

PROMISES THAT MOTIVATE TOWARD GODLINESS

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INTRODUCTION: (Scripture Reading: 2 Cor 6:14-7:1)

- A. I believe it's part of the nature God has created us with... We are creatures motivated by promises**
1. Parents use this nature all the time with their children... They say things like, "If you will... then I will..." or "After this, I promise to take you..." or "Just do this and I will..."
 2. When we know that there will be some type of reward we are motivated to work harder, behave better, and remain patient longer.
 3. But not all promises are positive are they? But even seemingly negative promises are usually intended to bring positive results
 - a. Parents often tell their children promise their children that they will ground them, spank them, remove some favorite privilege, or give them some extra work
 - b. Children especially need to know that there are negative consequences for their negative actions. This too is a promise. Sadly, some don't learn about this as they grow up!
- B. A major component in the power of a promise to motivate is the reliability & capability of the promiser**
1. You have to know that a person can fulfill the promise – For instance, if I promise you a brand new BMW roadster my promise is not very motivating since I have no chance of fulfilling it
 2. You have to know that a person will complete the promise – Sometimes with parents one reason why their promises are ineffective is the fact that they never or inconsistently follow through
 3. So trust is a major factor in how much a person's promise really impacts our thoughts or behavior
- C. Certainly we can easily see how these aspects of promises impact our daily walk with the Lord**
1. God has given us many promises, some seem big and some seem small, but all motivate us to live godly lives on a daily basis... This is what Paul speaks about in [2 Corinthians 7:1](#)
 2. Some of these are positive and some are negative, but they are intended for our good always
 3. We can trust God's promises because God is both reliable in following through with His promises and God has the power to completely fulfill them ([Hebrews 10:23](#))

PROMISES THAT MOTIVATE US TO LIVE GODLY LIVES

- A. We often don't think of this as a promise, but we can find motivation to live godly lives because God has promised that His way works best:**
1. God has promised us that His way is the wisest way, that His laws are for our own good, and that even His discipline is to make us better ([Proverbs 3:5-12](#))
 - a. Words of totality – Trust with ALL your heart, in ALL your ways, and of ALL your produce. Trusting God does not leave any room for half-hearted effort & haphazard adherence
 - b. Why does God give us the "Thou Shalt Not's" of scripture? Why so many commands about how we live? Some people talk as though God is trying to restrict our lives to keep us from having fun and truly enjoying life, but the exact opposite is true!
 - c. Why pursue God's ways in our daily lives? To please Him, yes, but also because God's way results in a better life! How many lives have been physically ruined when people disobey God? How many bring on extra troubles since they don't follow His word?
 - d. This is God's promise – His commands and principles are for our own good. If we will submit FULLY to them, they will protect us, refresh us, & give the best life possible
 - e. But this takes a commitment to trust in the Lord with all our hearts... It takes turning our lives over to God's direction and God's order. It takes submitting our will to His!

- f. We have to come to realize that God's ways & thoughts are higher than ours! **(Is 55:8-9)**
- 2. God has promised life and peace now to those who pursue godliness **(Rom 8:6-7)**
 - a. The scriptures consistently describe those who are not striving for godliness as living in darkness and being dead. Sure you may have a pulse, but that's not real life at all!
 - b. It is God who created us and He created us to be righteous and holy beings. When we go against our purpose we don't function right (car being mishandled doesn't run right)
 - c. People say, "You haven't lived life until..." – Well, you haven't lived life until you have sought to serve God, obey His will, & develop righteousness in all parts of your life!
 - d. **Illustration:** But it's like going to the doctor – We go, we get diagnosed, we say we want what's better, and yet we go away doing nothing. You have to take the prescription!
- 3. One reason people have a difficult time accepting God's ways is the fact that they haven't really given God's ways a real wholehearted chance **(Luke 10:25-28ff)**
 - a. This lawyer starts out with the right question and Jesus gives Him a powerfully motivating promise – You will live! But he sought a loophole... wanted a way around one part!
 - b. **Illustration:** Guy on men's soccer team who always thinks his way is best and will not really give the right way to play a chance. He sees the pass, people are calling for him to do the right thing, but he won't. What if he tried it for a game or two?
 - c. What people often do is they turn over a few hours of their life each week over to God, or they turn over certain aspects of their life to God, and they wonder why their lives are still filled with the struggles, emptiness, & why they don't enjoy being a Christian!
 - d. Here's a test – What if we really tried doing our absolute best in growing spiritually, being like Christ, putting spiritual things first, & obeying God for 30 days. What change!
- 4. Consider some more specific areas in our lives where our lives would be so much better if we would simply give doing things God's way a wholehearted chance:
 - a. Marriage – What if you really loved your wife as Christ loved the church? What if you truly dwelled with honor and knowledge? What if you submitted to your husband as unto the Lord? What if you really respected him? **(Eph 5:22-33; I Peter 3:1-7)**
 - b. Children – What if you really did put God's word in their daily life? What if you really did teach them God's ways? What if you really did make spiritual things the number one priority? What if you really did consistently discipline them? **(Eph 6:1-4)**
 - c. On The Job – What if you really worked for your company/boss as unto the Lord and not just as to a man? What if you treated those who worked for you without any partiality and treated them with honor and respect? **(Eph 6:5-9)**
 - d. Daily Relationships – What if we tried forgiving one another as God forgave us? What if we tried not gossiping or speaking evil of one another? What if we really tried putting others ahead of ourselves? **(Eph 4:31-32; Philippians 2:3)**
 - e. In Our Personal Holiness – What if we put forth real effort to study daily? What if we quit rationalizing any sins we've allowed to take root and get rid of them? What if we sought to remove the lust, anger, pride, resentment, envy, etc? **(Gal 5:19-24)**

