

## God's Agreements With Us



### SABBATH—JANUARY 7

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** 1 John 5:13; Deuteronomy 28:1–14; Proverbs 3:1–10; Malachi 3:7–11; Matthew 6:25–33.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “ ‘Now, if you will be careful to obey the LORD your God and follow all his commands that I tell you today, the LORD your God will put you high [make you a big success] above all the nations on earth. If you will obey the LORD your God, all these blessings will come to you and be yours’ ” (Deuteronomy 28:1, 2, ERV).



God also promised that until the end of the earth, we will have a time to plant crops (Genesis 8:22).

**GOD MADE SPECIAL AGREEMENTS** with us. God's agreements with us also are named promises. Most of God's promises have two parts. So, both God and humans have a part to do. An example of a two-part promise is “If you do this, then I, God, will do that.” Or, “I, God, will do this, if you will do that.”

Another type of promise has only one part. An example of a one-part promise is: “I, God, will do this, even if you don't do anything.” Only a few of God's promises with humans have one part. Whatever we do or don't do, we can trust God to give us sunshine or rain. After the Flood, God made humans and every animal on the earth a promise. God promised not to drown the whole earth in water again (Genesis 9:9–16). God also promised that until the end of the earth, we will have a time to plant crops (Genesis 8:22).

This week, we will study some very important two-part promises between God and His people. Let's pray that we will keep our part in these agreements.

**GOD'S PROMISE TO SAVE US (1 John 5:13)**

Jesus' death on the cross made God's saving mercy possible for every person who lived or will live. But God's promise to save us is not the same as His promises about the crops and no more worldwide Floods that we read about yesterday. God offers to save everyone. But not everyone will be saved. Of course, there are people who believe that everyone will be saved. But the Bible doesn't teach this false idea. Jesus taught that His death on the cross was for everyone. But some people will choose to reject His offer to save them (Matthew 7:13, 14).

**How do people get the saving gift that God offers them in Jesus? How do the verses below help us answer that question?**

**1 John 5:13** \_\_\_\_\_

**Matthew 10:22** \_\_\_\_\_

**John 6:29** \_\_\_\_\_

**2 Peter 1:10, 11** \_\_\_\_\_

Paul understood that God's saving promise has two parts: a part for God to do and a part for humans to do. Near the end of his life, Paul told Timothy in a letter that he did his part. Soon, Paul was going to be killed. Many of his friends left him. But Paul's faith was strong: "My life is being given as an offering to God. The time has come for me to leave this life. I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith. Now, a crown is waiting for me. I will get that crown for being right with God. The Lord is the judge who judges rightly, and he will give me the crown on that Day [the day Christ (Jesus) will come to judge all people and take His people to heaven to live with Him]. He will give that crown not only to me but to all those who have waited with love for him to come again" (2 Timothy 4:6–8, ICB).

Paul knows that God saves us by His mercy because of our faith. So, our good behavior has nothing to do with our being saved. Our faith in Jesus' holy life saves us.

**What must we do to accept God's saving gift of mercy?**



**God offers to save everyone. But not everyone will be saved.**

**TO OBEY WITH ALL OUR HEARTS  
(Deuteronomy 28:1–14)**

In the book of Deuteronomy, Moses tells God's people again about all the wonderful things God did for His people in the past. Most of all, Moses shows Israel that God loves His people. God wants to take care of them.

**What wonderful blessings does God promise to people? What must the people do to get these blessings? Read Deuteronomy 28:1–14 for the answer.**



**If God's people sin and fight against Him, their evil behavior will cause bad things to happen.**

Moses was eager for God's people to understand that God had wonderful blessings for them. God promised to do special miracles for His people, too. Moses starts by saying to the people, "Now, if you will be careful to obey the LORD your God and follow all his commands that I tell you today . . ." (Deuteronomy 28:1, ERV). These words show that the people must be careful to do what God asks because their everlasting life depends on it. We also see that God makes us free to choose to obey Him. God chose Israel to be His special people. If the people obeyed God, He promised to bless them and give them many gifts. But first, Israel must accept God's blessings and promises and live by them.

