made for the occasion; it fits as exactly as a well-made key fits the wards of the lock for which it was originally prepared. Having found the identical word of the living God, you hasten to plead it at the throne of grace, saying, "O my Lord, thou hast promised this good thing unto thy servant; be pleased to grant it!" The matter is ended; sorrow is turned to joy; prayer is heard.

Frequently the Holy Spirit brings to our remembrance with life and power words of the Lord which else we might have forgotten. He also sheds a new light upon well-remembered passages, and so reveals a fullness in them which we had little suspected. In cases known to me, the texts have been singular, and for a while the person upon whose mind they were impressed could hardly see their bearing. For years one heart was comforted with the words "His soul shall dwell at ease; and his seed shall inherit the earth." This passage was seldom out of his mind; indeed, it seemed to him to be perpetually whispered in his ear. The special relation of the promise to his experience was made known by the event. A child of God, who mourned his years of barrenness, was lifted at once into joy and peace by that seldom-quoted word, "I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten." The bitter experiences of David as to slander and malice led to the utterance of consoling promises, which have been a thousand times appropriated by obscure and broken-hearted Christians when afflicted with "trials of cruel mockings." Before this dispensation shall close, we doubt not that every sentence of Scripture will have been illustrated by the life of one or other of the saints. Perhaps some obscure and little-understood promise is still lying by until he shall come for whom it was specially written. If we may so say, there is one rusty key on the bunch which has not yet found its lock; but it will find it before the history of the church is finished: we may be sure of that.

The word of the Lord which would remove our present discomfort may be close at hand, and yet we may not be aware of it. With singular knowledge of human experience, John Bunyan

represents the prisoner of Doubting Castle as finding in his own bosom the key called Promise, which opened every door in that gloomy prison-house. We often lie in durance vile when the means of obtaining fullest liberty proffers itself to us. If we would but open our eyes, we should, like Hagar, see a well of water close at hand, and wonder why we thought of dying of thirst. At this moment, O tempted brother, there is a word of the Lord awaiting thee! As the manna fell early in the morning, and lay ready for the Israelites to gather it as soon as ever they left their beds, so does the promise of the Lord wait for thy coming. The oxen and the fatlings of grace are killed, and all things are ready for thine immediate comfort. The mountain is full of chariots of fire, and horses of fire, prepared for thy deliverance; the prophet of the Lord can see them, and if thine eyes were opened thou wouldst see them too. Like the lepers at the gate of Samaria it would be foolish for thee to sit where thou art, and die. Bestir thyself, for close at hand lavish mercy is poured forth, exceeding abundantly above all that thou dost ask, or even think. Only believe, and enter into rest.

For the poor, the sick, the faint, the erring, there are words of good cheer which they alone can enjoy. For the fallen, the desponding, the despairing, the dying, there are cordials which are compounded with an eye to their peculiar maladies. The widow and the fatherless have their promises, and so have captives, travellers, shipwrecked mariners, aged persons, and those in the article of death. No one ever wanders where a promise does not follow him. An atmosphere of promise surrounds believers as the air surrounds the globe. I might almost call it omnipresent, and say of it, "Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?" (Psalm 139:5, 6, 7.) No depth of darkness can hide us from the covenant of promise; say, rather, in its presence the night shineth as the day. Wherefore, let us take courage, and by faith and patience wait in the land of our exile till the day of our home-bringing. So shall we, like the rest of the heirs of salvation, "inherit the promise."

Certain covenant engagements, made with the Lord Jesus Christ, as to his elect and redeemed ones, are altogether without condition

so far as we are concerned; but many other wealthy words of the Lord contain stipulations which must be carefully regarded, or we shall not obtain the blessing. One part of my reader's diligent search must be directed towards this most important point. God will keep his promise to thee; only see thou to it that the way in which he conditions his engagement is carefully observed of thee. Only when we fulfil the requirement of a conditional promise can we expect that promise to be fulfilled to us. He hath said, "He that believeth in Jesus shall be saved." If thou believest in the Lord Jesus Christ, it is certain that thou shalt be saved; but not else. In the same way, if the promise is made to prayer, to holiness, to reading the word, to abiding in Christ, or whatever else it may be, give thy heart and soul to the thing commanded, that the blessing may become thine. In some cases, great blessedness is not realized because known duties are neglected. The promise cannot enter because "sin lieth at the door." Even an unknown duty may whip us with "a few stripes," and a few strokes may greatly mar our happiness. Let us endeavour to know the Lord's will in all things, and then let us obey it without a trace of hesitation. It is not of the way of our wilfulness, but of the tracks of divine wisdom that we read, "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."

