

God's Promises

There was a little boy who lived in an orphanage with lots of other children just like him, except that he never really fit in because there was something different about him. The only thing he owned was an old, wrinkled bag, which no one was allowed to see what was inside. He knew he had a father somewhere but didn't know where. Everywhere he went he looked for his father. Whenever he would see a man he would ask him, "Are you my father... Are you, my father?" Each time they would say, "No I am not your father." And each time the little boy would look down at the ground in sadness as he walked off. Then he would go back to the orphanage and sit in the middle of his bed holding the wrinkled bag closely to him. He knew he had a father and wouldn't give up looking for him. This went on for a few years.

Then one day a man came to the orphanage looking for his son. He came to see if his son, who had been taken away from him, might have been put in this orphanage. The word went out through the orphanage that this man would know his son by the things he gave to him to keep. Then the little boy ran and got his bag and ran back to find the man. But when he got there the man had gone. So, the little boy took his bag and went back to his bed again, holding onto bag tightly, in hopes that the man would come again.

One day, about a year later, the little boy was out playing in the town with the other children, when the man came back to the orphanage. Once again, he asked if his son might be there, because he missed him, and wanted him to come home. By the time the little boy got back to the orphanage, the man had left again. When he found out the man had come and gone the little boy was deeply saddened and went away crying. The boy decided that he would not leave the orphanage again until the man came back, so he could see if he was his father.

The boy had grown to be a young man by now and was beginning to think the man wasn't coming back anymore. He thought, he might

have missed his last chance to find his Father. He was about to give up and go on with his empty life when he heard someone whispering that the man was here again. The young man ran to his room and got his bag, and ran to the front door, knowing that there was only one door to go through and he would surely not miss him this time. He stood there holding onto his bag and waited and soon he saw the man coming toward the door.

When he got to the young man He asked, "Are you my son, are you, my son?" The young man said, "I don't know, but if you can tell me what I have in my bag then I will know for sure if you are my father." The man said, "Inside the bag there will be some old torn clothes, battered and worn out from a hard life." "Yes," the young man said, "that is part of it, but what else is in my bag?" The man said, "There is a second bag within the old bag, that is not wrinkled, and it has five promises in it." "Yes," the young man said, "but what do they say?" The man said, "When my son was taken away, I put these promises inside the bag so he would know it was me when I returned for him."

The young man said again, "What are the promises?" The man said, "The first promise is, I will never forget you." The young man said, "Yes, go on." Then the man said, "The second promise is, I will always love you." The young man said, "Yes, you are right again." The man said, "The third promise is, I will search for you." And the young man, with a big swallow said, "Yes." Then the man said, "The fourth promise is, I will save you", and before the young man could say anything, the man said, "And the fifth promise is, I will take you home with me forever." With this the young man said, "Father, it is I, your long-lost son" and the father said, "Yes, you are my son, come home with me, and I will take care of you forever."

As the father and son walked through the door the son looked back and saw the orphanage change right before his eyes. All his life the orphanage looked homey, but now he noticed that it was dark and ugly, and suddenly it began to look hideous, and he said, "Father what has happened to the orphanage?" His Father said "My son the

home you lived in wasn't what you thought it was, it was an ugly deception that had blinded you from the truth. But I promised I would keep on looking for you until I found you. That is why I put those five promises in your bag, so that you would know it was me. Now, let us go home and be together forever."

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God's 5 Promises to Each of Us

This story speaks of a love between a father and his son that are separated from each other. Let's call the son a child of the Father, because God's promises are the same for every person who will ever be born, male or female. The question is when did his father become his father? Sounds like a silly question but in this case, the question is of great importance when determining who our real father is. Make no mistake, our earthly father has an important role in our lives but that is not the real issue here. The question is who is our real father between God and Satan?

As a child we can only understand a father figure after we are born. But Scripture tells us in Jeremiah 1:5 NIV, God speaking, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart..." and in Psalm 139:13-16 says, "For you created my inmost being (that is our spirit); you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body...". These Scriptures tell us that God, our heavenly Father, knew each of us before we even a glimmer in our parents' eyes. What we cannot comprehend is that God knew everyone of us, who would ever be born before he even started creation. Genesis 1 and 2 is the birthing of that love story which has played out over time before God created Adam and Eve.

