

Lasting Promises



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The International Lutheran Laymen's League

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Introduction

Promises can be cause for joy. A young man leaving to join the military, promises his girlfriend, "When I return, we will get married." A supervisor tells one of her workers, "You have really been working hard. So next month, you will receive a promotion." These and many other promises can cause celebration. They make the future look brighter. They give reason to live.

But, promises may also be depressing. People sometimes do not fulfill them. Who has not experienced the bitterness of a broken promise or a worthless signature? There may even have been times when you have not fulfilled the word you gave and found excuses saying, "Promises are made to be broken."

In this world many things are uncertain. People hope for stability! Sometimes they wish they could receive solid promises worthy of trust.

The purpose of this booklet is to show you that you have not been left without promises and hope. On the contrary, God has made many valuable promises. God's promises are not vain expressions of good faith. They are clear declarations of His love. God's promises are not spiritual excuses that forecast some shady happiness for the future. They are based on historic events that God caused to happen in order to gain people's love and trust. God has signed His name with indelible ink on the cross of His

Son, Jesus Christ. Can you believe that? Keep on reading and think about the credibility of God's promises.

The Testimony of God's Promises

Many people justify their cold attitude toward God with these words, "If God would make a miracle happen before my eyes, I would trust in Him and would follow Him. I am only waiting for Him to give me a sign." That is exactly what God has done for you!

Prophecy

Christ would be born of a virgin.

† Isaiah 7:14: *"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."*

Among all the nations, He would be born in Bethlehem of Judah.

† Micah 5:2: *"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for Me One who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."*

God Almighty has already done a multitude of miracles that you can read with your own eyes. You can read about them in the Bible.

God's Promises

Prophecies are the promises that God made regarding the coming of the Savior, Jesus Christ. These promises were made hundreds of years before Jesus was born. They are not merely coincidences. They are detailed prophecies given by the Lord a long time before the events took place. These prophecies were given to prove His wisdom and power so you are able to recognize His plan of salvation from sin and death.

Fulfillment

† Matthew 1:20-23: *“But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, ‘Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a Son and you are to give Him the name Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins.’ All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ‘The virgin will be with Child and will give birth to a Son, and they will call Him Immanuel’ — which means, ‘God with us.’”*

† Luke 2:6-7: *“While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a Son. She wrapped Him in cloths and placed Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.”*

Prophecy

God pointed out the region of Israel where the ministry of the Savior would begin.

† Isaiah 9:1-2: *“Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past He humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future He will honor Galilee of the Gentiles, by the way of the sea, along the Jordan — The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.”*

The Savior would cure the sick.

† Isaiah 35:5-6: *“Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert.”*

Christ would be the greatest prophet. His Words would be the greatest ever spoken and would not be ignored.

† Deuteronomy 18:15: *“The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to Him.”*

He would preach that forgiveness and peace are gifts from God.

† Isaiah 55:1,2,6-7: *“Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money*

and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare... Seek the Lord while He may be found; call on Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him, and to our God, for He will freely pardon.”

Fulfillment

† Matthew 4:12-17: *“When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, He returned to Galilee. Leaving Nazareth, He went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali — to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah: ‘Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way to the sea, along the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles — the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.’ From that time on Jesus began to preach, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.’”*

† Matthew 9:35-36: *“Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When He saw the crowds, He had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.”*

† John 1:17-18: *“For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father’s side, has made Him known.”*

† Romans 6:23: *“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

Prophecy

The Savior would be received in the city of Jerusalem, riding on a donkey.

† Zechariah 9:9: *“Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your King comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”*

He would be crucified. This surprising prophecy was made centuries before crucifixion was ever invented.

† Psalm 22:12-28: *“Many bulls surround Me; strong bulls of Bashan encircle Me. Roaring lions tearing their prey open their mouths wide against Me. I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted away within Me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and My tongue sticks to the roof of My mouth; You lay Me in the dust of death. Dogs have surrounded Me; a band of evil men has encircled Me, they have pierced My hands and My feet. I can count all My bones; people stare and gloat over Me. They divide My garments among them and cast lots for My clothing. But You, O Lord, be not far off; O My Strength, come quickly to help Me. Deliver My life from the sword, My precious life from the power of the dogs. Rescue Me from the mouth of the lions; save Me from the horns of the wild*

oxen. I will declare Your name to My brothers; in the congregation I will praise You. You who fear the Lord, praise Him! All you descendants of Jacob, honor Him! Revere Him, all you descendants of Israel! For He has not despised or disdained the suffering of the afflicted One; He has not hidden His face from Him but has listened to His cry for help. From You comes the theme of My praise in the great assembly; before those who fear You will I fulfill My vows. The poor will eat and be satisfied; they who seek the Lord will praise Him — may your hearts live forever! All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations will bow down before Him, for dominion belongs to the Lord and He rules over the nations.”

