

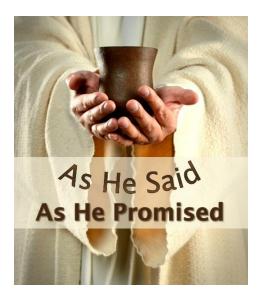
40 Days of God's Promises at Easter by

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As He Said . . . As He Promised

(Genesis 21:1)

# A Promising Easter



In the emptiness it's carved there,
God's affirmed answer to His promise made,
Carved in stone . . . hewed in the rock of His empty tomb.

The miraculous glory of Easter - "Christ is Risen!" - is the exclamation point to God's redeeming work of man through Jesus Christ.

Our lives thrill with hope from the belief of the Resurrection.

And if there is anything we should have at Easter, it is an exciting hope.

For hope is the song of praise of Easter that celebrates the Resurrected Christ.

Because of God's "Yes!" and "Amen!" in Christ Jesus, His Son—God's faithfulness to fulfill every promise made in Him—and because of all God accomplished through the Cross, this irrepressible hope is ours.

Easter is undoubtedly the crescendo of many of God's promises. And the Resurrection culminates a history-long succession of God-fulfilled promises.

His Word, once carved in Sinai's stone, etched deeper still to entomb a Savior, is made from the sure promises of the God of the Universe.

As God has said and as God has promised so He has done. "The God who guides the stars, unhasting and unresting, will as assuredly fulfill what He has promised." ~Oswald Chambers

We can enjoy an intimate fellowship with our Risen Lord this Easter because of yet another of His promises.

And we can experience the Resurrected Christ **now** in our lives.

We may partake of His power, His wisdom, His strength, His victory, love, and grace,
His comfort, joy, and peace.

May our remembrance of God's promises made and accomplished glorify our Promise-Keeper. And, I pray, it will excite hope to fill our hearts with worship this season.

It's sure to be a promising advent to Easter. One, I pray, that will bring blessing to you...and to the world's Blessed Savior, promised from before the foundations of the earth.

Oh, to fill the earth to the very heavens with praise! We bless you, The Faithful One, and set our hearts on pilgrimage—back through the sacred record of Your promises given. In Christ Jesus name, Amen.

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## **Forced Promises Go Awry**



Any "Sarahs" out there, besides me?

Other women that doubt God's promise?
That try to "help" God out?
Or try to force His blessing in your own timing and on your own terms?

You know the Sarah I'm referring to . . .as in, Sarah and Abraham? (I would say "once known as Sarai" but, the way I figure it, when God changes your name, you probably shouldn't use the old one.)

Oh, my many Sarah-blunders! Call it a twisted hope. Instead of simply an expectant hope in the promise alone, the hope gets warped into the expectation of the whowhat-when-where-and how of the promise. Which quickly swells into impatient anxiety. Gone is God...removed entirely from the picture. And I am left to manage (rather, manipulate) the situation to my presumed outcome.

And that is *never* pretty. That sort of attitude always goes awry and lands me in a heap of a mess!

How often have I worked against the purposes of God?!

God was incubating more than a baby in that delay. He was growing the promise of a changed character *in the parents* of the promised child. Changing lives to fit the new names...*their new purpose*.

Isn't the vessel of the promise often as much God's work as the promise itself?

The grace of God became that much more gracious. And the promise fulfilled, miraculous, to a 90 year-old Sarah. God, proving once more that truly nothing is too difficult for Him...especially when it comes to His promises!

"Now the LORD was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did to Sarah as he had promised."

(Gn 21:1 emph mine)

Notice those emboldened words? They are the source text of the theme of this Easter series. And they are words that should so fill our hearts with hope undeniable. Because, just as God has said, and just as He has promised, so shall it ever be.

I praise Your grace that births promise through our blunders and molds us to be promise-receivers of purpose, my Father Dear.

# Promising Encounter {of the heavenly kind}



It was just a "certain place."

He was at a crucial turning point in his life.

He pulled up a rock for a place to rest.

And drifted off to sleep alone . . . or was he?

The gates of heaven opened and the Lord appeared to him in his dream.

It was there—in that certain place—that God reaffirmed a promise given to his grandfather. It was now passed on to him, Jacob.

"I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land.

I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." (Gn 28:15)

And he named the place "Bethel," House of God, and exclaimed; "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it. How awesome is this place! This is none other than the House of God and this is the gate of heaven."

"Then he went on his journey..." with the promise that God would be with him and would keep him.

Are you in any certain place? A doctor's office, courtroom, classroom, child's room? Surely God is there.

Are you at a crucial turning point in your life? Surely God is there.

You need to know that you are in the Presence of God.

For hasn't He said so?

And "as He has said...as He has promised" so . it . is .

Charles Stanley wrote: "Salvation does much more than bring you out of darkness and death, it ushers you into the presence of God to experience divine communion in prayer, praise, and worship."

Jesus opened heaven and bridged the gap that God might come near—be with us.

And the indwelling Holy Spirit that makes you His temple, has made you a Beth-El.

Are you not the house of God?

And everywhere you are is Beth-El, for you are in the presence of God.

Surely God is there—in that certain place...at this crucial time.

He will not leave you until He has done what He has promised.

How wonderful is this place, Lord! And how awesome Your Presence...always and everywhere! Glorious are You, Lord of Wonder!

### The With Us of God



"And God said, 'I will be with you' . . . (Ex 3:12a)

"The LORD replied, 'My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.'" (Ex 33:14)

God's faithfulness to His Promise of Presence has been proven over and over...

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Read of the With-Us of God (each a link to verses that prove):

In the Garden (Gn 3:8)

In a Bush (Ex 3)

On the Mountain (Ex 19:3)

Before the Rock (Ex 33:22)

In the Cloud (Ex 13:21-22; 14:14-23; 40:36-38)

Filling the Tent (Ex 29:42-46; 33:9)

Engulfing the Tabernacle (Ex 25:8, 22; 40:34-35)

Consuming the Temple (2 Chron 5:14)

In the Fiery Furnace (Dn 3)

In the Flesh, Jesus Christ (Mt 1:23; Jn 14:11)

Indwelling His people (Jn 14:15)
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Throughout all their wilderness journeys and to the very end of the age — then . . . . and now — He is with us always (Mt 28:20).

The Omnipresent God—Who is everywhere always—both transcendent and immanent, chooses to interact personally with sinful man.

Woe to us, the contemptible! To be so loved by the Holy Most High God and yet deny His presence!

And yet we are.

We are in the promised presence of Infinite Love.

"God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. 'For in him we live and move and have our being.'"

(Act 17:27-28 emph mine)

El Elyon, Most High God; Holy is the Lord, the whole earth is filled with Your Glory! I am completely undone at the thought of such incomprehensible Greatness and Grace! Great are you Lord, and most worthy of all praise and honor. Who can stand in the Presence of such a magnificent God? Not I, O LORD, surely not I!

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# Conquest



"Then the LORD said: 'I am making a covenant with you. Before all your people I will do wonders never before done in any nation in all the world. The people you live among will see how awesome is the work that I, the LORD, will do for you. Obey what I command you today. I will drive out before you the Amorites, Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. Be careful not to make a treaty with those who live in the land where you are going, or they will be a snare among you.'" (Ex 34:10-12,16) (see also Dt 7:1-6)

Our next promise-stop is Mt. Sinai.

After impressing upon Moses His preeminent holiness and all-surpassing glory, God insisted upon loyal devotion. His pledge to clear out those living in the land they were to possess (more on that tomorrow) was conditional on obedience and exclusivity.

This Promised Land was to be a Holy Land.

God clearly lays out His uncompromising conditions. He imparts knowledge of what is required in order to eliminate any interference in their relationship.

When Moses repeated the law 40 years later, just "east of the Jordan," he reminded the people that God is a God Who is faithful. God will keep the oath He made because of His "hesed," covenantal love.

"The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your forefathers that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commands." (Dt 7:7-9)

"You may say to yourselves, 'These nations are stronger than we are. How can we drive them out?' But do not be afraid of them; remember well what the LORD your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt. You saw with your own eyes the great trials, the miraculous signs and wonders, the mighty hand and outstretched arm, with which the LORD your God brought you out. The LORD your God will do the same to all the peoples you now fear. Moreover, the LORD your God will send the hornet among them until even the survivors who hide from you have perished. Do not be terrified by them, for the LORD your God, who is among you, is a great and awesome God." (Dt 7:17-21 emph mine)

In view of the surmounting conquest that lay before them, they would gain faith in remembering. And facing a land filled with enemies, they would gain the promise in obedience.

And God's assurance to them rings with familiarity to us. Compare Deuteronomy 28:7 with James 4:7:

"The LORD will grant that the enemies who rise up against you will be defeated before you. They will come at you from one direction but flee from you in seven." (Dt 28:7)

"Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." (Jms 4:7)

God protects and defends a people given over wholeheartedly to Him.