Because of what happened to Adam and Eve, when they ate the forbidden fruit, has caused each of us to be separated from God, our Father, before we even understood life, as seen in Isaiah 59:1-2 NIV, "Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear." This is why each of us were separated from God and put into an orphanage of type, away from our Heavenly Father and we didn't even know what had happen. It was only after the fall that Satan gained any rights to us, but even that has its limitations. God's promises to each of us tells us He will redeem us. Let's look at these 5 promises and see why God, our heavenly Father's love compelled him to give each of us these promises before we were even born.

The first promise is “I will never forget you.” In John 14:18 NLT God says, “No, I will not abandon you as orphans-I will come to you.” God made it clear that we are His and He will never forget us, and he will come to us. God reaffirms that He won’t forget us when he says in Isaiah 49:15-16 NLT, “...Can a mother forget her nursing child? Can she feel no love for the child she has borne? But even if that were possible. I would not forget you! See, I have written your name on the palms of my hands...” The issue has always been the sinful nature we were born into that at times our earthly parents may reject us but God our Father in heaven will never reject us as written in Psalm 27:10 NLT which say, “Even if my father and mother abandon me, the Lord will hold me close.” And God our Father makes it clear he will take the responsibility of redeeming each of us if we allow Him to help us as recorded in Isaiah 44:21-22 NLT saying, “Pay attention O Jacob, for you are my servant, O Israel. I, the Lord, made you, and I will not forget you. I have swept away your sins like a cloud. I have scattered your offenses like the morning mist. Oh, return to me for I have paid the price to set you free. So, you can see God’s promise of “I will never forget you” really means we are apart of His heart, and He will never forget us and He longs for each of us to be back in his loving arms.

The second promise is “I will always love you.” In our world today we often think of the word “love” as a temporary word that has a time limit. The history of mankind shows us that men and woman say they love each other so they get married and then they divorced causing us to not see love as an everlasting meaning. It seems only a small percentage grasp the real meaning of love and stay together throughout their whole lives. If we view love from an earthly perspective, we will miss the overwhelming truth that God’s love is eternal. Psalm 36:7 NLT says, “How precious is your unfailing love, O God! All humanity finds shelter in the shadow of your wings.” Then in Lamentations 3:22-23 NLT Scripture records, “The faithful love of the Lord never ends! His mercies never cease. Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each morning.” When you can see love from God’s perspective you will sing out what is written in Psalm 63:3 NLT which says, “Your unfailing love is better than life itself; how I will praise you!” That kind of love builds a foundation of trust that what God is saying to each of us is He really loves us. So, when life’s challenges come our way, good, bad or horrific, we can still be sure of God’s love as seen in Isaiah 54:10 NLT which

says, “‘For the mountains may move and the hills disappear, but even then my faithful love for you will remain. My covenant of blessing will never be broken,’ says the Lord, who has mercy on you.” With this understanding we begin to love ourselves more because we are learning how much we are loved by God. We can trust our heavenly Father to always love and care for each of us no matter what happens in our lives. Now that we understand the reason God, our Father does not forget us, is because he truly loves us, so let’s look at the next promise.

The third promise is “I will search for you.” God’s love for each of us causes Him too long to spend time with us, so he searches for us. Ezekiel 34:11-12 NLT says, “For this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I myself will search and find my sheep. I will be like a shepherd looking for his scattered flock. I will find my sheep and rescue them from all the places where they were scattered (places are our orphanages) on that dark and cloudy day.” In Matthew 18 we see the same analogy in the Parable of the Lost Sheep that says in verse 12 “If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them wanders away, what will he do? Won’t he leave the ninety-nine others on the hills and go out to search for the one that is lost?” God’s compelling love drives Him, to not want to lose one of us. We begin to realize our Father in heaven will always search for us and want us to be with Him for all eternity. We see this spoken in Revelation 3:20 NIV when Jesus said, “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.”

Then God, compares himself like a mother, when he says in Isaiah 66:13, NIV, “As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you...” That comfort is the protective instinct of someone who truly loves that person. Real “love” is an action word because that love compels a person, like God our Father, to do everything in his power to find, save, and protect those He loves. Now that we understand the reason God doesn’t forget us is because he really loves us and he will never stop searching for us validates what is written in Luke 19:10 NLT says, “For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost.” The best part of this verse is not that God finds us, but that once He finds us, he will save us and restore us back to a right relationship with Him.

