

Part 1 of 3



MAGNIFICENT PROMISES

FOR TIMES LIKE THESE

By Don E. Stanton

“For by these He has given us His precious and magnificent promises in order that through them you might become partakers of the divine nature.”

(2 Peter 1: 4)

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1. IN TIMES LIKE THESE

Troublesome times are here, filling men's hearts with fear. Freedoms we all hold dear, now are at stake. We are living in an anguished society; the nations are in perplexity.

The newspapers, the radio, the television - all are couriers of bad news. We don't expect to read any good news, now-a-days. If there is a lull, and the newspaper does not outline a disaster, we say, "What wrong with the world that it's not so bad today?"

For most days, the selection is pretty grim — that is, **very** grim — and not so pretty. Suicide, domestic violence, rape, murder, terrorism, brutality, disruption, corruption, drugs, AIDS, a poisoned planet, national debts, more taxation, depression, War !

It's the threat of a “no-future” that worries many. There doesn't seem to be much point left — in living, in striving, in planning. It's a blank wall ahead — the threat that everything one has worked for, is ready to collapse!

Leaders are in disarray; decency has fled from politics, and it's now a war to the finish — topple or be toppled. Promises are made to be broken; it's the realm of the ruthless — and men have lost their reason. Society has become sin-sick and sordid. Homes have become harassed and helpless. At times it seems that the bottomless pit has already been opened, and the realm of men has become the playground of demons and dragons.

Some say the world needs a renewed hope and faith. But a vague hope that society will somehow correct itself, that the nations will discard their war preparations, that everything will not topple, is not enough! It is very definite; the Bible says the world is going to be shaken as never before.

“At that time His voice shook the earth, but now He has promised, ‘ONCE MORE I WILL SHAKE NOT ONLY THE EARTH, BUT ALSO THE HEAVENS.’ [Haggai 2:6]. And this *expression*, ‘once more,’ indicates the removing of those things which are being shaken - things that have been created - so that what cannot be shaken may remain.” (Hebrews 12:26-27)

A vague "faith" that world leaders will somehow solve our many problems, or that "God" won't let anything serious happen, is not what we need today!

In times, like these, we need a word from God; a word, a promise — a promise that we can **trust** in. We need a rock upon which we can build confidence. And we also need a

faith that **trusts** the promises of God.

Yes, God has given us, not just one promise, but a whole portfolio of promises. They are called by the Apostle Peter, "**precious and magnificent promises.**" Peter received many of the promises direct from the Lord's mouth; and although at times he did not understand why some things worked out the way they did, he came to know the promises were guaranteed by the Messiah, the Son of Yahweh the Living God.

The Apostle Paul also, could have asked a thousand questions, 'why?' 'why?' because of the various circumstances in his life, when things, from a human point of view, seemed to go so wrong. But he came to the conclusion:

“For as many as are the promises of God, they are all ‘yes’ in Him (the Messiah); and through Him also is the ‘Amen’ we pronounce, to the glory of God.” (2 Corinthians 1:20)

Both Peter and Paul were sustained by the power of God, as they believed the promises of God. Both could go all the way, triumphantly, to martyrdom, because of the confidence that Y'shua was the “**Rock of Ages cleft for me,**” and that with Him, “**our lives are hidden in God.**” (Colossians 3:3)

The same promises given to Peter and Paul, my reader, are given to you and me. But the important fact is that the promises of God must be **taken hold of, believed, claimed and trusted.** You might write out thousands of promises on pretty paper, and paste them to the walls of your house; but if you don't believe those promises, and **trust** God to fulfil them, they will do you no good at all.

In times like there, we need **faith** to **trust** the magnificent, God-given promises, which are ours through Jesus Christ.

2. THE PROMISES OF GOD



When we talk about promises today, the general response is sceptical. "You can't trust in promises. The times are like that." It's true, the corridors are filled with broken promises. It's true, it seems, that “promises are made to be broken.” Yes, people are so often a big disappointment; and if we will admit it, **we** may be a disappointment to others.

