

God's Promises

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Promises of God

Every promise has its time

We all like to receive promises from God. There are many promises in God's word. Some promises were given to specific individuals at that time, which were fulfilled. Some promises are for everyone. Some promises will be fulfilled in the future. Some are being fulfilled right now.

God gives promises to His children even today. Some promise He gives are to us as individuals. Other promises are to us a family. Still other promises are given to us as a Church. Some other promises are given in response to us obeying His commandments.

The promises of God gives us hope and helps us in our walk with the Lord. The promise of the Lord's provision and His protection gives us peace of mind. The promise of His continuous presence in our lives helps us face any situation. These are the promises that are for our everyday life. These promises are fulfilled in our everyday life.

But the scope of this message is limited to the specific promise of God, given to us as individuals. How it is fulfilled in our lives. And the process a believer goes through, for the fulfillment of it.

Promises are always exciting to receive. Receiving a promise is like a baby conceived in the womb. When a baby is conceived it brings joy, excitement and great expectations to the family members. But there is greater joy and celebrations when the child is born. And the most crucial part in this process is the period between the time conceived and the time delivered. It is this 9-10 months in the womb that determines the health of the baby.

It is the same with the promises of God. When God gives a promise it excites, the people involved. And the fulfillment of it always brings greater joy and celebrations. But the crucial part in this fulfillment process is the "time-in-between". This is the time period between promise given and promise fulfilled.

It would be unhealthy and messy if you force a baby to be born before its appointed time. The same way, if you expect God to fulfill His promise before the appointed time, it would lead to messy situations. But when the appointed time comes, the baby will come out on its own, without you having to do anything. It is the same with His promise, when the appointed time comes, it will be fulfilled.

Every promise comes with a fulfillment time embedded in it. It is the Lord who determines the time of fulfillment. The time it takes for the fulfillment of the promise is a very crucial period for a believer. It is this "time-in-between" that determines the condition of a believer's spiritual life. It is this period the Lord uses to train, equip and mould a believer for the fulfillment of the promise.

A believer's true spiritual condition is also revealed during this time. Many deeper things from the bottom of the heart surface during these times. When a believer goes through this process and comes out successfully, then, he/she will become a powerful weapon in the Lord's hand.

Right promise.... Wrong situation

Many Christians are disappointed and disillusioned with the Lord because they expect the right promise to be fulfilled in the wrong situation.

I know of a very sincere young man. It was his desire to go to a university abroad and study. And he did not have enough money to pursue his education there. But he sincerely believed that the Lord was taking him there in spite of his financial situation, because he had received a word from the Lord. The promise the Lord gave him was from Isaiah 41:18-20.

"I will open up rivers for them on high plateaus. I will give them fountains of water in the valleys. In the deserts they will find pools of water. Rivers fed by springs will flow across the dry, parched ground. ¹⁹ I will plant trees—cedar, acacia, myrtle, olive, cypress, fir, and pine—on barren land. ²⁰ Everyone will see this miracle and understand that it is the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, who did it."

He said, even though his situation was like a desert, God had promised to provide all that he needed. He was confident that God would change his financial situation and would give him plenty to continue his studies. He was very confident that he would go abroad for his studies. He was very confident that God would take him there. He confessed many other words from the Bible to prove that God would do this miracle for him.

But it did not happen that way. He could not go abroad as planned and this really broke him. He felt that God had let him down. He had boldly confessed before his friends that he would make it. The embarrassment and the disappointment was overwhelming for him.

This young man was sincere, but he took the right promise for the wrong situation. Many believers I know have made this mistake. They receive a promise from the Lord, they are excited and want it to be fulfilled in the very next situation they face! And they are disappointed when it does not happen that way. They expect promises to be fulfilled whenever and wherever they want it fulfilled. They fail to understand that the promise has its appointed time and it will be fulfilled only in its time.

For this young man, the Lord did fulfill His promises, but it happened in a completely different circumstance. The Lord took him through a completely different path than the one he had planned. The Lord did fulfill all the promise He gave him. But it was fulfilled in a different situation, in a different time.

After going through the road of fulfillment, now he understands fully the promise given to him. He also learnt many valuable lessons in the process. Now, when he looks back, it amazes him the way the promises were fulfilled in his life.

This what we see with Moses' life. Moses knew that God had called him to deliver the Israelites, when he was 40 years old.