Strengthen your faith in the battle. The verse from "Desert Song" by Brooke Fraser just might lend aid:

"This is my prayer in the battle When triumph is still on its way I am a conqueror and co-heir with Christ So firm on His promise I'll stand. I will bring praise...
I will rejoice...
I will declare...
God is my victory
And He is here."

Drive out completely and finally anything opposed to God and antagonistic toward His will and His ways—we must!

Allow the blood of Christ to cleanse and the Holy Spirit to purify His domain of whatever is contrary to His rule. And step onto the battlefield armed with His promise.

"Do not be terrified by them, for the LORD your God, who is among you, is a great and awesome God."

(Dt 7:21)

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By Your power and might, Lord, cast all out that is not of You.

# Because We Can't Have It Both Ways



"This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses.

Now choose life, so that you and your children may live."

(Dt 30:19)

Yes, it's true.

There are two sides to every coin.

There are also two sides to every condition. Good. And bad.

Some promises of God are unilateral—when the obligation is solely upon God. And some of God's promises are conditional.

Look at these examples of a conditional promise:

• "Be careful to follow every command I am giving you today, so that you may live and increase and may enter and possess the land the LORD promised on oath to your ancestors" (Dt 8:1).

- "Carefully follow the terms of this covenant, so that you may prosper in everything you do" (Dt 29:9).
- "Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful" (Jos 1:8).

Some promises reap a positive outcome — a blessing:

- "If you pay attention to these laws and are careful to follow them, then the LORD your God will keep his covenant of love with you, as he swore to your ancestors. He will love you and bless you and increase your numbers. He will bless the fruit of your womb, the crops of your land—your grain, new wine and olive oil—the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks in the land he swore to your ancestors to give you" (Dt 7:12-13).
- See also Deuteronomy 28:2-8.

While others don't — some carry with them the promise of a curse (which is a promise nonetheless):

- "See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse—the blessing if you obey the commands of the LORD your God that I am giving you today; the curse if you disobey the commands of the LORD your God and turn from the way that I command you today by following other gods, which you have not known" (Dt 11:26-28).
- See also Deuteronomy 27 and Deuteronomy 28:15-20.

A promise that bears blessing requires faith and obedience—faith to believe the promise. And obedience to act accordingly.

Jerry Bridges, in *The Pursuit of Holiness*, writes; "Obeying the commands of God usually involves believing the promises of God. One definition of faith might be 'Obeying the revealed will of God and trusting Him for the results'...If we would pursue holiness we must have faith to obey the will of God revealed in the Scripture and faith to believe that the promises of God will then be ours."

We can have just as much faith in the promised outcome for disobedience. For the fruit born of a curse is just as real as the blessing promised in obedience.

But here is the Good News:

"For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, as it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.' Clearly no one who relies on the law is justified before God,

because 'the righteous will live by faith.' The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, it says, 'The person who does these things will live by them.' Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole'" (Gal 3:10-13).

While we may not rely upon the law for our justification, are there still consequences for sin? Yes! But the law that condemned us and warranted God's curse has been nailed to the Cross of Jesus Christ. He bore our curse when He hung on the Tree of Calvary.

A promise is a promise—whether the fruit it bears is sweet or sour. You can choose the action...but not the reaction—consequence is consequence. When a promise carries a condition, a choice must be made...because we can't have it both ways.

Our God of Promise; I choose life. And I believe a life of blessing is promised to those that obey in love.

# To Have and To Hold



"See, I have given you this land.
Go in and take possession of the land the LORD swore he would give to your fathers—to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—and to their descendants after them."

(Dt 1:8)

God swore on oath to give the land "from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean Sea, from the desert to the Euphrates" to the Israelites to possess—contingent upon their obedience.

The land was promised them on oath but God expected them to "do what was right and good." He would prepare the land, clear the land of their enemies, send an angel to guard them and to bring them into the land. They were to "walk in obedience...so that they would prosper."

God had promised to pave the way and they were to respond in faith and obedience.

We, too, are possessors.

We must own the skin we're in.

The flesh is not our master. And the Holy Spirit is a far greater Power to conquer and overcome our sinful enemies of craving, desires of the flesh, and the misdeeds of the tongue.

They are not our Lord and Master!

Take possession, Christian.

"For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.

"Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

"In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness. For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace" (Rm 6:5-14).

God has provided the Way of victory over our enemy and the Power to overcome temptation. Inhabit the domain of holiness secured for you in faith and obedience to the promise by submitting to the will of God and the power of the Holy Spirit. For the territory you inhabit as His temple is one promised to have and to hold.

"Therefore, since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God."

(2 Cor 7:1)

Fail, oh how I fail, Lord! Your desire for us to prosper is pure and good. You have done it all for us! The choice is ours. Give us the desire and the will, the courage and the fortitude to obey in faith...to possess the souls You have purchased in holy reverence.

#### A Generous Landowner



We're not out of the desert yet! In our pilgrimage through the Grand Story, filled with the promises of God, we're still trekking with the Israelites in the desert.

Oh, the rich promises that were made there!

God knew full-well when He made the Mosaic covenant that His chosen would fall away. But He swore on oath a promise . . . and He would keep it regardless.

"It is not because of your righteousness or your integrity that you are going in to take possession of their land; but on account of the wickedness of these nations, the LORD your God will drive them out before you, to accomplish what he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Understand, then, that it is not because of your righteousness that the LORD your God is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a stiff-necked people."

(Dt 9:5-7)

The promises we've touched upon the past few days were for the Israelites to enter the land, conquer the land, possess the land, and obey in order to be blessed in the land.

So what if they didn't?

God had a promise for that, too.

He provided a means for return.

"I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you this day

that you will quickly perish from the land that you are crossing the
Jordan to possess. You will not live there long but will certainly be destroyed.
The LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and only a few of you
will survive among the nations to which the LORD will drive you.
There you will worship man-made gods of wood and stone, which cannot see
or hear or eat or smell. But if from there you seek the LORD your God,
you will find him if you seek him with all your heart and with all your soul. When
you are in distress and all these things have happened to you, then in later days
you will return to the LORD your God and obey him. For the LORD your God is a
merciful God; he will not abandon or destroy you or forget the covenant with your
ancestors, which he confirmed to them by oath."

(Dt 4:26-31emph mine)

He remembers His promise.

He delivered them into a land of promise with the Kingdom on the far horizon.

And when that promised Kingdom came near in Christ, He made a way for us.

Ours is to turn . . . and re-turn.

Turn to God for reconciliation and restoration through Jesus.

How is a right relationship with God restored? Baptism in Christ.

"This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe." (Rm 3:22)

Our justification is accomplished by Christ alone.

"All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ" (2 Cor 5:18a)

"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Cor 5:21)

There is nothing in me that will restore what's been broken. It has been accomplished wholly outside of me—by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

He has made a way for the wanderer to return—for all the promises of God find their "Yes" in Him. He is the fulfillment of **all** the promises in the Old Testament.

And when we have turned and been restored to Him and we then sin, it is ours to return and seek His forgiveness.

Thankfully He has provided a means for our return—repentance.

There will be a day when "we will be with the Lord forever" (1 Thes 4:17).

No more restoring and returning.

Until then, however, we have to live this life on this earth. But we fall short of His glory and get turned around, don't we?

But we live with grace before us . . . and the Kingdom on our horizon.

God, the Generous Landowner, has delivered us into this spacious place to live in Him, the kingdom on our horizon, with a means of return. There is nothing to fear...

"For the LORD your God is a merciful God; he will not abandon or destroy you or forget the covenant with your ancestors, which he confirmed to them by oath."

(Dt 4:31)

Holy God; When we turn . . . and return to You, restore us through Christ, the Perfect Righteousness of God, according to Your promise. Keep us ever headed toward Your Kingdom's horizon, and may we dwell in the House of the Lord all our days.

# **Promises to the Thirsty**



In the Desert of Sin they quarreled for water:

"God had Moses smote the rock at Massah that the thirsty might drink."
(Ex 17:1-7)

"God smote the Rock, Jesus, the Messiah that the Fount of Living Water might flow."

(Is 41:17; Is 53:10; Jn 4:10; Jn 7:38)

As He has said...

"The Son of Man must suffer many things." (Mk 8:31)

As He has promised...

"All who believe and ask will receive rivers of living water."
(Jn 4:14; Jn 6:35; Rv 7:16; Rv 21:6)

So has He done...in this desert of sin.

Lord Jesus, I come thirsty. . . to drink and to share.

## A Promise Trampled Underfoot



They would have everything they would need for their journey . . . their 40-year-long journey.

Their caring Father covered them with faithfulness to His promise rejected.

[In the wilderness] "you saw how the LORD your God carried you, as a father carries his son, all the way you went until you reached this place. In spite of this, you did not trust in the LORD your God," (Dt 1:31-32)

The giants in the land seemed larger than their god. (Can you relate?)

They could have gone right in. The door was opened to them, but they slammed it straight shut. Their lack of trust chose the hard way, their entry delayed until all the unbelievers were cleansed from the pack (Nu 14:20-38).