B. Closely connected to that promise is the promise that we will reap what we sow:

- 1. Throughout the scriptures God uses the picture of a farmer and his crops to illustrate spiritual truths... Among these truths is the law of sowing and reaping **(Gal 6:6-9; Hosea 10:12-13)**
 - a. What we are today is because of what we chose to do yesterday, what we are tomorrow is because of what we choose to do today. Every day we're sowing toward our destiny!

- b. Typically we think of this promise in a negative light – That we will reap the consequences of our sinful thoughts and actions, but it could equally be positive. If we will sow things that are righteous & true we will reap righteous & true consequences in life!
 - c. Quote from Madame Chiang Kaishek on reaping and sowing → Another has said, “Sow a thought, reap an action; sow an action reap a habit; sow a habit reap a character”
 - d. Two options every day – We can sow to the flesh, planting seeds of the works of the flesh, or sow to the Spirit, planting seeds of the fruit of the Spirit. At times these decisions may seem small and insignificant at the moment, but they become what we reap!
2. There are three fundamental laws to reaping what we sow which we need to realize (**1 Cor 15**)
- a. First, you always reap what you sow – A farmer plants corn seeds and only corn stalks will emerge. If we sow to sinful things & worldliness will reap devastation & spiritual death always. If we sow righteousness & spiritual things will reap everlasting life
 - b. Second, you always reap more than you sow – A farmer plants one small seed and reaps much more fruit from it. When we sow sinful things isn't this the case? Sin always takes us farther than we meant to go, keeps us longer than we meant to stay, and costs us more than we meant to pay! Equally true, when we sow spiritual things the results of peace, righteousness, salvation, & fellowship is far greater than deserved!
 - c. Third, you reap in a different season than you sow... As a farmer plants a seed he doesn't expect a fully mature plant the next day, but waits patiently for it. Sin is like this... We may think there's no consequences at first, but the harvest is certainly coming! If we sow to righteousness the reward may take a while, but it too will certainly come!
3. God has also promised that we will reap according to what we have sown in regards to the sorrows and troubles we have to endure in life (**Psalms 126:5-6; Romans 8:18**)
- a. This is a very interesting picture if you imagine it – Throughout life we shed tears because of the troubles we must endure, but each teardrop is like a seed being planted in the fields of Heaven which will one day sprout into flowers of great joy!
 - b. **Illustration:** Speck on the line of eternity. Sometimes what seems huge and unbearable in the moment, are nothing in comparison to eternity and the glory that awaits us!
4. The promise of reaping what we sow also is given in regards to our giving (**2 Cor 9:5-11**)
- a. There are some who preach health & wealth and make false promises – Some “preachers” on television promise, or say God promises, that if you send them money to support their program God will bless them with more money. They'll even use this passage!
 - b. While that is a perversion of this verse, there is a reciprocal principle being taught here... God promises to bless those who are truly cheerful generous givers.
 - c. This passage does not teach that God will line the pockets of those who give – It does promise that God will give us the grace we need to meet our needs and it does promise that we will reap a reward of righteousness... a.k.a we'll be more like Him!
 - d. Think about it this way – God is a giver. When are we most like God? When we're giving!
 - e. This reaping and sowing is with purpose – To bring glory and thanksgiving to God! Notice the cyclical nature of giving and praise God intends to exist... God blesses us, we are givers, and those we bless turn & praise God. What if we break that cycle? (**vs 12-15**)

C. One of the most motivating promises we have is the promise of an eternal reward or punishment:

- 1. God has given a promise of eternal life in Heaven to all who live faithfully in Him (**1 John 2:24-25**)
 - a. What does eternal life mean?

- b. The promise of eternal life is also a promise of Heaven (**I Peter 1:3-4**) - It is a place of...
 - 1) Eternal rest – Rest from our labors, temptation, trials, suffering, presence of evil
 - 2) Eternal fellowship – The best company! Heaven will be filled with all the saved of all time. It will be filled with people of whom this world is not worthy.
 - 3) Eternity in the direct presence of the Lord – Of course the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit abide in Heaven. Heaven means living in their presence eternally.
 - 4) Eternal worship – Singing, bowing down, praising the Lord... In His direct presence!
 - 5) Eternal perfection – Perfect bodies fit for eternity, a perfect place, in the presence of the perfect God, living a perfect life.
- c. How would you answer the question: “Why do you want to go to Heaven?” My answer is... God is there, Jesus is there, the Spirit is there, all the saved all there. Everything and everyone that causes heartache, pain, and disappointment will not be there.
- 2. At the same time God has given an equally motivating promise of eternal punishment in Hell to all who disobey and are unfaithful to Him (**Revelation 21:8**)
 - a. It shocks some, but Jesus spoke more about Hell than anyone else! Jesus wanted His disciples and all men to understand the harsh reality of this place of punishment and be motivated by its reality to live a godly life. It’s one of His promises! (**Matt 18:8-9**)
 - b. Just as words cannot adequately describe the glory of Heaven, words cannot adequately describe the terrible nature of the punishment of Hell, but it is described as a place of...
 - 1) Eternal torment – It is described as a place of darkness, a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth, an abyss, a bottomless pit, a lake of fire, and the deep. If people in Heaven will be resting, rejoicing, & worshipping what will people in Hell be doing? The only thing they’ll be doing is suffering & dying for eternity
 - 2) Eternal wickedness – The worst of all company will fill the courts of Hell. All of the scum of mankind will be there and the devil and his angels will be there. Yet some of the company there will be surprising – Some seemingly religious and moral people who didn’t truly follow Christ and God’s word will also be there
 - 3) Eternal Godlessness – Hell is Hell because God isn’t there! It is punishment away from the presence of the Lord. The glory and light of God is nowhere to be seen. All of the goodness (love, justice, mercy, grace) is absent in Hell.
 - c. We should understand that while Hell is a place of punishment for the wicked, God did not create it with the intention of sending us there. It was prepared for the devil and his angels, not us... But God will send us there if we insist upon it! (**Matthew 25:41**)
 - d. Hell should be a motivating factor in our lives. No, we shouldn’t live every day being scared of winding up in Hell, but our knowledge of Hell should cause us to fear God and fear God’s ways even more and keep us dedicated to serving Him!
- 3. There are quite a few other promises that are related to God’s promises of punishment or reward... Our attitude toward these promises depends on how we are living
 - a. God has promised us that one day there will be a resurrection from the dead of all people, whether they were saved or lost (**John 5:28-29**)
 - b. God has promised us that one day Jesus will return from Heaven, that the earth and all that is in it will be destroyed (**I Peter 3:9-10**)
 - c. God has promised us that one day there will be a day of judgment when all people will stand before His throne and answer for the way they spent their lives (**2 Cor 5:9-10**)

4. Living with the knowledge of all of these promises will greatly impact our lives. These promises will motivate us to live in holiness and godliness knowing eternity awaits! **(1 Peter 3:11-13)**

D. Finally, we have the promise of God's presence in our lives to motivate us to pursue godly living:

1. So now we come back to the source of the lesson this morning. Paul motivated the Christians at Corinth to live a holy life with the promise of God's presence and fellowship **(2 Cor 6:14-7:1)**
 - a. One of the great struggles of being a Christian is remaining pure and holy in the midst of a impure and unholy world. Often, we make this even more difficult by our relationships.
 - 1) **Illustration:** Have you ever gotten all dressed up for an important occasion only to find dirt on you a little later? One truth about living in this physical world is that we often pick up some of its dirt. This is true spiritually as well isn't it?
 - 2) So much of our world is unashamedly living in a pigsty, wallowing in the mud of sin. If we're wallowing around with them, how can we expect to stay clean?
 - 3) Being "unequally yoked" with the lost doesn't just make holy living more difficult than it has to be... It makes it impossible. We can't afford to fool ourselves... we're NOT strong enough to handle it. But also, this relationship is wrong!
 - b. So Paul issues five commands concerning the Christian's relationship to the world:
 - 1) Do not be unequally yoked – This phrase goes back to farming. You don't yoke together two animals with different natures which pull different ways.
 - 2) Come out from among them – This is a picture of us being in a crowd of people who living lost lives and us choosing to leave that crowd... No fellowship.
 - 3) Be separate – A dividing line between us & the world. We are to be different! This is two-fold... We separate from the lost and we separate unto God.
 - 4) Touch no unclean thing – Simply put... anything immoral, unrighteous, or sinful must be put far from us. We determine to let them have no place in our life!
 - 5) Cleans yourself from every defilement of body and spirit – Cleanse ourselves of anything in our heart, mind, actions, or speech that mars our holiness.
 - c. Why? It is right! A true Christian does not fit in with the world... He is going a different direction, his values are different, his passions are different, his morals are different, his priorities are different. If we get too close to the world, it destroys these things!
 - d. But we are also to do it because God has given us five powerful promises. These promises have to do with God's presence and fellowship in our lives:
 - a. His presence – God says, "I will live among them... will walk among them"
 - b. His fellowship – God says, "I will be their God... I will receive them... I will be a Father to them..."
 - c. But these promises are given to those who will reject the presence and fellowship of the world for His presence and fellowship. Like in a marriage situation, God will not compete with others if we are giving our hearts & lives to them!
2. It was a failure to pursue godliness that brought about one of the saddest scenes in all of the Old Testament... The day the glory of the presence of God left His people **(Ezekiel 10-11)**
 - a. These were supposed to be God's chosen people, they were supposed to be a holy nation, they were supposed to be separate from the other nations... But they quit being this!
 - b. God removed His glory from the Most Holy Place in the temple, then He moved it to the door of the temple, then His glory went to one of the gates, and from there it exited the city to a hill on the east side of the city, then presumably ascends back to Heaven

- c. With each movement it seems as though God pauses... This was painful for God to do!
 - d. Today, we are the people of God... The temple of God, where God dwells, is now within us... How sad it would be to see God take His glory and remove it from our lives!
3. What is fellowship with God worth? When we choose sin over His fellowship or association with this world of His fellowship we are placing a cheap price tag on it! **(Hebrews 12:15-17)**
 4. How powerful of promise God has given to us! If we seek to live a holy life we can have fellowship with the eternal, all wise, all powerful, ever present, Creator and King!

Madame Chiang Kai-shek once wrote: "If the past has taught us anything it is that every cause brings its effect, every action has a consequence. We Chinese have a saying: "If a man plants melons he will reap melons; if he sows beans, he will reap beans." And this is true of everyone's life; good begets good, and evil leads to evil. True enough, the sun shines on the saint and the sinner alike, and too often it seems that the wicked prosper. But we can say with certainty that, with the individual as with the nation, the flourishing of the wicked is an illusion, for, unceasingly, life keeps books on us all. In the end, we are all the sum total of our actions. Character cannot be counterfeited, nor can it put on and cast off as if it were a garment to meet the whim of the moment. Like the markings on wood which are ingrained in the very heart of the tree, character requires time and nurturing for growth and development. Thus also, day by day, we write our own destiny; for inexorably...we become what we do."

"The King's Highway" Once a king had a great highway built for the members of his kingdom. After it was completed, but before it was opened to the public, the king decided to have a contest. He invited as many as desired to participate. Their challenge was to see who could travel the highway the best. On the day of the contest the people came. Some of them had fine chariots; some had fine clothing, fine hairdos, or great food. Some young men came in their track clothes and ran along the highway. People traveled the highway all day, but each one, when he arrived at the end, complained to the king that there was a large pile of rocks and debris left on the road at one spot and this got in their way and hindered their travel. At the end of the day, a lone traveler crossed the finish line warily and walked over to the king. He was tired and dirty, but he addressed the king with great respect and handed him a bag of gold. he explained, "I stopped along the way to clear a pile of rocks and debris that was blocking the road. This bag of gold was under it all. I want you to return it to its rightful owner." The king replied, "You are the rightful owner." The traveler replied, "Oh no, this is not mine. I've never known such money." "Oh yes," said the king, "you've earned this gold, for you won my contest. He who travels the road best is he who makes the road smoother for those who will follow."