

The Promise of God: Eternal Life

There are two places in the New Testament, even in the letter of the word, where the testimony is that we are part of one another. It isn't just that we are joined to one another, but we are actually made part of one another. It's the reason that makes judgment so difficult to navigate. When judgment comes and it separates and it is divisive, it actually damages the body of Christ. So, it says that there are many that are sick among you and some die because you are not discerning the body of Christ. In the same context, it says, When you see one taken in a fault, go in humility, giving evidence of the interest of the Holy Spirit, and restore. It doesn't say, Evaluate. It certainly doesn't say, Condemn. If you see somebody hungry, you feed them. If you see them cold, you give them a coat. If you see them lost, you provide a context for comfort. This is the disposition of, Let brotherly kindness continue. If each one of us were always everything that we should be to one another, there would be no need for that exhortation. I think it's important that we recognize that it's not what we evaluate, it's not so important what we assess, but it's most important how we respond to what we see.

Quite honestly, over the last several years, I think the thing that I am being convinced of more than any one thing is that my salvation, that me being saved is by me being made a savior – me becoming a provision for what I see as the need that is around me. The process of this isn't to be high-minded and think I am everybody's solution, but a necessary aspect to becoming a savior is to experience the benefit of God's salvation in my own life. One of the greatest evidences of this, I think, is mentioned by John in his epistle to the church when he said, Herein do we know that we have passed from a life that needed to be saved into a life which has been saved – not just the beginning, but the full extent of that salvation – when we love the brethren. This is how we know we have passed from death into life, the intent of God having a priest on the earth, which certainly is a solid definition of the manifestation of the sons of God.

So, we have a priest in the heavens; what's lacking is the distribution of that in the earth. The manifestation of the sons of God is that there are some who have grown up so that their heart is the same as God's heart toward that creation. Jesus, in this regard, said it this way, If you only love those who love you, what better are you than the heathen? To love the heathen, to love those that hate you, to love those who despitefully use you, to love those that curse you. He came unto his own and his own crucified him, and yet he gave himself willing and wept that they

would not allow him to gather them. The redemption of God certainly has to be effective in our own lives, but before our body is going to put on a glorified body, before we have any hope of not being unclothed but being clothed upon, we are going to have to become redeemers. I'm not suggesting that that means the redemption of the blood of Jesus is inadequate, neither would I suggest that when Jesus said, Greater works than I have done shall ye do, that that means we are going to do something that is more spiritual. However, the distribution of God's salvation to a lost and dying creation can only be magnified and made known because it has proven to be effective in some. The question of the Holy Spirit to each one of us today is, Today, are you willing to become one of some? Are you willing, not only to forgive, but having learned to forgive, recognize the greater value of not being offended? Not living of this world while in the world, but living and walking in the spirit while in this world, drawing upon the superabundant provision of grace. Then, we can be an absorbing of the offense without taking the offense by being offended.

I think we all have common ideas when I Corinthians 13 is mentioned. For example, if I hear somebody mention the 13th chapter, I say, Oh, the love chapter, the agape love chapter. But there's a sense in which not only is it that, but it is also a tutoring for us on the disposition of God toward his creation, that God is in this seeking our benefit. The author of Hebrews said, You know, we've all had fathers who disciplined us according to their benefit, according to what pleased them, but God is seeking to discipline us for our benefit. When we have received the full administration of the redemptive capacity of the blood of Jesus Christ, then we can be the evidence or the manifestation of that salvation to the world.

I want to take a look in the scripture, beginning in Titus. I'm going to confess ahead of time that I am going to be guilty of something that isn't always a good idea. I'm going to be introducing scriptures that have context, but I'm not going to put them in context. The context of these scriptures is something with which we are all familiar, not only with the verses themselves, but also with the concept in which this verse is presented. So, in Titus the first chapter, the second verse only. In hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before the world began. Before one atom was created, there was something that was present. If there is a creation, it presupposes there must be a creator; the creator obviously precedes the creation. So, we are talking about God having an intent, a purpose, and a plan. All of those pre-existed him speaking that which is seen into a created environment, and here the scripture says that what was his intent was eternal life. It says that

before he made or began that which is created that he had a promise which was eternal life.

It also says that God cannot lie. What it is for God to not lie is different than it is for me to not lie. If we tell the truth and don't lie, we speak accurately; however, the reason that it is impossible for God to lie is because, as opposed to me, he is a creative being. If I'm going to speak accurately, I say things the way they are. If I say, During the day on a cloudless day, the sky is blue, I'm describing something that already is. That is different than when God speaks and does not lie because the words that he speaks have a creative capacity that take the shape of what he says.

