

Just the other day, my little girl asked me for chocolate ice cream at 6:00am in the morning. She gave me the puppy dog eyes and the long, “pleeeeeeeeeeease!!” For a moment I thought, “what could it hurt?” Only a few seconds passed before I realized it wasn’t a good idea. She wanted ice cream so bad she started crying. However, I knew that if I gave her a big bowl of ice cream, it wouldn’t be long before she would be crying about a tummy ache.

Later that day, I found myself praying and crying out to God about something I really needed. My daughter crossed my mind and I realized that I was in the same position she had been in that morning. I knew what I wanted. I thought I knew what I needed. In fact, I understood that God, through Scripture, had actually promised what I was asking for. But, here I was asking and it seemed that God was saying, “No.” I didn’t act much different than my four year old daughter. I cried and pouted. I sulked up and poked my lip out.

It’s not that I didn’t want my daughter to enjoy the pleasure of ice cream, in fact, I really wanted to give it to her (and I did later that night.) But, I knew that ice cream at 6 am would not be pleasurable for her (even if she didn’t understand). It would cause her pain. In the same way, God will fulfill His promises the way that is most beneficial for His people.

This principle is nowhere better illustrated than the story of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. In Luke 24:13-35, two disciples were walking and debating about the crucifixion and the empty tomb. They were vehemently discussing what it could mean. As they talked, a stranger, whom they did not recognize joined them on the road. We are told that it was Jesus, but their eyes were kept from recognizing Him.

He asked them what they were talking about and why they looked so sad. Cleopas, one of the two, related the story of Jesus’ trial, crucifixion, and the discovery of the empty tomb. The way Cleopas relates the story, it is obvious that they were unsure as to whether their Lord was truly resurrected.

What is most instructive about Cleopas’ words is his distress about the crucifixion. He said, “But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel.” (24:21). You see Cleopas’ problem? It is the same as mine.

God had promised redemption. Jesus came to redeem Israel (and the Gentiles), and that is exactly what He did. However, He didn’t bring the kind of redemption that Cleopas and the Jews expected. He didn’t come to redeem them the way they wanted to be redeemed. Of course, they wanted forgiveness and grace before God, but they were focused on being delivered from the military oppression of the Romans. They understood redemption in terms of earthly power and influence.

Cleopas’ words demonstrate that his “messiah” was executed INSTEAD of redeeming Israel. Yet, the reality was that Jesus was executed IN ORDER TO redeem

Israel. God's promise in response to the cries of His people was fulfilled, but not necessarily in the way the people wanted.

When Cleopas finished, Jesus called them "foolish men," who were "slow in heart to believe all the prophets had spoken" (v. 25). Then Jesus began to explain how the Messiah must suffer in all the Scriptures from Moses and the prophets.

Now, I would love to tell you that Cleopas and the other disciples should have known better. They should have understood everything that was to take place. However, I can't do that. The Spirit Himself is the illuminator of the Scriptures. But what Cleopas should have had was faith. He should have trusted that God knows what He is doing.

...and so should I. Although, I don't know how God will fulfill all His promises to His people (myself included), I must believe that He is trustworthy and He knows what He is doing. I can't have all the answers about HOW He does what He does, but I can simply trust that He knows.

To be honest, if I could understand all the ins and outs of God's purpose and plan, He wouldn't be much of a God.

God's promises and provisions are completely trustworthy. Although they might not be fulfilled in the way I think they should...they will be fulfilled. God is working for the believer's good. That doesn't necessarily mean He will give you ice cream whenever you ask for it, but He will give it when it is truly for your good.