

Promise, Problem and Provision

Scripture tells us that “2Cor 1:20 “For all the promises of God *in him* are yea, and in him Amen, *unto the glory of God* by us..”?

However we know that we do not get answers that we want every time we pray. To develop this further, let’s look at what James tells us:

James 4:2-4 “You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. *Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?”* NKJV

1. sometimes we do not ask, therefore we don’t receive
2. when we ask, if the request or the provision is worldly & carnal, we will not receive. This points to an attitude of the heart.

God wants us to pray diligently telling us Matt 18:18-20

“Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.”

Matthew 6:6 “But you, when you pray, enter into your room. And shutting your door, pray to your Father in secret; and your Father who sees in secret shall reward you openly.”

Mt 21:22 “And all things, whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive.”

John 15:7-8

“If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. *By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples. Answered prayer gives glory to God.*

Rom 12:1-2

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” NKJV

These Scriptures tell us that we must be *abiding in Christ* and that our prayers must be in *God's will for us* in Christ Jesus.

Again regarding diligence and prayer:

Luke 18:1-7

“ *Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart,* saying: "There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, 'Get justice for me from my adversary.' And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, 'Though I do not fear God nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.' " Then the Lord said, "Hear what the unjust judge said. And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them?" NKJV

There have been times for us when we prayed for loved ones with terminal illnesses. **We could imagine the glory that God would receive if He would answer our prayers. However, that person for whom we were praying died. It is at those times that praying for anyone else seems futile. Our job is to pray in faith. The results are in God's hands since He alone knows our hearts and the destiny He has planned for our lives.** The attitude of the heart when praying is very important: **Believe that you have it when you ask and until you receive it, be content with your present state of affairs.**

A mother prayed regularly for over 20 years that her son would be saved. The Lord took her home to glory. Her son was not yet saved. On the first Mothers' Day after her death, her son went forward and received Jesus as his Lord & Saviour.

Phil 4:6-7

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” How many of us pray, without peace, constantly requesting without yielding to contentment with what God has provided you. When you reach this contentment which can accept the present, the our God will change your situation and answer your prayer. We are not to be anxious, or filled with apprehension over our prayer request once we make it.

I had been pursuing a promotion at work that I thought I deserved. No amount of manipulating was able to secure that promotion. The lack of recognition and this promotion burdened me whenever I thought about it. Finally, I praised & thanked God for my present job that the Lord had provided me. I worked it in peace, thanksgiving and ease. Once I reached this attitude, the Lord promoted me and my ease left immediately. Now I was challenged with a series of difficult situations in different countries ranging from China to Germany.

Remember the Scripture in Phil 4:10-11

“But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity. Not that I speak in regard to need, ***for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content:***”_NKJV

Summarizing prayer:

1. Forgive others before ever going into prayer. Matt 18:21-35
2. Confess those sins which impede our relationship with Jesus
1John 1:9
3. Be diligent in your prayers Luke 18:1-7
4. Be content with what you have and whom you are,
then God will respond. Phil 4:11
5. Do not pray to satisfy your earthly lusts keeping you in the world
which God hates.
6. Pray in accordance with the will of Christ Jesus in your life.
Rom 12:1-2
7. Pray with expectancy that you will receive that for which
you are praying.

8. Pray in faith, not in hope. Faith anchors the heart and pleases God Heb 11:1 - Hope anchors the mind 1Thess 5:8

9. 1 Peter 3:7 “Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.”NKJV

Hebrews 1:1 “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen. In our language we use words such as faith (noun) and believe (verb). In Greek it is one word: pistis is faith – noun; pisteuo is verb.

Faith pleases God greatly. In Hebrews 11:6 “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” NKJV

Examples of God’s Promises – Three Cycles God takes us through in response to receiving God’s promises made in faith.

a. Promise

b. Problem

c. Provision

1. Abel Genesis 4:1-8 Abel sought after God’s acceptance. He raised sheep even though he could not eat the meat of sheep at that time. (Gen 3:18) He could use their wool for clothing, but primarily he raised them for sacrifice to God as Adam & Eve taught him from their personal experience of using blood from a substitute’s death to cover their sins. Therefore Abel pleased God in faith by raising & shepherding sheep.