(Of course, my broken promises are quite justifiable — there are genuine reasons why I could not keep my word. It was in my heart, the Lord knows, and I had every intention ... but! “But **that** man! He just **always** breaks his word.”)

Okay, that's man. Human intentions often fail. But let's talk about the promises of God! There's a magnificent promise which says:

“Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for YHWH your God is the One who goes with you. He will never fail you nor forsake you.” (Deuteronomy 31:6)

Now I ask you, can we, or can we not, trust in God's promises ?

"Of course," you say. "Absolutely! No doubt about it! God never fails. His promises are

'Yea and Amen'. He cannot lie, He cannot forget. He is for real."

Sure?

"Of course, I'm sure. You can definitely trust in God's promises!"

Then why don't we do it?

"But I do," you say; "... well, usually I do."

Ah, that's the point. We trust the Lord when things are going fairly well, or when we can see some reason or help on the way. But what about when circumstances get really tough, when everything seems to be adverse; when we feel so utterly down and helpless; when we're pressed to the corner and there's no-one to deliver us? Do we trust then? Or do we give way to depression, fear and doubt?

Some people say, "But I asked God for this and that, and He did not answer me. How can I say His promises never fail?"

Yes, you may ask, you may ask five thousand times, and not receive. The reason could be one of three; either you asked **without faith**; or you **asked amiss**; or you **harboured sin** in your heart.

The Word of God cautions us about these terrible triplets — Non-belief, Wrong Motive and Iniquity.

“But **without faith** *it is* impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God (*YHWH the eternally-existing One*) must believe that He exists, and *that He is a Rewarder of those who earnestly seek Him out.*” (Hebrews 11:6)

“You ask and do not receive, because you ask with **wrong motives**, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.” (James 4:3)

“If I had regarded **wickedness** in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.” (Psalm 66:18)

These terrible triplets are like a gang of hijackers. They rob a person of the provision God has made for them. Beware of these gangsters!

3. BY FAITH

"Without faith it is impossible to please God." (Hebrews 11:6)

Why is faith so essential? Because God has established faith as a principle, and as a means by which a person might participate in His life and provision. It's not that God wants to set a stern condition - "believe me or else!" It's a spiritual law. Just as we must operate by the law of aerodynamics if we are to fly, so we must operate by **the law of faith**, if we are to experience the power and provisions of God.

We do not receive an answer from God because of our begging or bargaining, or because of our status, or our self-attainment — we receive the answer through exercising faith in His Word. It's simply **trusting** God.

Say your friend offers to take you to a destination in his car. What do you do? You just take your seat, trust the driver and relax. You don't have to prove to him that you are a fit person to go in his car. You don't have to prove your lineage. You don't have to bargain, and swear that you will do this and that if he will give you the lift. You don't have to go into all the mechanics and ask if there is air in the tyres, petrol in the tank, and how many gears or horsepower the vehicle has. You just trust your friend because he has offered — he has **promised** to take you.

Of course, it is possible your friend may fail you; it's possible the car might break down.

But with God there is no breakdown or failure, provided you "sit in His car."

If you say to your friend, "don't ask me to simply trust you! I'll help push the car," then of course you're not going to get very far.

But that's what we sometimes do when it comes to the offer — the promise of God. We're more inclined to say, "Well Lord, I'm telling You all about this problem of mine. So Lord, listen, and please help me tackle the problem in my own way."

Our problem is **non-belief**. It's not that we believe God **can't** do it. It's simply that we don't **trust** Him to do it. And yet at times, we may even doubt whether even God can take care of this particular need.

A man having a demon-possessed son once came to the Lord Jesus. Do you remember the account?

"So they brought *the boy* to Him. And when the *demonic* spirit saw Him, immediately it threw the boy into a convulsion. Falling to the ground, he *began* rolling around, foaming *at the mouth*.

"Y'shua asked the boy's father, 'How long has this been happening to him?' He answered, 'From childhood. And it has often thrown him both into fire and into water to destroy him. But **if You can do anything**, take pity on us and help us!'

