

Know the Promise!

Becoming a “Can Do” Person:

2 Corinthians 1:18-20, 2 Peter 1:3-9

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Wesley J. Gabel

Bethany Church

The stories in Haiti are both horrific and heroic. I shared last Sunday that the leader of our United Methodist emergency relief work died in the rubble of the Montana hotel. Since then, I've learned that another leader, who directed our volunteers in mission, was pulled from the rubble alive, airlifted to America, and then died from his injuries. Even as his wife and children mourn, they urge people to volunteer and serve. While these United Methodist leaders died, others survived days in the rubble, singing hymns and praying. My sister's church had a team working at a United Methodist orphanage. At exactly the moment the earthquake struck, every team member and orphan were outside, away from the buildings, playing games. Not one suffered injury; however, the orphanage director was inside and killed as the building collapsed. Miraculous protection for the team and orphans, the ultimate sacrifice by the orphanage director! For us believers, the story of Haiti reads like the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. In that chapter, some believers conquer through faith. Some were saved by faith, and some surrendered their lives in faith. All were heroes by faith. Certainly, that is the story in Haiti.

For those of us not directly in the fight for life over there, although we can be through our prayers and gifts, we tend to stand back in horror. That was never Jesus' posture. We are not to stay in such a posture. As children of God, we are not observers. We are players. Among Christian believers, there were few who suffered as much as the Apostle Paul. His challenges

were so difficult that the Lord told Ananias about Paul: “*I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.*” (Acts 9:16, NIV). Yet, in prison, after so much hurt, Paul wrote:

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:13, NIV)

Paul meant that. That truth rooted so deeply in his soul that every area of his life branched from it. Think of your heart as a root system. Words and thoughts come from heart like leaves and fruit on a tree. All your actions come from the heart as well. They are the tree that defines you. However, depending upon what your roots feed on, depending on what fills your heart, you can be a Can Do person in a hostile world or you can be a victim.

To be God’s “Can Do” child like Paul, you first must be convinced that God is for you. If God’s for you, it doesn’t matter who or what is against you! If you believe God’s for you, you won’t cower when courage is needed. Second, you need to check your vision. Do you focus on God’s presence and pleasure with you? Do you see God with you in each challenge? If you don’t visualize God with you, you’ll see yourself as a victim rather than a player. Third, you must not hang with scoffers. Their bitter words and actions go into the soil of your life and affect your heart. Fourth, you must come to know God’s promises.

Last week, I introduced you to a Belief or Vision Grid that looked like a glass checkerboard. We see God, ourselves and everything in life through a set of beliefs. If the beliefs line up with the truth, if they are godly, then we see clearly, like looking through a clear square. If the beliefs are ungodly, if we are deceived, then we can’t see clearly, like these darkened squares on the checkerboard. Unlike the checkerboard, we don’t have an even distribution of godly and ungodly beliefs affecting our vision. Much like the checkerboard, we do have godly and ungodly beliefs affecting what we see in every row or area of life. We’re accurate in some of our vision of God (the first row), and we’re horribly deceived in other ways.

We're right in assessing some things about ourselves (the second row), but we're sadly deceived about others. We're handicapped by what we don't see. Consequently, we stumble, crash, and injure both ourselves and others.

In the Bible, after Job suffers great loss, he complains to God. After a time, God responds saying: "***Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge?***" (Job 38:2, NIV) Another translation reads: "***Who is this that obscures my counsel with ignorant words?***" Job's talk obscured the truth. He spoke out of darkened, obscured squares on his checkerboard. What he said reveals that his thinking, feeling and actions were out of line. As God spoke to him, those darkened squares began to clear.

How can darkened squares clear for us? For one, we need to understand what square is darkened or obstructed. After all, Job thought he was right in challenging God's justice. Rabbi Saul, before becoming the Apostle Paul, thought he was right in opposing Christianity. Jesus tells us that there are two things that reveal those squares in a person's heart.

The first is the mouth. Jesus said:

The things that come out of the mouth come from the heart. (Matthew 15:18, NIV)

If you want to know what you really think, believe and see, watch your words. Do you talk like a victim? Do you speak wistfully? Do you compare yourself to others? Do you focus on problems or opportunities? Do you speak with anticipation or disappointment? Is your speech filled with God and his exploits? Is your speech focused on unmet expectations? Jesus said your words actually defile you. They actually violate and sully your stature as a saint and child of God. Jesus tells us that God measures our words. Therefore, we better monitor and measure

them. Have you given someone permission to monitor your speech and help you understand your attitudes and heart?

A second way to uncover the dark squares in our heart is to check our treasure. Jesus said where our treasure is, there is our heart. Where does your money and time go? That is where your heart is. Look at your calendar and checkbook, and then listen to your mouth. They help you read your heart.

You won't, however, have the discernment to know whether you squares are dark or clear unless you know the word of God. Psalm 119:9, 11 declares:

How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. (Psalm 119:9, 11; NIV)

You can't keep your way pure unless your vision to pursue that way is clear. God's word is critical. Psalm 119:105 declares:

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path. (Psalm 119:105, NIV)

The Scriptures truly enlighten your mind and heart. However, there is something more specific in the Scriptures that shapes you and me.

As a child, I remember my parents promising certain consequences if I had not completed the work by their promised return. Their promises imparted fear and also comfort. The words "I'll be home by such and such and we'll have this or that for supper" brought comfort. It eliminated anxiety, formed my expectations and altered my behavior. Promises profoundly influenced my mood, understanding and actions.

Do you know God's promises? They form your attitude and actions! The Bible says:

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through

them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. (2 Peter 1:3-4, NIV)

The Bible tells us that the power of God has already given us everything necessary to change those dark squares to clear. **We become “Can Do” persons in an intimidating world through knowing God and believing his promises. As we act on those promises we become like Jesus.** We do the will of God with the attitude of God.

Do you understand that all of God’s promises are meant for you to believe and act upon? They are all to be fulfilled through your faith in Jesus. They are to guide your attitude and action whatever the challenge.

I have some questions.

- 1. What promises are comforting you?*
- 2. What promises guide your actions today?*
- 3. How are you becoming aware of God’s promises to you?*
- 4. How do you keep them in mind so they affect what you think and do?*
- 5. What will you do this week because of a promise God has given you?*

If you take the time to reflect and respond to these questions, you will see amazing changes in such a short time. You will be cooperating with your heavenly Father who is raising you to be his “Can Do” kid!