His gift refused, His glory denied, God was incensed.

"The LORD said to Moses, 'How long will these people treat me with contempt?

How long will they refuse to believe in me,

in spite of all the signs I have performed among them?'"

(Nu 14:11)

And yet (oh, the expansive grace of the "and yets" of our God!) He never turned His broad back. He never left them to fend for themselves.

"The LORD your God has blessed you in all the work of your hands.

He has watched over your journey through this vast wilderness.

These forty years the LORD your God has been with you,
and you have not lacked anything." (Dt 2:7)

Their feet did not swell,
Their sandals, nor clothing, wore out.
They ate.
They drank.

They were protected from the hostile desert elements, from venomous snakes and scorpions and predators of the land.

And when the time of testing was done, God renewed the covenant (Dt 8:1-5).

"These are the terms of the covenant the LORD commanded Moses to make with the Israelites in Moab, in addition to the covenant he had made with them at Horeb.

"Moses summoned all the Israelites and said to them:

'Your eyes have seen all that the LORD did in Egypt to Pharaoh, to all his officials and to all his land. With your own eyes you saw those great trials, those signs and great wonders. But to this day the LORD has not given you a mind that understands or eyes that see or ears that hear. Yet the LORD says, "During the forty years that I led you through the wilderness, your clothes did not wear out, nor did the sandals on your feet. You ate no bread and drank no wine or other fermented drink. I did this so that you might know that I am the LORD your God.

"Carefully follow the terms of this covenant, so that you may prosper in everything you do.

"You are standing here in order to enter into a covenant with the LORD your God, a covenant the LORD is making with you this day and sealing with an oath, to confirm you this day as his people, that he may be your God as he promised you and as he swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. I am making this covenant, with its oath, not only with you who are standing here with us today in the presence of the LORD our God but also with those who are not here today." (Dt 29:1-6; 9; 12-15)

A new and far-superior covenant has replaced that covenant trampled underfoot - crushed and broken (see Heb 8:6-13). Our sin of rebellion, forgiven by the Blood of the New Covenant.

By His grace He faithfully feeds His own by the Bread of Life. We feast upon His Word and are refreshed by Living Water. With a Guide to lead us to His land of promise and

grace sufficient for the journey, we sojourners, traveling under His banner of love, are personally cared for by our Heavenly Father.

You are the God of the wanderer. You are the God of the hungry. You are my Lord and God, Gracious Provider in all our journeys. How you fill those that hunger and thirst for Your righteousness with such blessedness and I praise You! Lord, give us a mind that understands, eyes that see, ears that hear. Make us a faithful people of the Lord's New Covenant.

### **Promised Woe**



By now, in our journey this Easter season, I think we've gotten a pretty good sense of the austere nature of God's promises.

We've looked at promises of blessing which positively set our hearts to frolicking.

But there are those otherwise . . . those promises of woe.

"The angel of the LORD went up from Gilgal to Bokim and said, "I brought you up out of Egypt and led you into the land I swore to give to your ancestors. I said, 'I will never break my covenant with you, and you shall not make a covenant with the people of this land, but you shall break down their altars.' Yet you have disobeyed me.

Why have you done this? And I have also said, 'I will not drive them out before you; they will become traps for you, and their gods will become snares to you.'"

(Jgs 2:1-3)

Covenant disobedience would reap the promise for bad...for their own good.

Had God not warned them, wouldn't it still come to pass?

Dwelling in the presence of God's enemy would be their undoing—they could count on it.

God's people broke covenant with God with an unfinished conquest, idolatry, and apostasy—common spiritual enemies of our day. God's protection was rejected in their disobedience . . . and oppression would quickly follow.

As He promised.

And judgment would, too, follow.

"After that whole generation had been gathered to their ancestors, another generation grew up who knew neither the LORD nor what he had done for Israel. Then the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD and served the Baals. They forsook the LORD, the God of their ancestors, who had brought them out of Egypt. They followed and worshiped various gods of the peoples around them. They aroused the LORD's anger because they forsook him and served Baal and the Ashtoreths. In his anger against Israel the LORD gave them into the hands of raiders who plundered them. He sold them into the hands of their enemies all around, whom they were no longer able to resist. Whenever Israel went out to fight, the hand of the LORD was against them to defeat them, just as he had sworn to them. They were in great distress."

(Jgs 2:10-15 emph mine)

We have received our promises of woe from the Lord as well. He has warned of "weeping and gnashing of teeth" in the last days.

There will be a *Bokim*, a place of misery and great weeping.

Who can bear it?

As He promised: "A house divided cannot stand."

One that lives divided in two camps cannot stand in peace and good conscience before our holy Lord. The enticements of a hostile enemy **does** bring about destruction—there's just no denying it.

We must be as serious about eradicating everything opposed to God in our lives...as serious as He is of the promise.

Show us, Omniscient One, the threats that lie within. And by Your power drive them all out, that we may live in holy peace.

### A Promise-Shield for the Battle



We fast-forward over 500 years today . . . and the promises keep coming!

The Spirit of the Lord comes to Jahaziel with a promise from God in response to King Jehoshaphat's prayer.

The Israelites are to step out in faith and confront their foe. But they need not fight—that belongs to the Lord.

They enter the battlefront prayerfully and praisefully to take their stand and see God's salvation.

"You will not have to fight this battle.

Take up your positions;

stand firm

and see the deliverance the LORD
will give you, Judah and Jerusalem.

"Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the LORD will be with you." (2 Chron 20:17)

Take your position, dear Christian.

What . . . or rather, Whom . . . will you believe?

Stand firm.
Unmoved in your faith.

See the Lord's deliverance.

Wait and watch in hopeful anticipation.

With faith-filled eyes, recognize His Mighty Hand at work.

And take the charge of Paul:

"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people." (Eph 6:10-18 emph mine)

Fit the Lord's people for battle, Lord, to stand strong. May we remain ever alert, prayer-full, faith-full, and praise-full.

# **Coram Deo Living**



"If you return to the LORD, then your fellow Israelites and your children will be shown compassion by their captors and will return to this land, for the LORD your God is gracious and compassionate. He will not turn his face from you if you return to him."

(2 Chron 30:9)

Do you see it?
Do you see the "if" and "then"?
That, my friends, is promise.

Do you now see the far-reaching effect of blessing? Returning affects those around you. Your countrymen. Your children.

And do you see the good pleasure of God?
His response at the turning?
Of compassion?
Grace?

He will not turn Even if you do.

Turn to Him

And see His face—

It is promised to be there.

Coram Deo ~ Live before the face of God.

Coram Deo ~ Live for His glory.

Coram Deo ~ Dwell under His authority

Coram Deo ~ Heed the "Ifs" and "Thens" of God, dear one.

Coram Deo ~
The Face of your Father Full of longing and delight Is paradise sublime to abide.

Coram Deo ~
Turn to the Father,
He looks upon your face
With a promise.
And sees promise.

Dear.

Living before the face of God, Coram Deo, is where I want to remain, my Father

**-**\$=\$

Four "I Wills"



"I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols.

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you;
I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.
And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees
and be careful to keep my laws."

(Ez 36:25-27)

This is the promise, beloved—
The promise we've been given—
The promise we're now living.

Oh, wonder of all wonders, this miracle of grace!

Are not these "I wills" ample cause to celebrate our Risen Lord? No Other has purity and power and grace sufficient to cleanse this sinful heart but Christ Divine.

This is the promised inner working of God through Christ.

The filthy stain I bore was not brandished outside this body. It could not be removed by an external washing. Nor cleansed by anyone but the Perfect Lamb of God.

His cleansing accomplished two things. It washed away all my impurities and prepared a place for the incoming Spirit.

And then, the glory, He removed that old heart. He didn't just revamp it, rather He *replaced* it with a new heart!

As His Finger carved His Word into the Sinai tablet of stone, with precision It carved out that old wretched heart. Only the omnipotent power of God can carve the impenetrable flinty wall around that old heart.

And in the cavernous expanse He placed a warm, tender heart of flesh. Soft and pliable—that bleeds repentance when pricked.

A new heart of flesh—to house the Lord's love and compassion.

A vessel to receive, and give away, every spiritual blessing.

A new heart to house His Spirit.

He promised to give a new spirit—The Spirit...Himself. God, in our new heart of flesh—the flesh made in His image!

He graced all this so that we can live up to these "I wills". . . live up to the promise.

Don't compare His "I will" to man's. I've been guilty of saying I will do something...and not. Not so with God. His "I will"? They're emphatic . . . definitive. . . .sure. As sure as that old heart was granite hard! And there are many more than these four.

Four blessed "I wills" to be treasured . . . trusted!

He will cleanse you.

He will remove from you your heart of stone. He will give you a new heart of flesh. He will put a new spirit in you.

And in Christ, He has.

As He said . . . As He promised.