If Cain, Abel’s brother had come to him with grain that he grew from the cursed earth, humbled himself and asked his younger brother Abel surely would have made a sacrifice for both Cain and himself. **Abel approached God with a bloody sacrifice in faith & obedience.**

Problem: Cain’s anger & jealousy. If Cain displayed these character faults over his sacrifice, it is certain that Abel saw them manifested in Cain as they grew up together. Cain approached God with religion

(external ritual), not with faith. He offered God the works of his hands, \produce from the cursed earth. Cain offered to God the works of his own hands and paid no heed to his parents teaching him about their sacrifice to God after their sin.

Provision: Heb 11:4

“By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.” NKJV

The religion of Cain was the religion of works. It produced a murderer. The faith of Abel produced the first martyr. (Examples: Buddhist China, Muslim Indonesia and Sudan – countless Christian martyrs in our own days. Also William Tyndale, in faith he translated the Bible into English spoken by the common people of England. Tyndale was murdered by the Roman Catholic Church (organized religion of that day).

2. Noah Hebrews 11:7 and Gen 5:5 to Gen 8:22

Promise: God wanted Noah to preach repentance to people who were totally corrupted from sin. He promised Noah that Noah and his family would be saved.

Problem: When God created the earth, or restored the earth in Gen 1:7 during the 2nd Day of creation Gen 1:7-8

“Thus God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament; and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. So the evening and the morning were the second day.” NKJV

The people did not know what rain was. The earth was surrounded by a ring of water in the ozone layer which created a hot-house effect on earth. Plant life was watered by mist created by the cool evening in contrast to the hot day. Therefore people were being warned that God would destroy them with a flood. They did not live near a sea. When Noah began building the ark at God’s command, he built a vessel that wasn’t designed to sail anywhere unlike all other boats / ships. All the ark was to do was to hold many animals and float. Noah faced ridicule and rejection for 100 years. During this time he could have given up on what might have seemed like a vain effort. Certainly no one was converted through his preaching.

Provision: God had let it be known that there would be a catastrophe brought about by His judgment on sin. Methuselah was grandfather of Noah and son of godly Enoch who was raptured. His name meant to the people in that day “when he is gone, then it (the flood) will come” Methuselah begat Lamech, Gen 4:18, when he was 187 years old. Lamech begat Noah when he was 182 years old. Noah was 600 years old when the flood came. Gen 7:11

$187 + 182 + 600 = 969$ years – the life span of Methuselah

Provision: God sent the flood which destroyed all life on earth. The human race now would have as progenitor, Noah and his three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth. Noah’s preaching and his faith had been vindicated by God.

3. Abraham

Promise: Abraham would be the Father of many nations and receive the promised land (Gen 15:3-5)

Problem: (actually two trials) Abram (“exalted father”) received direction from the Lord to move from Ur of the Chaldees to a strange land. Gen 12:1-5

After God’s promise to Abram that he would be the father of many nations, God changed his name to Abraham (father of a multitude) Gen 15:1-7

Even though God had promised these things and Abraham believed God, he still knew that he was advanced in age, 99 years old, and Sarah was also too old for child-bearing. When Isaac was born to Sarah when Abraham was 100 years old, he still had only two sons, Isaac & Ishmael, and only Isaac as the son of his promise. **God told Abraham to take Isaac and offer him up to God as a sacrifice. Abraham believed that, if he did, God is even able to raise the dead. Abraham obeyed and took Isaac to Mount Moriah (Gen 22:1-12)**

Provision: Abraham became the father of many nations and the Father of those who believe God (Gal 3:29). Abraham never saw all of his descendants and never owned the land God promised to him. However, his offspring, Israel did receive the land. Abraham was the patriarch of the family into which the seed of the woman, Jesus Christ, would be born.

4. Joseph Promise: dream of greatness (Gen 37:5) and faith that his family would be in the bloodline of Messiah (Gen 3:15), the promised seed and that his people would dwell in the promised land. (Gen 15:18)

Problem: Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery Gen 37:23). Joseph was falsely accused of adultery in Egypt and imprisoned. Gen 39:7-14 The butler who was supposed to go before Pharaoh on behalf of Joseph forgot him in prison.

Provision: a. Joseph was raised up by Pharaoh as his second-in-command. Gen 41:44.

