

Why Do Christians Die if God Promises to Meet Their Basic Needs in Life?

Pastor Kelly Sensenig

The Great Deliverer

Psalm 34:17

“The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles.”

Psalm 34:19 repeats this promise:

“Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all.”

Some of God’s promises are directed to all the saints of all the ages. They are trans-dispensational, which means they can be applied to all of God’s children of any age or period of history. We discover from these verses and others that the righteous do have many afflictions in this life which relate to both spiritual and physical pressures. Do not believe those who teach otherwise. Trials are part of life like weeds are part of gardening. Nowhere in this psalm does David suggest that the life of faith and obedience will exempt the child of God from trouble (Ps. 34:4, 6, 17, 19). Perhaps we will find out someday that we have had more tribulations than the ungodly (II Tim 3:12; Heb 11:33–38; 12:5–10). However, the wonderful thing is that we do not have to bear these trials alone since God is our Friend that stands by our side and cares for us (Ps. 34:18). Yes, we have the reassurance that God will deliver us out of all our troubles. God is the great Deliverer! This is God’s promise to us during the time of trial.

“He’s able, He’s able, I know He’s able;
I know my Lord is able to carry me through.
He’s able, He’s able, I know He’s able;
I know my Lord is able to carry me through.

He healed the broken-hearted
and set the captive free;
He made the lame to walk again
and caused the blind to see.

He's able, He's able, I know He's able;
I know my Lord is able to carry me through."
Making the Distinctions

Of course, as God's saints, we can expect several different types of deliverance and the Psalms speak of all three perspectives of deliverance. This is important to understand or else we might become frustrated when seeking deliverance from God. God's deliverance can be viewed from a *spiritual* perspective (Ps. 34:4 – "fears"), a *physical* perspective (Ps. 34:9-10 – "want" or need) and a *future* perspective (Ps. 34:20 – "keepeth all his bones"). This last verse is probably looking ahead to the future and resurrection day and the glorious destiny we have of receiving a new body someday (Luke 24:39). The bones refer to the entire frame of the body, that which provides structure to the entire body. In the end, the wicked will be forsaken and all alone but the saints of God will continue to flourish and experience a glorious, pain free body (Rev. 21-22).

What we need to remember is that deliverance is promised to the child of God and this deliverance can take on various forms and relate to spiritual, physical, or even our future, bodily and heavenly deliverance. Of course, God always promises to deliver us from a *spiritual* perspective (1 Cor. 10:13), making a way of escape for us, which is His strengthening and enabling grace. God will make a way! However, sometimes God does not always deliver us from a *physical* perspective (2 Cor. 12:7-10) and allows us to suffer for His greater glory and our good (John 11:4). Nevertheless, we do know that God always meets our truest needs in life (Phil. 4:19) and delivers us and provides for us accordingly, as He meets these specific needs. Lastly, looking ahead, we can be sure that God will grant us final deliverance from all trials in the future when we pass from this life into the next (Rev. 14:13; Rom. 8:18).

Reconciling God's Promises

There is an important question that normally surfaces regarding God's promises in relationship to our needs. If God always promises to meet our basic needs in life, such as food and raiment (Matt. 6:28-32), then why do some Christians die of starvation? It's interesting that many of our questions that we have about God's promises are often linked to death and dying. This is because we are people who naturally want to live and experience good health instead of starvation, misery, and despair. However, we must come to

grips with the reality that we are all going to die, unless Jesus returns in the Rapture (John 14:1-3; 1 Cor. 15:51-52).

Here is the ten thousand dollar question. How can the promise of God, as it relates to meeting our basic needs in life (Psalm 37:25; Matt. 6:28-32; Phil. 4:19), be reconciled with the reality of the death or dying of His saints? For instance, why do some Christian people die of hunger and thirst if God promises to meet these basic needs in life? What about a Christian who is lost at sea, on a boat, and ends up dying? How about those Christians who died on the Titanic?

What about a Christian missionary who dies in some foreign third world country where there is a lack of food? What about a Christian who gets lost in the Grand Canyon while backpacking and freezes or starves to death? What about a Christian miner who is buried in rocks and dies after two weeks without food and water? What about a Christian who is captured by a communist regime and who is slowly starved to death in a concentration camp? What about a Christian who gets lost in the forest and dies of thirst? What about the early Christians who were starved and thrown to the lions during the early church? Has God forsaken them, invalidated His promises given to them, and failed to meet their basic needs of life?

