



PROMISES
OF POWER

HOPE
AWAKENS

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P R O M I S E S
OF POWER

J O H N B R A D S H A W



INTRODUCTION

Someone once calculated that the Bible contains 3,573 promises. Since I first heard that number, others have tried to calculate it—sometimes claiming less, sometimes more. But whatever the exact number is, the Bible contains a lot of promises.

The Word of God has been given to us for the purpose of transformation. God's desire is to restore in us what sin has taken away, and to restore in us His own divine nature.

The promises of God are given for that very purpose. Peter wrote in 2 Peter 1:4 that the “exceedingly great and precious promises” of God are given so that we “might be partakers of the divine nature.”

The promises of God are that powerful. In *Promises of Power*, we'll focus on promises that speak of God's great, transforming power, and the power God brings into the life of a believer!

Isaiah 40:31

*They that wait upon the
Lord shall renew their
strength; they shall mount
up with wings as eagles;
they shall run and not be
weary; and they shall walk,
and not faint.*

A year or two ago, I was in one of the truly magnificent places on earth with my family. As we stood on a peak opposite Mount Rainier, we got to within feet of wild mountain goats, eking out a subsistence living on the rocky slopes. Then minutes later, we stood in awe watching an eagle effortlessly climb higher and higher on the invisible air currents. We had hiked a long way to get to where we stood, yet far above us, an eagle was being carried along by the wind. How envious I've often felt when watching winged

creatures demonstrate their God-given gift of flight.

But God's promise to the weary group of hikers that day was, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint." Obviously, that doesn't mean that we're going to grow wings and fly. Or does it?

Certainly, God promises that there are times when He will give us more-than-human abilities to withstand physical challenges. I've spoken to physicians who have claimed this promise during an arduous night in the operating room, only to experience the power of God surging through their bodies and giving them the strength to continue. I've read of Christians, persecuted for their faith, who have claimed this promise and experienced deliverance from—and in—the most trying of circumstances.

But even more important is the spiritual component of this promise. God doesn't guarantee anyone energy to complete an ultra-marathon. But He does guarantee His presence—which can buoy up Christians under the most challenging situations.

The Bible says that those who wait upon the Lord—those who trust in Him, lean on Him, hope in Him, have faith in Him—will be strengthened!

2 Peter 1:4

*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.*

Think of some of the world's truly great accomplishments. Climbing Mount Everest would be one. Honestly, I can't ever see myself doing that. Winning a Nobel Prize? Not on my bucket list. Olympic gold medal? If I turn up in an Olympic stadium, none of the athletes are going to worry about me giving them competition.

There are some things in this world that are beyond the reach of most of us. But God makes a dramatic promise to us in 2 Peter 1:4

that seems to make everything possible—where it really matters: “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.”

Through the promises in the Word of God, Peter says that we may be “partakers of the divine nature”—connected by the Holy Spirit of God with God Himself, with God’s nature guiding and strengthening our lives. In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul wrote that we are “by nature, the children of wrath” (Ephesians 2:3). We can understand what that means only too well: prone to spiritual failure, and driven by impulses inconsistent with faith in God. But Peter’s point is that the promises of God contain in them a power that is able to give us an entirely new nature—a born-again nature, in harmony with the will of God.

Spiritually, no mountain is too high for the believer, nor any attainment beyond our reach. Because as we claim the promises of God, we experience through them a transforming power, and become the partakers of the very nature of God Himself. It doesn’t mean we’ll win a gold medal, but there’s something better for the believer than a medal—a crown, given by Jesus to the faithful at His return (2 Timothy 4:8).

Exodus 4:12

*I will be
with
your mouth.*

It isn't unnatural for a person to feel completely inadequate for the task they're facing. And sometimes that's because a person *is* completely inadequate for the task they're facing. If you've ever felt that way, you're in good company. When Moses was called by God to go to Egypt and square off with Pharaoh, his first thoughts were of his own inadequacies. He had

no confidence in his speaking ability, saying, “I am slow of speech and slow of tongue” (Exodus 4:10).

But a wonderful truth about God is that He doesn’t always choose the most obvious people to do His work. Sometimes He calls people who might be considered ill-equipped for a given task, then He equips them as they move forward in faith.

God said to Moses, “I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say” (Exodus 4:12). What incredible encouragement that must have been for Moses. He now knew that even if he was inadequate for the task that had come to him, God had taken responsibility for seeing that Moses’ inadequacies weren’t an issue. God would be with Him and would do for Moses what Moses couldn’t do for himself.