Provision b. Joseph is reconciled to his brothers and saves Israel from famine. Gen 45:7 Although Joseph did not live one day in the land of Canaan, when he was dying, he asked his brothers to see that his bones were disinterred and buried in the land. Gen 50:25

5. Moses Promise: God would deliver Israel from Egypt through Moses whom He had chosen to lead His people to the Promised Land. Moses knew he was called to be Deliverer of Israel (Acts 7:25). However, after Moses intervened and killed an Egyptian who was mistreating a Jew, two other Jews who witnessed this and indicated that they did not recognize Moses as Deliverer. Moses thought that he might lead Israel in rebellion against Egypt to overthrow Egyptian power Acts 7:30

Problem 1: Moses spent 40 years in the desert and had all of the time and natural reasoning to doubt God's call on his life.

Problem 2 After leading the people in God's miracles through the Red Sea and up to Kadesh Barnea, in order to prepare to enter the Promised Land, the people listened to the bad report of the 10 spies rather than to Caleb and Joshua who reported favorably about the land in faith.

Numbers 13:25-33 Numbers 14:5

Provision: 1. God delivered Israel from Egypt by using Moses.

Provision 2: God showed Moses the Promised Land before his death.

This land would be taken by the offspring of their unbelieving parents. Deut 34:4

6. Gideon

Promise: God would deliver Israel through Gideon as Judge of Israel against the Midianites Judges 6:34-39

Problem: God reduced Gideon's army from 32,000 to 300 to go against the Midianites who had 900 iron chariots. Gideon and his men were armed only with trumpets, torches and pitchers. Judges 7:2-7, Judges 7:16

Provision: Gideon defeated the Midianites by the right hand of God. Judges 7:25

7. David

Promise 1: He would be King of Israel 1 Sam 16:13

Promise 2: His seed would reign over Israel forever 2Sam 7:16

2Sa 7:16 And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever.

Problem 1 Saul tried to kill David, yet David refused to kill Saul, preferring to let the LORD deal with His anointed. 1 Sam 23:15, 1 Sam 26:9

Problem 2 David committed adultery and murder to secure Bathsheba as a wife and as mother of Solomon. 2Sam 11:3

Provision: 1. David ruled over Israel for forty years. 1 Kings 2:11

Provision 2. David was convicted of his sin (Psalm 38:2) and repented (Psalm 51)

Provision 3. Jesus is the son of David, Son of God who will reign on David's throne forever Matt 22:41-46 (READ THIS IN CLASS), Matt 25, Rev 19:15

The Promise Josh 1:1-5

After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, it came to pass that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, saying: "Moses My servant is dead. Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them -- the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the River Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and to the Great Sea

toward the going down of the sun, shall be your territory. No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you.

The Warning Josh 1:9

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; *do not be afraid, nor be dismayed*, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”

The Promise - Repeated

Jos 5:13 “And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, a Man stood opposite him with His sword drawn in His hand. And Joshua went to Him and said to Him, "Are You for us or for our adversaries?"

14 So He said, "No, but as Commander of the army of the LORD I have now come." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped, and said to Him, "What does my Lord say to His servant?"

15 Then the Commander of the LORD'S army said to Joshua, "Take your sandal off your foot, for the place where you stand is holy." And Joshua did so.”

(NKJV)

Problem

Jos 7:2 Now Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is beside Beth Aven, on the east side of Bethel, and spoke to them, saying, "Go up and spy out the country." So the men went up and spied out Ai.

And they returned to Joshua and said to him, "Do not let all the people go up, but let about two or three thousand men go up and attack Ai. Do not weary all the people there, for the people of Ai are few."

So about three thousand men went up there from the people, but they fled before the men of Ai.

5 And the men of Ai struck down about thirty-six men, for they chased them from before the gate as far as Shebarim, and struck them down on the descent; therefore the hearts of the people melted and became like water.

Doubt & Fear - Jos 7:6 “Then Joshua tore his clothes, and fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the LORD until evening, he and the elders of Israel; and they put dust on their heads.

And Joshua said, "Alas, Lord GOD, why have You brought this people over the Jordan at all-to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? Oh, that we had been content, and dwelt on the other side of the Jordan!
Joshua is not included in the Faith "Hall of Fame" in Hebrews 11 for buckling under the defeat at Ai.

Jos 7:10-12 "So the LORD said to Joshua: "Get up! Why do you lie thus on your face?"

"Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them. For they have even taken some of the accursed things, and have both stolen and deceived; and they have also put it among their own possessions."

"Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they have become doomed to destruction. Neither will I be with you anymore, unless you destroy the accursed from among you."

Notice that Joshua could / should have prayed to seek God's voice before Ai as well as any forthcoming battle. Then he would have known about the cursed booty kept by Achan which offended the LORD.