Fulfillment

Christ would give His life in payment for all our sins, offering freedom from the eternal punishment that we deserve.

† Mark 11:7: *“When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, He sat on it.”*

† Luke 23:33, 38: *“When they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him, along with the criminals — one on His right, the other on His left. There was written a notice above Him, which read: This Is the King of the Jews.”*

† 1 Peter 1:18-19: *“For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.”*

Prophecy

The power of death would be destroyed.

† Isaiah 25:7-8: *“On this mountain He will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; He will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces; He will remove the disgrace of His people from all the earth. The Lord has spoken.”*

These prophecies are only a part of many made about the Savior who was coming. Jesus Christ fulfilled them all. That is why the Bible says: *“For no matter how many promises God has made, they are ‘Yes’ in Christ”* (2 Corinthians 1:20).

God Is Faithful

No other religion in the world has prophecies about events that will happen centuries later. They are only found in the Bible. The fulfillment of those prophecies constitute the evidence of the faithfulness of God and the authority of the Holy Scriptures. But, God knows that people have a natural tendency to question and doubt.

He also knows that they need to have proof to be able to trust in Him. Therefore, He made the prophecies. He asks you to study them and accept His testimony.

† Isaiah 48:6-7: *“You have heard these things; look at them all. Will you not admit them? From now on I will tell you of new things, of hidden things unknown to you. They are created now, and not long ago; you have not heard of them before today. So you cannot say, ‘Yes, I knew of them.’”*

There is even more about the promises of God. Not only did He offer things in the past. He also fulfilled promises that can be applied today, as well as in the future. These promises are offered so you can make them your own. There are hundreds of them in the Bible. The following list is offered as an illustration.

† 1 Corinthians 15:20-22: *“But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a Man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.”*

God promises total forgiveness to all who humbly admit their guilt to Him.

† 1 John 1:9: *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”*

All who sincerely believe in Jesus Christ will have eternal life.

† John 3:16 *“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that who-ever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”*

Those who go to Christ will find rest as never experienced before.

† Matthew 11:28-30: *“Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for*

your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

It is through the power of God and the Holy Spirit that Christians exhibit virtuous qualities.

† Galatians 5:22-23: *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”*

God will respond to the prayers of believers according to His good and gracious will.

† 1 John 5:14: *“This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.”*

God uses His people to care for others.

† Proverbs 19:17: *“He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and He will reward him for what he has done.”*

Even in tribulation, God will free His children.

† Psalm 37:23-24: *“If the Lord delights in a man’s way, He makes his steps firm; though he stumble, he will not fall, for the Lord up-holds him with His hand.”*

God can turn tragedies into experiences that bring blessings.

† Romans 8:28: *“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.”*

Christ will come back in power to take to heaven those who believe in Him.

† John 14:2-3: *“In My Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with Me that you also may be where I am.”*

How fantastic are the promises made by God! Would you trust in them? Would you rely on them? You can. Since God has fulfilled His promises about the coming of the Savior, you may trust that He will also fulfill His present promises.

Every promise of God is like a precious gem. In the following section some of these gems will be examined so you can see how they shine.

Promise of Peace

A treaty is a formal promise between nations. But how long do international treaties last? Even if treaties had been signed with pens made of gold, they are human agreements that can be erased by greed and distrust among the countries.

This illustrates how unstable the word of humans really is. For those who have become cynics to the possibility of having true peace some day, God promises the following:

† Zechariah 9:9-10: *“Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your King comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and*

riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the war-horses from Jerusalem, and the battle bow will be broken. He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth.”

These words were told to the Jews when they were a weak nation, living in captivity. To that nation God promised a King who would bring universal and everlasting peace. But there was something amazing about this King. He would not enter Jerusalem, the capital, riding on a stallion, as a conqueror would. Instead, He would appear in humbleness, riding on a donkey.

Do you know when God fulfilled that promise? He fulfilled it about 500 years later when God sent His own Son, Jesus Christ, to the city of Jerusalem, on the day we know as Palm Sunday. We receive that peace trusting in Christ as the only One who eliminates our guilt and shame before God.

Has God Fulfilled His Promise?

There are some who say: “Look at war and the injustice in the world. God’s promises of peace have not been fulfilled. God has not kept His Word.” But think for a moment. When an invader is being repelled from a land by liberating forces, not all of the land is freed at the same time. Two young

people may be fighting for peace and justice in the world. One is frustrated because of the slow results of his attempt. The other is a believer in Christ. Even though sometimes he also feels very frustrated, he does not give up. God promised to send Jesus, the Prince of Peace. God fulfilled His Word when Jesus came as a Babe in Bethlehem. Through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, God made peace with all who believe in Him. He will fulfill His promise again when Christ returns in power to bring peace to the world.