God doesn't ask His people to do anything that is too hard. God says, "This command that I give you today is not too hard for you. It is not a secret hidden in some far away land. This command is not in heaven so that you should say, "Who will go up to heaven for us and bring it to us, so that we can hear and do it?" This command is not on the other side of the sea so that you should say, "Who will go across the sea for us and bring it to us, so that we can hear it and do it?" No, the word is very near to you. It is in your mouth and in your heart. So you can obey it" (Deuteronomy 30:11–14, ERV).

Of course, there are blessings and warnings in God's Promise. These warnings show God's people everything that will happen to them if they don't obey God (Deuteronomy 28:15–68). If God's people sin and fight against Him, their evil behavior will cause bad things to happen.

**What does it mean for us today to carefully obey everything that God tells us to do?**

## HONOR THE LORD (Proverbs 3:1–10)

**Read Proverbs 3:1–10. What wonderful promises do we find in these verses? Also, the Bible tells us to give God “the first share [part] of all your crops” (Proverbs 3:9, NIV). What does this verse mean for us today?**

God makes us the managers of everything He gives us. God asks us, as His managers, to put Him first. He wants us to understand that everything we own comes from Him. We also must show God that we believe He will give us everything we need. God promises us that if we put Him first with our things, He will bless the things we have left. When we put God first, we show our faith and trust in the Lord. We show God that we love Him with all our heart. We don't try to save ourselves. We don't expect other people to save us or take care of us. (We **need** trust in God because so often things happen that we can't understand.)

Jesus' death on the cross should help us to trust in God's love for us. Think about everything God gives you in Jesus. Jesus is the One who made us (Psalm 100:3). He also is the One who keeps us alive (Hebrews 1:3). Jesus is our Savior, too (Revelation 5:9). So, we should give to God the first share or part of everything we have.

“The Lord says that the tithe belongs to Him. [Tithe is 10% of all the money we get.] The Lord also tells us how we should separate the tithe for Him, too. The Lord says, ‘Honor the LORD with your wealth [riches; money]. Give him the first share of all your crops’ [Proverbs 3:9, NIV]. This Bible truth doesn't teach us that we are allowed to spend our money on ourselves and then give the leftover money to Jesus. First, we separate God's money from all the money we get.”—Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Stewardship*, page 81, adapted.

God says that if you put Him first, “your storerooms will be so full they can't hold everything. Your huge [big] jars will spill over with fresh wine” (Proverbs 3:10, NIV). Full storerooms won't happen by magic. That is, you aren't going to wake up some morning and find that your storerooms or barns are full all of a sudden.

What we must do is be good managers. The Bible gives us many important rules about being good managers. We must plan carefully and wisely. Then our “barns” or storerooms or savings accounts will be full of everything we need. We will have plenty, just as the Bible promises.



“The Lord also tells us how we should separate the tithe for Him, too.”

## THE 10% AGREEMENT (Malachi 3:7–11)

Did you know that there's a close spiritual connection between the tithe we give God and our friendship with Him? Tithe is 10% of all the money we get. The Israelites were a success and had plenty when they paid tithe. But they had hard times when they didn't pay tithe. During one of those hard times, God made a two-part agreement with His people. You can read about this agreement in the book of Malachi.

**Read Malachi 3:7–11. What promises and duties do you read about in these verses?**



**The Israelites had hard times when they didn't pay tithe.**

God makes His people a promise. He tells them, “ ‘Come back to me, and I will come back to you’ ” (Malachi 3:7, ERV). When the people ask God what He means, He tells them to stop robbing Him of tithe and offerings. Their stealing was the reason why God cursed them. God tells His people how to solve the problem of the curse. “The LORD All-Powerful says, ‘Try this test. Bring one-tenth of your things to me. Put them in the treasury [storerooms in the temple]. Bring food to my house. Test [Give a test to] me! If you do these things, I will surely [for sure] bless you. . . . You will have more than enough of everything’ ” (Malachi 3:10, ERV). If we don't have enough room for everything, then we have more than we need. We can use this extra to help other people and to support God's work on this earth.