God makes the same promise to you. When He calls you to move forward in faith, He provides the strength needed for the forward movement. When God calls and circumstances seem bigger than we are, we can know we serve a God who is bigger than our circumstances. When God calls, we should answer in the affirmative. God pledges to provide the help and strength we need to get the job done!

Acts 1:8

*You shall receive power
when the
Holy Spirit has come
upon you.*

Imagine—the whole world is against you, you're part of a tiny minority, and you live among a people who are fanatical about their faith and whose history is stained with blood and colored with violence. On top of all this, you've been asked to start a new religion in the capital city of this nation.

That's exactly the situation the disciples found themselves in. Their leader, Jesus, had died. What they thought was a terrible indignity—the removal of Jesus' body from the grave—had turned out to be nothing less than His resurrection and subsequent ascension to Heaven, and they're told by Jesus to wait in Jerusalem—in the heart of enemy territory.

It is known as the “Great Commission,” but under the circumstances, the charge given by Jesus to His followers to raise up the Christian church might instead be known as the “Terrifying Commission” or the “Impossible Commission” or the “Suicide Mission Commission.” But the disciples neither shrunk from their work, nor felt they needed to, because Jesus had made an incredible promise to them.

In Acts 1:8, just prior to His return to Heaven, Jesus told His friends, “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you.” Power! The very power and ability and sufficiency they would need to be His witnesses and to demonstrate His grace and communicate His good news.

Their task was overwhelming—a handful of everyday men communicating to the world their belief that an executed Jewish carpenter was in fact the long-expected Messiah. But they were encouraged in their mission by the promise of God that they would “receive power.” If you’re facing overwhelming odds or impossible difficulties, remember that God’s power is promised to you, just as it was to the disciples. The power is in God, and not in us, but it is real and it is there. And it awaits your demand and acceptance.

Genesis 32:28

*Thy name shall be called
no more Jacob, but Israel.*

A fascinating thing about the Bible—and at the same time, a very reassuring thing about the Bible—is that it frequently records the flaws and failings of the Bible’s great personalities. The missteps of David are enumerated in painful detail, as are those of his son, Solomon. Priests such as Eli, apostles like Peter, James and John, and leaders such as Joshua don’t escape the Bible’s honest retelling of their more inglorious moments.

Even the great patriarch Jacob is revealed as conniving, deceiving, faithless and fearful. In fact, if all we had was the record of Jacob’s early life, we likely wouldn’t think him capable of becoming one of the most significant figures in the history of Israel. Thankfully, God doesn’t base our worth on the mistakes of our past. Instead, He sees our potential—the bright future we may have through faith in Jesus Christ.

And it's a principle demonstrated in the life of Jacob. After being estranged from his brother, Esau, for many years, Jacob—fearing for his life—finds himself locked in a wrestling match with Someone he later discerns is God. Desperate for his future, and pained by his past, Jacob tells God he will not let Him go “except thou bless me.”

And in reply to this expression of faith in God's goodness, God says to Jacob, “Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed.”

One as weak and faulty as Jacob was given a new name by God, representative of God recognizing Jacob's heart change and commitment to cling to God. As God acknowledged Jacob's repentance, He acknowledges ours. Your past life doesn't have to hold you back from experiencing the blessings of Heaven. God says to you and me, “Thy name shall be called no more [insert your name here], but Israel,” a prince [or princess] of God. The weakest, most erring, most broken soul can be assured of God's commitment to restore and remake His children. Be encouraged that God will give you a new experience, a new heart, and new assurance that you can begin again through the power of His grace.

AWAKENS

1 Corinthians 6:14

*And God both
raised up the Lord
and will also
raise us up by
His power.*

Death. So very final. I've conducted funeral services where young wives have farewelled their young husbands, and parents have buried their children, and in not one of those situations was there ever any alteration to the status of the deceased. Every single dead person I've ever known of has remained dead.

You'll hear people say they "died on the operating table, but the doctors brought me back." Not exactly. Dead is dead, and there's no coming back from the dead except via a single means. In 1 Corinthians 6:14, it says, "And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power."

Nobody on earth can raise the dead. Former baseball great Ted Williams is one of many to have been frozen after death in the hope that one day, science will figure out a way of bringing people back from the dead—something that will never, ever happen.

But death isn't permanent for those who have faith in God, because God "will also raise us up by His power." This is power—resident in the Godhead—that we've never seen displayed in our lifetime. Eyes that close in death will open again on the day when the dead in Christ shall rise. God will raise us up. That's a promise of power!