----

You saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit (Tit 3:5) and I praise You with my whole, new heart! The Spirit You have placed in my heart cries out, "Abba, Father!" in adoration and gratitude. Help me to hear what the Spirit says, to live by the Spirit, and to bring glory to You by Your Spirit.

"How much more, then,
will the blood of Christ,
who through the eternal Spirit
offered himself unblemished to God,
cleanse our consciences from acts
that lead to death, so that we
may serve the living God!"
(Heb 9:14)

## The Promised Shepherd



Our promise path takes us today to the sheepfold of Ezekiel 34.

From one sheep to another, I confess that I considered myself a black sheep long ago. Long before I entered the Christ-fold. (Which probably explains the captivating effect this message has on me.)

Leading up to this point there is chapter after condemning chapter of God's judgment in response to treacherous acts against Him. To read now of His grace is especially soothing.

Leader after delegated leader failed to properly care for God's people so God declared that He, Himself, would **personally** step in to tend His flock—proving our God is not far removed and distant. His love could not idly bear His sheep being abused and led astray.

In your reading, be led by our Shepherd to green, still pastures and feed upon ancient promises made. Ancient promises kept. Allow the "I, myself" words of Your heavenly Father touch those tender places in the deep recesses of your heart.

"For thus says the Lord GOD:

'Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep
and will seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep
that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all
places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness.

'I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep,

and I myself will make them lie down', declares the Lord GOD. 'I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak...

'And you are my sheep, human sheep of my pasture, and I am your God', declares the Lord GOD." (Ez 34:11-12, 15-16a, 31 ESV adapted)

Christ-followers have received affirmation from Jesus that He is the Promised Good Shepherd . . . the promise fulfilled.

"I am the good shepherd.
I know my own and my own know me,
just as the Father knows me and I know the Father;
and I lay down my life for the sheep."
(Jn 10:14-15 ESV)

Jesus tends mercifully to His fold . . . and expects us to do the same.

Our Lord Jesus; Make us also shepherds of Your sheep. Help us to strengthen the weak, tend to the hungry, care for the sick and injured, seek out and bring back the lost.

### A Promise to be Believed . . . LIVED



"'He will swallow up death forever.
the Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears
from all faces;
he will remove his people's disgrace
from all the earth.'
The LORD has spoken.

"In that day they will say,
"Surely this is our God;
we trusted in him, and he saved us.
This is the LORD, we trusted in him;
let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.'"
(Is 25:8-9)

"Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For your dew is a dew of light, and the earth will give birth to the dead." (Is 26:19 ESV)

**Resurrection**—promised of God through Isaiah, the prophet (Is 25:8-9; 26:19).

Resurrection—a miraculous sign of the promised Messiah (Mt 11:5).

**Resurrection**—foretold by Jesus and promised to us (Mt 17:9; 17:23; Jn 5:21).

The resurrection of Jesus is God's glorification of His Son and the assurance of God's promise for our eternal life—a proof that bathes us in hope...hope in impending glory.

As that big fish swallowed Jonah and enveloped him with life, so has Jesus swallowed up death and surrounded it with life...His Life.

Our glorious, All-Powerful, Sovereign Lord raises the dead in spirit, the dead in heart, the dead in faith, the dead in their transgressions.

Just look at what Jesus' resurrection did for the apostles. . .

When He lay cold in earth's death chamber they huddled—hidden behind locked doors—fearful of the Jews. The power of the authority's intimidation lost its wallop when Christ arose. They entered the light of day and preached boldly...even unto death.

Throw wide the doors as Easter morn—the Lord has risen! Alive forevermore!

Yes, the earth will give birth to the dead! Be glad in the Lord of your salvation, which has removed your disgrace and swallowed up death.

Awake! Sing for great joy! The Lord has spoken—let your life be the amen!

Live a raised life...yes, even today!

"And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you."

(Rm 8:11)



Holy Spirit; Unleash Your resurrection power unto a faith and a hope in You—alive forevermore!

#### An Eternal Promise



Oh, these rich days, filled with Scripture and the Spirit—positively rich!

My mind reels from the depth of the riches of God's Word—especially when contemplating the Davidic Covenant.

Second Samuel 7 is a key passage of Scripture not only to covenant but the history of salvation as a whole.

The promise of God to David to establish a house in His name through the eternal throne of the Messiah is monumental.

"Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever." (2 Sm 7:16)

God's covenant set David's heart to worship and compelled a confession of praise unparalleled. His humble prayer of gratitude is one of the most beautiful in all of Scripture.

Just how enduring are the covenants of God? Psalm 89 is a fundamental accompaniment to this Messianic promise. By it we gain a better understanding of the everlasting, unbreakable Word of God.

"I have made a covenant with my chosen one; I have sworn to David my servant: 'I will establish your offspring forever, and build your throne for all generations.'" (Ps 89:3-4 ESV) "I will not remove from him my steadfast love or be false to my faithfulness.

I will not violate my covenant or alter the word that went forth from my lips.

Once for all I have sworn by my holiness;

I will not lie to David.

His offspring shall endure forever,
his throne as long as the sun before me.

Like the moon it shall be established forever,
a faithful witness in the skies."

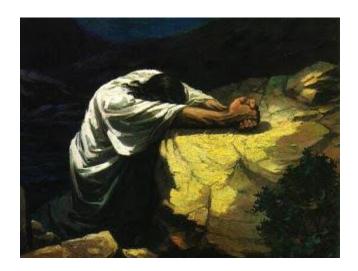
(Ps 89:33-37 ESV)

Powerful, isn't it?! Hopefully it births a greater appreciation for the surety of God's promise. But so much more: adoration for the Anointed One of God, the Eternal King of all Kings.



O Lord GoD; You are God, and Your words are true. Blessed be the LORD forever! Amen and Amen.

# A Promised Blessedness for the Bowing



Do you know that you have been promised a blessedness?

You, on the other side of this screen.

Yes, you!

Blessed you!

It doesn't require any doing.

Just bowing.

Bowing your will to the lordship of Christ.

Bowing your heart in reverent worship.

Bowing your head over Sacred Words.

Bowing your pride as sacrifice.

In both Old Testament and New, the humble . . . the meek . . . the poor in spirit, they have been promised a blessedness.

"The reward for humility and fear of the Lord is riches and honor and life."

(Prv 22:4 ESV)

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Mt 5:3 ESV) Use is moment as opportunity—bow the spirit and receive the promised blessedness of our Lord.



May the only exalted thing in me be You, my Lord.

### A Golden Promise



How I love that these days are carried along on the wings of God's promises! That as these spring-filled days blossom and bloom we also see before us the unfolding of God's plan—which all began as promise.

Promise—it's creation's soundtrack. God's grace, the melody; His promise, the harmony—setting this globe to spinning. And it all revolves around its Redeemer.

And how I *love* delving early into His Word, as panning for gold—to uncover a nugget of His truth that sings promise to His creation. It is purest of all joy!

How many are passed over? Left unearthed on the page? Stored as treasure for another day's need?

But for today, our journey has brought us to this heavenly gold . . . this promise of a Redeemer.

"The Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who repent of their sins," declares the LORD." (Is 59:20)

The Promised Redeemer has come! The price has been paid and the way opened! And the power of our Rescuer is infinitely greater than the feeble chains of our fallen state.

Rather than leave the world in a lost and hopeless state, God lovingly chose to save.

God came to redeem mankind. He paid the penalty our sins incurred, made possible a turning of our nature from the realm of darkness to light, and provided a means to restore our relationship with a holy God.

We're rescued by the Christ from worldly clutches, forces set against us and opposed to righteousness. But more than the influence of the world, He has rescued me from *me*. He has redeemed my iron will and aligned the twisted desires of my heart to that of our all-glorious Father.

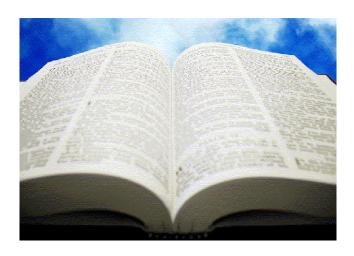
A plan from the foundation of all creation was gifted first as promise . . . a promise graced in the Christ.

And what magnifies our hope in this Crucified Redeemer is that He lives! And we can proclaim loudest praise to the tune of the golden promise of His return.

"This is what the LORD says—
your Redeemer,
the Holy One of Israel:
'I am the LORD your God,
who teaches you what is best for you,
who directs you in the way you should go.'"
(Is 48:17)

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people (Lk 1:68)!

### His is an Enduring Word



Right on the heels of yesterday's promise the very next verse—

is delivered yet another powerful promise . . .

"'As for me, this is my covenant with them,' says the LORD.

'My Spirit, who is on you, and my words that I have put in your mouth will not depart from your mouth, or from the mouths of your children, or from the mouths of their descendants from this time on and forever,' says the LORD."

(Is 59:21])

The hits, they just keep comin'!

First, a promised Redeemer; and now, an enduring word?!

Now that's all the promise we need!

And Jesus backed it up personally . . .

"Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away." (Mt 24:35) That's *sure* to propel me through whatever season lies outside my door! Because that promised word I'm taking with me.

