

THE PROMISE OF TRIUMPH

Scripture Reading: Romans 8:31

"If God be for us, who can be against us?" This is an answer, a question, and a promise.

The answer to the preceding question is of exclamation, "What shall we say to these things?" (verse 31). These things to which Paul is responding are the glorious truths in the preceding verse: "whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified" (verse 30). God, who "calleth those things that be not as though they were" (4:17), here considers the believer not only predestinated, but also glorified! Paul's *answer* to this question is stated in *question form*, "If God be for us (and of course He is!), who can be against us (and succeed)?"

Now all this turns out to be a wonderful *promise* of the constant, keeping, eternal care of God over all of us who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; but this is not all. For Paul continues to rhetorically ask, "How shall He [God] not with Him [Christ] freely give us all things?" As Paul goes on to enumerate some of the glories that are included in "all things," I often think and ponder how anyone today could go beyond the Scriptures to the Body of Christ, and claim Israel's place or blessings. With all the blessings lavished upon us in this dispensation of the grace of God, there just is no need nor excuse to lower our position in the heavenlies in Christ and claim something which God has reserved for others. Without doubt, God is more glorified when we by faith appropriate what He has bestowed upon us and give Him the thanks!

Ivan L. Burgener

Notes:

GOD'S PROMISE vs. MAN'S EFFORTS

Scripture Reading: Romans 4:14-15

"For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise of none effect: Because the law worketh wrath. . ." (Romans 4:14,15). This should be self-evident to us. If blessing is gained by the works of the law, it is *earned*. This is why Galatians 3:18 says: "*If the inheritance be of the law it is no more of promise, but God gave it to Abraham by promise.*"

The Apostle Paul, God's great apostle of grace, declares in Romans 4:4-5: "*Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.*" Let's go back to that phrase: "*the law worketh wrath.*" Many people just don't want to see this. Even some clergymen tell us that the law was given to help us to be good; but God Himself says, "*the law worketh wrath.*" Every criminal knows this, and every sinner should know it. God certainly places strong emphasis on it: "Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions" (Galatians 3:19) "that every mouth might be stopped, and all the world brought in guilty before God" (Romans 3:19). "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified, for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20).

If we come to God expecting eternal life because of our good works, are we not offering Him *our* terms, which He will never accept? He will never *sell* salvation at any price, and certainly not for a few paltry "good" works, when our lives have been filled with failure and sin.

Our only hope? God has *promised* to give eternal life to those who trust in His Son (John 3:35-36, Acts 16:31, etc.). "The *gift* of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23). So, simply trust Christ and accept salvation as the precious gift He purchased for you.

Cornelius R. Stam

A PROMISE OF SALVATION

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 2:13

Fellow Gentiles, are you fully appreciative of our wonderful position in the Body of Christ? After coming through one of the most woeful verses in the Bible, Ephesians 2:12, we ought to be.

After the tower of Babel, God (for all intents and purposes) was through dealing with the nations. He then centered His attention and love upon "His own"—Israel. The Old Covenant (Testament) is full of His constant care for them, even to the extent of fighting wars on their behalf. Understanding the Old Testament dispensationally gives us a warm appreciation of what we *now* have in Christ.

Even opening our Bibles to Matthew, we find that nothing in God's program concerning Israel has changed, not even after the cross! Many there are who believe the Bible should be divided into events before the cross and those following. The two great divisions are, of course, prophecy and the mystery. That's a subject in itself.

So when we come to the words BUT NOW in Ephesians 2:13, it indicates a departure from that which went on before. Now we who were afar off are made near "by the blood of Christ." We could not be made near until God had taken the "near ones" and set them aside first. Once this happened to Israel, the way was open for BOTH Jews and Gentiles via the cross.

Ralph F. Balog

Notes:

UNITY IN CREATION

Scripture Reading: Genesis 2:18, 21-24

Human reason and philosophy claim conviction of the value of unity. "In unity there is strength." "We hang together, or we'll hang separately." "United, we stand; divided, we fall." All these are axioms authored and embraced by humankind. But it seems that attainment of this idealistic and commendable goal remains ever beyond reach.

God, on the other hand, is able to engender and preserve perfect unification under His own plan and on His own terms. He created a perfect environment. He then created an occupant to dwell within that environment—a guileless being destined to live an idyllic existence in a sylvan climate. Then the final touch: "I will make him an help meet for him." This conjunction epitomized all that is significant of a perfect union. "And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh."

But there was a condition involved. The two innocents who were as one, were endowed with the ability to choose between right and wrong; and therein lies a tale! One stipulation, and one only, God set down: "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:17).