Ephesians 4:7

*Unto every one of us
is given grace
according to the measure
of the gift of
Christ.*

There are some things that not everyone can have. You have to win an Olympic gold medal, and you have to be awarded a Nobel Prize, and it wouldn't take you long to read the entire list of those who've won either.

Computers aren't free—you have to buy one—and university degrees aren't given away. They have to be earned, and paid for. But there's something you have been given that is far more important than a gold medal or a Nobel Prize.

Paul says in Ephesians 4:7, that “unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.” Favor we don't deserve and power for obedience is given to every one of us by God Himself.

Most of us have at some time had our heart set on a certain gift that we haven't received. But there's no disappointment here. Grace has been given to you! This isn't a “maybe” or a “perhaps,” but a blessed reality. You can thank the Lord He is gracious, and let that grace do a powerful work in your life today.

James 1:5

*If any of you lacks wisdom,
let him ask of God,
who gives to all liberally
and without reproach,
and it will be given to him.*

A lady was in a supermarket puzzling over which brand of a certain product to buy. As she looked, pausing in the midst of her reverie, she said to a man standing nearby, "Decision, decisions..." He answered her by saying, "I give all my decisions to Jesus!"

God has pledged to guide us in the decisions of life. And there are so many important

decisions to make! Where will I go to college? Whom will I marry? What career will I pursue? How many children will we have? Do we get a 15-year or a 30-year mortgage?

And in many cases, the answers to our questions might not be obvious. In those instances, we can be confident that when we turn to God for guidance, He'll provide us with the wisdom we need to face the vicissitudes of life. We can be thankful for something very significant: when it comes to what we really want to know in any given situation, God has pledged to guide us by granting us a measure of His own wisdom.

James 1:5 says, "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him." Notice where it says, "it will be given."

God doesn't expect us to chart our own course in this complex world, and He wants us to turn to Him to seek His direction. Imagine how much difficulty and heartache and loss would be avoided if in every situation, we sought the wisdom of God. He is waiting to give it, and has promised to do so. God's guidance can be yours. In fact, it is there for the asking! And by the way, the man in the story invited the woman to a series of Bible meetings. She attended, gave her life to Jesus and was baptized!

AWAKENS

Psalm 32:8

*I will instruct you
and teach you
in the way you should go;
I will guide you
with My eye.*

As a brand-new Christian, my life had changed dramatically and my future seemed very uncertain. What would I do with my life? I had been a radio broadcaster working in commercial radio—playing pop music and, generally speaking, earning a living as a paid fool. To put it simply, I could no longer work in such a worldly, un-Christian environment.

Then I read a Christian magazine where a young woman shared a Bible text that had been significant in guiding her life. It was Psalm 32:8, which says, “I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye.”

I began to claim that promise myself, believing that the God who had guided this young woman would surely be able to guide me. It’s interesting how things work out. God guided my life dramatically—all the way to full-time ministry, and the young woman in the magazine article is now a family friend! God has promised to instruct and teach us in the way we should go. He pledges to guide us. And we can expect Him to do so as we claim this promise.

Matthew 28:20

*I am with you always,
even to the end
of the age.*

The last words of English reformer John Wesley were, “Best of all, God is with us.” Wesley was on his deathbed, knowing that life was slipping away, and yet he could be encouraged by a powerful, enduring truth: God is with His people.

In some of the last words He spoke to His disciples, Jesus gave us that same encouragement when He said, “I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20).

Consider those words for a moment. “I am with you always.” The word “I” refers to Jesus, the eternal Son of God, who called the world into existence (John 1:3). Jesus, the Savior of the world, makes this incredible pledge. And again—what is that pledge? “I am with you.”

There’s nothing quite like a friend, a companion, and Jesus pledges to be a constant companion to all of His friends. “I am with you.” Not “I might be with you,” but “I am with you.” And Jesus raises the intensity of the statement by saying, “I am with you always.”

Those who have faith in Christ cannot escape the abiding, comforting, encouraging presence of Jesus. At home, at work, in happiness, in distress, in sorrow, in poverty, in wealth, in sickness and in well-being, Jesus is with you—always.

What greater encouragement could there be for a Christian? The divine Son of God is with you, irrespective of circumstances or appearances. It often takes real faith to believe that. Life can present some challenges that often leave a person feeling forsaken. But the reality is this: Jesus has promised that He is always with us. Be encouraged by this promise. No less a Person than the King of Kings and Lord of Lords is with you—every moment, every day.

