

The Christian Life: Sanctification

Do You Forget the Promises of God?

By Dr. Paul M. Elliott

There is one great promise that we forget perhaps more than any other.

In our **last article**, we began considering some of the ways in which saints today are often like the Apostle Thomas. We saw that we, like Thomas, often try to place conditions upon God, demanding empirical evidence of God's working in order to believe. Where we say, "Unless I see, I will not believe," God commands, "Believe, and you will see."

Forgetting, Not Understanding

Thomas' disbelieving response also exhibited the fact that he, along with the other disciples, had forgotten God's promises, or did not understand them at the time they were first given. In Luke 18 we read that a short time before His death and resurrection,

"[Jesus] took the twelve aside and said to them, 'Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished. For He will be delivered to the Gentiles and will be mocked and insulted and spit upon. They will scourge Him and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again.' But they understood none of these things; this saying was hidden from them, and they did not know [Greek *eginoskon*, they did not understand] the things which were spoken." (Luke 18:31-34)

Slowness of Heart

Should they have understood? When speaking with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, Jesus made it clear that they should have, but that their forgetfulness of God's promises was a problem of the heart:

"Then He said to them, 'O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?' And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." (Luke 24:25-27)

Likewise, Jesus had told the disciples that there were many things about the future - theirs and the Lord's - that they would not understand until a later time:

"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them [literally, take them up and carry them] now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you." (John 16:12-15)

The Promise We Most Often Forget or Misunderstand

Jesus concluded that same discourse with these words: "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). If there is one promise of God that His saints forget or fail to understand more than any other, it is this one: Christ has overcome the world. He has won the victory.

How do we exhibit that forgetfulness and misunderstanding? We fail to live in light of the victory of the Cross. Let me give just four examples.

- Our sins are forgiven - but far too often we live and think as though that burden had not been taken away. To His saints who are forgetful of His promise, Jesus says, "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word

and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life" (John 5:24).

- Satan has been defeated - but in our flesh we listen to him as he whispers words of deceit in our ears, and we permit him to lead us astray into sin. To His saints who are forgetful of Christ's victory and its meaning, the Word says, "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up" (James 4:7-10).
- Christ now intercedes for us - but we fail to go to Him in prayer, coming boldly and expectantly before the throne of grace. To His faltering saints, the Spirit says through the writer to the Hebrews, "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:14-16).
- Christ lives in us - but often we conduct ourselves as though He were an absentee. To the saint who forgets or misunderstands the constant presence of Christ, Paul writes,

"And if [in the original, *since*] Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if

the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors-not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs - heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together" (Romans 8:10-17).

"Exceedingly Great and Precious Promises"

Just like Thomas, we must not forget or misunderstand the promises of God. We must be constantly in the Word, seeking deeper knowledge of Christ and the victory He has won, by the instruction of the Holy Spirit, and applying it to our thinking and living:

"Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

"But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither

barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.

"Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 1:2-11)

Next: Must Faith Feel Secure in Order to Be Secure?

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