Do not undervalue the grace of the promise because it has a condition appended to it; for, as a rule, it is in this way made doubly valuable, — the condition being in itself another blessing, which the Lord has purposely made inseparable from that which thou desirest, that thou mayest gain two mercies while seeking only one. Moreover, remember that the condition is grievous to those only who are not heirs of the promise, to them it is as a thorn hedge, keeping them off from the comfort to which they have no right; but to thee it is not grievous, but pleasant, and it is therefore no hindrance to thine access to the blessing. Those requirements, which show a black cloud and darkness to the Egyptians, have a bright side for the Israelites, and give light by night to them. To us the Lord's yoke is easy, and in taking it upon us; we find rest unto our souls. See then that thou note the wording of the promise, and carry out all its precepts, that all good things may come to thee.

If thou art a believer in the Lord Jesus, all the promises are thine;

and among them is one for this very day of the month, and for this particular place wherein thou art now encamped: wherefore search the roll of thy Magna Charta, and find out thy portion for this hour. Of all the promises which the Lord hath given in his Book, he hath said, “No one of these shall fail, none shall want its mate, for my mouth hath commanded them.” Therefore trust, and be not afraid. Whatever else may prove a failure, the promise of God never will. Treasure laid up in this Bank is beyond all hazard. “It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes.” Let us sing at every remembrance of the God of truth and grace.

*“Tell of his wondrous faithfulness,
And sound his power abroad;
Sing the sweet promise of his grace,
And the performing God.*

*He that can dash whole worlds to death,
And make them when he please;
He speaks, and that almighty breath
Fulfils his great decrees.*

*His very word of grace is strong
As that which built the skies;
The voice that rolls the stars along
Speaks all the promises.”*

18. The Time of the Promise

“The time of the promise drew nigh” Acts 7:17.

Thomas Brooks reminds us that the mercies of God are not styled the *swift*, but “the *sure* mercies of David.” There is nothing of hurry about the procedure of the Lord: it may even seem that the chariots of his grace are long in coming. It is by no means an unusual circumstance for the saints to be heard crying, “O Lord, how long?” It is written “the glory of the Lord shall be thy reward” (Isaiah 58:8). Now the guard of the rear comes up last, but it does come. God may sometimes make us wait; but we shall see in the end that he is as surely the Omega as the Alpha of his people’s salvation. Let us never distrust him, but though the vision

tarry, let us wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry (Habakkuk 2:3).

There once sailed from the port of London a vessel, which the owner called the *Swift-sure*, because he hoped it would prove both safe and speedy. Truly this is a fit name for the Lord's mercy: it is both swift and sure. David may not have said so in the text which Brooks quotes, but he often said as much and even more in others. Did he not say "He rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind?" The Lord is not slow to hear the cries of his people. He has set time to favour Zion, and when that set time is come there will be no delay.

The date for its fulfilment is an important part of a promise; indeed, it enters into the essence of it. It would be unjust to delay the payment of a debt; and the obligation to keep one's word is of the same nature. The Lord is prompt to the moment in carrying out his gracious engagements. The Lord had threatened to destroy the world with a flood, but he waited the full time of respite until Noah had entered the ark; and then, on the selfsame day, the fountains of the great deep were broken up. He had declared that Israel should come out of Egypt, and it was so: "And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt" (Exodus 12:41). According to Daniel, the Lord numbers the years of his promise, and counts the weeks of his waiting. As for the greatest promise of all, namely, the sending of his Son from heaven, the Lord was not behind-hand in that great gift, "but when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman." Beyond all question, the Lord our God keeps his word to the moment.