Luke 18:27

*The things
which are impossible
with men
are possible with God.*

Every now and then, one of my children will say, “I can’t.” Not “I won’t,” but “I can’t,” as in, “Dad, I’m not able to do this.” Which is perfectly normal because there are some things that must be learned and some things children simply can’t do.

There are some things none of us can do. When I visited the Sea of Galilee, I tried walking on water, just like Peter and Jesus did. No surprise—unlike Peter and Jesus, I couldn’t do it, even though I tried several times. Sometimes it can be a trial—perhaps a comedy of errors!—for me to cook breakfast for my family, but Jesus fed thousands of people even though He only had a few loaves of bread and a couple of fish to work with, and in spite of the fact He wasn’t in a kitchen.

There are other things we’re not able to do. We’re not able to make ourselves good. We’re not able to change the condition of our heart. We’re not able to make ourselves righteous. But just like walking on water, these are things that Jesus can do, and that He’ll do in us. Luke 18:27 says, “The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.” Don’t get discouraged at what you can’t do spiritually. Recognize that what’s impossible for you is possible with God!

AWAKENS

John 21:18

*When you are old,
you will stretch out
your hands,
and another will gird you
and carry you
where you do not wish.*

James had been killed and now Peter is in prison—and he knows that he’s facing the same fate that befell his friend. And what’s fascinating is that when an angel comes to Peter’s prison cell, the angel finds him sleeping! He’s about to be put to death, and the angel has to “strike” him to wake him up.

How can this man sleep when his life is on the line? Because Peter had faith in the promises of God. Jesus had said to Peter in John 21:18, “When you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish.”

It wasn’t entirely good news, but Jesus did say to Peter, “When you are old...” And while he was there in his prison cell, Peter wasn’t yet old. Peter, in the prison cell, would have said to himself, “Jesus promised me I’d be old someday, so it’s not my time to go.”

Peter’s faith in Jesus’ promise carried him through some dark moments, to the extent that he was able to sleep like a log at a time when—for most of us—sleep would have been the last thing on our mind. Remember God’s promises to you. They’ll give you the confidence Peter had.

Hebrews 2:18

*For in that He
Himself has suffered,
being tempted,
He is able to aid those
who are tempted.*

I heard an evangelist tell the amusing tale of a young boy hanging around the cart of a man selling fruit. As the boy lingered suspiciously near the shiny red apples, the man asked him, “Son, are you trying to steal one of those apples?” The boy responded, “No, sir. I’m trying *not* to steal one of those apples!”

Temptation is an ever-present foe, brought to us by an enemy who understands us well and knows which buttons to press. After studying humanity for thousands of years, Satan is at the top of his game. But in the midst of temptation, we can afford to remember that God makes us a promise of power.

Hebrews 2:18 says, “For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.” Jesus, having been tempted Himself, understands what temptation is like. He knows what we’re confronted with in our daily battles, for He has walked our path before us. And knowing the nature and the force of temptation, we’re told in God’s Word that He is able to aid the tempted one.

As a parent would help a child struggling with some great difficulty, Jesus is able—and willing—to help us when we’re tempted. And you can’t possibly get better help than that. When temptation comes, remember that Jesus is there to help you in the heat of the battle. And He’ll do so. He has promised!

Revelation 21:5

*Behold,
I make all things
new.*

Everyone experiences failure and disappointment. And thankfully, most of our failures and disappointments are minor. The bread didn't turn out the way you planned. Rabbits got into the garden. A first serve that wasn't working right meant you let your doubles partner down and the game was lost rather than won.

But from time to time, life confronts us with real difficulties: a lost job, a serious injury, or the death of child or spouse. The fact is, faith in God

doesn't shield us from life's harshest blows, nor does it remove bitter hardship.

But faith in God offers us hope—hope that God knows and understands, and that ultimately, God will make things right. In Revelation 21:5, God makes an incredibly reassuring promise. “Behold, I make all things new,” He says.

When life robs you of joy, you can remember the promise that sadness is only for a season. When grief seems to choke the vitality out of your life, you can be confident that a day is coming when grief will be no more.

Death will be gone forever, heartbreak will never again be experienced, there will be no more loss, and disappointment will be history. Whatever you're facing today, you can be sure that God will one day soon make all things new.

If you've ever been called to endure great difficulty in your life, you can be sure that this promise brings joy to God, as well as joy to His children. God looks forward to the day when He makes all things new. Let this promise strengthen you. Wherever you find yourself, remember that God has promised to make all things new—and He's going to do that soon!

AWAKENS

