

An Attempt To Listen To God

Introduction to The Promises of God

By

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Inscribed on one of the entrances to a university in New Zealand are the words: “How little a portion is heard of Him” (Job. 26:15). It is profoundly true!

It is totally irrelevant how long one has studied the scriptures, the depth of enlightenment the Holy Spirit has graciously given, or spiritual giants one spends time with; none of the sin prone sons of Adam can know all there is on any given theme. Individuals may be given truths and enlightenments possibly unique to themselves because of a certain situation, (illustrated by Nebuchadnezzar, Dan. 2:1-49 and Belshazzar Dan. 5:1-5), but the scripture stands true: “None of us liveth to himself” (Rom. 14:7). Each of us are indebted to those who have either gone before, or are still alive but leaving for others their understandings as Peter did (2 Pet. 1:15). These papers are compilations of personal studies, those of Samuel Clark D.D., Dr. H. Lockyer, Rev. Finney, Dr. John Rice, Praying Hyde, and Mr. Rees Howells.

I would have been greatly impoverished by the lack of two things:

- a) Had there not been left the recording of their meditations on God’s promises
- b) The ways of God in their lives which enabled them to literally claim the promises of God in a very real way.

The multitude of the promises of God means that it is quite difficult to divide them into sections, thus the following is a suggestion of how they can be divided, be considered, and added to:

- a) The introduction
- b) Promises specifically concerning:
 - i) Israel (Gen. 18:18 with Gal. 3:8)
 - ii) For all the redeemed (1 Jn. 1:7; Heb. 10:10)
 - iii) For times of uncertainty (Isa. 43:2)
 - iv) For the temporal things of life (1 Kgs. 3:12-13; 10:23; Matt. 13:22; Phil. 4:19)
 - v) In times of fear (Prov. 3:5)
 - vi) Eternal security (Jn. 10:28-29)
 - vii) The Holy Spirit (Jn. 15:26)
 - viii) Satan and his sympathizers (Rev. 20:10; Psa.9:17; Rev. 21:8)
 - ix) Christ (Isa. 28:16; Isa. 11:2)
 - x) God (Gen. 18:25)
 - xi) Our blessings (Eph. 1:3)
 - xii) For times of spiritual conflict (Jam. 4:7)
 - xiii) The Gentiles (Zech. 1:21; Rom. 11:25; Matt. 24:6-7)
 - xiv) The natural world (Psa. 105:16; 1 Kgs. 17:4 & 9; Matt. 24:7)

Before delving in to this lovely and comforting theme, there are a series of truths which are interesting and informative.

- 1) When dealing with any promise, whether human or divine, there must be:
 - a) The Promiser
 - i) Such a one must be marked by absolute fidelity of character and the ability to fulfill that which they promise. This requires absolute power over every hindering circumstance which may arise. When this is observed, it becomes clear that there are very few promises man can make for he has not the fidelity or ability in totality. This is why Paul is caused to write: “For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen”. Only in Christ are all the promises of God “yea and Amen” (2 Cor. 1:20).
 - ii) The character of God is such that He cannot lie (Titus 1:2) because He is Holy (Josh. 24:19).
 - iii) The promises, whether for blessing or threatening, are never mere empty expressions. God says what He means and means what he says. God never gives rash statements as we may do when we tell someone we will pray for them and then forget about the oath

made. Neither is He like a father who answers absentmindedly when the child asks for something. Neither does God ever make a pledge and act in deception the entire time (Dan. 11:22-23)