The introduction of this verse says, In hope of eternal life. In Romans the eighth chapter, it says God made man subject to vanity not willingly but by reason of hope. When God said, Let there be, he did not say, Let there be eternal life. He said, Let there be temporal life because invested in what he said was the hope of the one who spoke. He obviously created a world that desperately needs to be saved. In fact, the scripture says that in due time, Christ came. He gave the promises. He gave the promises to Israel in the form of prophecy, and the prophecy was that there would be a Messiah who would bring salvation and greatness to Israel. In due time, Messiah came but he did not come in the format that they thought he should manifest to them as, and because he would not take a crown and become king and lead them to international status and, more importantly, because he destabilized their understanding of God being "their God," they actually crucified their Messiah. What God is seeking to overturn and establish as a clear testimony in the earth for the first time ever is that when he said, Let there be temporal life, because he spoke it in a redemptive heart, he made a provision to redeem that which was temporal and bring it into that which is eternal.

So, why should we trust God? If we look around us, what is the testimony? What is the bulk of evidence that God is trustworthy? There is very little testimony. We have the scriptures but they mean nothing to you if you are not saved. We have the cross, but to them that are not born again it is foolishness. The world is headlong in the pursuit of what Dan said yesterday in this conference – Baal worship. I think he said that California is instituting an educational, religious, spiritual program that says we should worship the Incan gods, a complete rejection of any responsibility of purity in the inward parts, a complete rejection of responding to a loving God as a son, Abba Father. They are presenting a god that is only vengeful and is only going to be appeased by sacrifice, by blood running down the streets.

I would like to take a look into Hebrews briefly tonight. In the tenth chapter of Hebrews, in the 31st verse – again, not setting context – it says, It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a living God. My awareness of what I spoke of earlier – that the extreme challenge of being saved is becoming a savior – is also prophesied in Obadiah because it doesn't say the saved will come on Mt. Zion; it says saviors will come upon Mt. Zion and the remnants of what isn't on Mt. Zion will flow to Mt. Zion to be taught of the God of Jacob. It is the fulfillment of the evangelism of what is represented in a five-fold ministry, where the evangelist goes and tells. But in this age in the kingdom of God, the spirit is going to distribute a message to the nations, and he is going to say, Come and see.

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a living God. What is required to offset that is trust. When Christ be formed in us, it is by the hand of God. To recognize the pervasiveness of my need doesn't just take into account my failings; it takes into account what God has called some to become. It is no longer sufficient to say, I didn't lie. It is no longer sufficient to say, I didn't hit back. What are we not yet that we are called to be? There is a scripture that says that sin can be defined by all that falls short of the glory of God. To not fulfill the purpose for which we are assigned is falling short, to come up with less than. This is becoming a burden to me, quite frankly. This is something that is beginning to fuel to a greater sense of desperation the prostration of myself before God. It's beginning to bring a new dimension for the purpose of mercy and the grace that is founded in that mercy.

When the scripture says in I Corinthians 15, that although we have been brought out of corruption into a corruptible state – that we have been born again, not of blood, not of the will of man, nor of the will of the flesh, but of the will of God – that we are brought out of corruption by the blood of Jesus being shed for us, and we are now established in a corruptible state. If we pay attention, we begin to hear the evidence of the Holy Spirit saying that being corruptible by an imputed righteousness based on the sacrifice of another is a necessary step, but the purpose for which we have been established in a corruptible state is because corruption cannot inherit incorruption. But, it is a mandate that corruptible must put on incorruption. We see this coming through Jesus's life when he came out of the wilderness having been tempted of Satan, and although he overcame the temptation of Satan in the wilderness by staying under his father, he was able to be tempted. Yet when Satan came later – three years or so down the line from that temptation in the wilderness – his testimony was, Satan comes and has nothing in me. It was an ongoing provision of the work of the spirit of God in Jesus's life as well.

The same evidence is given in the sixth chapter of Hebrews when it says, Having been established in the basic teachings of Christ, being established and founded and stabilized on that foundation, let us go on. We have been justified by faith but the scripture says that the just must live by faith, and it's the trying of our faith that yields a more precious thing than anything in this universe. I challenge anybody to consider that they will yield themselves completely to that which they yet fear.

Let's look in Hebrews 6:17 and 18. I'm going to give two examples from Abraham's life. It says, Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath. So, the promise is in place to show the heirs of the promise, meaning that the promise is first, and second is that he confirmed the promise by an oath. I want to characterize these two things for us. The promise of God is eternal life. It was in place from the beginning and it has always been God's intent and plan. Then, the oath comes, and the oath is that which makes the promise happen, and it speaks to the second wonderful thing already mentioned in this conference that what the blood of Christ accomplishes for us is redemption. It delivers us from the dependency upon ourselves to make this happen. The only result from whatever sense we have that our works might seem to accomplish something is self-righteousness.

