

STANDING ON THE PROMISES

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INTRODUCTION

We have 5 grandsons. One is particularly persistent...it goes like this. He asks 'can you take me fishing?' or 'can I stay at your place tomorrow?'. If you say any version of 'yes' such as 'maybe', or 'I'll think about it' – if you give him any glimmer of hope – his faith rises. He is on the phone next morning claiming the promise as his. He even tells his mum 'I am staying at grandma's tonight – you need to phone her – he gets others believing. He knows he has a right to claim a promise from his grandma or grandpa, because he trusts us and we are his grandparents. He can ask and extract a promise from us, when he can't from others! I like that sort of tenacity.

On the last day of 2009, I woke up with an old hymn on my mind – clearly – one which I had not read or sung for years. My mind paged over the words...this is what they were....

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

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

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

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

*Standing on the promises of Christ the Lord,
Bound to Him eternally by love's strong cord,
Overcoming daily with the Spirit's sword,
Standing on the promises of God.*

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

(R Kelso Carter circa 1886)

I have been holding onto some promises of God for years now, for some of my loved ones. I felt, at the dawn of a new year, that the Lord was encouraging me to keep standing on those promises – that they cannot fail. But I think that this encouragement from the Lord was not just for me, but for all of us.... Let's turn to a wonderful scripture about the promises of God...

2 Cor 1:20- *For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.*

A little background...Paul had intended to visit the Christians in Corinth, but felt he needed to change this plan, because he would have had to rebuke them, so decided to write to them instead. They misunderstood this, and thought they could not trust his word...so he explained to them, at the same time using what seemed a negative incident to teach a powerful message about the totally sure promises of God.

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1. THE PROMISES OF GOD

Who is promising? It's God. He decided to make the promises. It was His will to promise – we didn't twist a promise out of Him. With my grandchildren, sometimes they sort of manipulate a promise out of me – e.g. by telling mum or dad 'I am staying at grandma's tonight', then phoning me and saying mum said it was ok for them to stay, and 'please, please can I stay'. So, sometimes, even though things have to be reshuffled, we do it...or we say...maybe later in the week...so they more or less extract a promise....and two days later the phone calls come...'can I stay tonight....it's later in the week'. But God's promises – He has made them out of His favour to us, His grace, by His volition, His will, without our co-ercion....So these are extremely great and precious promises...God Himself deigned and decided and willed to make His promises...

2 Peter 1:3-4 *His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, 4 by **which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises**, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. ESV*

His own glory and excellence has granted us these great, precious promises.

How can I not believe them? Saying I can't believe a certain promise when I am God's child, is serious. God cannot lie. This is an awesome truth. I would be devastated if my grandchild, or my child for that matter said to me 'I can't believe what you say – I can't trust you'. So being a child of the Father, Father God, the Creator, sustainer, the Almighty – it is very, very serious stuff if I say I can't trust Him. It calls into question my very relationship with the Father. Perhaps, for some of us today, we need to lay aside some things, leave them behind us, and come like a child, trusting the Father.

God's promises – when I promise something, I am tied to it. My nature, my character is vested in the promise. If I don't fulfil my promise, children will be quick to pick it – 'you lied' they would say if they were feeling very angry, or disappointed

about it as they would no doubt! Or they would call me to account....'but you said'...and claim the fulfilment, based on an underlying 'but you must keep your promise, or how can we ever believe you'. We insult God's character by doubting His promise. His truth, His unchanging-ness, His power, His mercy, His love – all are questioned if we question His promises. Note:

he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. 2 Peter 1:4.

As we take God's promises and believe them – we become partakers of the divine nature....something of His nature is imparted to us – amazing! His character is tied to His promises, and as we claim, stand on, inherit the promise, we become partakers of His divine nature...we become like Him.

We must reverence, respect His promises – we must not take them lightly. The promises of God! The worth, the majesty, the dignity of His promises is overwhelming.

2. ALL THE PROMISES...

A wide range of promises – from the garden of Eden to Revelation there are promises of salvation, promises of eternity, promises of guidance....all sorts of promises, all along the journey. We need to **find the promises for ourselves, for our walk, and step on, stand on the promises**. There are conditional promises and unconditional promises. Earthly promises – provision, bread, blessing. Heavenly promises. Guidance, peace, joy, safety. Promises for our children. Promises for the generations. Search and find the promises – stand on them – all the promises. What promises are you standing on?

3. IN JESUS....YES – sure

In Jesus. All the promises of God find their 'yes' in Jesus. He is so very, very great. How great is our God. He is big enough for all the promises of God....in Him.

But how does this work?

God made a **promise in the garden** – I will bruise the serpent's head...the promise of the Seed of the woman, the Redeemer. Then years later he made an unsolicited **promise to Abraham**, whom He chose by His own grace...'your seed will inherit the nations, and in your seed all the peoples of the earth will be blessed'- the promise of a family, a multitude from all nations, children made right with God by faith, and the promise of the Redeemer through Abraham's descendants. God brought **the Law**, under Moses, to point toward Jesus, 'how to live, how to worship' – with priests, sacrifices to atone for sin, and lots of rules to live. There were **promises of many blessings** to those who keep the law (*you will be my children*). But no one could keep it totally. And then in the fullness of time, **Jesus came**. He kept the law perfectly, the God-man, as no one on earth ever had. He fulfilled the law. And He became the sacrifice, to fulfil the penalty of the law. So – **He owns all the promises!** And we are **in Jesus**...those promises are yes, accomplished, done...for us...in Jesus....we also inherit the promise and the promises...praise God!