"**'If you are able to believe,**' Y'shua said to him, **'all things are possible to him who believes.'** Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, 'I do believe, Master; help *me* in my unbelief.'" (Mark 9:20-24)

Some of us come to the Master with the same attitude "**if you can do anything**, take pity on us." And the Lord replies to us, "What do you mean, IF I can do anything? The only **if** is **if you will believe (trust)**."

Without faith, **nothing** is possible, and so we are left to our own resources. With faith, all things are possible, for by faith the resources of God can be released in our lives.

Hebrews 11 is the chapter on **Faith in action**. We read:

By faith, Abel offered a better sacrifice to God.

By faith Enoch was taken up.

By faith Noah prepared the ark.

By faith Abraham went to the land of promise.

By faith Moses chose to stand with God's people.

By faith Israel passed through the Red Sea.

By faith Jericho was tumbled.

By faith others conquered kingdoms, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, put armies to flight, received back their dead, endured torture and martyrdom.

Hebrews 11 seems to be a list of examples illustrating what Jesus meant when He said, "**all things are possible to him who believes.**" (Mark 9:23)

And then there was blessed Sarah:

"By faith also Sarah herself received ability to conceive and to give birth to a child, even though *she was well* past the age for it, because she considered *YHWH El Shaddai*, the One who had made the promise, faithful *and true to His word*." (Hebrews 11:11)

We always remember that Sarah laughed when the LORD promised Abraham that his

wife would have a son even though she was so aged. (Genesis 18:9-15)

But that was not the end of the story. Sarah repented, and she was enabled to lay hold of God's promise **by faith** so that in due time, she gave birth to Isaac.

If Sarah had not believed and trusted this promise of God, she might be still waiting for the promised child. But by faith she conceived. And unless you and I lay hold of the promises, my reader, they will not be fulfilled.

Another example of faith was the virgin, Mary. The angel Gabriel appeared to her and said she would have a Son - the Messiah. Mary asked, "How is it possible when I have no husband?" The angel explained that the Holy Spirit would overshadow her, and her offspring would be the Son of God. Notice Mary's beautiful response:

"Here am I, the servant of the LORD. Let it happen to me according to your word." (Luke 1:38)

Mary could have been filled with unbelief. She could have argued with Gabriel, and said, "No, no, no! If this happens to me everyone will say I'm a bad woman. I could not handle that. It's never happened before that a woman had a child without having a man. No, Mr. Angel, no!"

But by **faith** Mary said, "Let it be. I'll trust Adonai to take care of what the people gossip. I'll trust Him to fulfil His purpose in choosing me to be the mother of Messiah."

If Mary did not believe and trust the promise of God, then Gabriel would have needed to find a woman who would believe the word of the LORD.

My reader, I think of the millions of lost opportunities - because of non-belief; and the millions of "could-have-happeneds" if people had taken hold of the promises, and trusted God.

I think of my own life, and of how many things could have been so different, and so much more blessed, if I had simply trusted God instead of harnessing my own resources, and ploughing away in non-belief.

Friend, this is a basic lesson; it's a kindergarten lesson -- **trust in God** regardless. Some of us need to go back to kindergarten, and re-learn; **without faith, nothing is possible. With faith, everything is possible.**

Let's bind this gangster, Non-belief, right now. Pray:

Oh Father, I come to You in the authority of the Name of Jesus right now, and I confess my sins of non-belief, doubt and anxiety. I have been letting these sins rob me of the provision You have made for me. I have been hindered in my spiritual walk because of my failure to trust You. Master, I now forsake this attitude of non-belief; I reject it in the Name of Jesus. I believe Your Word, and I take Your provision for my further growth in faith. Thank You, Father. Amen.

4. RIGHT MOTIVE

Another gangster we have to bind, is **Wrong Motive**. This thief will have you working your fingers to the bone, to no avail. He will fill you with goals and dreams, and lead you up a dead-end alley. He will encourage you to cry to God to help you prosper in carnality; he will keep you busy fulfilling your own ambitions; and will congratulate himself when he hears your cry, "I don't know why God doesn't answer my prayer." The Apostle James says:

"You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures." (James 4:3).

