

CROSS COURIER

Proclaiming the gospel

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LIVE *as the children of God*

In 1 John 3 we read the wonderful words that God calls us his children. Learn what that means for us and how we must truly live as God's children.

BY REV JOHAN NEL

God's Word is alive and powerful. When God speaks, what He says happens. This is true of every word that is written in the Bible.

In 1 John 3:1 we read the most amazing words: "See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God: and so we are ..." God calls us his children, and therefore we – everyone with true faith in God in his or her heart – are his children. This means living under his care, love, and mercy. He sent his only Son to die on the cross for our sins.

As his children we can be sure that we are also heirs of the eternal life. The Holy Spirit within us gives us this certainty.

GOD EXPECTS THAT WE WILL LIVE AS HIS CHILDREN

Being called children of God brings with it a great responsibility. Our Father makes known to us that He wants us to live as his children. In the rest of the first letter of John we read how we must live as his children.

1. LIVE IN AN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

1 John 2:28 gives us the order to "... abide in him". Our Father wants us to remain in Jesus Christ, his Son, and in him, through his Son. We abide in Jesus Christ by having an intimate spiritual relationship with him. An intimate spiritual relationship with Jesus Christ means –

- ➔ believing in him with all your heart as your only Savior.
- ➔ keeping him in your heart and mind.

- ➔ loving him with your life.
- ➔ showing your love for him through your service and obedience.

2. LIVE PURELY

"And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure," states 1 John 3:3.

Being pure means that you do not sin. Even though we will struggle to live purely, we should still try. You can live purely in the following ways –

- ➔ Know God's law very well so that you may know your sin.
- ➔ Live with the certainty that Jesus Christ has redeemed you from all your sin.
- ➔ Fight against the devil, the sinful world, and your own sin.
- ➔ Live a life of repentance, where you break away from sin and become closer to God and live more and more for him.
- ➔ Seek God's will and do everything through his Holy Spirit guiding you.

3. DO NOT BE DECEIVED INTO SINNING

The devil is a very dangerous enemy of every child of God. He wants to lead us away from our Father. He will not openly lead you astray, he tries to deceive you into committing sin. That is why 1 John 3:7 says to "let no one deceive you". As a child of God, you need to resist the devil in the power of the Holy Spirit. The Father then gives the promise that the devil shall flee from you (James 4:7).

4. LOVE ONE ANOTHER

1 John 3:11 commands that "we should love one another." Our Father asks us to love our fellow believers. The love John writes about means to care so much that you are willing to make a sacrifice on behalf of another believer.

5. LOVE MUST FOLLOW INTO DEEDS

We are commanded how to love in 1 John 3:18, "let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth." Love must not just be lip service. Our Father gave us his Son out of love (John 3:16), and out of love Jesus Christ laid down his life for us (John 15:13). Now God asks us to love other believers and to show this love with deeds.

6. KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS

1 John 3:22-24 is about the importance of loving each other and keeping God's commandments. We find his commandments in Exodus 20:1-17 and Deuteronomy 5:6-21. And in his sermon on the mount, Jesus Christ explains them (Matthew 5-7). If you know the commandments, you can keep them in your mind and heart, and be able to obey the Lord out of love.

We are children of the living God, our Father in heaven. His Son made us new people. The Holy Spirit guides and helps us to live a new life. Listen to your Father in heaven. Do what He asks of you. Live with your fellow believers as children of our Father in heaven. †"

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The blessings and our inheritance IN THE BEATITUDES

Through Jesus' death on the cross, we have been reconciled to God and so we have become his heirs. Here is what the beatitudes say about our inheritance.

BY PEET VAN DER WESTHUIZEN

When you read the well-known passage about the beatitudes what really stands out is that the word blessed comes up nine times. The Lord calls people blessed nine times. This is meant specifically for God's children.

MATHEW 5:1-12

"Seeing the crowds, he went up the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. And he opened his mouth and he taught them saying: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE BLESSED?