Josh 8:1-2

Now the LORD said to Joshua: "***Do not be afraid, nor be dismayed***; take all the people of war with you, and arise, go up to Ai. See, I have given into your hand the king of Ai, his people, his city, and his land. 2 And you shall do to Ai and its king as you did to Jericho and its king.

The Provision

Josh 8:28-29

"So Joshua burned Ai and made it a heap forever, a desolation to this day. And the king of Ai he hanged on a tree until evening. And as soon as the sun was down, Joshua commanded that they should take his corpse down from the tree, cast it at the entrance of the gate of the city, and raise over it a great heap of stones that remains to this day."



8. **Promise:** Stewart Road CG built a larger building to accommodate the many new people flooding the church. Build in faith **Psalms 127:1** “**Unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build it;**”

Problem: lower attendance rates and less of a flood of newcomers.

Provision: The Lord will “right-size” the congregation while putting to the test the commitment of church members. If there had been no problem, I would be seriously concerned that we are walking into God’s provision for this church family. When will this provision happen? When we obediently praise & thank God in all things. **1Thess 5:18** “**In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.**”

We cannot be effective in our prayers without understanding God’s will for our lives. Much unanswered prayer comes from Christians who are living outside of the calling God has on their lives. The purpose for our lives: **Eph 1:12** “**that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.**”

How are we to be to the praise of Jesus’ glory? **Eph 2:10** “**For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them.**”

In Romans 12:1-2 we are taught how to know God’s will for our lives which, in large part, provides the background from which we pray.

Romans 12:1-2

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the *renewing of your mind*, that you

may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” NKJV

God wants each of us to know His will for our lives more than we want to know it.

Elsewhere in Scripture the mind of Christ is mentioned for believers:

1 Corinthians 2:16 For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.” When we have the mind of Christ, we see things as Jesus sees them. We look less at the stock market or at your golf scores and more at the people we see living in poverty with no hope. There is nothing wrong with stocks or golf, but that which is central to Jesus’ heart is not held in regard by this world. When the world sees an alcoholic, drug addict or a prostitute, the response is to get out of that area so that you don’t have to trouble yourself looking at the dregs of the earth. Only with the mind of Christ can we understand the importance to the Lord of what He has called us to do.

Jesus sees these people as lost sinners whom He loves. Without the mind of Christ, Jesus could tell us in detail His plan for our lives, and we would respond with emotions ranging from boredom to a total surprise that Jesus wants you to do that which seems unimportant to you.

Most times the Lord will burden your heart with a small matter. It isn’t small to Him, but it certainly is to you. In post-exilic Israel, the people who returned from Babylon and became discouraged at building a small temple to God compared to Solomon’s Temple. Remembering Israel’s greatness, they easily became disheartened. God spoke to His people through Zechariah and said “**For who hath despised the day of small things?**”
Zech 4:10

Most of the time when we are walking in God’s will and doing those small things, only later do we understand the great things that the Holy Spirit made from our small efforts in faith.

Knowing God’s will This is the desire of each of us; what is God’s will for my life. We were all created for the praise of the glory of Jesus (Eph 1:12), however how does that translate into my daily life? Several of us in this church have prayed for others who wanted to know God’s will for them.

James 1:5-6 The Request

“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.”

James 3:17 The Response

“But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.” NKJV

As an example of determining God’s will, let me give you an illustration: There is a lighthouse that had to be constructed with three lights. The entrance to this harbor was narrow, surrounded by rocky reefs. During the night any ship could easily have run aground on these reefs. The three lights were designed to guide the ship’s captain. If he saw three lights, he was not to proceed. If he saw two lights, he was not to proceed. When he positioned his ship so that he could see only one light, he could proceed through the narrow pass safely.

Our three lights that must be lined up as one:

1. The Word of God (example of a woman “all love from God, I’m in love...therefore marriage ok)
2. The peace of the Holy Spirit in our hearts (example- a man walking home, troubled in his heart as he walks in the straightest path. He chooses a circuitous route home with a peaceful heart. The next day he discovers that one of his neighbors was beaten and robbed on his normal path home)
3. There must be an open door – right circumstances. Paul knew he needed an open door to preach the Gospel:

1Cor 16:9 **“For a great door** and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries.”

2Cor 2:12 **“Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me** of the Lord,”

An example of the lack of an open door or the right circumstances may be a matter of timing. (e.g. the missionary couple called to Brazil – went 8 years too early)