- iv) The word “promise” does not have to be used to indicate the pledge of God for when God gives His word concerning anything, it is a promise. For instance, God said: “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen. 2:17). That was a word, a promise of judgment. The same is when our Lord said: “Ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am a He, ye shall die in your sins” (Jn. 8:24). On the other hand, an invitation can extend to a promise, for the Holy Spirit wrote for the saint’s encouragement: “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we might obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:16)
 - b) The promise
 - c) The promisee
- 2) The word “promise” is first found when God promised Abraham the land saying: “Get thee out of thy country. . . unto a land that I will show thee” (Gen. 12:1), and the last is: “And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life” (1 Jn. 2:25).
 - 3) One of the questions often asked concerning the scriptures is: “How many?”
 - a) How many questions are there?
 - b) How many verses are there?
 - c) How many chapters are there?
 - d) How many prophecies are there?
 - e) How many promises are there?
 - 4) Concerning the latter: “How many promises are there?” The answer varies greatly for several reasons:
 - a) Clarifications:
 - i) When we speak of a promise are we thinking of a specific pledge as when the Lord promised Abraham a son from Sarah? (Gen. 17:19)
 - ii) Or, are we also including prophetic statements, i.e.: “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him” (Rev. 1: 1).
 - iii) What of the times when it states: “a saying”, a “word”, “the burden of the word of the Lord” (Zech. 9:1; 12:1; Mal. 1:1).
 - b) Numeration:
 - i) One individual spoke of there being 30,000 promises. This is quite far fetched to say the least since there are only 31,173 verses in the entire volume.
 - ii) H. Lockyer refers to K. Storms, who after reading through the scriptures 27 times, counted 8810 promises. Storms, in his study, concluded that the scriptures contain:
 1. 7487 Promises from God to man
 2. 2 promises from the Father to the Son
 3. 991 promises of one man to another
 4. 290 promises of man to God
 5. 21 promises made concerning angels
 6. 1 promise from a man to the Angel of the Lord
 7. 2 promises made by evil spirits
 8. 9 promises made concerning Satan
 - iii) Indeed, it could be said the entire book of Revelation is a combined series of promises which cumulate chronologically with the eternal state in ch. 21:1-8.
 - 5) One matter which must be considered is: “Has God made promises?” Following hard after this is, “What is the evidence of such communication?”

- a) A promise is a pledge of one individual to another, of one group, or nation to another, or an individual or number of individuals representing an individual or nation, etc.
 - b) God has made promises to:
 - i) Individuals concerning another. When speaking to Ananias concerning Saul of Tarsus, God said: "He is a chosen vessel" (Acts 9:15).
 - ii) Individuals, concerning them and their seed directly. The Lord gave this pledge to Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:15).
 - iii) All humanity concerning nature, that He would never again destroy the earth with a flood (Gen. 9:11).
 - iv) An individual from the natural world using an unnatural means, such as with Elijah when he was fed by the ravens (1 Kgs. 17:4).
 - v) Humanity concerning the promised Redeemer (Isa. 9:6).
 - vi) God had made a promise to Abraham concerning his family, their going into Egypt, duration and conditions under which they would live and their deliverance (Gen. 15:13-16; Acts 7:6-7)
 - vii) God has made promises:
 - 1. Concerning the effectiveness of His Word when He pledged: "So shall my word be that goeth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void" (Isa. 55:11).
 - 2. Concerning the permanency of His Word when the Holy Spirit promised: "The Word of the Lord endureth for ever" (1 Pet. 1:25).
 - viii) God made a promise to Himself when He pledged: "In hope of eternal life which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began" (Titus 1:2).
 - c) A man made a promise to God (Gen. 28:20-22).
- 6) The character of the promises:
- a) It needs to be understood that the promises of God are both conditional and unconditional. An unconditional promise is a pledge of God, irrespective of whether man believes it or not. Examples of such promises are:
 - i) "Yet have I set my King upon my holy Hill of Zion." (Psa. 2:6)
 - ii) "Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." (Heb. 7:17)
 - iii) "Unto thy seed will I give this land." (Gen. 12:7)
 - b) Examples of conditional promises are:
 - i) "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Acts 2:21)
 - ii) "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from Heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." (2 Chron. 7:14)
 - c) While all the promises of God in Christ are yea and Amen, yet those very promises are based on the justice of God or they have a reversal. For instance, if one believes, then there is salvation, but if an individual does not believe, then there is judgment. (Mk. 16:16)
- 7) The clarity of God's promises and prophecies:
- a) Across the world many thousands of people read their horoscopes, imagining that the celestial bodies can determine that which will happen in life. The fact is that they are so vague they can mean almost anything. One interesting observation is that none of them ever warn of impending happenings such as earthquakes or deaths!

