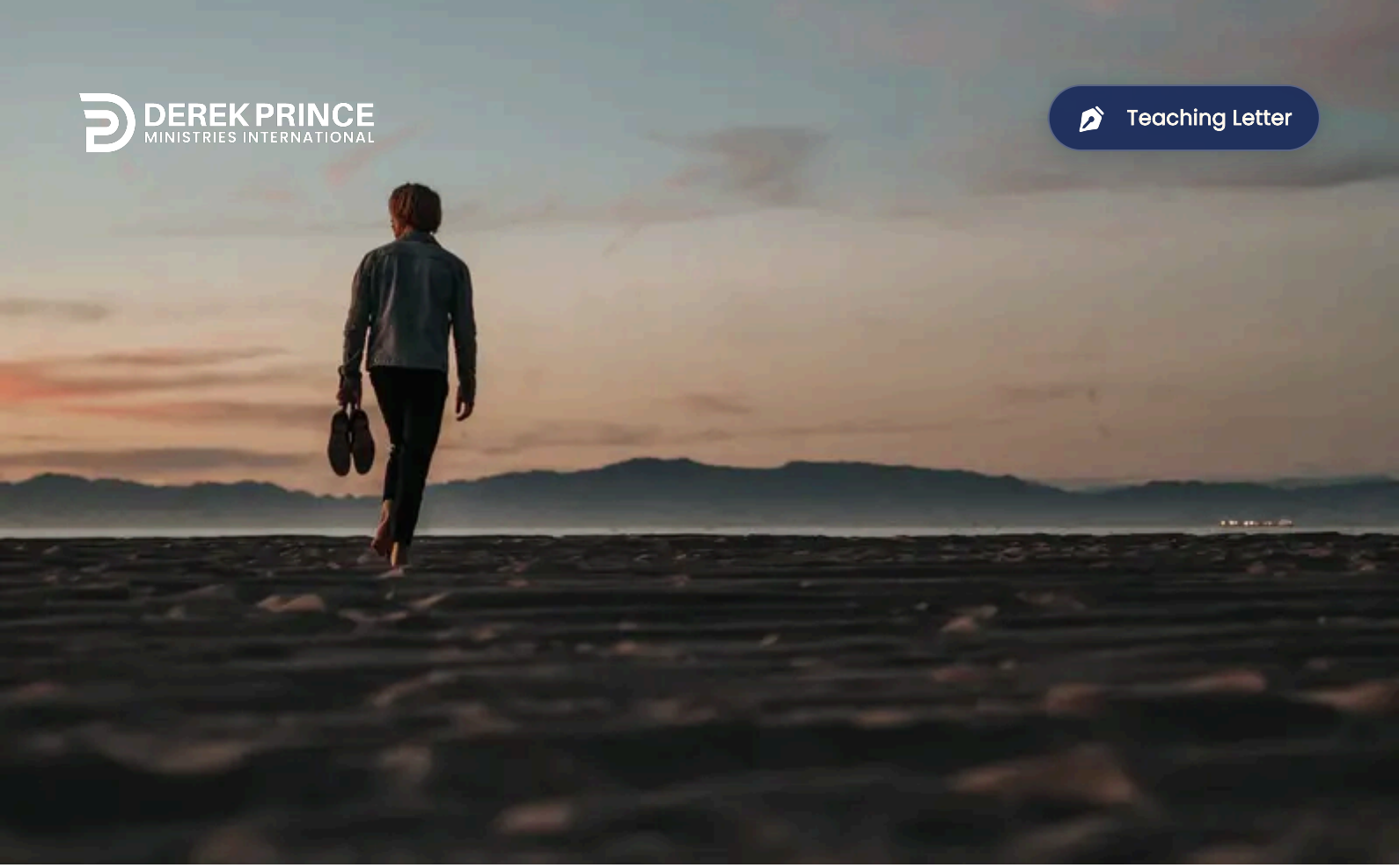


Walking Through the Land of God's Promises - Part 6



Part 6/6

Walking Through the Land of God's Promises
By Derek Prince

Guidance

Throughout my many years in ministry, I have counseled thousands of Christians facing various problems and challenges. The one consistent truth I have found is this: God, in His word, has given us great and mighty promises with which to face and overcome every issue of life. Although our problems may vary, the basic root issues do not: such as the reality of sin, the need for total salvation, the problem of mental torment, and the moment by moment need for practical wisdom. These are some of the topics we have looked at in this series, *Walking Through the Land of God's Promises.*

The Heart of the Matter

In these lessons, my purpose has been to show you how to locate and claim the specific promises of God for every situation you will ever face. This is the practical outworking of one of the greatest principles of the Bible, and also the foundation for this series: that God's provision for us is in His promises, and those promises are our inheritance.