“God gave His only Son to die for you. This same God makes you a promise. God gives you His blessings. In exchange, God asks you to give Him your tithes and offerings. No person can say that he didn't understand this agreement. Everyone can read about God's plan for our tithes and offerings in Malachi 3. God asks His followers to honor the agreement He made with them.”—Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Stewardship*, page 75, adapted.

Let's look at one of the stories in the Bible when God's people obeyed Him and started to keep this agreement. During the days of good King Hezekiah, the people turned back to God. They started to bring their tithes and offerings to the temple's storehouse. The people brought so much that their gifts were piled high in the temple (2 Chronicles 31:5).

**Do you pay tithe? What does your answer say about your own spiritual life and your friendship with God?**

**PUT GOD'S KINGDOM FIRST! (Matthew 6:25–33)**

The Bible says, “Most of the people were glad to hear Jesus’ teaching” (Mark 12:37, WE). Many people in the large crowds who followed Jesus and heard Him preach were the same as you and I. Jesus fed the people on the mountainside. They heard the Sermon on the Mountainside. Jesus told them that He knew their needs. He knew they were worried about taking care of their families. Jesus knew they worried about getting enough to eat and drink daily. Jesus also knew they worried about the clothes they needed to stay warm. So, Jesus told them His plan for their lives.

**Read in Matthew 6:25–33 about Jesus’ plan for His followers’ lives. What promises does Jesus make? What does Jesus ask the people to do to get the things He promised?**

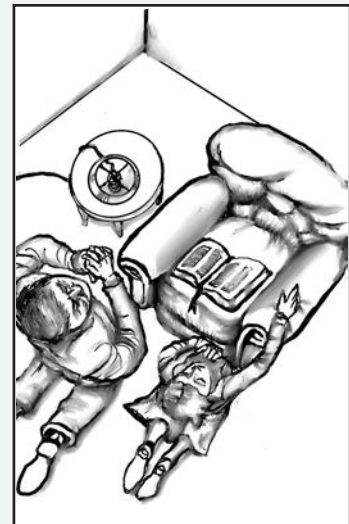
Many of God’s promises have two-parts. Our part and God’s part become one agreement. That is why we must do our part to get the blessing He promises.

**Read about the peace that God promises in Isaiah 26:3. What must we do to get this peace?**

**1 John 1:9 tells us that we must confess our sins. What will God do for us if we confess our sins?**

**Read about God’s plan in 2 Chronicles 7:14. What does God promise to do for His people? What must His people do?**

All these verses show us that God expects us to do our part in the worldwide war between good and evil. Sure, God doesn’t need our help to win this war. He is all-powerful. He is the One who made us. He keeps us alive, too. Our good behavior can’t earn us His mercy. We have nothing good inside us to give to God. But He wants us anyway. At the same time, God gives us free choice. So, we must choose to follow the Holy Spirit. We must obey God and do the things He asks us to do. Yes, God offers us blessings and life. But we can choose curses and death if we want. No wonder God says, “ ‘You can choose life or death. The first choice will bring a blessing. The other choice will bring a curse. So choose life! Then you and your children will live’ ” (Deuteronomy 30:19, ERV).



**We must choose to follow the Holy Spirit. We must obey God and do the things He asks us to do.**

**ADDITIONAL THOUGHT:** “Whenever God’s people follow His plan for tithes and offerings, God keeps His promise to bless them. [Tithe is 10% of all the money we get.] Then God blesses everything His people do. The more the people obey God, the more God blesses them. When God’s people do what He asks and honor Him with their offerings, God fills their barns with plenty. But when the people keep the tithes and offerings, they soon see that they robbed God. They also understood that they lost many blessings that God wanted to give them. God limits His blessings to His people only when they limit their offerings to Him.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 3, page 395, adapted.