"One day when he was forty years old, he decided to visit his relatives, the people of Israel. ²⁴ During this visit, he saw an Egyptian mistreating a man of Israel. So Moses came to his defense and avenged him, killing the Egyptian. ²⁵ Moses assumed his brothers would realize that God had sent him to rescue them, but they didn't. (Acts 7:23-25).

God had already given the promise that he was to rescue the Israelites. It was based on this promise, he acted, by killing the Egyptian. You see, the promise was right, but the situation was wrong. The time had not yet come for this promise to be fulfilled. Because the time was not right, the Israelites did not see Moses as a deliverer. And the whole thing blew in Moses' face and he ran away to the wilderness.

Moses had to wait for another forty years for the fulfillment of the promise. It was this "time-in-between" that prepared, equipped and trained Moses for the fulfillment of the promise. This is the process that Abraham went through for 25 years before he got Isaac. It was this process that Joseph went through for 13 years as a slave and a prisoner, before he became a ruler, as promised by God.

When you go down the path with the Lord for the fulfillment of His promises in your life, do not expect it to be fulfilled in every situation you want. Wait in the presence of the Lord and let the Holy spirit teach you which promise is for what situation. Always be sensitive to listen to the Lord regarding the fulfillment. This will help avoid unnecessary disappointments and heart aches.

Unfulfilled Promises

There is another group of believers, who won God's approval for their faith, but died without receiving what God had promised them.

"But others trusted God and were tortured, preferring to die rather than turn from God and be free. They placed their hope in the resurrection to a better life.³⁶ Some were mocked, and their backs were cut open with whips. Others were chained in dungeons.

³⁷ Some died by stoning, and some were sawed in half; others were killed with the sword. Some went about in skins of sheep and goats, hungry and oppressed and mistreated.³⁸ They were too good for this world. They wandered over deserts and mountains, hiding in caves and holes in the ground.

*³⁹ All of these people we have mentioned received God's approval because of their faith, **yet none of them received all that God had promised.**⁴⁰ For God had far better things in mind for us that would also benefit them, for they can't receive the prize at the end of the race until we finish the race. (Hebrews 11:35-39) (Bold mine).*

Whenever we hear messages on faith from Hebrews 11, we always hear about Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Joseph etc. But usually the message stops with the first part of Hebrews 11: 35. I have not heard anyone talk about the other group of believers, who were also men and women of faith. They also received God's approval for their faith. But they did not do anything spectacular. None of their names is mentioned in the Bible. They were the ones who went hungry, oppressed and mistreated. They wandered over deserts and mountains.

There are such people in the Body of Christ even today. They are the ones who serve God in remote areas with very little possessions. They sacrifice their body, give up their comforts and security for a life of service to others and for the sake of the Gospel. They are oppressed and mistreated for the sake of the gospel.

I know of many such saints who are ill and have diseases in their body. They have given themselves up completely for the gospel. Many of them have died in their sickness. They continue to be sick and die even though God has promised to heal all their diseases (Isaiah 53 :5). I also know of some very Godly people who do have lack. They do struggle financially. They have to sacrifice many things because they could not afford to buy all they need. They continue to struggle. Does this mean that the Lord is not their shepherd? (Psalm 23:1).

An Australian missionary, Graham Stains and his two innocent sons were burnt alive in Orissa, India. They faithfully served the Lord by helping the lepers in that area. But they were killed cruelly by people who hate the Lord and hate the gospel. Were they killed because God was not able to protect them? God promises His servants protection from all evil. But for Graham Stains and his sons, that promise was not fulfilled, why?

Even Apostle Paul had suffered lack. Listen to what he says, *"I have lived with weariness and pain and sleepless nights. Often I have been hungry and thirsty and have gone without food. Often I have shivered with cold, without enough clothing to keep me warm"* (II Corin. 11 :27).

The apostle who wrote almost half of the New Testament says that there were times when he was hungry, thirsty, shivered with cold without enough clothing to keep him warm. Did the apostle Paul and these sincere missionaries forget to claim Psalm 23:1? Why were Graham Stains and his sons killed so cruelly?

