

BIBLE BAPTIST
CHURCH
SUNDAY
SCHOOL SERIES

HE IS ALWAYS TRUE. SO TRUST...

[God's 5 promises when life is hard]



Based on the book "Always True" written by James MacDonald | adapted by Pastor Travis Gilbert

Preface

This study has been tailored from the James MacDonald book *Always True: God's 5 Promises when life is hard*. That fact is not a blanket endorsement of MacDonald, of all his theological positions, or even every assertion he makes in the book. The goal is simply to share good, biblical material that is worth our time, and to give credit where credit is due.

2 Peter 1:4a, “*Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises...*” Promises are only as good as the one who makes them. That is either good news or bad news, depending on who is making the promises on which you are dependent. Here is some good news, some really good news. God has made many promises to us in His Word. Nothing could be more certain and more comforting than the promises God has made to His people. They are always true, because God is truth. There are always good, because God is good. Therefore, we can be certainly comforted in them because they are from God. We can, and should, TRUST GOD’S TIMELESS TRUTH, no matter what.

Standing on the Promises!

Travis Gilbert
Mount Vernon, KY
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Always True *God's Promises When Life is Hard*

The Theology of God's Promises

This series is based on the book Always True: God's Promises When Life Is Hard by James MacDonald, published by Moody Publishers.

2 Peter 1:3-4:

"According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that *pertain* unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us **exceeding great and precious promises**: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."

God did not have to promise us anything, but He has, and we can count on His promises. God never forgets. He will never fail to keep His promises.

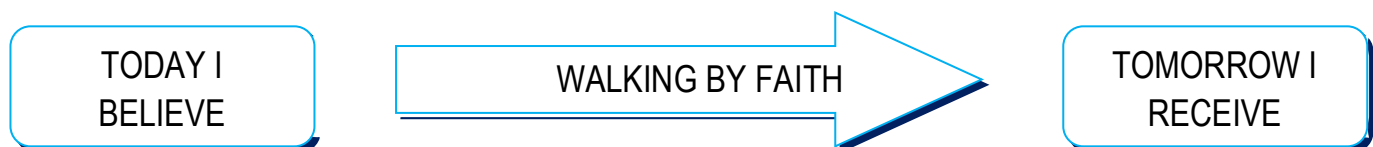
God is a Promiser by Nature

What follows is only a small sampling. God promised...

- **Genesis 3** – that an offspring of Eve would crush the serpent's head.
- **Genesis 9** – Noah to never again destroy the world by flood, and to repopulate the world through him.
- **Genesis 12** – Abraham to begin a great nation, a people that will be His people, through him.
- **Exodus 6** – Moses that he would be used to deliver God's people and establish them in the Promised Land.
- **Joshua 1** – Joshua that He would never fail or leave him and that victory was assured.
- **2 Samuel 7** – David that He would establish an everlasting throne through him.

Definition of a Promise: a declaration of what someone will do.

Biblical Definition of a Promise: an assurance God gives His people so that we can walk by faith while we wait for Him to work.



The distance between today and tomorrow is called **walking by faith**. All that stands between us and what God has promised is time. God's promises are assurances that He gives to His people so they can walk by faith while they

wait for God to work. We walk by faith, not just to receive what He abundantly gives, but to increasingly know, love, and trust the Giver.

God's promises are *great*.

1. **They come from a great God.** A promise's veracity is tied to the one who has made the commitment, and to their ability to deliver.
 - a. **Psalm 145:3** – We cannot fully fathom God's greatness, but through His promises we are able to explore and experience how great He really is.
 - b. **Jeremiah 32:27** – There is nothing that God cannot handle. Hold on to God by clinging to His promises.
2. **God's Promises cover great issues.** They respond to our deepest doubts, and are the antidote to our debilitating despair.
 - a. **Psalm 27:13-14**, "*I had fainted*, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living."

God's promises are *exceedingly great*.

1. **Greater than human wisdom** – Proverbs 18:2
2. **Greater than white-knuckled obedience** – God's promises offer strength and peace, enabling us to not just get through our trials but to get on top of them.
3. **Greater than wallowing in self-pity** – a day in the pity pit is understandable, although not mandatory, but instead of wallowing in that slop, rise to the surface by taking hold of God's promises.

God's exceedingly great promises are believers' best possession. They will lead us through the darkest night, the longest day, and the deepest valley. Trust what God has done, is doing, and what He is going to do.

God's Promises are exceedingly great and *precious*.

"Precious" denotes weight and conveys value. In the gospel accounts, Peter's behavior was often impulsive. He was fast, foolish, and fluctuating; more heat than light. When he writes 1 and 2 Peter, much time has elapsed, and maturity has developed. By then, he knew what was precious: **1 Peter 1:7, 19; 2:4, 6; 2 Peter 1:4**. "Precious" is a treasure realized by those who are not in a hurry. Time and attentiveness are necessary to realize what is truly precious, because precious require proving. Something is not precious until it has been proven to be, but in a culture where *quick*, *cool*, and *easy* are high commodities precious is in short supply.

When God's promises establish, strengthen, and sustain you, they become precious. Taste and see that the Lord is good (**Psalm 34:8**). Do not just know that in your head. Experience it in your life. God's promises do for us what nothing else can do.