The Bible tells us that we are saved by God’s mercy because of our faith. We obey God because He saves us. Our obedience doesn’t earn us God’s saving gift. (If we can earn this gift, then the gift wouldn’t be free, right? Read more about that in Romans 4:1–4.)

When we look at God’s two-part agreement with us, we can see both His promised blessings and the things He asks us to do. By our answer to God’s offer, we make our friendship with Him grow strong. We choose our future. Obedience means serving God because He saves us and because we love Him, too. Obedience shows we are the loyal followers of God. Faith doesn’t release us from obedience. Our faith permits God to give His mercy to us. God’s mercy helps us to give God the obedience that He asks from us.



When we look at God’s two-part agreement with us, we can see both His promised blessings and the things He asks us to do.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① What if every Seventh-day Adventist gave all the tithe and offerings that God asks for? Then the church would have everything it needs to finish God’s work on earth, for sure. What are you doing with your tithes and offerings to help the church finish God’s work?
- ② How important are our choices and our own good behavior in our friendship with God? Why is paying tithe and offerings part of being a good manager? Is it possible to earn God’s saving gift by paying tithe? How can we avoid this trap?
- ③ As we learned this week, hard times can come, even when we’ve been loyal to God. Why does this happen? How do we stop ourselves from feeling very sad and disappointed?

## MAKING A DEAL WITH GOD

**D**mitry Bagal was a student from the old Soviet Union. He came to Germany to study about God at Friedensau Adventist University. A few months later, after he started school, Dmitry ran out of money. He decided to try to get a job at the school or in a nearby home for retired people. But whatever job he chose, Dmitry knew he wouldn't earn enough money to pay for school. He couldn't get a loan from the German government the same way German students could. So, Dmitry decided to ask the school for money. The money the school gave Dmitry was smaller than the loan from the German government. But Dmitry didn't have to pay back the money to the school.

Dmitry prayed about his problem. He decided to make a deal with God. He prayed, "Lord, please bless me with a special gift of money. If You do, I promise to give You a second tithe to support Your work." Tithe is 10% of all the money we get.

Dmitry asked the school for the money. He was so happy when the school gave the money to him. So, Dmitry started to pay a second tithe of everything he earned. Each time his classes started, he got the money again and again from the school. Paying a second tithe was a lot of money. But Dmitry somehow always had enough money to pay his school bill and buy the other things he needed. He also started to save some money for an emergency.

Then Dmitry's five-year-old laptop computer started to break down while he was working on his homework. Two times Dmitry had to buy parts to fix his computer. Then the laptop's lid stopped closing shut. Dmitry needed a new laptop if he wanted to finish his assignment. He was happy that he saved some money for an emergency.

While Dmitry prayed about his emergency, he remembered a friend. His friend also was from the old Soviet Union. His friend and family went to the South American jungle to work for God. The high heat and rain had destroyed his friend's laptop. His friend needed a new laptop badly. Dmitry needed one, too. But he didn't have enough money for two laptops. In the end, Dmitry bought a new laptop and mailed it to his friend.

Soon after Dmitry mailed the package, he saw an ad on his laptop screen for the exact parts he needed to fix his laptop. Dmitry ordered the parts. He fixed his laptop, and it worked the same as a new one. His laptop continues to work today, eight years later. Dmitry knows that God blesses people who put His work first. Dmitry said, "The Lord continues to keep my old laptop running. The Bible says, 'Anyone who is kind to poor people lends to the LORD. God will reward them for what they have done' " (Proverbs 19:17, NIV).

INSIDE  
*Story*  
by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



**"Lord, please bless me with a special gift of money. If You do, I promise to give You a second tithe to support Your work."**