This other group of believers continue to suffer in this world and are murdered cruelly. To some, they may look like failures. They are people who no one knows about. These are the people who are despised by the world. They do not come on TV to boast of their "exploits" and ask for money. But toil in difficult areas without anyone knowing of their work. They are the ones who live for a year with the same amount of money, a prosperity preacher spends on a suit! Do they have little faith because they have less money? Do they have little faith because they suffer? Is their ministry inferior because no one knows about it?

The word of God says these are the ones who have gained approval from God for their faith. Yet they did not receive all the promises of God in this world, because God has something better for them in eternity. They are the ones the writer of Hebrew call "**The ones too good for this world**" , NKJV says "**of whom the world was not worthy**". The world may not know them or remember their name, but I am sure their names are very well known and popular in heaven.

Yes, the world is not worthy of such saints. They did not receive the promise in this world, but they will receive much more in eternity. They are the ones who set their minds on the things to come. These are people who are eternity conscious. To them, the things of this world seem utterly inferior. They have chosen the better things that God has for them.

The road to fulfillment

After the promise is received, the road to fulfillment is very important. It is this process that prepares and makes us ready to receive the promise. Let us examine the lives of some men of faith who went through this process and see what we can learn from them. The following are some of the challenges and hurdles they faced and overcame on their way to the fulfillment of their promise.

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Human mind

"And again, in the book of Psalms, we are told that the Lord knows full well how the human mind reasons and how foolish and futile it is". (1 Corinthians 3:20)

The fulfillment of a promise is dependant on the power of God. Never let the human mind overwhelm divine power. When you are on a journey to fulfillment, the greatest hurdle you will face is the human mind. That is why Paul asks us to let God transform our mind.

"Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will know what God wants you to do, and you will know how good and pleasing and perfect his will really is" (Romans 12:2).

The way we think will determine the way we live. Many Christians want to live a Christian life without having a Christian mind. A Christian mind is essential for a Christian life. If you don't have a Christian mind you can't live a Christian life. This is the hurdle Abraham faced.

God gave Abraham the promise when he was 75 years old (Gen12:1-4). And I am sure that Abraham was excited to receive such a promise. The Lord promised him a son and many descendants. *"And I am going to give you so many descendants that, like dust, they cannot be counted!"* (Gen 13:16).

Year after year came and went, but nothing happened. God used to visit him time to time to re-iterate the promise, but nothing happened. After 10 years, Sarah's human mind begins to think and she proposes a solution (Gen 16: 1-3). Her thinking reflects the human mind. According to human wisdom old people do not conceive and give birth.

So it was time for a solution to this problem, her way. She did not bring God's promise and His power into the equation. The only thing that she thought about was, that which was humanly possible. This is the human mind thinking. The human mind is the greatest enemy to the plans of God.

It was this human mind that prevented the Jews from recognizing Jesus as the Messiah. Because the human mind was looking for a Messiah who would come and rescue them from the Romans and would establish a Kingdom for Israel. Jesus' talk of a heavenly kingdom was not appealing to them.

The human mind cannot understand many things of God. *"If you do this, you will experience God's peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand".* (Phil 4:7)

Many children of God give up on their promise by listening to what their human mind says. Only a Christian mind will help you attain the promise God gives you.

When going toward the fulfillment, you will hear many noises from all over. "It is too hard", "It is too late" "Not possible" "Are you crazy?" are some of them. These are the phrases that will come out of a human mind. It is the mind of Christ that can see the promise in spite of all these negative noises.

"But, strange as it seems, we Christians actually do have within us a portion of the very thoughts and mind of Christ." (1 Corinthians 2:16)

Since we have the mind of Christ, let us think like Him. Keep going. Let your mind be on the promise and your eyes on the one who has promised you.

Contradictions

The second test Abraham faced was contradictions. It was God who gave Isaac according to the promise. But one fine day, the same God asks Abraham to sacrifice him (Gen 22:1,2). Two things must have confused Abraham initially.

1. How could God ask back the one He himself gave?
2. How could He ask for a human sacrifice? Abraham knew that God was always against human sacrifice.

This may seem like a contradiction. But Abraham never let any contradiction bother him. He obeyed God irrespective of whether it made sense to him or not. He had such faith in God that he believed God was able to raise up Isaac even if he were to die. *"Abraham assumed that if Isaac died, God was able to bring him back to life again."* (Heb. 11:19).

He was sure that his promise would not go away from him. He was confident that God would never go back on his promise, even though it may seem like, on the surface.

