

190522-4 Doctrine Series, The Church, Her Promises—CThurman

36. Churches: Their Blessing*

To these churches He has made His promises, delivered the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, and gives the blessings of his presence, acceptance, love, and protection. Here are the fountains and springs of His heavenly graces flowing forth to refresh and strengthen them. The Lord's churches belong to him and are subject to his laws and commandments; religious institutions which do not have scriptural baptism cannot be the LORD's churches, therefore, they shall always be separate and distinct from these man-made organizations.

Mt.28:18-20; 1Co.11:24, 3:21; 2Co.6:18; Ro.9:4, 5; Ps.133:3; Ro.3:7, 10.

**Formerly Article 34 of 1644 COF*

To These Churches He Has Made His Promises

The Lord's church is the elect and spiritual seed of Christ which have not only professed faith in Him and obeyed the commandment of baptism, but have purposed to walk with Christ in one of His congregations. This church has the corporate presence of the Holy Spirit with them to instruct, guide, & judge. It is this church, to this kind of church, because it is the only church that there is to which God has made great and precious promises.

2Pe.1.1 ¶ Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious

that have obtained, λαχοῦσιν, dat. pl. masc. part. aor. of λαγχάνω; it means to receive an allotment ...like precious faith.

like precious, ἰσότημον, acc. sing. fem. of ἰσότημος, ἰσός + τιμή, equally precious.

faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ:

Now, if Peter is in the same place as he was when he wrote the first epistle, he is in Babylon, in Chaldea. So, he writes to those of the nations which have the same kind of faith as they did where he is presently. There isn't any other kind of true faith but that which

believes that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, come to die for the sins of His people. But this to which Peter refers is more. This faith led them on to following after that life which is in Christ. These *obtained* like precious faith; a faith *equally precious* to Peter and the church at Babylon. He speaks of those that had obtained like precious faith *with us*. Who but the saints of God manifest such this *precious, esteemed* faith? Do believers that have never obeyed the first commandment of God upon their lives to be baptized? Do believers who never see the glorious purpose of Christ for His people to come into the fellowship of a N.T. church? No. It is those who have come into the congregation of the Lord. Peter is writing to those who have come into special relationship with Christ in one of His churches. Notice the church context is understood in his writing.

2Pe 2:1 But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.

The first epistle is the same way.

1Pe 5:1 The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed ...

Among whom? Who else can it be except those baptized believers which do congregate together and have the in them the pastoral office.

Let me point out something here. Peter's epistles are among those called the general epistles. These epistles are written to those who are *of* the churches of Jesus Christ. There are other letters that are called church epistles and those are written to the churches as a whole. So, Hebrews, James, 1 & 2 Peter, 1, 2, & 3 John, Jude, and to this I would add Romans, are general epistles written to those who are understood to be in one of the Lord's churches. Proof of this is in each letter.

2 Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,

3 According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:

4 Whereby

δι' ὧν; , is a gen. pl. of ὅς; δι' ὧν is tss. in 1Co.3.5, but ministers by whom ye believed; 2Pe.3.5, 6, ... and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: 6 Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished ...

are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

Whereby refers to *glory and virtue*, which speak of the kind of life to which they, and those in the same kind of relationship with Christ in a church, are called to presently and eternally.

We, being called to a life and future of such glory and virtue, are given promises which compel us to hope in God.

1Pe.1.3 ¶ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,

5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Consider a few of the promises there are for the Christian, with a particular interest in the promises that are before us.

The Promise to Preserve His Church

First He promised to preserve His church, and that promise means God shall preserve the His saints.

2Ti 4:18 And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Mt 16:18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

The Promise of Christ's Presence with His Church

Christ promised that He would be with His churches. He would be present with His church everywhere and at all times.

Joh 14:18 I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.

Mt 28:20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Christ is always walking in the midst of His churches.

Re 2:1 Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks ...

Re 1:20 The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.

The account of the book of Acts is that the Spirit of God came upon the already existing church of the Lord Jesus at Pentecost. (cf. Acts ch.2) In this last book of the Bible, which is near the end of the apostolic era, Christ was as present with

them then as he was when He first came upon the church. The truth is, that He is still with the churches that are His.

The Promise to Them of the First Resurrection

The next promise made to the church that I'd like to consider is the promise of the first resurrection.