Now once again, my reader, let us go back to kindergarten and relearn the ABC of the Christian Life. When we are saved - born again - redeemed, **we were bought** by Christ.

“For you know that it was not with perishable things like silver or gold that you were **redeemed** from the futile way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but **with the precious blood of the Messiah, a Lamb without blemish or defect.**” (I Peter 1:18-19)

“You do not belong to yourself; you have been bought at a price. Therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.” (I Corinthians 6:19-20)

The purpose for which God has both created us, and redeemed us, is that **He might be glorified through our lives.** To put that in other words; that the innate qualities of God might be known through their working in our lives; that the beauty, holiness, light and love of God might be manifest in our redeemed and sanctified personalities. The Lord Jesus said:

“My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.” (John 4:34).

And He did so. Thus he could say to the Father:

“I glorified You on earth; I have accomplished the work which You gave Me to do.” (John 17:4).

To glorify God, one must live to do the will of God. And the same attitude that the Lord Jesus had, must be our attitude, "Not my will but Your will be done."

Now the Lord gave this magnificent promise - but notice the purpose of it!

“**And whatever you ask in My Name, that I will do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My Name, I will do it.**” (John 14:13-14).

Praying in the Name of the Lord Jesus is not a magic formula - it is praying in **faith in Jesus' (Y'shua's) Name**, for the magnificent promises are given **in Christ.** We pray with faith in that Name because that Name guarantees the Promises.

And the **right motive** in asking anything of God is that **the will of God** might be fulfilled, and that He will be glorified.

Notice again what Peter said: God has given us His magnificent promises in order that we might become **partakers of the divine nature.** In other words, God gives us promises that we might increasingly partake of His life. He has called us into fellowship with His Son, and this means not merely friendship and communion with the Lord, but a **participation** in His life, and harmony to His will. He wants us to live by the principle of faith and dependence on the Son of God, and to live for one purpose — the will and glory of God.

Of course, we are progressing beyond kindergarten now. We are reaching on to maturity; and what we learn in theory or doctrine, we have also to learn in experience. To put it simply, the Lord wants us to walk with Him, to live for one purpose — the will of God, to live in harmony with Him and His directions, commands and ways. Although we must live in the world, work for our living, provide for our family, and do good to all men, yet we do all these things with one goal and motive — to glorify God in our lives (to let the life and character of the Lord shine in and through our behaviour and being).

This is what Peter means by "partakers of the divine nature." Paul puts it another way. His prayer is that **Christ may dwell** in the hearts of believers through faith. (Ephesians. 3:17)

By faith, we receive Jesus into our lives as Saviour. By faith also, we experience the fullness of Christ — Jesus filling our lives by His Spirit, so that **He lives out His life in us**. Paul also puts it this way; that we each one might be "**a body filled and flooded with God.**" (Ephesians 3:19 Amplified Version).

You may say, brother, you are taking us from kindergarten to Post-graduation. Oh that I could, my friend! I don't want to take you merely to 1st class. And although spiritual maturity may take years to reach, it certainly helps if we know what we're reaching for. So as early as possible, I want to help set you free from that terrible hijacker, **Wrong Motive**. I want you to be saved, not only from the penalty of your sins, I want you to be saved from a petty little spiritual life that mostly wants to use God for its own benefit. I want you to live for God, and not for your own trivial ambitions. I want to convert you from a self-empire builder, to a wise master-builder in the kingdom of God. (I Corinthians 3:10)

“Now if any man builds upon the Foundation using gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay or straw, each man's work will be shown for what it is, for the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire; and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If the work which any person has built *on this Foundation* survives, **he shall receive his reward.**” (I Corinthians 3:12-14).

So my friend, when you pray, don't pray amiss. Pray for the will and glory of God, so that you may lay hold of the magnificent promise of the Lord in John 14:13-14.