When you are on the road to fulfillment, you will face situations when your promise may seem to be slipping away from you. On the surface it may seem like that, but in reality the promise once given, will not slip away from you. Never let any contradiction bother you.

Circumstances

The Lord gave Joseph a promise that He would become a king and everyone, including his parents would bow down and worship him. (Gen 37 : 6-11). This definitely was an exciting dream for a 17 year old boy. Joseph was excited about it and he told everyone, including his jealous brothers. They got so irritated with his dream, that they sold him as a slave. (Gen. 37 : 27,28)

The Lord had told him that he would become a ruler, but here he is being sold as a slave. The promise was to be a king, but he became a slave and a servant. As if that is not enough, he was wrongfully convicted of a crime he did not commit and sent to jail. Now, Joseph was not only a slave and a servant, he was also a convicted rapist (at least from the Egyptian perspective).

There could be no worse circumstance than this for the fulfillment of the promise given to him by God. A despised Hebrew man in a sophisticated Egyptian society. Not only was he despised, but he was a slave, a servant and a prisoner. This is not the circumstance from which rulers come. But Joseph knew a God to whom circumstances mean nothing. When God promises, He fulfills it. No circumstance can prevent Him doing what He had planned to do.

When you are on the road to fulfillment, do not expect favorable circumstances. Expect hostile circumstances. It was this circumstance that tested and tried Joseph.

"Until the time came to fulfill his word, The Lord tested Joseph's character." (Psalm 105:19)

Joseph's character was tested until the time came. But when the time came things started to happen. (Gen 41 : 1-46) and Joseph was brought from the dungeon and was set on the throne. The events that happened were not coincidence. When the time came the Lord sets things into motion and the promise was fulfilled. It all happened so fast that no human being could have predicted such a thing. It was far beyond the understanding and comprehension of the human mind.

When you are on the road to fulfillment, never let any circumstance make you lose your faith. No matter how bad the circumstance, when the time comes and when the Lord begins to act, nothing can stop Him. It is His power that matters not the circumstance. His power can overwhelm all circumstances. Wait patiently like Joseph, and the Lord will lift you from the dungeon to the throne. It took the Lord no time to fulfill His promise to Joseph.

Darkness

We read a very interesting incident in the following passage.

"I know what the dream means," Joseph said. "The three branches mean three days. ¹³ Within three days Pharaoh will take you out of prison and return you to your position as his chief cup-bearer. (Gen. 40 : 12,13)

Here Joseph predicts what would happen to the cupbearer. Joseph was able to see the cupbearer's futures clearly. And he also predicted the future of the chief baker (Gen. 40:18,19). But the irony was, **he did not know his own future**. I don't know how many people in the prison made fun of him for this. "You predict his future, can't you know yours?" But Joseph did not let this lack of visibility about his own future from helping others.

God did not reveal Joseph's future, but He chose to reveal the future of the cupbearer. Joseph did what God wanted him to do. He did not shy away from serving God and helping others, even when his own future was so dark. He kept on helping people. He did not let the lack of visibility bother him.

You will face similar situation when on the road to fulfillment. Your future may be dark, but when God asks you to help others, obey Him and do as he tells you. Be faithful in your calling in all situations. Because as you help others, your door will open. Be productive where ever you are. And when the time comes you will be lifted up.

Even though Joseph could not see with his natural eyes into the future, he saw it with the eyes of faith. Do not let the lack of visibility on the natural bother you. Only what you see with your eyes of faith matters.

People

The fulfillment of the promise is not dependant on what people do or do not do. Joseph helped the cupbearer by interpreting his dream, but after he got released from the prison, he promptly forgot Joseph. *"Pharaoh's cup-bearer, however, promptly forgot all about Joseph, never giving him another thought". (Gen 40 :23)*

When you are on the road to fulfillment, people will let you down. The person you think will help you receive the promise may let you down. But always remember, your promise is not dependant on whether some one helps you or not. Your promise will be fulfilled when and how the Lord chooses to.

It is true that God uses people to fulfill His promises. But let that be not your concern. **Please do not run behind men to get your promise fulfilled**. Let the Lord take care of all that. When the Lord decides to act, He could use anyone He chooses to fulfill His promise.

The Lord did use the cupbearer to fulfill Joseph's promise, when the time came. Though he forgot Joseph for sometime, when the time came, he remembered (Gen. 40:9). Do not worry when people let you down. When the time comes, they will do what God wants them to do. It is the Lord who is in charge of your life, not people.