To be blessed means that someone had to bless you. In this passage it is implied that God is the One who blesses.

To better understand what it means to be blessed we look at the priestly blessing in Numbers 6:24-26 which reads: "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace."

We see that the blessing of the Lord holds that He shines his face upon the person who is blessed. It means that the person enjoys God's favor; that God shows him goodness. It can also be described as the highest imaginable happiness to experience. That God resides among his people is a great part of the message of the first five books of the Bible, which includes Numbers.

This is what God promises to the people who are blessed: They are comforted, they will inherit the earth, they will be satisfied, they will be shown mercy, they will see

God and they shall be called his children. All these promises are the result of being blessed by God.

BELIEVERS ARE THE BLESSED

To be blessed is closely connected to being in good standing with the Lord, because the enemies of God cannot enjoy his favor and goodness. And that is why the Lord Jesus speaks of believers in Matthew 5.

Believers are blessed, and therefore they live in a certain manner, and they receive gifts from the hand of the Lord. These believers are not blessed because they do certain things. It is the other way around: because they are blessed by God, they can act in a certain manner. Because they are blessed, they are poor in spirit, they mourn, they are meek, they hunger and thirst for righteousness, they are merciful, they are pure in heart, they are peacemakers, they are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, and they are ridiculed and persecuted for the sake of the Name of Jesus.

We must remember that man, in his sinful state, is an enemy of God. However, as believers, we are reconciled to God through the death on the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. So, we became heirs of God, and we now enjoy his favor. We are now blessed, and we become blessed through God.

THE BLESSINGS AND OUR INHERITANCE

As we have already seen, the fact that we are blessed by God has consequences. There are two blessings that have to do with our inheritance. The first is that the believers who are blessed will inherit the earth (verse 5), and the second is that they will be called children of God (verse 9).

1. When we are reconciled to God and enjoy his favor and live meekly according to his will, then we have the promise that we will inherit the earth. This refers to the new earth where we will live with God forever.
2. We also have the promise that we will be called children of God when we are peacemakers. The result is that God is our Father, and we are heirs of all the promises of God.

We have an inheritance that is not in this world but has been promised to us by God. The only reason why we have this inheritance is because we are blessed by God. Let us therefore live as people who have been blessed by God and live in hope for the inheritance that we were promised. †

Editor's note

Throughout the Bible we see how God makes promises to his people. But it is more than just making promises – we learn that God keeps his promises. For us, who sometimes struggle to keep our promises, this is an amazing privilege. But where we struggle, God prevails. And we never have to worry if his promises will be kept.

It is important to know that God keeps his promises. But even more important, we need to know and understand what these promises are. That is why we need to study our Bibles. Ask questions. Pray for the Holy Spirit to guide us.

In this *Cross Courier* we look at the covenants that God makes with us as believers, his children. A covenant is important, because it is not only a promise from God, but also from us. The ultimate promise, of course, is that of eternal life that we receive through his covenants. It is so important for us to see what we must do to receive this promise as part of his covenant.

Being in this covenant relationship with God, means being a child of God. Understanding the covenants and what it means that God is our Father, leads to realizing how his promises impact our lives. This, in turn, leads to us seeing the blessings that God makes happen in our lives.

May you see the blessings of God in your life, and may you live as the child of God that *He* says you are. †

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PRAISE THE LORD

for his spiritual blessings

Ephesians 1 verse 3 to 14 is a hymn about the Lord's grace. Read how God chooses us as his inheritance, obtains the inheritance of spiritual blessings for us, and assures us of the inheritance.

BY REV DIRK MEIJER

Ephesians 1:3-14 is actually a hymn. If you were to read it in the original text, you would notice that it is one long sentence of 202 words. Paul could literally not stop singing about the Lord's grace. This hymn is about the "spiritual blessings in heaven" that God, through his grace in Christ, gives to us (verse 3). These spiritual blessings are also about an inheritance that we shall receive (verse 14).

