Knowing and Claiming God’s Promises
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The old hymn, “Standing on the Promises of God” once regularly rang out in many worship services. A song of hope and assurance, it is also a song of declaration, one that boldly expresses a tenacity of faith in the Lord come what may in this life. It is a song stating what really should be our daily focus in this world. It is also a call to us to know what promises of God we can claim.

In this series of lessons, we will explore the Scriptures in search of God’s great and precious promises to His New Covenant people. The objective is to know them, understand them, claim them as our own, and experience them throughout our lives.

It is my hope that these lessons provide you with a clear, biblical lens from which to see your life. There can be no greater assurance in life than to know that God’s promises rest with us throughout the various challenges and changes of the human experience in this world.
Our particular focus is to search out the promises of God to those who are in Christ. There are things that we can expect from the Lord. These must be understood and accepted by faith. They serve as undergirding of our faith as we journey through this life.

This study will also dispel some popular misunderstandings concerning God’s promises. Sadly, there are some claims upon God that are not supported in the Scriptures. We want to be able to distinguish between what God has promised and how some of these promises are being misconstrued.

Upon completion of this study series, Christians will have acquired a clearer understanding and appreciation of God’s promises. We will see that He who has called us to eternal salvation is also securing us on our way to that ultimate eternal reality.
He is Working it Out

Romans 8:28

Introduction
Life in this world is full of questions, challenges, and decisions. We often wonder why we encounter what we encounter. We are frequently faced with hills and mountains that seem too hard or too high to climb. We find ourselves facing choices that seem too difficult to make. Yet, in the midst of it all, we have God’s great promise to guide our lives.

Key Concepts
The sovereignty of God refers to His overarching realm of rule over all that is, was, and shall be. It is a fundamental teaching of the Scriptures and is the foundation for all divine acts recorded in the Bible.

“Know” (eido in Greek) means mental discernment that does not necessarily incorporate experience. It has a related, but different, connotation than the Greek term ginosko – a term that speaks of knowledge by personal experience.

Paul’s “we know” statement is a declaration of what God will do. Such a declarative statement given by inspiration of the Holy Spirit is the same as a promise from the Lord.
The Sovereignty of God

The matter of God’s sovereignty is firmly attested in the Scriptures. Throughout the sacred pages, testimony is given of God’s ultimate, complete rule over all that is, was, and shall be. There is not a person or a thing outside of God’s rule. In fact, the thought conveyed in the expression “Kingdom of God” is that of God’s universal reign. Though it is true that the Scriptures sometimes use this expression in a more restrictive sense, it is equally true that God’s rule over all is unquestioned (1 Chronicles 29:9-11; Psalms 2, 24, 50:1-6).

Although God is sovereign, we must understand how He has chosen to exercise His sovereignty. The Lord has created all of nature to function on certain principles. For example, He made the law of reproduction, which allows for living organisms to reproduce after like kind and evolve within a species (Genesis 1:11). This creation order law is behind plant, fish, fowl, insect, animal, and human reproduction (Genesis 1:27-29). Other such laws lie beneath the function of the sun, moon, and stars. The universe is under God’s rule – functioning as He has designed it.

God’s rule is not like that of an absentee landlord. Neither does He function as a divine watchmaker who merely created the world and then stepped away from it to allow it to function on its own. Rather, our God continuously interacts with His creation – interrupting even His natural laws at times for the purpose of accomplishing His divine will (Exodus 5-14). World affairs and the rise and fall of leaders and nations all fall under God’s rule (Acts 17:26-29). God exercises His sovereignty in such a way that always gives humanity opportunity for a blessed life. It is rebellion against God’s rule that makes for misery, destruction, and death.
God's Sovereignty and My Life

Given God's sovereignty, there are tremendous implications for His children. Specific to our study, God’s rule over all incorporates His hand on our lives. This is a tremendous source of encouragement, exhortation, and admonition for all of God’s children.

In the context of our study text, Paul wrote about trials and sufferings (Romans 8:18-38). He pointed to the sufferings and groanings of all creation. We are looking forward to the experience of full salvation – including our new bodies and the complete riddance of all of the painful trappings of this fallen world. Until that time, we struggle from without and from within. Satanic forces oppose us, while seeking to destroy our hope and overthrow our faith. We are in constant battle with our flesh, our sin-nature, as we seek to open ourselves to the Holy Spirit’s transformative work within us (Romans 7:18-24; 8:1-8; Galatians 5:16-17; Colossians 3:1-17). Living in the throes of these unavoidable experiences, we can rejoice in the promise of God to arrange all things to work together for our good.