*Joh 5:28 Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice,
29 And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.*

A careful reading of the Scriptures notes that the first resurrection pertains especially to the faithful of the true churches of Jesus Christ. Outside of this relationship one is hard pressed to find Biblical support that any outside of Christ's NT church and the faithful of Israel past (cf. Mt.8.11) have promise of that glorious first resurrection. Paul lived expectantly of the prize of the resurrection.

Phl.3.8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that (ἵνα, hina, in order that) I may win Christ,

*win, κερδήσω, 1ps. aor. subj. act. of κερδαίνω; to gain (14), win (2); it means to be increased, or to receive profit ; comp. to αἰσχροκερδής, αἰσχρός, shameful + κερδής, gain tss. *filthy lucre*.*

To resolve an offense with a brother is to *gain* thy brother. (Mt.18.15); the antonym would be to *lose* (Mt.16.26), or *suffer loss* (Phl.3.8)

Win Christ in what way? To win his approval and the things that are associated with Him in His coming.

2Co 10:18 *For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth. (commend means to set, establish, stand together with him.)*

9 ¶ And *be found*
[may] The subjunctive *may win* is understood with this verb *be found*, 'And may be found'

εὕρεθῶ, 1ps. aor. subj. pass. of εὕρισκω, *may be found, may be gotten, may be obtained, may be perceived.*

in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: (That Christ might live through me by faith to produce the works of righteousness.)

10 *That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;*

εἴ πως
11 *If by any means*
also, perhaps, haply, by some means

πως, adverb, indefinitely

I might attain
come, arrive, reach

καταντήσω, 1ps. aor. subj. of καταντάω, κατά + ἀντάω;
KJV, *to come or attain*; that is *to arrive or reach*; LXX,
2Mac.4.24, *got*; 2Mac.4.44, *came*; 2Mac.6.14, *be come*.

unto the resurrection of the dead.

Paul is referring to the first resurrection. Paul hoped for being accounted worthy of this resurrection. It was not to him a foregone conclusion. As we read on, his hope and the prize to be won of the Lord was to be resurrected at this time.

Mt 10:38 And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.

Lu 20:35 But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage:

36 Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.

12 Not as though I had already attained (ἔλαβον, aor. of λαμβάνω, received), either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend (καταλάβω, aor. subj. of καταλαμβάνω) that for which also I am apprehended of (κατελήφθην, aor. pass. of καταλαμβάνω) Christ Jesus.

13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended (perf. infin. of καταλαμβάνω): but this one thing I do, forgetting

ἐπιλανθάνω, to forget, hide (as of putting away), to escape, to be unaware, to be willfully ignorant of; my opinion is that the main idea is to release.

those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto

*reaching forth unto, ἐπεκτεινόμενος, nom. sing. masc. part. pres. mid. of ἐπεκτείνω, ἐπί + ἐκ + τείνω LXX, to being, draw, spread; only this once in the N.T.: **to spread myself out upon ...***

those things which are before,

14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Brethren the faithful have the expectation of winning Christ and receiving the prize of the first resurrection. Those who are not living for Christ are not looking for Christ, and they do not live in expectation of the first resurrection. The first

resurrection is the great event that takes place at the *παρουσία*, *Parousia*, the second coming of Christ. For the saints of God there is no greater moment *in time* than this. This is when we are changed and we receive our bodies from heaven: spiritual, glorious, powerful, incorruptible, & immortal. (1Co.15.42-53; 2Co.5.1-4)

1Co.15.50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

51 ¶ Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. (... if we should be raised in that day.)

The apostle John writes of this moment as taking place at the coming of the blessed Son of God. Again, like Peter's letter, John writes to those who are understood to be a part of one of the Lord's churches.

1Jo 2:19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

The prepositional phrases *from us*, *of us*, and *with us* understands a church relationship. These are encouraged to understand that when Christ shall appear then they should appear with Him and be as He is.

1Jo 3:2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

The Promise to Them of the Kingdom

The next promise Christ has made to the churches concerns ruling and reigning. The kingdom of God comes to earth at the millennium. The model prayer, which

the Lord taught the disciples expressed the hope that one day the earth would experience this most wonderful kingdom.

Mt 6:10 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

Those that are raised in the first resurrection are raised to be special heirs and partakers of the kingdom. They are granted to rule and reign with Jesus Christ during this time.