THREE STANZAS OF THE HYMN

In three stanzas of this hymn, we hear why we praise the Lord:

- ① The first stanza (verses 3 to 6) sings about God the Father who chose us for the inheritance.
- ② The second stanza (verses 7 to 12) exalts about God the Son who obtained the inheritance for us.
- ③ The last stanza (verses 13 to 14) rejoices about the Holy Spirit who assures us of this inheritance.

Every stanza ends with the hymn's chorus: everything is to the praise of God's glory (verses 6, 12 and 14).

"... to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves."

EPHESIANS 1:6

The Father chooses us for the inheritance

The inheritance we sing about in Ephesians 1, is an inheritance that's value surpasses money, property, and any other thing by far. It is a spiritual and heavenly inheritance (verse 3).

In Ephesians 2 we read that we, mankind,

were once dead (2:1), and that we were without God and without hope in the world (2:12). Who are we to receive such a glorious inheritance? The answer lies in God's grace.

The Father has chosen us for this inheritance (verse 4). Even before the world was created, He had decided, and what God decides, no man can reverse (Psalm 33:11). In Ephesians 1 we do not only sing of our inheritance, but also of God's inheritance that He chose for himself. God's children are his inheritance (Deuteronomy 32:9, Psalm 33:12). He wants to be known as our Father, and He wants to be glorified by us as his children.

Through his grace God chose who will share in his inheritance. Whoever shares in this inheritance then sings, "it is to the praise of his glorious grace" (Ephesians 1:6).

The Son obtains the inheritance for us

God not only chooses us for the inheritance, but He also obtains it for us. This is what Jesus Christ did for us: "in him we have obtained an inheritance" (Ephesians 1:11). This inheritance is nothing other than God himself. We sing about it in Psalm 16:5-6,

"The Lord is my chosen portion ... indeed. I have a beautiful inheritance."

By ourselves we are not worthy to receive this inheritance. By our own accord we are not even God's children (Ephesians 2:2). But Christ is worthy of this inheritance because He is God's only begotten Son.

In this we see the immeasurable wealth of God's grace. Christ, who was worthy of possessing this inheritance, surrendered himself to the cross. He took our sins upon

himself and bore them. Jesus Christ was punished for them on our behalf. He settled the price that was on our account.

In Jesus Christ we are now also sons and daughters of God. In him we belong in God's household (Ephesians 2:19), and we too are people who receive the glorious inheritance: God is our God, and we are his children. He did all this "so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory" (Ephesians 1:12).

The Holy Spirit assures us of the inheritance

As if all this is not yet enough abundant grace, the hymn speaks even further about God's blessings. God assures us personally that we have received this inheritance through his Son. He seals us with "the promised Holy Spirit" (Ephesians 1:13).

A seal is a mark that bears witness that a property really is your possession. God seals us with himself, with the Holy Spirit. He testifies in us of the certainty we have in Christ. He also works in us so that we shall live as children who share in God's inheritance.

Not only does God "seal" us by his Spirit, but He has also given us the Holy Spirit as guarantee (Ephesians 1:14). It literally means that He was given to us as a deposit – the first sum of money deposited to ensure that the rest will come. He assures us that we shall receive everything that God has promised.

This is grace upon grace: God chooses us as his inheritance, He obtains the inheritance of spiritual blessings for us, and He assures us of it. And if we are heirs of the glorious inheritance, let us indeed live out this hymn "to the praise of his glory" (Ephesians 1:14). †

!?!? QUICK QUESTIONS

to understand covenants

Cross Courier answers three of the biggest questions about covenants here.

BY PHILIP WEPENER

1. WHAT IS A COVENANT?

Covenants are not expressly taught and summarized on merely one page of the Bible but is instead a central subject and pattern throughout the Bible. A covenant is a firm commitment between two parties, namely: God and man. Through grace God comes to man and gives him or her promises and demands. Mankind must believe in God's promises and obey his demands completely.