The priesthood that was not Melchisedec, the priesthood that was according to the law, it says that the Levitical priesthood was made by a carnal commandment. What the carnal commandment says is that you must do these things. But we recognize that the law was weak through the flesh because it left the flesh to do the law, and Paul testified concerning this. He said, That which I thought was ordained for life – because remember what God said concerning the law at the foot of the mountain, If you do these things, you shall live. So, Paul said, Fine, I'll do them – but he said, What I found was that what I thought was going to bring me to life was actually what slew me. The law is spiritual, but I'm carnal, and no flesh shall inherit. Only the son inherits, so Jesus said to Nicodemus, If you are not born again, you can't even see the kingdom, never mind enter in. We've been born again unto a lively hope, not by the works of the law, not by the efforts of the flesh, not by the strength of our own will, but by the humbling of ourselves before a mighty God who we have learned to trust.

I want to talk about Abraham, and I want to talk about two events in Abraham's life. You know that Abraham had a promise; it's already been referenced several times in this conference. It's interesting that all the covenants that God's made through scripture, whether they're to a nation or to an individual person, they have

their roots and intent in the promise of God from the beginning. So, the promise of God from the beginning is eternal life. Listen to the promise and the covenant that God made with Abraham. He said, I am your shield and your exceedingly great reward. Abraham – because he was not spiritual, God was investing his word into Abraham to bring him out of being natural to becoming spiritual – when he heard this promise, he said, That’s great. You’re going to give me a wonderful gift, but whom am I going to give it to when I die? I don’t have a son to give this great gift you’re going to give me to. So, if your gift to me is going to make any sense, I need to have a son so I can give it to him when I die. Abraham didn't recognize that before God could fulfil his covenant with him, Abraham was going to have to give him himself. God was promising Abraham eternal life, I’m going to give you me. I’m going to give myself to you. In order to accomplish this, I’m going to have to change what you are because, frankly, Abraham, corruption cannot inherit incorruption. I have to bring you to a corruptible state. I have to teach you that I can be trusted so that you will lay your life down and that you will learn not to live out of yourself, but you will learn to live by dependency upon me in spite of the circumstances that you are in.

This is not an exhaustive study of Abraham’s life. It’s just kind of taking two events and seeing how God was working in Abraham’s life through two immutable things: a promise and the oath, not a commandment. A commandment says, You have to do this; the oath says, I will do this. We see that Jesus in the seventh chapter as a Melchisedec priest was made a priest according to an oath, not a carnal commandment. He was not left by God to do this himself, but he learned to live by faith. His statement at thirty-plus years old was, I live by the father. I have learned to live not out of my own resources; I’ve learned how to live by dependency upon everything that God provides, one day at a time, by faith.

So, we see Abraham, and we know the story how there was a famine and he went down for food into Egypt. Knowing that this Pharaoh, this governor of Egypt, was a world-class womanizer and Sarah being a beautiful woman, Abraham was afraid for his own skin. He talked with Sarah and he said, Here’s what I’m hoping you’re going to agree to. If we’re questioned, rather than saying you’re my wife, say you’re my sister. If my memory of history isn’t totally foggy, I think she was a distant relative, so this could be stretching the truth. Sarah bought into this subterfuge, and this king noticed her and took her. When I read scripture, eventually I start thinking about myself in that situation, and I haven’t just thought of myself being Abraham. I thought about myself being all the characters in the story, including Sarah and this lecherous king, but I had never thought about myself being God. I

think that's the perspective I want to speak about before I go on to the second evidence of Abraham's life.

The story winds up that that night God gave the king a dream, and the short version of the message in the dream was, If you touch her, I'm going to kill you. She is Abraham's wife. The next day, that king asks Abraham to come see him. In thinking about being the king, I would have been really upset with Abraham – You're dissembling from the truth. Your stretching the truth to almost popping put my life at risk with God. I would have been very angry with Abraham. But somehow, in this encounter with God, there was enough communicated with the king concerning Abraham as well as God himself, that Abraham walked out of that event, not only with his wife's honor intact, but he walked out with the friendship of the king. Apparently, the king was wise enough to connect that if this God likes this man, I don't want to count this man as my enemy. So, in a sense, he didn't hold Abraham accountable for putting his life at risk, and Abraham came out of Egypt with a wife intact in virtue and with a friend.