There are some crucial points to remember about this. First, the grammar Paul used in this statement conveys assurance. There was no doubt in Paul’s mind about what God will do in the midst of our trials. This is one of several “we know” statements that Paul included in his letters. Second, there is the completeness of this promise. All things, inclusive of personal trials, communal, societal, national, or international crises fall under the umbrella of God’s promise. Third, the end to which God works these things is good. This means good in light of the ultimate goal God has for us, and that is our eternal salvation. Although at times this can include a temporary reprieve from extremely challenging situations as well as change in fortunes, the ultimate goal is our eternal destiny. Remember, the Lord is concerned for our eternal destiny as opposed to our temporary comfort. Fourth, it is
God Himself who is actually working, arranging all things to work together for the end goal of our eternal salvation. This is not a matter of luck, coincidence, or happenstance. The hand of the omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, loving, merciful, gracious, just, and longsuffering God of glory is at work in our lives for our good. Fifth, this promise comes to us as something we can initially know theoretically. However, as in all of the promises of God, this promise must be mixed with faith (Hebrews 4:1-2). Therefore, what begins as a promise of God that has yet to be personally experienced will eventually become a promise of God that we know by experience.

It is possible to have become a Christian, yet to have missed the experience of this promise. One way in which this can happen is to have never trusted the Lord enough during time of trial. Rather than to believe that He is working out our salvation through these painful experiences, we give in to satanic influence and give up on the Lord’s deliverance. It is also possible to miss the experience of this promise by thinking ourselves to be self-sufficient. No one who seeks to live by heaven’s standards in this Satan-dominated world can manage through all of life’s experiences without a divine hand to navigate his or her life. Though it is both responsible and admirable to plan ahead and seek to chart the course of our lives and careers, we must always depend on the Lord to work within our lives whatever is for our eternal good (James 4:13-16).

We must be careful not to trivialize this promise of God. Some may be tempted to reduce such a promise to some of the mundane experiences that we encounter. Forgetting to comb our hair, having a hang-nail, or picking brown as opposed to black shoes to wear to work is not the focus that Paul had in writing these words. We must also be careful not to use this promise to dismiss the need for personal responsibility or accountability. The Lord calls upon us to live temperate,
productive, and godly lives, especially in light of the fact that we are His representatives in this world (Titus 2:11-14). It is in the midst of such living that we are sure to encounter the trials and sufferings to which Paul referred.

**Important Prerequisites**

We cannot afford to miss the prerequisites of Paul’s statement. This divine providence in the affairs of our lives is conditioned upon having a relationship with the Lord. We must have a love for the Lord. Such is the desired impetus for coming to Him. When we are called by the good news of what God has done for us in Christ, a love-response in appreciation of this magnificent grace is what God calls for (John 3:16; Mark 16:15-16; 2 Thessalonians 2:14; 1 John 4:19). We surrender to the Lord and become His in our obedience to the commands of the gospel (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38-47). This results in our being added to the family of God, the church, the spiritual body of Christ consisting of those that the Father knew would respond to Christ yet without divine coercion to do so.

As members of Christ’s spiritual body, we are among those destined to be like Jesus. In other words, God, before the world began, predetermined that there would be a people that would follow after and become like Jesus in person and character (Romans 8:29-30). As we live in this world as students of our Lord Jesus, the Holy Spirit works within our innermost being to mold and shape us to think and behave like our Lord (2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 John 3:1-3).

**Final Thoughts**

The comfort and assurance of this promise should always remain with us. Life can be uncertain, and at times we can find ourselves feeling as if we have lost our way. We can feel as if we walked through the
wrong door or followed the wrong path – even after doing all that we could to make the right choice. Circumstances well beyond our control can negatively impact us and render us with a sense of hopelessness. Even our times of waywardness can place us in conditions where we feel like the prodigal son felt.

However, this gracious promise of God can lighten our load and lift our souls. As we continue drawing near to God, we can be assured that the storminess of all past, present, and future circumstances will be so managed and arranged to lead us to the experience of eternal life with the Lord.

**Discussion Questions**

1. What is meant by God’s sovereignty?
2. What are some Old Testament examples of God’s sovereignty?
3. What are some examples of internal trials?
4. What are some examples of external trials?
5. Why must God’s promises be mixed with faith?
6. What is the danger of trivializing this divine promise?
7. What is the meaning of foreknowledge?
8. How does God call mankind to Himself?

**Just for Further Thought**

1. Discuss how God can use consequences from our times of sin toward our eternal salvation.
2. Discuss the grace aspect of God’s work for our good.