I'm ready to head out—filled with promise—how 'bout you?



Heavenly Father; I didn't have to journey far in Your Word to come across yet another golden promise! May it be so—that Your Word never depart from the mouths of my children or their descendants from this time and forever!

# How right can I be?



The Lord Our Righteousness is His name, this Mighty Branch of David.

The Lord—**He** is indeed my righteousness! For even on my best day there is **no** good thing in me!

How right can I be? Dead wrong! But the righteousness of a just God has been revealed and birthed into the world by His Son—gifted to those that bear His image.

So any right in me has been given—credited to me by God because of faith in Jesus.

"This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe."

(Rm 3:22)

The only righteous thing I will have done today—and everyday!—was to rise loving Him, My Righteousness. And any fruit I bear is graced from the Fruit-Bearing Branch.

Tis the season for budding branches—may His goodness blossom bountifully through those that wear His name.



Lead us, O Lord, in Your righteousness, make straight Your way before us (Ps 5:8).

#### Just As He Has Said-Twice



Jeremiah sat in confinement.

And yet nothing could keep out God's word of promise.

"The word of the Lord came to him a second time."

God would speak again and again—promise upon promise.

And we have already firmly established the significance and surety of God's promises.

God had a message for Jeremiah to deliver. . .a promise of restoration for the Jews. But it was a forward-reaching type of the gospel-message: those alienated from God because of disobedience would be reconciled to Him. Sin had estranged God's people from God but through a coming Messiah there was a promised reconciliation. The created would once again have peace with their Creator.

Over the past few days we have looked at God's promise of redemption, righteousness, and restoration. In some of these verses the promises are directed toward a specific people, but elsewhere it is made clear that they are also meant for others.

In chapter 33 of the Book of Jeremiah God promises restoration and addresses three covenants. Though the people were in captivity, God assured them that the covenants were still valid.

God explained through Jeremiah that repentance would bring restoration so that the people could serve God. And those in Christ have received the same instruction.

"Therefore this is what the LORD says:

'If you repent, I will restore you
that you may serve me.'"

(Jer 15:19)

Repentance brings restoration.

When my relationship with God isn't right, I am a wreck! I feel like a man untethered in space. But because God has already made a way for me to return to Him, I am able to do my part in making things right. Then—and only then—can I know His peace and joy.

A means for restoring a broken relationship with God has been provided. Justified in Christ, enmity is removed so that sweet fellowship can be reciprocated.

As He said,
And as He promised,
So has He done.

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Father, dear Father; I can come to You as Your child because of the promise Jesus perfectly fulfilled. Words fall short of expressing just what that means to me—but I receive that promise and thank You for providing the means of repentance when I strain our relationship. May that promise reach me…wherever I may be found.

"For if, when we were God's enemies,
we were reconciled to him
through the death of his Son,
how much more, having been reconciled,
shall we be saved through his life!
Not only is this so,
but we also rejoice in God
through our Lord Jesus Christ,
through whom we have now received reconciliation."
(Rm 5:10-11)

#### **Promise-Of-All-Promises**



Just in case your Easter season is running long...
just in case your frustration with battles of the flesh wear...
just in case you feel sin has dug a bottomless pit...
respite has come.

We're here!

We've arrived at last to the pivotal promise junction.

We've come to the promise-of-all-promises... the Promise of a Savior.

But which verse shall I choose? That's a real dilemma (but a dandy one to have)!

It's back to Isaiah we go...

"Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign:
The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son,
and will call him Immanuel."
(Is 7:14)

Today's verse in our march toward Easter makes it feel more like Christmas.

The promised birth gifted the world with a Savior.

"Joy to the world the Savior comes,
The Savior promised long,
Let every heart prepare a throne,
And every voice a song."
~Philip Doddridge

The real beauty is not the promise per se but the Heart behind it. It's the God of the promise that makes it so exquisite!

God not only gave the promise but sent message-upon-message-upon-message through several prophets so that when the Savior came He would be recognized and believed.

And like so many other promises we've already seen, it **has** come to pass—the Savior has come!

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He is the Hope of all hopes...
Our Peace,
Our Righteousness.
He is our faith,
what our hearts cling to.
Our Savior,
The Answer to every promise and covenant of God.
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"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." (Ac 4:12)

Let rejoicing resound at every remembrance of the promise God made. And let the hearts of His own people peal with praise that it has come to pass.



Your promise for our Savior, O such glory! All glory to God...glory in the highest! Yes! Let heaven and nature sing for great joy!

# **Another Promise Layer**



# Only God!

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Only God would make a promise . . . and then make a promise about that promise . . . and keep it!
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So, yesterday we looked at the promised birth of a Savior.

Today, it's the promise God gave about that Savior:

"She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." (Mt 1:21 ESV emph mine)

Now that is one grand rescue! That deliverance is THE greatest there is! Because we need saving from our sins more than any other single thing.

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The guilt,
the shame,
the penalty,
the stain,
the power,
the weight,
of our sins are
FORGIVEN.
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"As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us." (Ps 103:12)

A promised Savior . . . and a promise to save us from our sins . . . all wrapped up in one wonderful name—

JESUS!

He's the only one that could!

Do the dark clouds o'er shadow your pathway? Have you no hope beyond the dark grave? Carry your sins and burdens to Jesus, Jesus is strong and able to save.

Sorrowing one, oh, flee to the Savior, Hide you from sin's dark, turbulent wave; He will conduct you upward and homeward, Jesus is strong and able to save.

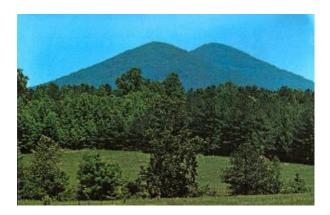
Jesus is willing,
Mighty and ready,
Victor o'er sin and death and the grave;
He can redeem you,
Pardon and heal you,
Jesus is strong a able to save.

~Austin Taylor

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Heavenly Father; The Messiah promised is the Son of God born to man to save—blessed be His powerful name!

### A Promise to Stand On



Set my feet upon a trail through the woods and I will hike it with great joy!

I love time spent on the trails of nearby Kennesaw Mountain.

There are, however, some steep passes covered with loose gravel.

Those cause me some anxiety.

I don't particularly care to go downhill when footing is precarious.

I don't like the way my stomach lurches or the little number my heart plays when I start to skid.

This girl much prefers planting a sure foot.

We want the ground we stand on to be firm and steady, don't we?



So, for all of us that love terra firma and homes built on solid ground, this promise was made for you . . .

"So this is what the Sovereign LORD says:

'See, I lay a stone in Zion,

a tested stone,

a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation;
the one who trusts will never be dismayed."

(Is 28:16)

The Promised Savior would be steadfast, sure . . . rock solid.

And He is!

That's just the confidence you want in a savior. Call it a necessary essential. People don't just want saving, they want a trustworthy savior to depend on. One we can trust with our very souls...and the souls of those we love.

And how marvelous that we have song-after-theological-song to worship this Sure Foundation, this Solid Rock. With lyrics like:

"This Cornerstone, this solid ground, Firm through the fiercest drought and storm." (In Christ Alone)

Or songs like:

"My hope is built on nothing less Than Jesus' blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, But wholly lean on Jesus Name.

When darkness seems to hide His face I rest on His unchanging grace. In every high and stormy gale, My anchor holds within the veil.

His oath, His covenant, His blood, Support me in the whelming flood. When all around my soul gives way, He then is all my Hope and Stay.

On Christ the solid Rock I stand, All other ground is sinking sand; All other ground is sinking sand. (My Hope Is Built On Nothing Less)

That step of faith? It is not placed upon obscure, shifting principles of this world—loose gravel—but "tested stone." And Christ's Church? It will not crumble nor fall. Its Foundation is eternally sure—and that's a promise!

The LORD lives! Praise be to my Rock! Exalted be God my Savior! (Ps 18:46)

#### Cast In



Whenever the P.E. teacher would line us up against the wall I would cringe.

I knew what was coming.

She would select two students from the group to choose teams.

Filled with dread, my esteem would plummet to the very depths.

"Pick me, pick me," my heart begged, as a sick knot in the pit of my stomach feared I wouldn't get chosen at all.

Exclusion - how it wounds!

I suffered more heartache being "left-out" on the play ground that I did being rejected by any boy. Or when that middle school group of populars labeled me uncool.

Yes, people tend to be partial—often in a cruel way.

But God . . .

God does not play favorites.

And He made a promise of inclusion for those among the nation of God.

"Let no foreigner who has bound himself to the LORD say, 'The LORD will surely exclude me from his people.'

For this is what the LORD says:

'To them I will give within my temple and its walls a memorial and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that will not be cut off. And foreigners who bind themselves to the LORD to serve him, to love the name of the LORD, and to worship him, all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it and who hold fast to my covenant these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations.' The Sovereign LORD declares he who gathers the exiles of Israel: 'I will gather still others to them besides those already gathered."" (ls 56:3a, 4a, 5-8)

A promise of the Promised Savior was that He would extend justice and righteousness to all.