“**And whatever you ask in My Name, that I will do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My Name, I will do it.**”

And here is another Magnificent Promise:

“**If you live and remain in union with Me, and My words live and remain in you, you will ask whatever you will, and it will be given to you.**” (John 15:7)

5. A CLEAN HEART

Another reason why our prayers are unanswered, and why the promise of God is not fulfilled, is a **dirty heart**. This may be caused by disobedience, the surrender of our minds to impure desires, or by the yielding of the members of our body — the eyes, lips, hands, etc., to any form of sin. It could be a spirit of hatred or revenge that we cling to, that soils our hearts. It may be the practice of slander, gossip, back-biting, careless speech, or unwholesome talk, that blackens the heart.

The Scripture is clear:

“If I had regarded wickedness in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.” (Psalm 66:18)

“So when you spread out your hands *in prayer*, I will hide My eyes from you. Yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean! Remove your evil deeds from My sight! Cease to do evil!” (Isaiah 1:15-16)

Friends, we're back in kindergarten. Sin is evil in the sight of God because He is holy. Sin is also a big hindrance because it blackens our heart, infects our minds and decision-making faculties, and it binds our hearts so that, except by His grace, we cannot exercise faith aright. Sin builds a ceiling above us, so that our prayers bounce back as vain words.

Sin is like sugar in your petrol tank so that your car won't go properly; it's like an electronic virus in your computer, so that your system is fouled up; it's like a microbe in your blood that robs you of health.

This we should know! But sometimes we are deceived by this terrible triplet, Iniquity in the Heart, so that we feel our dirty heart is a suitable launching pad for prayers to a holy God. We are deceived into believing that because a little mud never hurt a baby, and because "a little poison never killed anyone," a little sin, a little rebellion, a little disobedience, a little iniquity, is not going to "put us in God's bad books." Well one thing is sure! Your little iniquity is going to prevent your prayers being answered, and it will rob you of the fulfilment of the magnificent promise that could be yours.

Now here is another magnificent promise which you can lay hold of, provided you get rid of that hijacker, that iniquity in your heart.

"Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we obey His commands and practice what is pleasing to Him." (I John 3:21-22)

Praise God, here are other magnificent promises you can claim, to get rid of your iniquity.

"But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father - One who pleads our cause - Y'shua the Messiah, the Righteous One; and He Himself is the propitiation - the atoning sacrifice for our sins ..." (I John 2:1-2)

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness ... and the blood of Y'shua the Messiah, His Son, cleanses us from all sin." (1 John 1:9, 7)

There is no way to get a clean heart, to have your sins forgiven, and your life cleansed of iniquity, except by the blood of Y'shua, the Lord Jesus Christ.

It's not a patched-up heart; it's not "a new leaf" you need; it's a cleansed, converted heart.

The blood of the Lord Jesus is spotless blood; and He shed His blood on the Cross of Calvary to pay the penalty for the sins of the World — and you are included. The blood is not a detergent — it was the price of redemption; the shed blood means the life of the Lamb of God was given to make atonement between the holy God and sinful men. And the shed blood — the atoning work of the Messiah — provides the basis and the power for the cleansing of the repentant sinner.

"But God demonstrates His own love for us, in that while we were still sinners, the Messiah died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him." (Romans 5:8-9)

"In union with Him we have redemption (deliverance and salvation) through His blood, the forgiveness of our sins, in accordance with the riches of His grace." (Ephesians 1:7)

While the sacrifice of the spotless Lamb of God was necessary to bring forgiveness and cleansing, it is the risen life of Jesus Christ within us that defeats sin in our lives. In other words, all the benefits of the redemptive work of Christ on the cross, and all the benefits of the risen life of Jesus Christ, come to us by the Holy Spirit, as we walk in faith, and in fellowship with our Redeemer.

"Cleansing their hearts by faith." (Acts 15:9)

So we must take hold of the promise and provision of God for our cleansing from iniquity. Let's do it right now. Pray like this:

Oh God, I take hold of Your promise, and by faith I receive Your cleansing of my iniquity. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. I thank You for the blood of Jesus Christ, shed for me. Thank You that He died for me, and thank You for His risen life. By faith I receive the benefits of His sacrifice and His

risen life right now. I trust You, Master, for the defeat of my sin and all my sinful ambitions and practices by Your risen life. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation. I ask in the authority of the Name of Y'shua - the Lord Jesus Christ.

END PART ONE