

God's Intervention: God's Promises

Introduction

1. Totally crucial to distinguish between God's promises and commands. God's promises are what He will do. God's commands are what He tells us to do.
2. Well, what about the commands? In the covenant of grace, all the commands are also promises. What this means is that God says, "Love me," but He also promises to empower us to love Him (Dt. 30:5–6, Rom. 5:5). Everything commanded is promised!
3. In all of these categories, it is important to note
 - a. Each category represents something we are anxious about.
 - b. Each category is only ultimately resolved in God.
 - c. Each category also has secondary blessings that we can't be our ultimate foundation but can point us to our ultimate foundation, i.e., savings is one way that God provides for our future.
4. You can think of different categories or different ways to slice them up, but I have found it helpful to think of the promises of God in terms of acceptance, security, power, and purpose.

Acceptance

1. How we are anxious about it: what people think about us, whether people will be there for us, how people look at us, what our reputation will be, etc.
2. Some of God's promises concerning security
 - a. "To me this is like the days of Noah, when I swore that the waters of Noah would never again cover the earth. So now I have sworn not to be angry with you, never to rebuke you again. Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed," says the Lord, who has compassion on you (Is. 54:9–10).
 - b. Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea (Micah 7:18–19).
 - c. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:38–39).
3. Secondary confirmations: friends, parents, kind looks, compliments, encouragement, etc.

Security

1. How we are anxious about it: will we be healthy? Will our children be cared for? Will we have a job? Will we have enough for retirement?
2. God's promises
 - a. "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze" (Is. 43:1b–2).
 - b. Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? (Mt. 6:26)
 - c. And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:19).
3. Secondary confirmations: health care, savings, homes, skills, contracts, etc.

Power

1. How we are anxious about it: Will I be able to do the right thing? Will I know what to do? Am I competent? How can I make it through today?
2. God's promises
 - a. I will give them singleness of heart and action, so that they will always fear me and that all will then go well for them and for their children after them. I will make an everlasting covenant with them: I will never stop doing good to them, and I will inspire them to fear me, so that they will never turn away from me (Jer. 32:39–40).
 - b. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint (Is. 40:29–31).
 - c. "[B]eing confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 1:6). I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength (Phil. 4:12–13).
3. Secondary confirmations: you got up today; you have many skills; you have done significant things; you have grown; you have learned; etc.

Purpose

1. How we are anxious about it: how do I make sense of everything? Does my life matter? Is what I am doing significant? Have I made a good use of my life?

2. God's promises
 - a. "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you" (John 15:16).
 - b. "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving" (Col. 3:23–24).
 - c. "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Eph. 2:10).
3. Secondary confirmations: you have blessed people; you have accomplished goals; you have contributed to people's lives; you have contributed to the kingdom; you have made an impact on your children; etc.

Small Group Questions

1. In which one of these areas do you struggle the most with believing the promises of the Lord?
2. Which of these promises resonated most with you today?
3. Are there other passages of Scripture that have really resonated with you in these categories that we have not mentioned today?