

GOD'S PROMISES: INHERITANCE VS POSSESSION

By Fr. Anthony Messeh

Inheritance comes from promise. Possession comes from obedience.

Have you ever heard a sermon about God's promises and felt a little discouraged? Have you ever read a book or an article about God's faithfulness and felt just a little bit cheated? Have you ever heard someone else tell the story of how God fulfilled a promise to them and had a little gnawing voice inside you say "why not me too?"

We all have. It's not easy to appreciate the beauty and splendor of God's faithfulness when you feel like God promised you something (healing, success, victory over a certain temptation, etc.) and He hasn't yet provided it.

- Where is God's promise of **"joy that no one can take from you"** when I'm lonely and depressed?
- Where is God's promise of **"authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy"** when I've fallen into the same sin...AGAIN?!
- Where is God's promise of **"peace which surpasses all understanding"** when I am more confused today than I've ever been?

The answer lies in the understanding of a key spiritual principle - one of the most important and least remembered principles in the spiritual life. And it is this:

GOD GIVES SEEDS, NOT TREES.

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Look at the famous parable from Matthew 13 – the parable of the mustard seed.

“The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches.” (Matthew 13:31-32)

Answer me this: if you want a big oak tree in your background, what would you do? How would you make it happen? Would you start with a tree? Or would you start with a seed?

How many people would think to themselves "I need to drive to the forest, find a fully grown oak tree, chop it down, tie it to my car, drive it home and plant it my backyard. That oughta work great!"

Anyone? Would anyone do that? If not, then why do we expect God to do that in our spiritual lives?

We struggle with God's promises because we think/want God to give us full grown trees.

We want Him to do a tree transplant from someone else's yard into mine.

We want the peace of God which surpasses all understanding... by TOMORROW! We want the joy that no one can take away from us... BEFORE LUNCH! We want the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions and every power of the enemy... RIGHT NOW!

But that just isn't how God works. To be honest, that isn't how LIFE works either.

God gives seeds, not trees. God gives promises, not possessions.

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God doesn't give us peace that surpasses understanding as a possession; He gives it to us as an inheritance. In other words, He says "if you do this (be anxious for nothing, pray, be thankful), then I will do this (PEACE).

The same holds true for all of God's promises. They aren't given as trees, but rather as seeds.

That's why I said at the start: INHERITANCE COMES FROM PROMISE;
POSSESSION COMES FROM OBEDIENCE.

God promised Abraham to be the father of many nations (INHERITANCE); but the promise was fulfilled by Abraham offering His only son back to God (OBEDIENCE).
God promised Joseph to rule over his brothers (INHERITANCE); but the promise was fulfilled by Joseph trusting God and maintaining his integrity as a slave and prisoner (OBEDIENCE).

God promised Joshua and the Israelites that they would dwell in the Promised Land (INHERITANCE); but they laid hold of that land not by with weapons, but rather by marching around the city according to God's command (OBEDIENCE).
God gives seeds, not trees. God gives promises, not possessions.

Think of God's promise to you like an egg to a momma chicken. The promise is given to you and something great is inside. If you neglect the egg, the baby chick will die and you will never possess what was promised to you inside.

But if you watch over that egg and guard it with your life, you will possess something miraculous at the end. That's how we need to approach God's promises - like a momma chicken with her egg.

Why? Because God gives seeds, not trees. God gives promises, not possessions.
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GOD'S PROMISES EXERCISE



STEP ONE: START WITH PRAYER

“Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain.” (Psalm 127:1). The goal isn’t to INVENT your own theme/promise for the new year, but rather to RECEIVE it from God. Therefore the starting point is prayer.

Spend as much or as little time in prayer as you want in prayer, but don’t start this exercise before you’ve submitted the entire process into His hands.

Here’s a great prayer to get you started:

O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth who is present everywhere and fills all, the treasury of goodness and Giver of life, graciously come and dwell within us, purify us of every iniquity, O Good One, and save our souls.

Other passages to help you pray: Psalm 127, 130, 141, and 143.

STEP TWO: REFLECT ON YOUR CURRENT STATE

Hearing God’s voice begins with submission to His will and obedience to His commands. The one who resists the will of God will struggle to discern His voice. So before we seek God’s promise for the new year, we need to assess where we’re at and see where we might be going astray.

Answer honestly: is there any thought pattern, belief, action or habit that is not in line with God’s calling for my life?

NOTE: Don’t overthink your answers. Be honest and write down whatever the Holy Spirit brings to your mind. Remember 1 John 1:8-9 “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

STEP THREE: RECEIVE A PROMISE

God’s promises usually align with a specific need in our lives. Take some time to reflect on where you’re at personally, spiritually, and relationally. Think about what areas you are in extra need of His grace and help.

Humbly come to God, telling Him your need and asking Him for His promise in that area. This is your chance to “come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” (Hebrews 4:16)