Open Doors

"So as David stood there among his brothers, Samuel took the olive oil he had brought and poured it on David's head". (I Samuel 16:13)

David was anointed King over Israel after the Lord rejected Saul. Samuel anointed David and he became the new King of Israel. But he did not start to reign immediately. He was on the run from Saul. The one who is anointed as the king of Israel starts to live like an outlaw. Living in caves and mountains. Saul was pursuing David and wanted to kill him.

It was in this situation that David gets two very easy chances to kill Saul (I Samuel 24 : 3-7, 26 5-11). All he had to do was kill Saul and he would begin to rule. And he had all the legal right to do it. After all, the Lord had rejected Saul and he was the anointed one.

"God has surely handed your enemy over to you this time!" Abishai whispered to David. "Let me thrust that spear through him. I'll pin him to the ground, and I won't need to strike twice!"

⁹ *"No!" David said. "Don't kill him. For who can remain innocent after attacking the Lord's anointed one?"* ¹⁰ *Surely the Lord will strike Saul down someday, or he will die in battle or of old age.* ¹¹ *But the Lord forbid that I should kill the one he has anointed!* (I Samuel 26 8-10)

But David chose not to kill Saul. David knew that it was the Lord who promised him and he wanted the Lord to fulfill it.

The proposition was attractive but, David wanted it fulfilled in God's way not any way possible. He knew he had to wait some more time for it. And he thought it was better to wait than do something without God. Waiting is painful, but it is better to wait till the right door opens.

Not all open doors lead you to your fulfillment. Discern all the doors that open , find out if it is from the Lord. If it not from him, no matter how attractive it may seem, do not enter it.

I know of many people who did not wait for the right door, but entered any door that opened. As they entered, instead of finding a solution to their problem they found more problems. Many people have ruined their lives because they did not want to wait.

When on your journey towards the fulfillment of the promise, you will find many attractive doors open. Do not enter just because it is open. Discern and enter only the door the Lord wants you to. Ignore all the others, like David.

Conclusion

There are two elements involved in the fulfillment of God's promise.

1. Willingness of the human being involved.
2. The power of God.

Of these two, the power of God is constant and it never changes. And His power is enough to change any situation. It is the human willingness to go till the end that determines whether the promise is fulfilled the way God wants it or not.

God promises many people many things. But very few go all the way for the fulfillment. Abraham went all the way with God, no matter how tough it was or how long it took. That is why he is called a friend of God. Men of faith are men who go all the way with God. They do not give up when the going gets tough. In fact , **they toughen up when the going gets tough.**

Saul was anointed the same way David was. But David went all the way with the Lord to attain what God had promised him. And Saul was not willing to go all the way with the Lord. When Samuel did not turn up for a sacrifice in time, Saul panicked.

"Saul waited there seven days for Samuel, as Samuel had instructed him earlier, but Samuel still didn't come. Saul realized that his troops were rapidly slipping away. ⁹ So he demanded, "Bring me the burnt offering and the peace offerings!" And Saul sacrificed the burnt offering himself. ¹⁰ Just as Saul was finishing with the burnt offering, Samuel arrived. Saul went out to meet and welcome him, ¹¹ but Samuel said, "What is this you have done?" " (I Samuel 13: 8-11)

When the going got tough David toughened up. But when the going got tough Saul cracked.

God has a plan for you. His promises are according to the plan He has for you. If the promise is to be fulfilled, prepare yourself to go all the way... with the Lord.

The very first time the Lord saw Simon, He changed his name from Simon to Peter (meaning rock).

"Then Andrew brought Simon to meet Jesus. Looking intently at Simon, Jesus said, "You are Simon,

the son of John—but you will be called Cephas" (which means Peter)" (John 1:42).

"You are Peter, a stone; and upon this rock I will build my church" (Mathew 16:18)

The Lord promised that he would become a rock. But he did not become a rock immediately, overnight. He went all the way with Jesus through the tough path with many problems, disappointments and heart aches. It was this process that changed him into the rock on which the church is built. It was this process that changed this tongue-in-cheek Simon into a rock on which the church is built.

These days, when the Body of Christ is so corrupt and compromised, God is looking for rock like believers. Are willing to go till the end with the Lord?

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