

The Lord Jesus said ... “My Sheep

The Gospel is God’s Promise in Christ

The apostles preached the death of God’s Son as the full payment for our sins. They also pointed to Christ’s resurrection as obtaining justification and acceptance for the believer (Rom. 4:24,25). Because payment for sin as well as the basis for being accepted with God is *finished* in the the work of Jesus Christ, the apostles did not preach a work to perform but rather a promise to believe.

For the PROMISE is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call (Acts 2:39).

That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his PROMISE in Christ by the gospel (Eph. 3:6).

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the PROMISE of life which is in Christ Jesus (2Tim. 1:1).

In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, PROMISED before the world began (Titus 1:2).

... They which are called might receive the PROMISE of eternal inheritance (Heb. 9:15).

And this is the PROMISE that he hath PROMISED us, even eternal life (1John 2:25).

When one is asked to believe in Jesus, what is he or she believing? Is it that Jesus is good and caring or is it something deeper? Obviously, we must believe both who He is and what He did. He is the Son of God. And He died for *our* sins and rose again as Lord. But we must also believe what He promised. To believe what one promises is to trust in that person’s ability, character, and word to fulfill their promise.

To trust someone in their promise is to look away from self and to depend on the word of the promisor to make it happen. This is where the gospel takes us.

hear my voice, and

The Bible never asks one to believe “about” the Lord Jesus Christ, but rather to believe “in” Him or “on” Him (Acts 16:31, Gal. 2:16). To believe *in* one is to trust them. For example, all believe *about* the existence of their national leader. But all don’t vote for him because all don’t necessarily believe *in* him i.e., trust that he will keep his promises.

The Promises of the Gospel

God’s promise in His gospel can be summarized in two areas. One deals with the negative and the other with the positive.

As John 3:16 promises: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him:

1. should **not** perish, - but -
2. **have** everlasting life.”

The negative side of the promise. God promises to the believer in His Son that he will “not perish.” This covers being saved from the wrath of God (Rom. 5:9, 1Thess. 5:9). The believer will never experience the judgment of God for his sin. Hell and the lake of fire will never be his destiny.

But if this is all the gospel would do, though that would be something, it would not bring us beyond the condition of a cat. Cats don’t go to hell.

The positive side of the promise. God also promises the believer that he will have everlasting life. This includes the believer’s acceptance with God called justification or imputed righteousness (Rom. 4:24,24). It also includes heaven as well as the coming kingdom on earth (John 14:1-3, Heb. 12:26-28). It also includes the means of getting there: rapture. Whether dead or alive the believer’s body will instantaneously be glorified to be with His Savior and God forever (1Thess. 4, 1Cor. 15).

All this is made possible by the *promised gift* of the indwelling Holy Spirit that the believer receives immediately (Eph. 1:13). It is the Spirit that gives the power to know, live for, and be with God (Rom. 8).

Thus, we have a twofold promise. God promises to:

- a. save **from** something: the judgment of our sin
- b. bring **into** something: eternal life with Him

they follow me” John 10:27

OT PICTURE

In the book of Exodus, we see God making a twofold gospel (good news) promise to His ancient people Israel. He said:

1. “I will bring you **out** from under the burdens of the Egyptians . . . and . . .
2. “I will bring you **in** unto the land.”

God’s gospel was that *He* would save them from the negative and bring them into the positive.

Many professed to believe God (Ex. 4:31). They believed He existed and that He spoke to Moses about their salvation from Egypt. But these same people didn’t trust God *in His promise* to them.

They were believers who didn’t believe.

God did bring them out of Egypt via the blood of the Passover lamb. Yet when it came time to enter the promised land many were convinced that the enemy was too strong and they would be destroyed. They really only believed half the promise. They *saw* that God had brought them out but now they did not trust God that He could or would bring them in as He promised. This crisis revealed that they had no faith in God.