In my previous letter, we looked at God's promise to give wisdom to all who ask Him in faith. I explained that the wisdom presented in the Bible is not "super-spiritual" or dependent upon understanding complicated theological jargon. Rather, it is simple, practical, and down to earth.

In this issue, we will be focusing on one particular area in which we often need this kind of practical wisdom. My subject may be summed up in one word: guidance. The fact is, in order to find the right way through each situation and circumstance of our life, we need guidance. The promises of God cover this need.

Let's begin this segment by looking at the promises that are found in Psalm 37:4–5:

> Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He will do it. (nasb)

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Perhaps you noticed something interesting about this passage: the first verse describes the kind of person who qualifies for the promise of the second verse. The promise is, "Commit your way to the Lord, Trust also in Him, and He will do it."

But before we focus on the promise, let's look at the kind of person who can receive this promise. God says, "Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart." But what does that really mean?

When I was a young believer, I understood that verse in this way: if I do what God wants, then He'll give me what I want. But as I became more mature, I saw that the promise in this verse goes much deeper. Now I understand the verse this way: if I delight myself in the Lord—if I really seek to please the Lord and find my satisfaction in Him—then He will give me the desires of my heart. And here is how He will do it: by the Holy Spirit, He will implant in my heart the desires that He Himself wants to fulfill. My desires will become God-centered and God-pleasing rather than self centered and self-pleasing.

So, delighting yourself in the Lord will lead to a change in the desires of your heart. Instead of being selfish and self centered, you will receive from God—by the Holy Spirit—desires, motives and ambitions which are godly and God centered. Furthermore, as God answers those desires and fulfills those ambitions, He will be glorifying Himself and extending His kingdom. Let me add that God's desires are always much better for us and much more profitable than our own selfish desires and ambitions, which are often harmful to ourselves and others.

A Three-Phase Promise

Let's look now at the promise in Psalm 37:5, which is the second part of our passage.

> Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He will do it. (nasb)

As I see it, there are three successive phases to this promise. The first is an act: "Commit your way to the Lord." Committing is a single act that has to be performed just once. What are we committing? Our "way"—which includes the burdens we carry and the decisions we've made.

Interestingly, where it says in this verse "commit your way," the original Hebrew literally says, "roll your way on the Lord." Why do you think the psalmist says, "Roll your way on the Lord"? Well, I have my particular answer to that question, based on a personal experience.

A Teacher's Dilemma

At one time in my life, I was the principal of a college in East Africa for training African teachers. Unlike our schools in the West, the principal of a college in East Africa was everybody's servant. He had to do everything. If a tap leaked, he had to repair it. If there was a food shortage, he had to meet it. In our school, rice was the students' favorite menu item. So I often had to go to the local city and collect sacks of rice, each of which weighed 112 pounds. I had to bring them in my little station wagon to the door of the storehouse where the food was kept.

The Africans who were being educated developed the attitude that now that they were in college, it was beneath their dignity to work with their hands. So I would set an example by helping to unload these sacks of rice from the back of the station wagon. I discovered that if the sack of rice was standing on the back of the station wagon, it wasn't difficult to get my back under it and carry it into the storehouse. But the real difficulty was to get it off my back again without injuring my back. That is when I learned about rolling my burden upon the Lord. I discovered that instead of unloading the sack slowly, if I gave a little quick jerk and rolled that sack off my back in one movement, it stood up on its end on the floor beside me. I became quite skillful at doing that.

When the psalmist says, "roll your way upon the Lord," how we choose to go through our life is like that 112-pound sack. It's too heavy for us to handle by ourselves; it's too big a decision and a responsibility. The psalmist is saying to us, "Don't try to carry that sack. Just roll it off your back and leave it at the Lord's feet. He'll take care of it." So that is the first phase: "Commit your way to the Lord," or "Roll your way onto the Lord."