And He does.

He will judge just as impartially . . . it has been promised.

"As the Scripture says, 'Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame.'
For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'"

(Rm 10:11-13)

God offers salvation through His Son to all peoples of the earth. The true children of God that inherit all of His promises are those that embrace and honor His covenant and worship Him in grace and truth.

If we are all foreigners because of our other-worldly citizenship, then our only ethnicity is of the heavenly kind, right?

And the new nation of God, the Church of Christ, is where He calls there be no outcast—socially, racially, or economically. But it all comes down to the individuals within the Body to love as He loves and reflect the Father's attribute of impartiality.

That there be no outcast is a sort of perpetual sharing promise. It's a promise He gave . . . that I can give . . . and we, the Church, can give . . . and the next generation can give . . . and on it goes until He comes—to all He calls His own.



Give us eyes like Yours that see no outcast. And a heart like Yours to love like You, Father.

# **Rejected Love**



Isn't it our human tendency to reject first those we know will reject us?

Only love doesn't spurn when rejected.

And only love loves when scorned.

And that Love has a name: Jesus.

God knew they would reject His Son.

Yet in the prophecy of such rejection He promised blessing anyway.

"The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone;" (Ps 118:22)

Even Jesus knew they would reject Him but, in love, He taught them anyway.

"He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law," (Mk 8:31a)

He knew, as prophesied, that the Stone the builders would reject was Him.

But it was also foretold that He would become the Capstone—the center stone at the top of the arch that holds the whole arch together.

And Isaiah foretold that He would become the Cornerstone—the sure foundation previously mentioned. (The cornerstone being the straight and level base to which all other stones of a structure are lined up.)

The Capstone and Cornerstone promised is the Alpha and Omega—the Beginning and End of His Church—even knowing full-well He would be rejected and scorned.

Other promises have been made to those that reject this Stone of Zion—promises to heed as warning this side of Calvary.

Jesus has made it clear that those that fall on the Capstone, in judgment will be crushed by it.

"Jesus looked directly at them and asked,
'Then what is the meaning of that which is written:

The stone the builders rejected
has become the capstone?'

Everyone who falls on that stone
will be broken to pieces,
but he on whom it falls will be crushed."

(Lk 20:17-18) (see also Jn 3:36; Jn 12:48; 1 Pt 2:3-8)

Jesus Christ—rejected by man, lifted high by God—The One and Only that loves anyway.



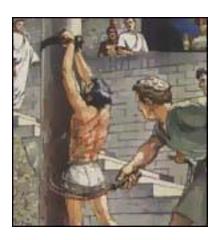
How many times and in how many ways have You been rejected by man...by me? And vet You love! I am humbled beyond words and thankful beyond measure.

### He Suffered in Trust

The moon, he smiles over Marietta tonight.

The silent witness with a grand story to tell.

For this same moon shone over
The Upper Room Passover guests,
Gethsemane,
The religious council's mock proceedings,
The Cross,
And an Empty Tomb.



As we enter into the events of Passion Week, I strain to hear the sounds of Jerusalem. The frenzy . . . the fear . . . the fury.

It was all foretold . . . promised—
The Rejection,
The Betrayal,
The Scattering,
The Suffering.

One of the hardest chapters to read in the whole Bible is Isaiah 53. This heartwrenching prophecy of the suffering of our Savior, God's Righteous Servant, held—of all things—promise.

"The will of the LORD will prosper in his hand.

After the suffering of his soul,
he will see the light of life and be satisfied;
by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many,
and he will bear their iniquities."

(Is 53:10b-11)

It is all for naught—their injustice and cruelty. God's plan was promised to succeed. And the suffering of Jesus would accomplish what God had promised long before—the justification of multitudes.

Oh, but let us not discount His agony in the face of such suffering.

"[Jesus] began to be deeply distressed and troubled.

'My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow
to the point of death,' he said to them."

(Mk 14:33b-34a)

But, just as He said;

"The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again." (Mk 8:31)

The Passion held promise.

In the most wretched atrocity, God sets a gem of beauty . . . a promise of victory.

With complete trust in the Father, and that promise to possess, Jesus endured immense suffering. A suffering inflicted by hate...yet endured by a love.

Is He what makes the moon smile? It's a mere reflection of the Father's good pleasure.

"He was pierced for our transgressions,
He was crushed for our sins;
the punishment that brought us peace
was upon Him,
and by His wounds we are healed."
(Is 53:5)

It was my transgressions and sins that crushed Your Son and my Savior, Father. Such grace and forgiveness warrants my life - buried and made alive in Him.

### Promise, from Passover to Passover



Passover, could it be considered Communion's father? Wasn't it the predecessor of the Lord's Supper?

Just thinkin'. . .

I can say that it was rich with meaning, significance, symbolism . . . and promise.

Those in a dwelling marked by the blood of the lamb were protected from the angel of death on the eve of the Hebrew's Egyptian deliverance (see Exodus 12).

God promised.

God gave detailed instruction about how the festival that memorialized this event was to be observed.

And it was at Jesus' final Passover that He instituted the New Covenant—yet another promise of God for His people.

Observing the Lord's Supper is a way to weekly celebrate and remember Jesus, the final Passover Lamb. By it we obey His command to proclaim His death until He returns. By it, we commune with God and other fellow-believers.

The Passover—first and last—were full of promise and symbolic of the salvation wrought by the Blood of the Perfect Lamb of God.

From Passover to Easter, Jesus.

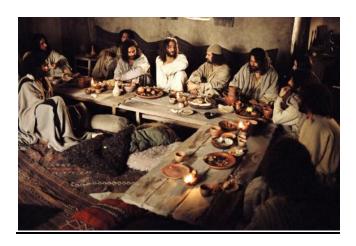
Jesus, always.



Lord Jesus, Thank You for the promises You gave and fulfilled. In trembling and anguish You drank of the cup, though it cost You much. A cup you offered to others - to not partake costs them much.

"Then he took the cup,
gave thanks and offered it to them, saying,
"Drink from it, all of you.
This is my blood of the covenant,
which is poured out for many
for the forgiveness of sins."
(Mt 26:27-28)

### **Promises to Believe**



As Isaiah 53 is harsh, so John 14 is tender.

Don't you wonder what the narrative sounded like in Aramaic?

Rolling off lips Divine from a heart bursting full?

So *much* to say . . . so little time remained. Jesus wanted His disciples to be sure of the fundamental truths that would sustain them.

But they needed more than instruction, they needed promise...promise to which to cling. To **believe**.

"Let not your hearts be troubled.

Believe in God;

believe also in me.

In my Father's house are many rooms.

If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?

And if I go and prepare a place for you,

I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also."

(Jn 14:1-3 ESV)

That one thing they would soon desperately need to **know**. They would need to believe that they would again be with Him.

Don't we? We **need** believe that we are ever moving - one day at a time - closer to living this promise. And we need believe there is room enough . . . prepared by Jesus Himself.

"Jesus answered,

'I am the way and the truth and the life.

No one comes to the Father except through me.

If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well.

From now on, you do know him and have seen him.'"

(Jn 14:6-7)

How wonderful to **know** that in knowing Jesus we can know God. To **know** Jesus is to know Truth. As if that were not enough, He also assured that we have access to our Heavenly Father in the knowing.

What comfort there is in this certainty!

We may be uncertain of most things - but we can rest assured in what Jesus has promised.

We can believe what He said because He is the One Who said it.

So allow His promises to leave you breathlessly hopeful. Peaceful.

Believe in Him and believe in His promises given. And in believing, trust—that your heart is not troubled.



Because You can be believed, so too are Your promises. You are able to do all things and not one of Your good promises has ever failed. How this strengthens my heart—banishing any trouble that may be churning there.

### **Promised Presence**



"I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you." (Jn 14:20)

How many more promises can there **be**? Let's just say: there are more promises than these 40 days we've been tracking.

And we need every single one of these promises in our relationship with our Lord.

# Especially this one!

We're still basking in John 14—those final moments Jesus spent with his disciples, strengthening their faith with promise.

"If you love me, you will
keep my commandments.
And I will ask the Father,
and he will give you another Helper,
to be with you forever,
even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive,
because it neither sees him nor knows him.
You know him, for he dwells with you
and will be in you."
(Jn 14:15-17 ESV)

You can **know** God, for He is with you . . . in you.

He is not some foreigner. He is Friend.

Knowledge of His Presence when we, or loved ones, are experiencing trials in this life brings such comfort. To **KNOW** He is with us brings purest peace. How utterly amazing to **KNOW** that He is with others in their need, connecting us, is too wonderful to express. We are bound by more than blood. So, when a family member is in need, we can pray courage into them through the uniting Spirit.

The same Spirit in you is also in me. How marvelous to realize! The entire Body is joined together by the same Spirit. We often hear others testify they can "feel" prayers in crisis—might that just be Him? The gift of connectedness is profound, indeed!