- b) The promises of God are precise 100% of the time, and where in the reckoning of man there seems to be a failure, it is simply God working to His timetable and not man's, or, God in grace withholding judgment and offering grace to man. (2 Pet. 3:9)
- c) God promised:
 - i) Abraham a son by Sarah even though their bodies were dead, but it came to pass as God said. (Gen. 18:10; 24:36)
 - ii) The fall of Babylon. (Isa. 21:9; Jer. 51:8; Rev. 18:2)
 - iii) The fall of Jerusalem. (Lk. 19:43; 21:20-24)
- 8) Whether man realizes it or not, he has been given a blessing beyond comprehension.
 - a) The omnipotent God who has all power. (Rev. 19:6)
 - b) The omnipresent God who is everywhere. (Psa. 139:7-10)
 - c) The omniscient God who knows everything. (Psa. 139:11-12)
 - d) The moral God who is light and in whom there is no darkness at all. (1 Jn.1:5)
 - e) The unchangeable God with whom there is no shadow caused by turning. (Mal. 3:6; Jam. 1:17)
 - f) The bountiful God whose blessings are new every morning. (Lam. 3:22-23)
 - g) The God who cannot lie, gives His word to humanity for our comfort in every situation of life, or for warning of that which lies ahead for the disobedient.

Blessed is the individual who can sing in truth the words of Russell Kelso Carter, (1849-1928): "Standing on the Promises of God". The writing of this hymn was due to circumstances in Russell's life which God used to make His promises real to him.

Having spent several years as a Methodist minister he changed course, and studying medicine graduated as a medical doctor. He also was a hymn writer. During a crisis in his life when having heart problems and the doctors unable to do anything, He looked to God for help. It was an unconditional pledge he made to God to become totally consecrated to the service of God. God made real to Him personally the promise of healing, and standing on that promise, God was as good as His word. Not only did his heart heal, but he lived for almost 50 more years. While he had written the words before his heart problems, they became Christ's Melchizedek ministry to him when the time was right.

Standing on the promises of Christ my King,
Through eternal ages let His praises ring,
Glory in the highest, I will shout and sing,
Standing on the promises of God.

*Standing, standing, Standing on the promises of God my Savior;
Standing, standing, I'm standing on the promises of God.*

Standing on the promises that cannot fail,
When the howling storms of doubt and fear assail,
By the living Word of God I shall prevail,
Standing on the promises of God.

Standing on the promises I now can see,
Perfect, present cleansing in the blood for me;
Standing in the liberty where Christ makes free,
Standing on the promises of God.

Standing on the promises of Christ the Lord,
Bound to Him eternally by loves strong cord,
Overcoming daily with the Spirits sword,
Standing on the promises of God.

Standing on the promises I cannot fall,
Listening every moment to the Spirit's call,
Resting in my Savior as my all in all,
Standing on the promises of God.

May we let the Lord use the circumstances of life to learn the fulness of His promises, “for He is faithful that promised.” (Heb. 10:23). Living in His peace we can then sing the words of William Gibson Sloan: “Praise the Lord and leave tomorrow”.

Praise the Lord and leave tomorrow in thy Father’s loving hands
Burden not thyself with sorrow, for secure the promise stands.
He is faithful, leave thy troubles in His hands

Pray today and leave tomorrow, bring with it what’er it may
Hear thy loving Father’s promise, strength according to thy day.
He is faithful, look for Him the coming One.

Thus by trusting, watching praying, each day as the time rolls on
We shall find the promised blessing, Daily strength till Jesus comes.
He is faithful, He will come to take us home.

**May God grant us good understanding as He, by His Holy Spirit, deigns to guide us into all truth.
John 16:13**

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