When we are in need, we may be urgent with the Lord to come quickly to our rescue, even as David pleaded in the seventieth Psalm, — "Make haste, O God, to deliver me; make haste to help me, O Lord" (Verse 1). "I am poor and needy: make haste unto me, O God: thou art my help and my deliverer; O Lord, make no tarrying" (Verse 5). The Lord even condescends to describe himself as making speed to carry out his gracious engagements, saying, "I the Lord will hasten it in his time" (Isaiah 60:22). But we must not pray in this fashion as though we had the slightest fear

that the Lord could or would be dilatory, or that he needed us to quicken his diligence. No. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness" (2 Peter 3:9). Our God is slow to anger, but in deeds of grace "his word runneth very swiftly" (Psalm 147:15). Sometimes his speed to bless his people outstrips time and thought: as, for instance, when he fulfils that ancient declaration, "It shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear" (Isaiah 65:24).

Yet there are delays in the answers to our prayers. As the husbandman does not reap today that which he sowed yesterday, so neither do we always at once obtain from the Lord that which we seek of him. The door of grace does open, but not to our first knocks. Why is this? It is because the mercy will be all the greater for being longer on the road. There is a time for every purpose under heaven, and everything is best in its time. Fruit ripens in its season; and the more seasonable it is the better it is. Untimely mercies would be only half mercies; therefore the Lord withholds them till they have come to their perfection. Even heaven itself will be all the better because it will not be ours till it is prepared for us, and we are prepared for it.

Love presides over the arrangements of grace, and strikes upon the bell when the best moment has arrived. God blesses us by his temporary delays, as well as by his prompt replies. We are not to doubt the Lord because his time has not yet come: that would be to act like petulant children, who must have a thing at the instant, or else they think they shall never have it. A waiting God is the true object of confidence to his waiting people. "Therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you" (Isaiah 30:18). His compassion's fail not even when his gracious operations appear to be suspended, and our grief's are deepened. Yea, it is because he loves us so much that he tries us by delaying his answers of peace. It is with our Father in heaven even as it was with our Lord on earth: "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was" (John 11:5,6). Love closes the hand of divine bounty, and restrains the outflow of favour, when it sees that a solid gain will ensue from a period of trial.

Perhaps the time of the promise has not yet come, because our trial has not yet fulfilled its design. The chastening must answer its purpose, or it cannot be brought to an end. Who would desire to see the gold taken out of the fire before its dross is consumed? Wait, O precious thing, till thou hast gained the utmost of purity! These furnace moments are profitable. It would be unwise to shorten such golden hours. The time of the promise corresponds with the time most enriching to heart and soul.

Perhaps, moreover, we have not yet displayed sufficient submission to the divine will. Patience has not yet had her perfect work. The weaning process is not accomplished: we are still hankering after the comforts which the Lord intends us for ever to outgrow. Abraham made a great feast when his son Isaac was weaned; and, peradventure, our heavenly Father will do the same with us. Lie down, proud heart! Quit thine idols; forsake thy fond dotings; and the promised peace will come unto thee.

Possibly, also, we have not yet performed a duty which will become the turning-point of our condition. The Lord turned again the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends. It may be that the Lord will make us useful to a relative or other friend before he will favour us with personal consolations: we are not to see the face of our Joseph except our brother be with us. Some ordinance of the Lord's house may lie neglected, or some holy work may be left undone; and this may hinder the promise. Is it so? "Are the consolations of God small with thee? Is there any secret thing with thee?" Peradventure we are yet to vow unto the Lord, and make a notable sacrifice unto him, and then will he bring his covenant to mind. Let him not have to complain, "Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money." Rather let us accept his challenge, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing" (Malachi 3:10).