2. WHAT ARE THE TYPE OF COVENANTS THAT EXIST?

The covenant is God's way of how He reveals and binds himself to mankind. When the covenant is explored in the Bible, we find that there are two types of covenants, namely: the covenant of works and the covenant of grace.

God established the covenant of works with Adam before the fall (Genesis 2:16-17; Hosea 6:7). But because of Adam's disobedience, God established the covenant of grace after the fall.

Under the covenant of grace there are seven different covenants, namely: Adam himself (Genesis 3:14-15), Noah (Genesis 8:1-9, 17), Abram (Genesis 15 and 17), Moses (Exodus 19-24), Israel (Deuteronomy 29-30), David (2 Samuel 7), and the new covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

3. WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GOD'S COVENANTS AND HIS PROMISES?

A covenant consists of two parties working together: both God and man act actively. In other words, God comes to man, and He makes a covenant that has specific promises and demands. Man then takes the responsibility to receive God's promises and obey his demands.

A promise consists of only one active party, namely God. God acts actively and man passively. In other words, God gives his promises that He will fulfill, and man receives it. †

God's first covenant with man

If you tried summarizing the whole Bible in one word, the word "covenant" would be a good candidate.

A covenant is a commitment between two parties. In the Bible we hear how God binds himself to us; how He establishes his covenant with us.

The first time the word "covenant" appears in the Bible is in Genesis 6, when God establishes his covenant with Noah. Yet, although the word is not used, we hear about God's covenant with man in the first pages of the Bible. Even before the fall we see how God establishes his covenant with Adam.

THE COVENANT IN PARADISE

In paradise the two parties of the covenant are God and Adam. Unlike all the other creatures, Adam and Eve lived in a special relationship with the Lord. God himself blows the breath of life into man's nose.

Adam and Eve were made in God's image. They received the instruction to rule over the rest of creation. That is why the covenant between God and man is special. The way in which God the Creator deals with us as creation is already a reason to praise God.

As with all covenants, the covenant with Adam contains a certain promise, a demand, and a judgment if the covenant is not maintained.

- ➔ The promise in the covenant with Adam is that he and his offspring will live eternally before God.
- ➔ The demand is that Adam may not sin by eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
- ➔ The judgment or consequence of disobedience will be that Adam and Eve will surely die.

SIGN OF THE COVENANT

Just as baptism is a sign of God's covenant with us today, there was also a sign in the garden of Eden for Adam and Eve. The tree in the middle of the garden served as a reminder that they could obtain the promise of eternal life through their obedience.

Because Adam could obtain this promise by his works, this covenant is often called the "covenant of works". Unlike us, who were born in sin, Adam and Eve were able to obey God perfectly before the fall. They were able to do their work in the garden of Eden perfectly right and to the glory of God too. Yet they did not.

The first covenant we read about in the Bible is the one that God made with Adam. Read more about the covenant and how it becomes a covenant of grace here.

BY REV DIRK MEIJER

ADAM AND EVE BROKE THE COVENANT

By eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam and Eve broke the covenant with God. Instead of receiving the promise of eternal life, they must now receive the judgment of eternal death.

Because we are all Adam's descendants, we are all included in his breach of the covenant. Therefore, we all also deserve the consequences of it.

A NEW COVENANT IS MADE

Graciously, God did not leave Adam and Eve in their sin. Through the fall the covenant was gone, and yet God searched for man again to establish his covenant again.

The "covenant of works" made way for God's "covenant of grace" because we are unable to receive God's promises through our own obedience.

In Genesis 3:15 we read how God establishes his "covenant of grace" with us, despite our sin. God says to the snake:

"I will put enmity between you and the woman. and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head. and you shall bruise his heel."

Rightfully so these words are called the "mother promise". This promise of One who will come to overcome evil, draws like a line through each covenant that comes later in the Bible. It forms the basis for the covenant with Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David, until it ends in Christ in the New Testament.