They had been “baptized” in the sea unto Moses. They had partaken of the miracles God did in the wilderness. They listened to the law of God. Yet they did not enter into the *promised* land – because of unbelief (Heb. 3:17 - 4:3).

God pronounced their judgment that they would not ever enter into the promised land. Without faith in God and His Word, one does not get to enjoy the fulfillment of His promises.

Then they further revealed their unbelieving hearts. They said they were sorry and wanted to go in. Moses said, no, for the Lord was now not with them. Instead of submitting to God’s directive they presumed in their own strength to enter into the land. *They tried to get in against God’s Word.* The enemy came out and destroyed them and they perished (Num. 14:40-45).

“And if ye be Christ’s,

History has repeated itself.

Like the ancient children of Israel, there are those today who will profess to believe in God and even follow His mediator, Jesus the Christ. They might have been baptized, go to church and even do humanitarian works. Perhaps they even claim to have experienced miracles. They might even say that because of the love of God in Jesus, He would never put them in hell.

Yet if you ask them if they are going to heaven, they answer, “I hope so. I’m doing the best I can.” They don’t trust the promise of God in Christ Jesus. They believe half but not all. They wouldn’t dare claim to be assured of everlasting life even though that is the promise. Thus, they are really unbelievers.

And even further they are like Israel of old. When you tell them that they can’t earn heaven by their works because it is a grace-promise from God simply to be believed (Eph. 2:8,9), they not only don’t believe God but also boldly proclaim that their good works will “most likely” get them in. They continue on in their self confidence – only to perish in their unbelief: sin.

To not trust God in His promise is to be an unbeliever. And only by faith does one obtain the promises.

“That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises ... But without faith, it is impossible to please Him” (Heb. 6:12, 11:6). God loves to be taken at His Word. Don’t you?

<i>Faith believes the word of God</i>	Unbelief questions the certainty of the same
<i>Faith sees the unseen promise of God</i>	Unbelief says, “How can these things be?”
<i>Faith puts a man under grace—in Christ</i>	Unbelief keeps a man under law—in wrath
<i>Faith makes great burdens light</i>	Unbelief makes light ones intolerably heavy
<i>Faith is dependence upon God</i>	Unbelief is dependence upon self
<i>Faith will help the soul wait if God delays</i>	Unbelief snuffs and throws it all away if God tarries

then are ye Abraham's seed,

How the promises are given

There are two ways a promise can be given. One, as a reward for good performance. Two, as a gift.

1. **The reward way.** A parent may *promise* a child a new bike "if" the child does all his chores up to standard and gets straight A's in school. The receiving of the bike is now dependent upon the child's performance. Therefore, it is not guaranteed. The promise is based on performance.

The Scriptures call this principle of getting something, the law of "works" or simply "law" (Rom. 3:27, Gal. 3:18).

2. **The gift way.** A parent may also *promise* a child a bike for his birthday. If the parent is a promise keeper, the child is absolutely guaranteed the bike for it is a gift not dependant on his performance. He just has to take it. The promise is based on the love and ability of the giver.

The Scriptures call this second principle of getting something, "the law of faith" or simply "promise" (Rom. 3:27, Gal. 3:18).

The gospel of God promises eternal life as a *gift*. "For the wages of sin is death; but the *gift* of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23).

To admit one's works cannot obtain God's salvation is to take the grounds of humility. It is to confess that one is unable to meet God's holy standard. It is to acknowledge that one is hopelessly lost apart from God's grace through His Son.

By offering salvation only as a gift-promise, God is saying that the price for sin has been paid in full by Christ. (A gift must be paid for by someone). And God is fully satisfied with Christ's sacrifice for sin as His raising of Christ declared. If not, God would ask for something more to be done. "It is finished" is now proven by God's offer in grace. If the Father is satisfied with the Son, are you? Is God a promise keeper?

and heirs according to -

OT PICTURE

God *gave* Abraham the inheritance by *promise* (Gal. 3:18). Abraham was justified (saved – declared righteous). So how did Abraham get it? Romans 4 refers us to Genesis 15.