And what of the great blessing untold of believing in the Gift of the Lord's promise:

"The Helper, the Holy Spirit,
whom the Father will send in my name,
he will teach you all things
and bring to your remembrance
all that I have said to you."
(Jn 14:26 ESV)

The Helper is The Greatest Teacher. He helped the disciples remember what Jesus said—that we might have the Gospels. (Oh, thank You!) He is Wisdom from God and discloses the things of God, leading us in His perfect will.

This powerful promise-beyond-measure became evident at Pentecost. And can be visible in my life...and yours.

Is it irreverent to say of such High Holiness that as a muscle grows with exercise He becomes "bigger" in me the more I "exercise" our relationship? It just seems to me that the more time I spend communing with Him in prayer, the more I am able to "see" Him.

When I consider the importance and the tremendous weight of this promise I try to imagine the emphasis Jesus must have used in conveying it. In passing it from heaven to earth, from Father to His children.

I am bowed low under the immense greatness of this Gift. How very precious we must be to Him that He would bless us with Himself—God. With. Us! The Infinite God of ALL Creation dwells within His people in the Person of the Holy Spirit. O, that our Blessed Lord and Savior is with us! Uniting me to His side and feeding my spirit with all things necessary to live a life for His renown.

Yes, John 14 is quickly becoming my favorite chapter.

Take note, my friend, of the other promises of God's Christ in this chapter and **know** His love for you.

There's more to delve into tomorrow!



You **are** here. I can **KNOW** that. Such knowledge is so wonderful to attain! To call that love or grace just seems far too ignoble in proportion to the immense gravity of the Gift. Holy Spirit; You are **more** than Helper, Comforter, Counselor. You are Power for this life in Christ, and You are beloved Friend.

# Truly, Truly, Eternal Life



I'm beginning to feel like a wind-up toy! Imagine each promise as one more turn of the crank winding me up good and tight. Come Easter-release I'll be all a'spin, positively rejoicing!

These promises, they just keep getting sweeter and sweeter!

Here, look at yet another rich promise to be found in our third day in chapter 14 of John's gospel:

"Because I live, you also will live." (Jn 4:19)

Don't you find this calms fear and robs death of its very sting?

The more I am around death, the more I appreciate this promise...and the more comfortable I am at the thought of dying.

O, for that day when this body will be but an empty tomb and my soul shall rise to be with my Lord and God!

With regard to God's promises for

Eternal Life, our Resurrection, and our Heavenly Dwelling,

I will leave you with but a sampling of verses from God's Holy Word for you to meditate upon today—that you may be lifted up by Jesus, the Firstborn over death and the grave.

### John 5:24-29

"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.

"Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned."

## Romans 6:4

"We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."

## 2 Corinthians 5:1-5

"Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come."

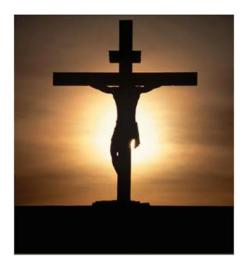
### Philippians 3:20-21

"But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body."

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Jesus; All praise be Yours, with thanks unending that You are Life and in You we have the promise for eternal life.

### **Tion-ful of Promises**



As He said: "Everything that is written about the Son of Man

by the prophets will be accomplished."

As He promised: "For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be

mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon."

So it was.

Jesus had evaded murderous crowds before, He could have done it again.

Not this time.

A promise awaited.

But this...this He endured for far more than promise.

### The Cross-

here Jesus bore all the amassed sin of man; here, unmitigated wrath of Holy God was POURED OUT; here, judgment was exacted upon the guiltless Son of God. Just as God promised.

We would never come near Easter but by the Cross.

And we would never know personal holiness but by the Crucifixion of God's Christ, Jesus.

I tread ever so lightly here, the holy ground of the Cross. . .

Before the Cross, God gave all these precious promises.

Through the Cross, they all became as priceless gems.

And Jesus, our Crucified Savior, is the golden thread that strings them together.

These promises of God, they are beautiful gems to behold in and of themselves. Oh, but in Christ, the central cord of covenant that ties them all together, they become an adornment for our eternal lives.

And what are these gems? They are all the "tions" promised to the children of God in Christ:

Salvation
Propitiation
Redemption
Reconciliation
Justification
Sanctification
Adoption
Resurrection

Priceless gems, all.

They are promised blessed gifts of grace given. But it is Jesus that has made them reality. Accomplished at His cry, "It is finished!"

It is much to ponder, yes?

The crucifixion was fully known to Jesus, but it was still His choice, His will, and His resolve to suffer it. In complete trust, obedience, and love of the Father He fulfilled the prophecy that we might live lives abundantly full of promise.

My Lord and Savior; Your crucifixion was our only hope—and for that I am truly and deeply sorrowful. Your blood shed on the Cross has wrought perfect atonement for all mankind. Words cannot express such gratitude. And all the beautiful "tions" you bought and bound together that I might wear such costly jewels are too wonderful to imagine. But worthy of highest praise. Make my life worship for such love and sacrifice.

# An Oracle of Promised Mourning



The oracle of promised doom by the shepherd of Tekoa implicatively pointed toward history's most dreadful day. He told of bitter mourning that would reverberate throughout creation.

"And on that day," declares the Lord God,
"I will make the sun go down at noon
and darken the earth in broad daylight.
I will turn your feasts into mourning
and all your songs into lamentation;
I will bring sackcloth on every waist
and baldness on every head;
I will make it like the mourning for an only son
and the end of it like a bitter day."

(Amos 8:9-10 ESV)

That day in Jerusalem began in exuberant celebration. Then all color was wrung right out of the chilled, thick air.

The rejoicing and glad tidings of the nation's festival stilled—all laughter and singing extinguished.

Straight-up Noon, darkness prevailed.

Creation, cloaked in grave clothes, mourned the execution of its Creator.

Time droned . . . three endless hours. Then the earth quaked and great boulders cracked as eggs.

Golgotha's crest heaved sorrow. And all through Jerusalem that holy feast day, those touched over the course of three hope-filled years bereaved the Man called Jesus.

Heaven and earth mourned God's Only Son...while Promise cocooned a cave-held miracle.

Long, dark shadows of mourning were shattered come Easter morning light.

The shredded fringe of the temple veil, left flapping in spring's breeze.

\_\_\_\_\_\_

Yes, my God, even this bitter promise You made through Your servant Amos came to pass. No detail of Your perfect plan has been slighted—add that knowledge to my blossoming belief.

#### "Just as he said"



### As they said:

"And taking the twelve, he said to them, 'See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished." (Lk 18:31, 33)

#### As He said:

"For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." (Mt 12:40)

#### As the angel said:

 Miracle of all miracles!

He lives!

His chest thumped to the beat of a once-cold heart.

Air filled deflated lungs.

His stiff body warmed...moved.

He rose right out of His grave clothes. Gently, He folded the linen that bound the dead, and took His stand...and strode right past the stone that sealed His tomb.

Trinity triumph!

The tomb a birthplace!

Born in a cave, to the physical life of Adam.

Born-again in another cave, to eternal life.

The praise on His lips!
The joy inexplicable!
The stretch of His arms!
The deep breath of fresh air!
ALIVE!

Did He chuckle as the guards fled?

Did He watch them arrive? Overlook the exchange of the angel with the women?

"So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him."

(Mt 28:8-9)

I want to be like those women!

I don't want to remain—mourning—at an empty tomb. I want to be so filled with resurrection-joy that I race to share the Good News. That I hurry to meet Him in worship.

May the "just-as-He-saids" of our Lord so flood your mind and fill your heart that your worship is raised to new life.

Run to Easter...our Lord will meet you there.

**─** 

It's true...just as you said! Hallelujah!

#### Our God is a Covenant God



"But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises."

"In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete." (Heb 8:6, 13a ESV emph mine)

The vein of covenant is promise. And the covenants of God are promise based on His infinite perfection and unfailing character of trustworthiness.

We experience the blessings of God's New Covenant through faith in Jesus Christ.

Among other things, the New Covenant in Christ promises forgiveness, eternal life, and the Holy Spirit. Something the Old Covenant could not accomplish. Therefore, it has condemned the Old.

Jesus died that we might receive the gift of forgiveness, rose that we might received the gift of eternal life, and ascended that we might receive the gift of the Holy Spirit... as promised.

Those are THE most extravagant gifts!

And the New Covenant in Christ - by means of God's grace, Jesus' sacrifice, and the Spirit's power - provides for relationship with the Trinity.

Power from on High the Father promised, the Holy Spirit, is our Covenant Master: "He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—

# not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." (2 Cor 3:6)

Drink deeply from the cup of the New Covenant, purchased by the Blood of Christ and guaranteed by the Spirit.

Marvel at God's gifts of Easter grace.

I am fully persuaded that You are able to do what You have promised (Rm 4:21).