JESUS CHRIST FULFILLS THE COVENANT

When the fullness of time came, Jesus Christ was the One who crushed the head of the serpent. He also brought the work covenant with Adam to fulfillment.

Where Adam was unable to obtain God's promises through obedience, Christ was able to do it. In Romans 5:19 we hear:

"For as by the one man's [Adam] disobedience the many were made sinners. so by the one man's [Christ] obedience the many will be made righteous." †

THE COVENANT OF GRACE

between us and God

The Lord searches for us in his grace and never leaves us where we are. Read here about the salvation we receive because God, through his grace, sent Jesus Christ.

BY REV MARNIX BOERSEMA

The Lord meets us where we are, but He never leaves us where we are. What do I mean? Look at Adam and Eve: Just after the fall, the Lord searches for Adam in the garden of Eden, asking: "Where are you?" (Genesis 3:9) The Lord comes to Adam and Eve in their brokenness and damnation. Then, as we also read in the previous article, God makes Adam and Eve a promise of salvation (Genesis 3:15). He makes them this promise because He is gracious: He will deliver them by sending the One who will crush the serpent's head.

The Lord progressively unfolds this promise of grace in mankind's history. Throughout history, since Adam and Eve, the Lord draws people to him by sealing a covenant with them.

THE LORD BRINGS HIS GRACE TO MANKIND

The Lord meets the broken people where they are: Adam, naked in his sin there in the Garden. Noah, in a wicked world on the verge of destruction. Abraham, far in the land of the Chaldeans. Jacob, who deceived his brother, and Moses, who murdered someone.

The Lord truly never leaves them where they are. He bestows upon each one of these people the same grace – the grace of salvation through the One who crushed the serpent's head!

THE LORD'S WAY OF GRACE

The Lord first makes this path of grace to him known to individuals; small groups of people, like the families of Abraham and Noah. But later, the Lord makes the path of grace to him known to all people. Jesus

is the Path to God! He is the Ladder that is used to climb from the earth up to the heavens (John 1:51).

The Lord Jesus Christ is the One who crushed the serpent's head. In him the promise of grace is fulfilled and everything that God has promised becomes true.

THE PROMISE OF GRACE BEFORE JESUS CHRIST

In the time before Jesus, God administered his promise of grace in a different manner. He sent prophets, gave visions, appointed priests, and commanded sacrifices. All these things were directions to the Path – it all had to point to the Lord's gracious salvation through the One who was to come!

THE PROMISE OF GRACE AFTER JESUS CHRIST

Now that Jesus has already come and the serpent's head is crushed, the Lord still administers the same covenant of grace, but in another way. He still gives directions so that all people may find the path to God. The Lord now gives preachers of the Word, the sacraments, and the freedom to worship God wherever we may find ourselves, in Spirit and in Truth (John 4:23).

In Jesus the new administration of the covenant of grace is established. After Jesus there is no other Adam, Noah, Abraham, or Moses. Jesus is the First and the Last. Jesus is now and forever the High Priest who with his own blood forgives and delivers us. Through his sacrifice the veil in the temple was torn and we now have access to the Father in heaven.

Jesus does not bring a "new" grace. He is not a new or a different path to God than the one in the Old Testament. He always was and still is the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6). There was never another way to come and be with God in heaven (Hebrews 11).

THE COVENANT OF GRACE WHEREIN WE STAND

Jesus is the One who came to earth to meet us where we are. In our damnation, broken in our sin. But He does not leave us here! He draws us to the Father, to be in a covenant of grace with him. He administers this grace upon us, not in the old manner through offerings and priests, but through the sacraments and the Word. †

"Since then 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 is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

HEBREWS 4:14-16

We are God's property – the covenant of grace is the sign

BY PHILIP WEPENER

The new covenant was made with the people of Israel and with all mankind. In the new covenant God promised that He will write his law upon their hearts. He promised that He will be their God and they shall be his people. Every one of them shall know him and He will forgive their sins. The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ is the confirmation of the new covenant. He has sealed the new covenant and fulfilled the covenant of grace

with all his promises and demands thereof.