God's promises are so dated as to secure his glory in their fulfilment, and this must be enough for us when we can see no other reason for delay. It may be necessary for us to be made more fully aware of our need, and the great value of the blessings which we crave. That which too lightly comes may be too lightly prized. Perhaps our ungrateful spirits need tutoring to thankfulness by an

education of waiting. We might not loudly sing if we did not deeply sigh. Wanting and waiting lead to panting and pleading; and these in due time lead to joying and rejoicing.

If all things could be known to us as they are known to God, we should bless him with all our hearts for keeping us under the smarting rod, and not sparing us for our crying. If we could know the end as well as the beginning, we should praise the Lord for closed doors, and frowning looks, and unanswered petitions. Surely, if we knew that the Lord's great purposes were answered by our continuing without the pleasures we desire, and bearing the evils which we dread, we should cry aloud to be left in our poverty, and to be shut up in our pain. If we can glorify God by being denied what we seek, we desire to be denied. Greatest of all our prayers, and sum of all the rest, is this one, "*nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.*"

19. The Promises in Possession through the Spirit

"That Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory" Ephesians 1:13, 14.

In a very true and real sense the things promised in the covenant are already the property of believers. "All things *are* yours." The great Father might truly say to each one of the sons who abide in his house, "All that I have is thine." The inheritance is already ours, say the old divines, *in promisso, in pretio, in principiis*; that is to say, in the promise of God, in the price paid by the Lord Jesus, and in its first principles which are infused into us by the Holy Spirit. In his sure promise the Father has already "blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:" he has not only resolved to enrich us in the future, but even now he has endowed us with the treasures of his love. The Lord Jesus has not merely made us heirs of an infinite estate in the ages to come, but he has brought us into immediate enjoyment of a present portion; as saith the Scripture, "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance."

The Holy Spirit is in many ways the means of making the promised heritage ours even now. *By him we are "sealed"* We

know of a surety that the inheritance is ours, and that we ourselves belong to the great Heir of all things. The operations of the Holy Ghost upon us in our regeneration, and his abiding in us by sanctification, are certificates of our being in grace, and of our being inheritors of glory. Beyond all other testimonies of our being saved, there stands this sure and certain evidence, namely, that the Spirit of the living God rests upon us. Repentance, faith, spiritual life, holy desires, upward breathings, and even “groanings which cannot be uttered,” are all proofs that the Holy Ghost is working upon us; and working in a way peculiar to the heirs of salvation. Life breathed into us by the Holy Ghost is the great seal of the kingdom of God to our souls. We need no dreams, nor visions, nor mystic voices, nor rapturous feelings: the quickening and renewing of the Holy Ghost are better seals than these. The Spirit of promise does not prepare men for a blessedness which shall never be theirs. He who hath wrought us to the self-same thing will secure that blessing to us for which he hath prepared us. The faintest impress of the seal of the Spirit is a better attestation of our part and lot with the people of God than all the presumptuous inferences which self-conceit can draw from its heated fancies.

Nor is the Holy Spirit only the seal of the inheritance, *he is also the earnest of it*. Now an earnest is a part of the thing itself, given as a guarantee that the remainder will be forthcoming in due season. If a man is paid a part of his six-days’ wage in the middle of the week, it is earnest-money. In this an earnest differs from a pledge, for a pledge is returned when we receive that which it secured; but an earnest is not returned, for it is a part of that which is promised. Even so the Holy Spirit is himself a great portion of the inheritance of the saints; and in having him we have the beginning of perfectness, of heaven, of eternal glory. He is everlasting life, and his gifts, graces, and workings are the first principles of endless felicity. In having the Holy Ghost we have the kingdom which it is our Father’s good pleasure to give to his chosen.