Gal 3:16-27 The Message

16 Now, the promises were made to Abraham and to his descendant. You will observe that Scripture, in the careful language of a legal document, does not say "to descendants," referring to everybody in general, but "to your descendant" (the noun, note, is singular), referring to Christ. 17 This is the way I interpret this: A will, earlier ratified by God, is not annulled by an addendum attached 430 years later, thereby negating the promise of the will. 18 No, this addendum, with its instructions and regulations, has nothing to do with the promised inheritance in the will.

What is the point, then, of the law, the attached addendum? It was a thoughtful addition to the original covenant promises made to Abraham. 19 The purpose of the law was to keep a sinful people in the way of salvation until Christ (the descendant) came, inheriting the promises and distributing them to us. Obviously this law was not a firsthand encounter with God. It was arranged by angelic messengers through a middleman, Moses. 20 But if there is a middleman as there was at Sinai, then the people are not dealing directly with God, are they? But the original promise is the direct blessing of God, received by faith.

21-22 If such is the case, is the law, then, an anti-promise, a negation of God's will for us? Not at all. Its purpose was to make obvious to everyone that we are, in ourselves, out of right relationship with God, and therefore to show us the futility of devising some religious system for getting by our own efforts what we can only get by waiting in faith for God to complete his promise. For if any kind of rule-keeping had power to create life in us, we would certainly have gotten it by this time.

23 Until the time when we were mature enough to respond freely in faith to the living God, we were carefully surrounded and protected by the Mosaic law. 24 The law was like those Greek tutors, with which you are familiar, who escort children to school and protect them from danger or distraction, making sure the children will really get to the place they set out for.

25 But now you have arrived at your destination: 26 By faith in Christ you are in direct relationship with God. 27 Your baptism in Christ was not just washing you up for a fresh start. It also involved dressing you in an adult faith wardrobe — Christ's life, the fulfillment of God's original promise.

Jesus has done it. In Jesus the promises are ours. Fulfilled.

4. HIS GLORY...THROUGH US

God's promises bring Him glory – compare with other pretended gods... what does Mohammed promise? What does Buddha promise? Nothing in comparison to God. Nothing compares to the promise that we will be His sons and daughters, that we will reign with Him, that He will be our Father. None can compare to the promises of our great God.

When God fulfils His promises, it reflects honour on Him.

....**2 Cor 1:20**- *For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God **through us**.*

Don't we spoil it? Does our humanity and sinfulness taint the precious promises of God? On the contrary – if God is to show His great mercy, He must have a condemned person to be merciful to. He loves to help the weak...so when I come to Him acknowledging my need, and He comes to my help, it is to His glory. God's promises cannot glorify God without you! You need to find, claim and stand on the promise. You need to remind God of it. Lord, You said.....*all my children will be taught by You, and great will be the peace of my children.*

2 Peter 3:8-9 *But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.*

The timing is God's!

Abraham is our model for trusting the promise...

*(Heb 6:12 – don't become sluggish but **imitate those** who through faith and patience inherit the promises)*

– Abraham is our great model for inheriting the promise...although he did not even see it all in his lifetime!

Rom 4:13-18 – *That famous promise God gave Abraham — that he and his children would possess the earth — was not given because of something Abraham did or would do. It was based on God's decision to put everything together for him, which Abraham then entered when he believed. 14 If those who get what God gives them only get it by doing everything they are told to do and filling out all the right forms properly signed, that eliminates personal trust completely and turns the promise into an ironclad contract! That's not a holy promise; that's a business deal. 15 A contract drawn up by a hard-nosed lawyer and with plenty of fine print only makes sure that you will never be able to collect. But if there is no contract in the first place, simply a promise — and God's promise at that — you can't break it.*

*16 This is why the **fulfillment of God's promise depends entirely on trusting God and his way, and then simply embracing him and what he does.** God's promise arrives as pure gift. That's the only way everyone can be sure to get in on it, those who keep the religious traditions and those who have never heard of them. For Abraham is father of us all. He is not our racial father — that's reading the story backwards. He is our faith father.*

17 We call Abraham "father" not because he got God's attention by living like a saint, but because God made something out of Abraham when he was a nobody. Isn't that what we've always read in Scripture, God saying to Abraham, "I set you up as father of many peoples"? Abraham was first named

"father" and then became a father because he dared to trust God to do what only God could do: raise the dead to life, with a word make something out of nothing. 18 When everything was hopeless, Abraham believed anyway, deciding to live not on the basis of what he saw he couldn't do but on what God said he would do. THE MESSAGE.

Abraham stood on God's promise to him. He lived like it was a fact, like it was 'done'. When everything was hopeless, he believed anyway. Do you have any impossible, hopeless situations today? Find the promise, stand on it, and don't give up, like Abraham.

*2 Cor 1:20- For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God **through us.***

George Mueller, a British Christian and social reformer wrote in his diary:
In November 1844, I began to pray for the conversion of five individuals. I prayed every day without a single intermission, whether sick or in health, on the land, on the sea, and whatever the pressure of my engagements might be. Eighteen months elapsed before the first of the five was converted. I thanked God and prayed on for the others. Five years elapsed, and then the second was converted. I thanked God for the second, and prayed on for the other three. Day by day, I continued to pray for them, and six years passed before the third was converted. I thanked God for the three, and went on praying for the other two. These two remained unconverted.

Thirty-six years later he wrote that the other two, sons of one of Mueller's friends, were still not converted. He wrote, *"But I hope in God, I pray on, and look for the answer. They are not converted yet, but they will be."* In 1897, fifty-two years after he began to pray daily, without interruption, for these two men, they were finally converted— but after he died! Mueller understood what Luke meant when he introduced a parable Jesus told about prayer, saying,

"Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up" (Luke 18:1).

I felt that there were some who have come into this year feeling 'when Lord, when will you fulfil that promise – I have been claiming it for years'but He is wanting us to keep standing on His promises.

2 Cor 1:20 - For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.

Don't give up – keep standing on the promises!