### A Hymn of the Suffering Savior



Christ Our Sacrifice Charles W. Naylor

Down from the portals of glory
A King in His majesty came,
Humbled Himself as a servant,
To bear our transgressions and shame.

He was despised and rejected, Hated by those He would save, Yet He so loved guilty sinners, That freely His life-blood He gave.

See Him led forth as a captive, His presence the multitude scorns; See them array Him in purple, And cruelly crown Him with thorns.

Lead Him outside of the city,
Nail Him on Calvary's tree;
Look on Him there, guilty sinner,
He's bleeding and dying for thee.
Though thou hast slighted Him often,
Still, sinner, He's pleading for thee.

### Good Friday "tions"



Should we not look beyond the promises to the Christ?

He should ever and always be our focus.

Picture a long hall lined with doors—as promises...leading to the Christ of God. Our best site is the Christ at the end. Let us not divert our gaze from Him. How I pray I have only helped us to peek inside each door lined along the way.

God has given us exceedingly great promises in Christ.

They are true only in Him.

He is the source, the substance, the end result of God's promises.

Sure, there is encouragement and comfort to be realized in turning to God's promises in dire times but never to the neglect of Jesus. Turn to Christ first, for He is the end of all promise. The promises, a trail, laid by God to lead us to Jesus.

Christ alone is our faith . . . our hope . . . our comfort . . . our all-in-all.

Christ alone is enough.

I have spoken much of Easter, but nothing of Good Friday. As we near, let's return to Christ crucified.

"He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world." (1 Jn 2:2 ESV - see also Rm 3:22-26)

Propitiation and substitution are the essence of the Gospel message and they are applied by faith in Jesus.

Unforgiven sin leaves one guilty and subject to God's wrath. And the one bearing unforgiven sin is destined to judgment and penalty.

But, for those who are clothed with the Savior's righteousness, He became our substitute and was the perfect atoning sacrifice for our sins. He satisfied the demands of God's justice, completely appearing a holy, just, and righteous God.

He donned our ugly, heinous sin and took the sentenced blows.

Sin propitiated.

It was all Jesus.

"Surely he has borne our griefs
and carried our sorrows;
yet we esteemed him stricken,
smitten by God, and afflicted.
But he was pierced for our transgressions;
he was crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
and with his wounds we are healed."

(Is 53:4-5 ESV emph mine)

There are lots of "He" - and no "I" - in salvation's story.

Nothing of my own can I claim "but wholly lean on Jesus."

Wholly—entirely and completely
Lean—fall upon and rest in
on Jesus—the One and Only

Is it even possible to grasp such sacrifice?

Can a life of worship ever be worship enough?

----

Righteous Lord Jesus; You willingly offered to expunge the wrath of God for every sin, trusting Him . . . and loving us—it is beyond comprehension. Your Life, a propitiation and substitution for my just and deserved death penalty, is inconceivable. What a Savior!

### **Pending Promise**



We've come this far and yet we've barely grazed the surface of the promises of God. There are promises I haven't even touched on. Promises on:

Prayer
Heaven
Holy Spirit power to overcome temptation
Victory in Jesus
A new earth.

But the one promise pending I want to mention to prepare our hearts for Easter is the promised return of the King.

This moves us beyond the exuberance of Easter. It moves us to proclaim daily "Alleluias." And those alleluias lift us to live between worlds—stuck here, but our hearts there..where our King is.

We tarry until Christ comes again . . . ever drawing closer to that "until" — until the "until" has become "soon," and even now "sooner."

And yet, grievously, I treat it with no urgency whatsoever.

We are robed in hope, for our Lord has promised to come.

Our futures encase majesty.

That He is willing to return—to come back to a people that despised, rejected, and crucified Him; that sin against Him, profane His Name, and refuse to believe and obey—is MOST remarkable.

But when has anything Jesus has ever done been anything but?

So, too, will it be with His coming.

He will fill the skies with glory!

As the grave could not hold Him, the heavens will not contain Him!

"They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. 'Men of Galilee,' they said, 'why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.'"

(Ac 1:10-11)

The Bride readies for the wedding feast of her Groom.

And as we prepare for Easter, consider how much He has prepared for us. The questions then become, "Am I prepared for Him? Are others aware of what is yet to come so they, too, might be prepared?"

"You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. For in just a very little while, 'He who is coming will come and will not delay.'"

(Heb 10:36-37)

Ours is a God that keeps His promises...as He will with those pending.



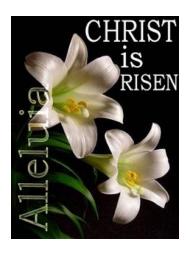
All praise be our Conqueror of the Tomb! Yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. We pray the King's kingdom come as we await Your glorious return. Amen.

"Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen."

(Rev 1:7)

## **Assorted Selections for Easter Day**

#### A Verse for Easter



"But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him."

(Ac 2:24)

### A Prayer for Easter



With Thee, O Christ, we would arise to newness of life.

We beseech Thee to make all things new to us.

Let the old duties, the old work, the old burdens, the old friendships be transfigured as Thou dost touch them.

Let the resurrection joy lift us from loneliness and weakness and despair to strength and beauty and happiness.

We would fain live the risen life.

Help us by Thy call, by Thy message, by Thy beauty, by Thy goodness, to be Thy true children, looking to Thee and serving Thee, until at last we see Thee face to face.

~Floyd W. Tomkins

### A Hymn for Easter

Low in the grave He lay, Jesus my Savior, Waiting the coming day, Jesus my Lord!

Up from the grave He arose, With a mighty triumph o'er His foes, He arose a Victor from the dark domain, And He lives forever, with His saints to reign. He arose! He arose! Hallelujah! Christ arose!

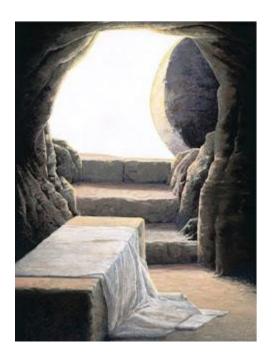
Vainly they watch His bed, Jesus my Savior; Vainly they seal the dead, Jesus my Lord!

Up from the grave He arose, With a mighty triumph o'er His foes, He arose a Victor from the dark domain, And He lives forever, with His saints to reign. He arose! He arose! Hallelujah! Christ arose!

Death cannot keep its Prey, Jesus my Savior; He tore the bars away, Jesus my Lord!

Up from the grave He arose, With a mighty triumph o'er His foes, He arose a Victor from the dark domain, And He lives forever, with His saints to reign. He arose! He arose! Hallelujah! Christ arose!

~Robert Lowry, 1874



# A Selected Quote for Easter

"Easter not only happened; it happens.

It is not only a past event to be celebrated with new hats and hallelujahs; it is an eternally present fact to be appropriated by faith and obedience." *Leonard Griffith* 



### **Closing Out the Season**



At Easter's end, I curl up under the covers...content. I rest deeply in truest comfort, as covered in promise.

And yet at the end of these forty days, I awoke to find nothing had changed—not my position in life or my bank account. But what I do have is a greater sense of God's faithfulness. And a greater sense of belovedness—of being graced by Almighty God with gifts of His faithful love.

It's like gazing at a flower. Because the longer I look at a flower, the more beautiful it becomes. Only then do I notice the intricate details and delicacy of its creation. That's precisely how I feel after closely inspecting God's promises these many weeks.

From the promise in Genesis to crush the serpent to His promise in Revelation for a new earth, God has gifted promises for His creation lavishly. Who could not delight in such a God?

Looking at these promises was to look to God in awe and adoration. In the process, He girthed a greater faith. And He bestowed a blessing of hope for looking ahead.

It is my prayer that you have come to know our God-of-Promise more intimately through time spent daily in His Word. I pray you realize more fully the great lengths to which He has gone in fulfilling the intricate and exquisite promises planned eons ago. Even more, I pray that you have personally seen the richness of His grace in Christ.

Are you now able to attest to our theme verse? Do you firmly believe: "As He said and as He promised" so will He do?

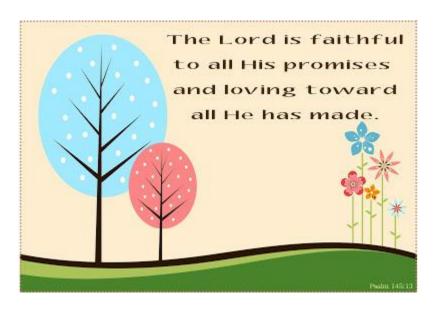
Jerry Bridges wrote: "Don't ask, 'Do I have faith?' Ask rather, 'Do I believe the promises of God?' If you do, it's because God has given you the gift of faith. Let God's promises drive away doubt."

The Lord our God has blessed us as He has promised—it is now ours but to believe...and share.

From the fullness of Your grace, Father, we have all received one blessing after another (Jn 1:16). Help us to live faithfully from that fullness. Receive our heartfelt praise for Your every faithfulness. In Jesus name, Amen.



This series was originally posted to my blog for the 2017 Easter season.



In praise of our faithful Lord