This will be made clear by a few moments’ reflection. Heaven will much consist in holiness; and it is clear that, as far as the Holy Ghost makes us holy here, he has implanted the beginnings of heaven. Heaven is victory; and each time that we overcome sin,

Satan, the world, and the flesh, we have foretastes of the unfading triumph which causes the waving of palms in the New Jerusalem. Heaven is an endless Sabbath; and how can we have better antepasts of the perfect rest than by that joy and peace which are shed abroad in us by the Holy Ghost? Communion with God is a chief ingredient in the bliss of the glorified; and here below, by the Spirit of God, we are enabled to delight ourselves in the Lord, and rejoice in the God of our salvation. Fellowship with the Lord Jesus in all his gracious designs and purposes, and likeness to him in love to God and man, are also chief constituents in our perfected condition before the throne; and these the Spirit of holiness is working in us from day to day. To be pure in heart so as to see God, to be established in character so as to be fixed in righteousness, to be strong in good so as to overcome all evil, and to be cleansed from self so as to find our all in God; are not these, when carried to the full, among the central benedictions of the beatific vision? And are they not already bestowed upon us by that Spirit of glory and of power which even now rests upon us? It is so. In the Holy Spirit we have the things we seek after. In him the flower of heaven has come to us in the bud, the dawn of the day of glory has smiled upon us.

We are not, then, such strangers to the promised blessings as common talk would make us out to be. Many repeat, like parrots, the word, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Corinthians 2:9); but they fail to add the words which follow in the same Scripture, "but God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit." What cruelty thus to cut the living child of Scripture in halves! The Holy Spirit has revealed to us what neither eye nor ear has perceived: he has drawn back the curtains, and bidden us see the secrets hidden from ages and from generations. Behold, in the life of God within your soul, the everlasting life which is promised to them that love God. The life of glory is but the continuance and the outgrowth of the life of grace. Behold, in reconciliation through the atoning blood, that celestial peace which is the groundwork of eternal rest. See, in the love of God shed abroad in the believing soul, a foretaste of the fragrance of felicity. Mark, in the immovable security and hallowed serenity of full

assurance, a forecast of the infinite repose of Paradise. When our inward joys swell high, and burst into a song, then we hear preludes of the heavenly hallelujahs. If we would know the clusters of Canaan, lo, they are brought to us by those emotions and anticipation's, which, under the guidance of the Spirit, have gone, like spies, into the good land, and brought us hence its choicest fruits!

It is not only that we *shall* have an inheritance: but WE HAVE IT. In having the Holy Spirit, we are already put in possession of the land which floweth with milk and honey. "We which have believed do enter into rest" (Hebrews 4:3). "Ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, and to an innumerable company of angels" (Hebrews 12:22).

What remains for such persons, thus made partakers of a divine inheritance in the Son of God, but that they walk worthy of their high, holy, heavenly calling? "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God" (Colossians 3:1).

20. Jesus and the Promises

"For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us" 2 Corinthians 1:20.

Jesus, our Lord, stands for ever connected with the way of the promise. Indeed, he is "the way, the truth, and the life." No man comes to the Faithful Promiser but by Jesus Christ. We could not close this little book without a short chapter upon HIM. Our hope is that the reader will not attempt to obtain any comfort from a word that we have written, or even from the Word of God itself, except as he receives it through Jesus Christ. Apart from him the Scripture itself contains nothing which the soul of man may live upon. This, indeed, is the great fault of many — they search the Scriptures, for in them they think they have eternal life, but they will not come unto Christ, that they might have life. Let us not be of this foolish company; but let us come to Jesus day by day, knowing that it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell. Only as we know him do we know the light, life, and liberty of the heirs of promise; and, as surely as we wander from him we

roam into bondage. Oh, for grace to abide in him, that we may possess all the good things of the covenant made with us in him!

Jesus is the Gate of the promises. Through him the Lord is able to enter into gracious engagements with guilty men. Until “the seed of the woman” had been appointed to be the Mediator between God and man, no messages of comfort could be sent to the offending race. God had no word for sinners till the Word of God undertook to be made flesh, and to dwell among us. God could not communicate his mind of love to men except through Jesus, the Word. As God could not come to us apart from the Messenger of the covenant, so we could not approach to him except through the Mediator. Our fears drive us away from the Holy One till we see in the Son of God a Brother full of tender sympathy. The glory of the divine Trinity overawes us until we behold the milder radiance of the Incarnate God. We come to God through the humanity of his Son, and especially through that humanity suffering and dying on our behalf.