Now, I'm going to jump into conjecture here and a little bit of – hopefully – anointed imagination because when I began to consider this story from God's point of view – and that's where imagination comes in big time, obviously – I was thinking about God's oversight of Abraham's spiritual growth. God knew of a mountain with a lamb caught by its horns in a thicket on the top of this mountain because God isn't limited by time like we are. God was thinking, I don't just need to get this man up there to offer his son that hasn't been born yet, I need to bring evidence into this man's life that I can be trusted. I know that I have a king down there in Egypt that is less than a savory character, so how am I going to get Abraham down there, being afraid for his life? I think God predestined a famine to get Abraham down into Egypt, and the outcome from God's point of view was he wanted to prove himself faithful in spite of Abraham's failure. There's actually a verse that says, Though my heart fail, yet he remains faithful. There's also a scripture that says that it's God's goodness that gets me to repent. What is the most limiting sin that we can yield to? What was the sin by which all but two in the wilderness perished? It says, Because of their unbelief, they perished in the wilderness. We are enjoined to be careful that we not fall after the same manner of their unbelief. It actually says it in a very poignant way. It says that the reason they did not enter in, though they had the gospel preached to them, was because the word that they heard was not mixed in them with faith. They drew near with their lips but held their hearts far from him.

We have a promise. The promise is eternal life. There is a desperate need for that promise to be made manifest in this world. This world is in a desperate, spiraling-downward condition. In fact, it says, If the days weren't cut short, there would no flesh still live. We not only have a promise, but we have a God who says, I will do this. It's said in Philippians 3 this way: It is God who works in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. In the thirteenth chapter of Hebrews, it mirrors that statement, where it says, For it is God who works in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight. If this corruptible is going to put on incorruption, it's going to take place by my subjecting myself to God in trust for the fulfillment of the promise by his power to do so. The seventh chapter of Hebrews also says that although Jesus was born Christ, he had to be made a high priest. We see the dependency by which he lived in his relationship with God. What I am saying concerning this event in Abraham's life is that it was a significant step in his faith toward God because he saw God be faithful to all parties involved in spite of his failure. We could say it this way: in spite of Abraham's lack of faith. So, he didn't believe God was his shield.

Now, I want to flash forward in time in Abraham's life. The word of the Lord came to Abraham and he said, Abraham, I want you to take your only son, Isaac, and I want you to kill him. I want you to sacrifice him to me. One of the most amazing parts of this story to me is that it says, Early the next morning... That's all there was between the commandment and the performance. I have six sons. I'm not sure if God spoke to me to go sacrifice one of my sons that it would be early the next morning. You know that up until this time there was no evidence of resurrection in the earth. Paul had not written I Corinthians 15, concerning resurrection; Jesus had not died and been raised by the glory of God. In fact, if history serves correctly, I think the first evidence of resurrection from the dead was when Elijah raised the widow's son. But we know the story – that Abraham walked up that mountain with his son – and we look at amazement at what Abraham had allowed God to do in his life between Egypt and Mount Moriah. In spite of what occurred on the mountain top, there's an amazing statement of Abraham's faith to his servants. He knew the commitment that was in his heart to kill Isaac, but he said to his servants, I and the lad will go up, and I and the lad will return.

If this story had fallen out literally instead of as Hebrews says that it was that he received him back from the dead in a figure, if this was more than a test of Abraham's commitment to remain faithful to God, would Isaac have walked down the mount with a scar across his throat? I think that we must learn to hold to God, to not let the testimony of our soul, our emotions, our thoughts, and our will to hold

us, but to hold to God. Abraham walked up that mountain with the confidence that when he pulled the knife across his son's throat and watched him die, against all the testimony that we see from scripture of history, he believed that God was going to raise him up and his son would walk down the mountain with him.

Now, what was the third component that was added to these two things that came from God? What was joined to the promise and the oath? It was that Abraham held to God for his faith to be grown up, to be tried and proven. It was Abraham having been justified by God because of his faith, now learning not only to live a corruptible life by faith, but to inherit the promise of God because he continued in faith unto the obedience of laying his life down. Abraham's life was tied up in his son Isaac, and what Abraham had to have accomplished in his dealings with God and God's dealing with Abraham was he had to have submitted his will so completely to God that the contradiction of killing his son did not interrupt his fidelity to God himself. Because he held to the God who promised rather than to the promise that God made – so he held to God not to Isaac – he received the first evidence of resurrection. Because it didn't go to a literal death and resurrection doesn't mean that it wasn't accounted to him as having received his son as back from the dead.

The trial of your faith and the trial of my faith today is what is going to bring us to the full effect of redemption, and we are going to walk down off of that mountain having offered ourselves in that final act of offering, and we will fulfill the promise that has yet not been fulfilled to the creation. Toward the end of the 15th chapter of I Corinthians, it says, Then shall be fulfilled that which was written, for mortal shall put on immortality, corruptible shall put on incorruptibility, and the world will have a basis to be released from the bondage of its corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. May God have mercy upon us and may the grace of God dwell upon each one of us as we continue to offer ourselves to the ongoing work of God's spirit.

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