Re 20:4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

Re 20:6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

Re 2:26 And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:

27 And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.

There are some that say we are in the millennium now. There are those that say that the world will eventually get better; that the world will ultimately be won to Christ. These are false, hurtful and deceptive teachings. The Bible says otherwise.

2Ti 3:1 This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

...

13 But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.

1Jo 2:18 Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.

Brethren, Christians won't be ruling the world in any way with a rod of iron until Jesus Christ returns.

But when Jesus Christ comes the saints of God are given dominion over the earth. There won't be any question about that when this becomes a reality. Christians suffered during their lives for faithful witness & service to Christ He shall reward them openly, boldly, clearly in the day that He sets up on this earth His glorious kingdom.

(Read Lk.12.32-48)

Da 7:27 And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.

2Ti 2:12 If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us:

13 If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.

Jesus Christ has made those elect of His churches kings and priests to God.

Re.1.4 John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne;

5 And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,

6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Many Promises Are Given to the Churches

A great portion of the promises that Christ Jesus has made to the churches can be found in His addresses to the seven churches in the book of Revelation.

- To the church at Ephesus: *Re 2:7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.*

The tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God is located on the new earth, which is in a new heaven. This is a promise to the saints that they shall enjoy blessings which follow them into the eternal age.

- To the church at Smyrna: *Re.2.10 Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. 11 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.*

The faithful saints of the churches receive not only life everlasting, but the *crown of life*. This *crown* seems to indicate that these shall receive the best of that which there is with Christ; the best of the best.

To the church at Pergamos: *Re.2.17 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.*

Manna was in the book of Exodus was a miraculous provision which God sent to the Israelites from heaven every morning during as they journeyed from Egypt to the land of Canaan. By the phrase *hidden manna*, perhaps is meant that the faithful shall receive a special portion in Christ that no others shall enjoy.

These also receive a new name. It is interesting that when Israel was taken captive by the Babylonians some of the children were tested if

were skillful in learning. Once accepted into the program they were given new names and eventually promoted to places of authority in the kingdom. (cf. Dan.1.3-7)

- To the church at Thyatira: *Re 2:26 And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: 27 And he (the overcomer) shall rule them (the nations) with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. 28 And I will give him the morning star.*

The faithful in Christ Jesus of the churches shall be granted to rule over the nations with Christ. Note that as wonderful as the time of the millennial reign of Christ men are still, though Satan is bound in the bottomless pit for the duration, rebels in their natural state.

Of the morning star, our Lord Jesus tells us that it is He.

Re 22:16 I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.

What does it mean to be given the morning star? I don't know, but perhaps, like receiving the *hidden manna*, it refers to something special that there is for some to Jesus Christ.

- To the church at Sardis: *Re 3:4 Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. 5 He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.*

Walking in white speaks of a righteous life. These are noted among others to be the *holy ones* of the Lord. These receive certain assurances of everlasting life.

- To the church at Philadelphia: *Re 3:9 Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie;*

behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. 10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. ... 12 Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.

The faithful reap eternal benefits: these are granted permanent residency in the city of God, bearing the name of the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the name of the city of God, and the new name of the the Savior.

- To the church at Laodicea: *Re 3:20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. 21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.*

The faithful have the promise of fellowship now, and then, authority with Christ.

The churches of Jesus Christ have great promises made to them. They are the keepers of the word and doctrine of God. They are witnesses of the resurrected Lord. No other has this witness and this charge. For this they suffer the persecutions of the world, particularly at the hands of the religionists. But for faithfulness is a reward.

Re 22:12 And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

Have we believed in Jesus Christ to the saving of the soul? Have we, in a show of genuine repentance and faith received Baptist baptism? Have we joined ourselves to one of the Lord's churches to serve Him by His grace of God until He returns from glory to rule over this earth for a thousand year? If so, these promises are to you. The greatest privilege and blessing on this side of the

coming of Jesus Christ is to be counted a faithful member of one of the Lord's New Testament Baptist churches. Hurt, Pain and suffering are real. Losing things because of Christ is real. Setbacks and discouragements are real. But all of this which we suffer as Christ's people are temporary losses when we abide faithful.

Ro 8:18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

When our Lord Jesus comes He will come suddenly. The promises He has made are to encourage us to continue until that time. Live for Christ!

Col.3.23 And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;

24 Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.

25 But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.

Re 22:12 And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.