The revelation of Luke 19:10 brings us to Our fourth promise which is “I will save you.” The path for God saving us is found in Matthew 1:21 NLT which

states, "And she (Mary) will have a son, and you will name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." God's path is through Jesus Christ which is confirmed in John 1:12-13 NLT, "Yet to all who received Him (Jesus), to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God- children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God." This privilege is not something we can buy or earn or achieve by good works, it is a gift to all as recorded in Ephesians 2:8-9 NLT, "God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it."

God's grace is another expression of God's love, because he sees each of us as broken children needing a loving Father in our lives. Psalm 34:18 NIV says, "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." Our Father never wanted us to be without a loving Heavenly Father. He didn't come to judge us or destroy us. No, the reason God sent Jesus is found in John 3:17 NIV which says, "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."

But God, our Father doesn't stop with just saving us, He has plans for each of us as written in Jeremiah 29:11, NIV, "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." God reaffirmed this commitment to us in Psalm 91:14-16 NLT saying, "The Lord says, 'I will rescue those who love me. I will protect those who trust in my name. When they call on me, I will answer; I will be with them in trouble. I will rescue and honor them. I will reward them with a long life and give them my salvation.'" His commitment to us was so important that he said it again in Isaiah 46:4 NLT which says, "I will be your God throughout your lifetime- until your hair is white with age. I made you, and I will care for you. I will carry you along and save you." I hope by now you can feel our Father's love and He wants to be a part of every breath we take throughout our earthly lives.

Now that we can understand God, our Father really loves us and will save us, brings us back to the one issue that is keeping some of us from letting go and truly receiving God's love. That issue is learning to see God's love and commitment as eternal, without time limits or changing his mind if we do something wrong. Numbers 23:19 NLT says, "God is not a man, so he does not lie. He is not human, so he does not change his mind. Has he ever

spoken and failed to act? Has he ever promised and not carried it through?" The writer of Hebrews brings this truth forward thousands of years later in the New Testament when he records in Hebrews 13:8 saying, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever." God, our Father who endured Adam and Eve's fall and still loved them, is the same Father whose love and commitment to us today will never change. This promise will continue to belong to everyone who will be born after us. We see this commitment of God's love, mercy, and grace for everyone as recorded in Matthew 20:1-16 through the parable of the vineyard workers where everyone receives equally all of God's love. Paul echoed these promises in 1 Corinthians 2:9 NLT which says, "...No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him." God, our Father never changes!

This brings us to the fifth promise of "I will take you home with me forever." We see in Genesis 1 and 2 that God's intent was for mankind to be with Him for all eternity. Had Adam and Eve not sinned they would still be alive today with God, their Father, living here on this earth. Death was never a part of God's original plan for creation. In Ecclesiastes 3:11 NLT it says, "Yet God has made everything beautiful for its own time. He has planted eternity in the human heart, but even so people cannot see the whole scope of God's work from the beginning to end." John writes in 1 John 2:24-25 NIV, "See that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father. And this is what he promised us—even eternal life." Enoch and Elijah both were taken up into heaven (Genesis 5:23-24 and 2 Kings 2:11) showing us that heaven is the eternal destination for each of us.

While all of Psalm 23 sums up all five promises, verse six is the first time an author writes they will be with God for eternity in heaven, NLT which says, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." Let us not forget Jesus' own words in John 14:1-3 NIV which says, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am."

2 Corinthians 5:1 says, “For we know that when this earthly tent we live in is taken down (that is, when we die and leave this earthly body), we will have a house in heaven, an eternal body made for us by God himself and not by human hands.”

Some of the most important words regarding being with our Father in heaven are written in 1 Peter 1:3-5 NLT saying, “All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by his great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Now we live with great expectation, and we have a priceless inheritance- an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay. And through your faith, God is protecting you by his power until you receive this salvation, which is ready to be revealed on the last day for all to see.” The two phrases of “pure and undefiled” and “beyond reach of change and decay” bring great comfort to each of us that the promises of God cannot be changed nor taken away nor destroyed. John shows us what eternity looks like in Revelation 21:3-4 NLT when he says, “I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying ‘Look, God’s home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever.”

In closing, think about the five promises God has committed to each of us:

- I. I will never forget you.
- II. I will always love you.
- III. I will search for you.
- IV. I will save you.
- V. I will take you home with me forever.

Realize that God is the one who made each of these promises to us and He will not let one of these promises fall short of all He has promised. I close with Isaiah 55:11 NIV which says, “...so is my word that goes out from my mouth: it will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.” These truths and promises are for each of us to keep and hold on to as we walk out our journey of life with God our Father.