The rest is history! Adam did the one thing that could displease God; he ate the forbidden fruit and destroyed the perfection of the man-God relationship under the Dispensation of Innocence. The flawless unity was marred by separation, and man's futile struggles had begun to form a continuous history of self-defeat.

Robert E. Hanna

Notes:

DESTRUCTION BY DISOBEDIENCE*Scripture Reading: Genesis 4:8-12*

"Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18). From the beginning, God has instructed man in the ways of righteousness; and from the beginning, man has been free to comply with or to rebel against God's expressed will. Between the first two sons of father Adam, there existed a clear contrast. Abel elected to be willingly obedient; Cain chose to "do it his way."

"Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord [a boastful show of pride in his personal accomplishment]. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof [an obedient act of humble submission to the specific conditions set forth by God regarding sacrificial offering].

"And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering. But unto Cain and to his offering He had not respect" (Genesis 4:2b-5a).

Failure to comply with God's specific will is in itself unacceptable; but Cain compounded his offense with an act of open rebellion—the wanton murder of his own brother as an expression of resentment toward the very righteousness which he had already openly defied.

With the knowledge of good and evil comes the ever-deepening fracture marring the perfection of unity which preexisted the Dispensation of Conscience, under which the foregoing tragic drama was shamefully enacted.

REH

*Notes:***IMPERFECTION BY APPOINTMENT***Scripture Reading: Genesis 9:1-6*

Perfection on earth having been tainted by the iniquity of our faithless forefather, man became subject to the authority of man. God committed to Noah responsibility of headship over the social structure of his time. Stern conditions were clearly defined and enumerated. "And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered...And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made He man."

Capital punishment is hereby instituted. The necessity for such an administration is purely the result of man's infidelity. Had there been no humanly-incurred breach of fellowship with the Creator of perfection, there would be no possibility of any infraction deserving of retribution.

Because it is now entrusted to the fallible judgment of mortal man, the rendering of justice cannot be flawlessly accomplished. The God of perfection originally enjoyed total unity with his perfect creatures. Now that unity is broken and must await the inevitable restitution which will be the culmination of His completed plan before it is restored.

The wonder of it all is that God's total will and purpose will be accomplished despite man's ineptitude in the Dispensation of Human Government.

REH

Notes:

UNCLAIMED PROMISE

Scripture Reading: Hebrews 3:19

“For ever, O Lord, Thy word is settled in heaven. Thy faithfulness is unto all generations: Thou hast established the earth, and it abideth” (Psalm 119:89-90). “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise” (II Peter 3:9).

Any barrier between God and His children is invariably erected by them—never by Him. A consistent symbol of disobedience, God’s chosen people Israel have imposed their own limitations upon the fulfillment of His promises from the very outset of their relationship. God’s promise to Abraham and his seed was absolute. The stated initial conditions were perfectly clear and simple: “Get thee out of thy country AND FROM THY KINDRED, and from thy father’s house, unto a land [Canaan] that I will show thee.” (Genesis 12:1). But what did Abraham [then called Abram] do in response to these instructions? Instead of leaving his kindred, he left his country *with* them; and instead of entering Canaan, he stopped en route and established residence for the next twenty-five years.

As for Israel, their performance was true to the example of their ancestor. They were given the glad news by Moses: “Behold, the Lord thy God hath set the land before thee: go up and possess it, as the Lord God of thy fathers hath said unto thee; fear not, neither be discouraged” (Deuteronomy 1:21). What was their response? Unanimous agreement! But again, Moses speaks: “Notwithstanding ye would not go up, but rebelled against the commandment of the Lord your God” (Deuteronomy 1:26). So much for unity in the Dispensation of Promise!

REH

Notes:

NEITHER GODS OF GOLD

Scripture Reading: Exodus 20:23

“Neither shall ye make unto you gods of gold.” How clear—how plain! The children of Israel were not hearing-impaired. The Lord their God was a jealous God Who would tolerate no other God before Him. God was establishing the law in unmistakably specific terms. With these words fresh in their minds, they proceeded to defy the Supreme Authority of the Source of their deliverance.

“And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron. And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, THESE BE THY GODS, O ISRAEL, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt” (Exodus 32:3-4).

God’s purpose has ever been to establish a bond of love and peace between Himself and his people. In dealing with Israel, He gave them law as a means to this end; and they spurned it. What a reception for a God of such loving patience! David prayed, “Thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth” (Psalms 86:15). What irony that God was moved to say to Israel, “All day long have I stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people” (Romans 10:21)!

Man has nothing to offer God other than compliance with His will. It is *God* that gives; man is the recipient. “Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good [act of giving] and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights” (James 1:16-17a). Compliance? Not in the Dispensation of Law!

REH

Notes: