

Greg Laurie: Christian, Stop Wasting God's Promises

I read the other day that \$5.8 billion in gift cards goes unclaimed every year. Think of all that money not utilized. Those gift cards are already paid for. They just need to be cashed in.

The Bible is filled with promises from God that we all too often disregard like unused gift cards. Someone has estimated there are 3,000 promises to believers found in the pages of Scripture. I don't know if that figure is accurate, but I do know there are numerous promises that God has given us in the Bible.

For example, God says we will never be alone in life. In Isaiah 41, the Lord says: "Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Don't be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand" (Isa. 41:10, NLT). And Jesus said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Heb. 13:5, NKJV).

God also promises to get us through whatever we're facing. A while back, a young friend of mine had just received a round of chemo treatments and sent me a text asking me to pray that he could keep food down. I texted him my prayer for him. I happened to be writing down this promise from Isaiah at the time, so I included it in my text: "When you go through deep waters, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown. When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you" (Isa. 43:2, NLT).

God is saying: "I will be with you through the rough waters and the fires ... as you're getting your next round of chemo ... as you're facing that crisis ... when your world seems to be

unraveling.” It is during those times that verses of Scripture like these suddenly become what they’ve always been: great and precious promises from God. All we have to do is claim them for ourselves. Those gift cards, if you will, are already paid for. We just need to go and redeem them.

Do you have financial needs right now? Here’s what God says: “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matt. 6:33, NKJV). “All these things” is a reference to an earlier statement Jesus made when he said: “So don’t worry about these things, saying, ‘What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?’ These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs” (Matt. 6:31-32, NLT). Jesus was saying: “Put God first. Seek him first, and all these things will be added to you.”

In Malachi, God said: “‘Bring all the tithes into the storehouse so there will be enough food in my Temple. If you do,’ says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies, ‘I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won’t have enough room to take it in! Try it! Put me to the test!’” (Mal. 3:10). God promises that if we are faithful in our giving to him, he will provide for us. He even says, “Put me to the test on this one.” I find that very interesting, because God doesn’t say that anywhere else in Scripture.

God also promises to forgive our sins. In 1 John 1:9 (MEV), we are told, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Speaking of confessing sin, it’s easy to point fingers at everyone else and say they are the problem: It’s them. The whole world is against me. I don’t know why everyone dislikes me. I don’t know why everyone’s getting angry at me. They’re all so wrong. Do we ever think, however, that it might be us? This comes as a revelation to some of us.

A wife says: "Lord, my marriage is in trouble. This lousy husband—he needs to repent." Or a husband says, "Lord, this ungrateful wife doesn't know how hard I work." Parents say: "These miserable children, Lord. They want so many things. Change them."

But do we ever stop and say, "Lord, change me"?

It's like the little boy who was sent to his room for misbehaving. He told his mom that he had thought it over and said a prayer.

She said: "Very good. You should pray that God will help you not to misbehave."

"Oh, I didn't ask God to help me not to misbehave," he replied. "I asked Him to help you put up with me."

Sometimes we are always praying for someone else to change, but what about us? It starts with us.

I heard about two friends who had never flown before. They were afraid of jets, so they found a propeller plane that would be going where they wanted to go. They took their seats and were a little nervous as the plane taxied down the runway and took off. All of a sudden, they heard a loud noise. One of them looked out the window and saw that the engine on the other side of the plane had stopped. She turned to her friend and asked, "What do we do?"

Her friend replied: "I wouldn't worry about. That's on their side of the plane."

It's very easy to say, "If they would do this, then everything would be better." Maybe. But we can't control them, so let's just start with us.

We say our nation needs a spiritual awakening. True. We say the church needs a revival. Again, true. But revival starts with you. Revival is personal. Yes, it's good to pray for

someone else to change, but pray that God will change you. Prayer does change things, but it's also true that prayer changes you. And sometimes prayer changes you, and then you change things. Are you being the person God wants you to be? You can be the one who brings change. You can be the one who will make a difference. {eoa}

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