Simple Trust

The second phase of our promise is an attitude—trust. Commit is a one-time act; trust is a continuing attitude. Once we have committed, we don't go on committing. Instead, we take the attitude that it is already committed, and all we have to do now is go on trusting. Commit is the act; trust is the attitude.

God Is Doing It

The third phase is, in the English translation, "God will do it." However, in the Hebrew it says literally, "God is doing it." I understand it this way: First we commit our way to the Lord; then we maintain an attitude of steady, continuing trust. The matter is in God's hand and as long as we continue trusting, God is doing it. In other words, He is

working out whatever we have committed to Him. Whatever decision, whatever course we need to take, God is working it out.

To me, it's somewhat like going to a bank and depositing money in a savings account. Depositing the money is the act of commitment. After that, you don't keep running back to the bank every day, checking to see if your money is bearing interest. You are confident the bank is adding the interest to your money day by day. That is an attitude of continuing trust. As long as you leave your money safely deposited in the bank and maintain that attitude of trust, the bank is doing it. It's the same with God. "Commit your way to Him, trust in Him, and He is doing it."

Directing Our Path

Now we look at another promise of direction from the Lord. This is found in Proverbs 3:5–6:

> Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. (niv)

An alternative and legitimate translation is, "He will direct your paths." God will direct your paths; He will make the right way through life for you. That is a promise we need for every present-day situation.

What are the conditions? In a way, they are rather similar to those of Psalm 37. The first condition is, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart." Maintain that continuing attitude of trust and you will find that with trust, there always comes peace. When you become fretful and anxious, it is an indication that you have stopped trusting.

The second condition is negative: "Do not lean on your own understanding." Don't go back to trusting your own judgment and trying to work it out yourself. One of the greatest hindrances to receiving God's answers to our prayers is that we pray—but then we try to work out how God should answer our prayer!

Frankly, God is not committed to answer our prayer the way we think He should. When we start trying to work it out, we actually slip into an attitude of mind and spirit that works against us. That attitude makes it difficult for us to receive the answer God is working out on our behalf. So, don't lean to your own understanding.

Acknowledging God

The third condition in Proverbs chapter 3 is, "In all your ways acknowledge Him." What does that mean? Let me explain what I understand about acknowledging God. It means that at any given moment, in any given situation, time or place, you stop and say, "God, I thank You for Your faithfulness to me. I thank You for all the good You've already done for me. I thank You for the way You proved Yourself in so many situations and circumstances in my life. You have brought me this far and I trust You to continue to lead me." That is how to acknowledge God in all your ways.

I remember a time in 1964 when I resigned a rather secure pastorate that I held in a city in the Pacific Northwest. My next step was to commit myself to become an itinerant minister without any fixed salary, or any fixed place of abode. No capital—not even a car of my own. I had a wife and a child to support, and yet I knew God was thrusting me out into this new ministry. As I was waiting upon God and seeking Him for some indication of security in this new ministry, God gave me the Scripture I quoted above: "In all thy ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct thy paths. "I want to testify that I have proved that true in all the years that have intervened. I have proved that this beautiful Scripture can be trusted. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct thy paths."

Give Him Thanks

Every time you come to a turning point or a choice of a pathway for your life, pause and begin to acknowledge God. Thank Him for all He has already done for you. Thank Him for all His faithfulness, for the way He has answered so many prayers and solved so many problems in the past. Then, having acknowledged Him, just go on trusting Him to be as faithful in the future as He has been in the past. Know that He will direct your path.

The action I suggested to acknowledge God would be a wonderful way for us to end this month's Teaching Legacy letter. Would you like to join with me as I lead us together in such a prayer?

Lord, You have been so good to me—far beyond anything I could have ever asked or deserved. You have been faithful every step of the way—guiding me, helping me, and providing for me.

You have helped me through the challenges and difficulties I have faced so far, and I know and trust that Your help will continue. Thank You for Your love and faithfulness towards me.

I join with the psalmist in declaring: "In all my ways, I acknowledge You. I know You will continue to direct my

paths." For all of this, dear Lord, I give You praise and thanks. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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