Though Abraham was old and Sarah his wife was barren, God promised Abraham an offspring from his own body. It was a clear Mideastern starlit night when God asked Abraham to step outside and count the stars if he could. Concerning the number of the stars, God then made a five word promise to him: **"So shall thy seed be."**

The promise held out no conditions or work to be performed. It was unconditionally offered. Abraham could either disbelieve God in His Word or trust God in His Word of promise. Abraham did the latter.

Without moving a muscle, saying a word, or performing a ritual, Abraham "believed *in* the Lord." The second he did that, God counted him as righteous (justified). Instantly, Abraham became right that night before God – by faith alone – records Holy Scripture.

Abraham is the model that all must follow. When we believe the promise of God in Jesus the Lord we are declared righteous. It is a gift – exactly like Abraham's. "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the *promise* might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all" (Rom. 4:16).

Later, Abraham, under the coaxing of his barren wife, went into his slave girl and conceived a child. This child, Ishmael, was produced by the works of the natural flesh: *human effort*. But later God by His power caused Abraham and Sarah to have their own child, Isaac, produced by God's power fulfilling His promise: *grace*. (Gal. 4:23).

God rejected Ishmael as the heir, but chose Isaac. God was making a gospel statement: *only those who come by promise get the inheritance, never what is of the flesh (human effort)*. (Gal. 4: 21-31).

the promise." Gal. 3:29

Some look at God's grace-promise in the sense of a gratuity. One might leave a waitress a gratuity at the end of a meal. This is an expression of appreciation for service rendered. Though the waitress might thank you for your graciousness, it wasn't really grace because the waitress expected it and indeed worked for it. God's saving grace is to give the sinner *deserving* of judgment an unconditional gift without any works (Rom. 4:4-6). Grace is not God showing extra kindness in appreciation for our good service (even if we claim to have done that service only by His grace-strength). God's gift is not gratuitous but undeserved mercy.

Believers believe God keeps His promises. The great difference between Satan's counterfeit gospels and God's true gospel is that God says trusting Him is enough to obtain the promise. Religious counterfeits say receiving the promise requires some human performance to get it. Whom do you believe?

Receiving the promise is not the sinner asking Christ to do something *now* by inviting Him into his heart. But the invitation is from God for a sinner to look away from self and trust God concerning His Son and what He already *did* for his sin – on the cross.

Man's way gives some glory to man who "does his part." The gospel gives the glory to God alone (Gal. 6:14). God's gospel as defined in Romans:

- Condemnation** - guilty because of our sin performance
- Salvation** - the Person of Jesus by incarnation (birth)
- Redemption** - sin paid for by Lord's cross-performance
- Propitiation** - God's satisfaction with Christ's sacrifice
- Justification** - right by faith because of His resurrection
- Sanctification** - the changed life by His Spirit

Chronicle #5 of 'The Gospel of God' series looks at the make-up of God's gospel

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The Chronicles of the
**Gospel
of God**

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The Promise

Chronicle number one of God's gospel dealt with the great problem man has before God: he is guilty of sin and condemned. Chronicle number two dealt with God's Savior: not a philosophy or a religious program but a unique Person, the son of God and the son of man, Jesus the Lord. Chronicle number three looked at the performance necessary to satisfy God for our sins against Him. It was not our performance of today but Christ's performance of yesterday. And the performance was not the manger, mount of beatitudes nor miracles but the cross: redemption by blood.

This fourth chronicle looks at the *promise* of the gospel. Is God's gospel a set of works to perform or a promise to trust—or a bit of both? What does the gospel hold out to the repentant sinner who places heart faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? Is it penance or promise? There are three key areas to consider on this subject:

- The gospel is God's promise in Christ
- The promises of the gospel
- How the promises are given