The covenant is a sign that we are God's property. We belong to him. In the covenant we find the powerful promises of God, especially the word of reconciliation for our sins and the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. God gives his children of the covenant the certainty of faith. He cares for them and promises eternal life to those who obey him. †

Trust in the promise of your salvation



We are in a spiritual war. In Ephesians Paul teaches us about the armor that God has given us for the fight. Learn how we can use the helmet of salvation to fight against doubt.

BY REV JACO LEMMER

People sometimes think that becoming a Christian means that you will live an easy life. The reality of the Christian faith is that we are in a war (Ephesians 6:12) and our General (Jesus) calls us up to fight this fight with the armor of faith we read about in Ephesians. God gives us the armor we need for the fight. One of the most important pieces of the armor in this war is the helmet of salvation.

A HELMET IN THE BIBLICAL TIME

The helmets in Biblical times were usually made of leather or iron (see 1 Samuel 17:5, 38 and 2 Chronicles 26:14). The helmet was of course thick enough to protect the head and brain of the soldier from arrows and spears. The helmet was not only for protection, but also for adornment. Usually, the helmet would show your nation's distinct embellishment, which identifies you as a soldier of that nation.

THE HELMET OF SALVATION

The salvation of Jesus Christ, that becomes ours by faith alone, serves as critical spiritual protection. When Paul speaks about the helmet of salvation, he takes into account what a helmet was used for in war.

As the breastplate protects the heart, so does the helmet protect one of the most important organs – the brain. In the same manner the salvation that we receive through Jesus also protects some of the most important parts of our spiritual lives: The fact that I can be certain that I am saved, and that God assures me of salvation, is one of the most powerful defenses against the attacks of Satan.

HOW DO I WEAR THE HELMET OF SALVATION?

When we trust in the promises of God, we are putting on the helmet of salvation. We can repel the arrows of doubt when we trust in these promises in the Bible:

- "And I am sure of this. That he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6).
- "... your steadfast love, O Lord, endures forever" (Psalm 138:8).
- "... who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:5).

The helmet of salvation is not only the protection against doubt in our faith. It is also something beautiful with which we attack Satan. The songs of salvation that we sing and call out make Satan tremble with fear and identify us as the property of the King:

- "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" (1 Corinthians 15:55)
- "... neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in creation, will be able to separate from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39).

In this way, we use the helmet of salvation as a weapon against the enemy. When we embrace these promises there is no doubt that we belong to God the Father.

In our spiritual war the helmet of salvation is critically important. We put on this helmet by understanding our salvation, and by using the promises that God gave to ward off the attacks of Satan. Wear the helmet of salvation that God gives us as his armor. Trust in the promises that God gives. †

10 Promises of God IN THE BIBLE

God's children can rely on his promises. *Cross Courier* looks at 10 promises in the Bible that God gives to believers.

You will find many more promises in the Bible. Grab them tight with both hands; believe that the promises in Jesus Christ are also meant for you, because: "all the promises of God find their Yes in him" (2 Corinthians 1:20).

1. GOD PROMISES THAT NOTHING CAN SEPARATE YOU FROM HIM

ROMANS 8:38-39 "For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

2. GOD PROMISES REST

MATTHEW 11:28-29 "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

3. GOD PROMISES TO PROVIDE FOR OUR NEEDS

PHILIPPIANS 4:19 "And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Jesus Christ."

4. GOD PROMISES THAT HE WILL PROTECT YOU

PSALM 91:1-2 "He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to the Lord, "My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."

5. GOD PROMISES HIS PEACE

JOHN 14:27 "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid."

6. GOD PROMISES TO BE WITH YOU

JOSHUA 1:5, 9 "Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you ... Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

7. GOD PROMISES SALVATION

ROMANS 10:9 "... because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."