The answers to these questions are rooted in the fact that *God has promises which relate to both life and death*. Many promises are connected to our present-day living (Psalm 37:25; 46:1; Heb. 13:5) and are applicable to our days on earth, while other promises relate to death (2 Cor. 5:8; Rev. 14:13; 22:1-5) and are applicable to our time of departure and the future life. We should not confuse God's earthly and future promises and the specific needs that we have at these different phases of our lives. In general, God will always come to our rescue and meet our appropriate needs according to His perfect plan and timetable for our lives. We can rest in His sovereign purpose for our lives and the specific promises that accompany His providential dealings with our lives (Job 23:10).

“I could not see through the shadows ahead;
So I looked at the cross of my Savior instead.
I bowed to the will of the Master that day;
Then peace came and tears fled away.

O rejoice in the Lord. He makes no mistake.
He knoweth the end of each path that I take.
For when I am tried and purified,
I shall come forth as gold.”

God – the Dispensationalist!

If we lump God’s two sets of purposes and promises together, promises for both life and death, we will commit the error of not rightly dividing and correctly understanding God’s Word (2 Tim. 2:15). Distinctions are important and we must take note of these differences in the Bible. For instance, not all of God’s promises pertain to the same *situation* or the same *phase* of life. We must understand the Bible, not only from a dispensational standpoint (God working with different people and having different plans and purposes coming to pass), but also recognize that God has different purposes and promises coming to fruition that relate to different phases of a person’s existence (life and death). God is a dispensationalist since He is carrying out many different purposes and promises that are related to the lives of His saints. We can’t put God in a box!

Let us remember that God does not have one set of sweeping promises that include all people for all times (Abraham, Israel, Old Testament saints, New Testament saints, infant church, or later church period) nor does God have one set of promises that only relate to this life. God also has certain promises that directly relate to death and dying (2 Cor. 4:17). God is a God of variety and His promises cover all phases of a person’s existence, both life and death. Beloved, *we must learn the secret of applying the right promises to our lives at the different phases of our lives*. Unless we do this, we will become frustrated and confused with God’s different purposes and promises as they relate to our personal and daily lives.

Yes, God is dispensational, which means He chooses to change the way He sometimes works. God chooses to work in different *ways* at different *times* which applies to the different *phases* of a person’s life. God has different purposes and promises for His children, some specific promises that relate to both life and others that relate to death. Beloved, accept this fact and let God be God. He’s God, get over it!

All the Promises!

2 Corinthians 1:20 declares:

“For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.”

Let us remember that “all” of God’s promises are true! Therefore, God never nullifies or fails to fulfill any of His promises to His saints while they are living. Nor does He invalidate His promises given to them at the time of death. This is because God’s promises to meet our needs are valid in both living and death. However, we must be careful not confuse the two separate timetables of God’s working and promises. We must recognize that God has never promised that we would live forever in our present bodies (2 Cor. 4:16). Therefore, there must be a *transition* or *bridge* from God’s promises related to our earthly physical needs to His promises related to our dying needs, which are given to us at the time of death and our departure into the afterlife.

Psalms 23:4

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.”

Is this a promise for living or death? God does not promise to give us dying grace until we come to this point in our lives and possess this need. Certain promises apply to life and others to death. We will not receive dying grace until we get to this point. Likewise, we will not need dying grace while God grants to us daily grace for living (1 Pet. 5:10; 2 Cor. 12:9). God knows when to transition us from this life into the next life and His promise to meet all of our needs will come to pass, not only for this life, but as we transition into the next life (Acts 7:55-60). God always meets our needs for each phase of our lives, both life and death. Since this is true, we must learn to stand on all the promises of God which may apply to different phases of our lives.

“Standing on the promises that cannot fail,
when the howling storms of doubt and fear assail,
by the living Word of God I shall prevail,
standing on the promises of God.”

Yes, standing on **all** the promises!

God’s Sovereign Purpose

God does *whatever* He wants to do, with *whomsoever* He wants to do it, *whenever* He wants to do it (Ps. 115:3).

“Back of the loaf is the snowy flour,
And back of the flour the mill,
And back of the mill is the wheat and the shower,
And the sun and the Father's will.”

In God's sovereign plan and purpose related to individual death (Eccl. 3:2 – “a time to die”); He can choose to take His saints home through various means (sickness, starvation, persecution, etc.), without invalidating His promises given to them for everyday living. How can this be? It's because God is transitioning or bridging us from earth to Heaven, from this life to the next life, and from our present sufferings to our eternal glory. *In the sovereign plan of God there comes a time when He must change our earthly promises and needs into dying promises and needs.* As a result, there is a change of our present earthly needs (Phil. 4:19) to the special needs we have at the time of death (Ps. 23:5). Yes, God always meets our needs! God is good (Ps. 107:1).