The Promise of a Gift

If you are looking for a place in life where promises are fulfilled, do not look in the world of business. How many times have you bought a product, only to find that it did not perform as advertised on the television?

There is more doubt when an advertisement says that something is absolutely free. Experience has shown that in the world of advertising, nothing is ever free.

God Offers Everything

Even with our distrust, God promises in the Bible:

† Isaiah 55:1-2: *“Come, all of you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to Me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare.”*

This is the poetic way God uses to show that His blessings are given freely. The greatest blessing is the forgiveness of sins that frees us from eternal punishment.

Is it true that God freely forgives sins? Yes! That is the emphasis of the Bible. **Jesus Christ died on the cross in the place of disobedient sinners. He paid the price for all sins, even yours.** Christ's sacrifice was total.

How do you receive this gift? Simply by trusting that it is free. Faith has been compared with the extended hand of a hungry person who receives a piece of bread. The bread is a gift given by someone who cares about the hungry. The hungry man cannot earn the bread. All he can do is take the bread.

How to Receive a Gift

The same happens with God's gift of forgiveness through faith in Jesus. Many have heard about it, but they did not want to receive it.

The Surprising Promise

God made a surprising promise 700 years before the birth of Christ. Our heavenly Father promised:

† Isaiah 25:7-8: *“On this mountain He will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; He will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces; He will remove the disgrace of His people from all the earth. The Lord has spoken.”*

God promised to destroy death. Did He fulfill that promise? Of course! He fulfilled it the morning of that Sunday when the earth shook and the stone was removed to reveal that Jesus Christ was no longer in the grave. He had given His life as payment for your disobedience. He sacrificed Himself for you, because He loves you and wants you to live forever with Him in heaven. When He rose from the dead, He destroyed the power of death and hell.

Yes, the Risen Savior fulfilled the most important promise of God, the promise of life. Today Christ promises you in John 6:40: *“For My Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in Him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”*

Trust in God

This is the sure promise of God for you. You can count on it because God fulfilled His Word the first time. He said that He would destroy death, and He did it through His Son’s resurrection. He promises that He will do the same for you.

Peter was in the hospital, dying of cancer. He used to be an active man, but

now his life was slowly slipping away. He was afraid of death, because he did not have any idea of what would happen after death. He had no hope.

There was also a man named George. He was in the next bed. George was also dying of cancer, but he had hope. He trusted in a promise. Not any old promise, but he trusted Jesus' promise: "...*whoever lives and believes in Me will never die...*" (John 11:26). Peter asked George how he could confront death with such a strong conviction. George talked about the victory of Christ over death. He told Peter, "Christ died for your sins as well as mine, Peter. You can have the same hope that I have."

Peter continued to listen to George. Finally, he also believed and confessed: "The promise of life is not an optical illusion as I had thought. It is a real promise made into reality by our beloved Jesus who will faithfully keep His promise."

The Promise of Caring in the Future

Two friends were dining in a restaurant. They had a scenic view of the city where they lived. It was night, and the shining lights of the city looked like pearls against black velvet. That night they talked about the incredible changes that had taken place in the world and in their city during the last years. The conversation was nostalgic and pessimistic. Looking over the city, one of the friends said with sadness, "As long

as we live, there will never be a day, week or year that is the same.”

It is true! Our society is one of fast and violent change. It is true everywhere, in science, technology, politics and government, fashion, and even moral values. The times when every year was the same as the one before are gone.

There are many problems in the world. They are problems of corruption and injustice. Who caused them? God has not caused the problems. A long time ago, He promised a Savior. He fulfilled His promise by sending His Son, Jesus Christ. He promised to free you from the guilt and punishment for your sins. He did it when Jesus Christ gave His perfect life to pay for your imperfections. God promised eternal life. When He raised Christ from the dead, He proved He has the power to bring you back from the dead on the last day.

God has fulfilled His Word again and again. Therefore, you can trust totally that He will fulfill His promise to take care of you every day in the future.

Trusting like this, the blind can face the future with a clear vision of the love of God. Believers trapped in the middle of wars have been able to talk about the peace of God to those who were suffering. Those who have lost loved ones who were believers are anxious to be reunited with them in heaven.

Do you trust in the future? You can only if you have faith in God, who promises

to be with you in the future. Tomorrow may be completely different from today. **When tomorrow comes, you can be sure that there will be Someone on your side who never changes — Jesus Christ.** *“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever”* (Hebrews 13:8).

Conclusion

The purpose of this booklet is to help you trust in the sure Word of God. He loves you very much and has promised that you can expect forgiveness, peace, and eternal life. All these gifts make life worth living. Now you can tell others about the Lord who fulfills His promises through Jesus.