8. GOD PROMISES FORGIVENESS

1 JOHN 1:9 "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

9. GOD PROMISES ETERNAL LIFE

ROMANS 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

10. GOD PROMISES STRENGTH

ISAIAH 40:29-31 "He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength. Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint." †

Children's Corner

GOD KEEPS HIS PROMISES

Do you know what a promise is? A promise is when we say we are going to do something and then we do it. We can make promises to ourselves, to others, and to God.

Have you ever told someone that you would do something, and then did not do it? Sometimes we make mistakes, and we don't keep our promises. But when God promises something, He always does what He says.

Throughout the Bible God makes promises, and we see that He always keeps them. Let's read about a promise that God made to Abram.

READ GENESIS 12:1-6 (NIV)

The Lord had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Harran. He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Harran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there.

What do we learn from this story about Abram?

ABRAM HAD FAITH IN GOD

In this passage in the Bible we read how God gave Abram the order to move from the country where he was living. God did not even tell Abram where he was moving to, but still Abram listened to God and obeyed him. Do you know why Abram obeyed the Lord? Because he trusted the Lord to keep his promises; he had faith in God. Faith means believing something to be true even if you can't see it.

THE LORD KEPT HIS PROMISE TO ABRAM

God promises Abram that all people on earth will be blessed through him. That even includes us! God kept his promise to Abram. Abram was the father of the Israelites. And Jesus came into the world through them. Through Jesus we are blessed – just as Abram was.

Answer these questions:

1. How old was Abram when God told him to move?
2. Who else went with Abram?
3. What are the promises that God made to Abram?
4. How do you feel when someone breaks a promise to you?
5. How do you feel when someone keeps a promise?
6. Do you think it is important to keep your promises? Why?

ANSWERS: 1. 75 2. His wife, nephew and follow in his footsteps. his promises and as his children we must ple: Happy, special, pleased 6. Yes. God kept Sad, disappointed, hurt, angry 5. For exam- him, and to give him land 4. For example nation, to make his name great, to bless household 3. To make Abram into a great

DECORATE THIS WORD

Promise

We can trust God because He always keeps his promises!

Word search

Find these answers. They are hidden in the word search below.

1. The name of Abram's wife
2. The country where Abram lived
3. The land they moved to
4. The book of the Bible where we read about Abram
5. The name of Abram's nephew
6. God says He will _____ Abram

H	N	Q	I	Z	G	S
A	A	I	G	H	T	I
S	A	R	A	I	U	S
U	N	T	R	U	S	E
M	A	T	N	A	L	N
C	C	O	I	N	N	E
F	B	L	E	S	S	G

ANSWERS: 1. Sarai. 2. Harran. 3. Canaan. 4. Genesis. 5. Lot. 6. Bless

Memory verse

2 CORINTHIANS 1:20 (NIV)

"For no matter how many promises God has made, they are 'Yes' in Christ."

The rich blessing from God in the benediction

Do you really listen to the preacher's blessing at the end of the sermon? Let's look at the blessing of 2 Corinthians 13:14.

ADAPTED FROM A SERMON BY REV ATTIE BOGAARDS

One of the most widely used benedictions is found in Paul's second letter to the Corinthians: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit will be with you all" (2 Corinthians 13:14).

Do you listen when these words are spoken over you in church? Do you understand what it means for you? Let us think once more about the meaning of this wonderful blessing.

→ WHO BLESSES YOU?

Paul does not conclude his writings with an ordinary friendly greeting. At the end of his letter to the congregation of Corinth he pronounces the blessing of all three members of the Trinity to the church. But it is not Paul who pronounces it, it is the Lord. He is the real author of this letter. The Holy Spirit is the great Bible author. Therefore, it is God himself who blesses his church of all ages.

Similarly, when a minister pronounces these words to the congregation at the end of the service, it is the Lord himself who blesses them. God speaks to you through the preacher of his Word. The King of the church blesses you, and that is of priceless value.

→ WHAT DOES THE BLESSING PROMISE US?