“God is so good,
God is so good,
God is so good,
He's so good to me!
He cares for me,
He cares for me,
He cares for me,
He's so good to me!”

The point is this; God gives certain promises to us for daily living, during our present existence on earth, while others He gives for death. Furthermore, in His sovereign purpose (Ps. 135:6), God often allows His saints to suffer and die in ways that are not related to His promises, which He gave to them for everyday normal life. This is why some Christians can starve to death or die of thirst. Does God meet the needs of His saints as they pass from this life into the next life? Absolutely! The Lord meets all of our needs for this present journey in life and then, as we transition into the next, He meets all of our needs. God always meets the needs of His people for both life and death. God will always give us what we need, when we need it, at every phase of our lives, in both life and death.

Matthew Henry remarked:

"I shall be supplied with whatever I need; and, if I have not every thing I desire, I may conclude it is either not fit for me or not good for me or I shall have it in due time."

God's providential working in connection with our lives will bring His purpose and will to pass and we can be sure of His provision. The will of God will never lead us where the grace of God cannot keep us!

Life and Death Promises

If we view God's promises in a two-fold manner (promises related to life and death), we will then understand why God sometimes allows Christians to die by other various means (starvation, thirst, heat stroke, etc.) which are not necessarily in keeping with His promises given to them for daily provision and living. As this study has revealed, God has promises that relate to both life and death.

We should ask ourselves this question as we pass through this life and move toward eternity. Does God's promise apply to the realm of my present-day living or to the time of my death? While I am alive, I will be claiming God's promises, which are given to me for my present-day existence on earth (Ps. 23:1-3, 5). However, when I'm on my deathbed, I will be looking to experience His promises that are related to death (Ps. 23:4, 6). I know that in claiming these promises God will meet my need even in the time of death.

"Though billows roll, He keeps my soul,
My heavenly Father watches over me."

Here is the obvious point; all the promises about God's provisions for food and the basic necessities of life (Matt. 6:28-32) apply to the realm of daily living – not to death and dying. God will always provide our basic needs regarding food and clothing, in order to preserve our physical lives (Phil. 4:19); however, He reserves the sovereign right to withhold some of these basic needs, as a way to fulfill His will (Ps. 115:3) for our lives regarding death and the afterlife (Ps. 116:15). Either way, the needs of God's saints are always met in accordance with His purpose and will for their lives.

The Indictment Against God?

The Bible teaches that God has another set of purposes and promises that He wants to bring to pass in our time of death. Therefore, we must claim God's promises for both living and death and know when to separate the two. One thing is certain; God always meets our needs as they relate to both life and death. So, if a Christian dies of hunger or thirst, it is not an indictment against God. This is because in the grand scheme of things God is bringing to pass His promises and purposes related to both life and death. God will meet our needs at all times – in both living and death.

God's promises that relate to meeting our basic needs for everyday living do not invalidate and overturn His purposes and promises that are connected to our time of death and departure into His presence. Both are true. God is working out His promises that relate to both life and death and we should never exclude one at the expense of the other. If we do, we will become confused and discouraged in our Christians lives. We will be frustrated at God (Ps. 37:1-8) for we fail to understand the entire scope of His plan and promises which He gives to His saints.

Be Still My Soul

Let us remember the testimony ascribed to God by His saints: "just and true are the ways" (Rev. 15:3). This should be our testimony as well. So what is our response to all of God's promises and purposes? The answer is simple: "Be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10). God knows what He is doing! Relax!

"Be still, my soul; the Lord is on thy side;
Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain;
Leave to thy God to order and provide;
In every change He faithful will remain.
Be still, my soul; thy best, thy heavenly, Friend
Through thorny ways leads to a joyful end."

In conclusion, God is the great Deliverer. This is because He meets all of our needs in both life and death. For this reason, we have strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow! "Great is thy faithfulness" (Lam. 3:23). Yes, God is always faithful to His promises and to His saints. Do not let Satan sow the seeds of doubt and suspicion in your mind (Gen. 3:1). God is good and He always delivers on His promises!

Psalm 50:15

“And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.”

To this we say, “Amen!”

“God hath not promised skies always blue,
Flower-strewn pathways all our lives through;
God hath not promised sun without rain,
Joy without sorrow, peace without pain.

But God hath promised strength for the day,
Rest for the labor, light for the way,
Grace for the trials, help from above,
Unfailing sympathy, undying love.”