Jesus is the Sum of all the promises. When God promised his Son to be ours, he gave us in him all things necessary for our salvation. Every good gift and every perfect gift will be found within the person, offices, and work of our Redeemer. All the promises are “in him.” If you would add them up, or make a long catalogue of all the blessings which they secure to us, you may save yourself the pains, and be happy to know that this is the full total — the Lord has given us his Son Jesus. As all the stars are in the sky, and all the waves are in the sea, so are all covenant blessings in Christ. We cannot think of a real blessing outside of our Lord: He is all in all. On this thread all pearls are strung: in this casket all gems are contained.

Jesus is the Guarantee of the promises. He that spared not his own Son will deny nothing to his people. If he had ever thought of drawing back, he would have done so before he had made the infinite sacrifice of his Only-begotten Son. Never can there be a suspicion that the Lord will revoke any one of the promises since he has already fulfilled the greatest and most costly of them all. “How shall he not with him also freely give us all things?”

Jesus is the Confirmer of the promises. They are “in him yea, and in him Amen.” His coming into our nature, his standing as our

federal Head, and his fulfilling of all the Stipulations of the covenant, have made all the articles of the divine compact firm and enduring. Now is it not only kind but just with God to keep his promises to men. Since Jesus has rendered, on man's behalf, a full recompense to the divine honour which sin has assailed, the justice of God unites with his love in securing the carrying out of every word of promise. As the rainbow is our assurance that the world shall never be destroyed by a flood, so is Jesus our assurance that the floods of human sin shall never drown the faithful kindness of the Lord. He has magnified the law, and made it honourable; he must be rewarded for his soul-travail, and therefore all good things must come to those for whom he died. It would be an unhinging and dislocation of all things if the promises were now to become of none effect after our Lord has done all that was required to make them sure. If we are indeed one with the Lord Jesus Christ, the promises are as sure to us as the love of his Father is to him.

Jesus is the Remembrancer of the promises. He pleads with God on our behalf, and his plea is the divine promise. "He made intercession for the transgressors." For the good things which he has promised the Lord will be inquired of by us that he may do them for us; and that this inquiry may be carried out under the most encouraging circumstances, behold, the Lord Jesus himself becomes the Intercessor for us: for Zion's sake he doth not hold his peace, but day and night he makes remembrance of the everlasting covenant, and of the blood whereby it was sealed and ratified. At the back of every promise stands the living, pleading, and prevailing High-priest of our profession. *We* may forget the faithful promise, but he will not: he will present the incense of his merit, and the engagements of God on our behalf, in that place within the veil where he exercises omnipotent intercession.

Jesus is the Fulfiller of the promises. His first Advent brought us the major part of the blessings which the Lord has foreordained for his own, and his second Advent is to bring us the rest. Our spiritual riches are linked with his ever-adorable person. Because he lives, we live; because he reigns, we reign; because he is accepted, we are accepted. Soon, at his manifestation, we shall be manifested; in his triumph, we shall triumph; in his glory, we shall be glorified. He is himself the Alpha and the Omega of the promises of God: in

him we have found life as sinners, in him we shall find glory as saints. If he be not risen, our faith is vain; and if he come not a second time, our hope is a delusion; but, since he has risen from the dead, we are justified; since he will come in the glory of the Father, we also shall be glorified.

READER, WHAT HAST THOU TO DO WITH CHRIST?

All will depend upon thine answer to this question. Dost thou rest alone in HIM? Then the Lord has promised to bless thee, and do thee good; and he will surprise thee with the amazing manner in which he will do this unto thee. *Nothing is too good for the Father to give to the man who delights in his Son Jesus.*

On the other hand, art thou trusting to thine own doings, feelings, prayings, and ceremonials? Then thou art of the works of the law, and thou art under the curse. See what we said of the seed of Hagar, the bondwoman; and guess what thy portion will be. Oh, that thou wouldst quit the house of bondage, and flee to the home of free grace, and become one whom God will bless

ACCORDING TO THE PROMISE!

God grant this great favour unto thee for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

The third of three booklets.