In the sending blessing of 2 Corinthians 13:14 we are not promised something but rather, someone: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ..."

Grace is unmerited favor and goodness, forgiveness of sins, and remission of punishment. Everything that Christ has promised us is summarized in this one word. Grace should remind you of his suffering and striving to pay off your debt, his victory over the power of sin, and his triumph over death. He did all this even though none of us deserved it. This is grace. You have no right to it. You forfeited every right and claim through your sins.

Do you realize the value of what you receive every Sunday? Every Sunday God stretches out his hand to you with the pronouncement of this blessing. The entire wealth of the deliverance and salvation of our Mediator is pronounced over you. Who would still want to stay away from church?

The grace of Christ is placed first in the list of blessings. Thanks to Jesus Christ alone, you can receive the love of the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

"and the love of God"

Everyone wants someone who cares for them. Every Sunday God himself promises his love to us. It is even more special when you realize that God's love is in the form of actions. He says to you that He wants to cherish and protect you. He wants to take care of you – body and soul.

A child of God can never get enough of hearing, time and time again, about the love his heavenly Father has for him. In a world full of hate, pain and loneliness, there is Someone who really cares and really loves you: your heavenly Father.

"and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit"

The fellowship of the Holy Spirit is also a fruit of the grace of Christ. He obtained the Holy Spirit and on Pentecost day poured it out on his church. The Holy Spirit is the one who bestows the faith upon you. Through the bond of faith, He connects you to God and Christ. The Holy Spirit draws you to Christ and opens your eyes to the love of God and the gifts of his Son. He enlightens your mind to understand the Scriptures which testify of Christ. In the benediction you are promised that you will have a share in the Holy Spirit.

→ WHO IS BLESSED?

We learn about who is addressed specifically in the last part of the sending blessing: "... will be with you all." The blessing is meant for everyone. It was for the whole congregation of Corinth, but it is also for all the congregations throughout all the ages. No one needs to feel excluded because it is for everyone.

The Lord meant it sincerely: He wants to give it to you. He wants you to receive this treasure. You need not doubt it.

RECEIVE AND ACCEPT THE BLESSING

Once you realize what is being promised to you in the sending blessing, you will never again want to miss out on it. There is one important point to remember though: The blessing is not a magical formula. It will not work without you truly believing, and without your repentance. God's promises demand sincere faith from you. You must believingly listen to the blessing and accept it. God really meant that the blessing be for everyone, but you must also receive it. You must take God's blessing for yourself with the hand of faith. †



BENEDICTIONS IN THE BIBLE

A benediction is a blessing spoken at the end of a worship service. The word benediction is made up of two words: "bene", which means good, and "diction", which means the saying of words. It is a way for the pastor to pronounce a blessing of God over the congregation. Here are some examples of benedictions in the Bible:

Romans 15:13

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope."

Romans 15:5-6

"MAY THE GOD OF ENDURANCE AND ENCOURAGEMENT GRANT YOU TO LIVE IN SUCH HARMONY WITH ONE ANOTHER, IN ACCORD WITH CHRIST JESUS, THAT TOGETHER YOU MAY WITH ONE VOICE GLORIFY THE GOD AND FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST."

Philippians 4:7

"[May] the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

Ephesians 6:23-24

"PEACE BE TO THE BROTHERS, AND LOVE WITH FAITH, FROM GOD THE FATHER AND THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. GRACE BE WITH ALL WHO LOVE OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST WITH LOVE INCORRUPTIBLE."

Jude 1:1-2

"To those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ: May mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you."

2 Thessalonians 2:16-17

"NOW MAY OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF, AND GOD OUR FATHER, WHO LOVED US AND GAVE US ETERNAL COMFORT AND GOOD HOPE THROUGH GRACE, COMFORT YOUR HEARTS AND ESTABLISH THEM IN EVERY GOOD WORK AND WORD."

Hebrews 13:20-21

"Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen." †