God's promises are experienced in Jesus Christ

2 Corinthians 1:20, "For all the promises of God in him [the Lord Jesus Christ] are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us." Jesus is the promise of God. He is our strength, our hope, our encouragement (**Romans 5:8-10**). Jesus died for our sins, and it is Christ alone that has saved, is saving, and will ultimately save us (**2 Corinthians 1:9-10**). Every promise of God the Father are made possible and fulfilled in Jesus Christ, who is God the Son (**Luke 24:44**). The only comment worth adding to that is **AMEN!**



Always True *God's Promises When Life is Hard*

Promise #1 – God is Always with Me (I will not fear)

It is impossible to fully rejoice over a cure for some disease unless we are afflicted with that disease. Likewise, before we can fully delight in God's promises we must suffer the desperateness of our need. We will only cling to the great and precious promises of God once we realize how much we need them.

The Problem: Fear

One of our greatest problems is fear. We disguise fear with a variety of costumes, but it is never far from us. People are afraid of a lot of stuff.

- *Agoraphobia* – fear of open or public spaces
- *Claustrophobia* – fear of confined spaces
- *Mysophobia* – fear of being contaminated
- *Xenophobia* – fear of strangers
- *Cynophobia* – fear of dogs
- *Pteromerhanophobia* – fear of flying (sometimes called *aviophobia*)
- *Necrophobia* – fear of death/dead things
- *Carcinophobia* – fear of cancer
- *Lilapsophobia* – fear of tornadoes
- *Numerophobia* – fear of numbers (which explains my poor math scores)

Like the weather forecast, fear is adept at making people frenzied, and lists like the above are funny, until we get to one that causes our stomachs to churn. Fear is a universal problem that wears many masks, but the universal aspect of it is that we all **fear the future**. The past creates problems like regret and carries consequences, but we do not fear the past. Likewise, the present may be upsetting, but we do not fear it because we know it. Even if you are presently feeling fear, you are afraid **now** of what will happen **next**. We fear the future because we fear loss and pain. We fear losing people, our possessions, our position, we fear emotional and personal pain.

Scripture mentions fear nearly 1000 times. Here is a small selection of people who faced fear and were strengthened by God's word to them in the midst of it.

- 📖 **Abraham was fearful about his lack of an heir**, but we read in **Genesis 15:1**, "Fear not, Abram: I *am* thy shield, *and* thy exceeding great reward."
- 📖 **Hagar was afraid she would have to watch Ishmael die**, but we read in **Genesis 21:17**, "What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he *is*," *Genesis 21:17*.
- 📖 **The Israelites feared the pursuing Egyptians**, but we read in **Exodus 14:13a**, "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day:"

- 📖 **David regularly feared for his life**, but he often penned words like **Psalms 23:4**, “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou *art* with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.”
- 📖 **Solomon doubted his ability to lead Israel as his father had**, but David told him, “Be strong and of good courage, and do *it*: fear not, nor be dismayed: for the LORD God, *even* my God, *will be* with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the LORD,” **1 Chronicles 28:20**.
- 📖 **Jeremiah was afraid to tell people things they would not want to hear**, but the Lord, “Be not afraid of their faces: for I *am* with thee to deliver thee,” **Jeremiah 1:8**.

These biblical characters which we rightly regard as heroes shared the *same fears* that are so familiar to us. Naturally, fear is a universal, instinctive problem that afflicts all mankind. No one plans to be afraid, and no one learned to be fearful.

Therefore, God says to us, “Fear not. I Am always with you.”

The Promise: God is Always with Me (I will not fear)

Deuteronomy 31:8, “And I will surely hide my face in that day for all the evils which they shall have wrought, in that they are turned unto other gods.”

Fear happens. So the problem is not that fear visits. The problem is when fear stays. (Not talking about healthy fear, such as respecting the fact that fire will burn you.) God’s promises are the answer for those extended stay periods.

God does not want us to be fearful.

We read in **2 Timothy 1:7** that “God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind [self-control].” Being fearful of people, circumstances, and the times is not from God. Instead of fear, trust God’s promise, and be faithful, “Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partakers of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God” **2 Timothy 1:8**.

God is *always* with me!

Fear enslaves, but faith in the promise that God is always with me is the key to freedom from fear (**Romans 8:15**). **Psalms 139:7-10** and **Jeremiah 23:24** remind us of the omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresence of God. Nothing is too big for our God, and wherever we are, whatever we are enduring, God is there.

Is God with everyone? No.

- ✗ *Not with the proud* – **Psalms 138:6** – Pride is God repellent.
- ✗ *Not with the worldly* – **James 4:4** – Love for the world and love for God do not and cannot coexist.
- ✗ *Not with the rebellious* – **Isaiah 1:5, 15** – Sooner or later, God always crushes rebellion.
- ✗ *Not with those who harbor sin* – **Psalms 66:18** – When we humbly confess and forsake our sin we receive mercy, but to entertain and tolerate sin in our hearts and actions is to render our prayers lives worthless. In so doing we cut ourselves off from God. That is a fearful thing

God is for us!

The proof of this is the Lord Jesus Christ (**Romans 8:31-34**). Since God is for us, who can stand against us, and why care who stands against us? The Lord Jesus Christ once died for your sins and continually defends you. He is praying for you. He knows your exact situation. He knows exactly what to ask of the Father, and we may be confident that the Father hears and answers the Son's prayers.

The Lord Jesus died for us, defends us, prays for us, and helps us (**Hebrews 13:5-6**). Believer, your security is from God, not your financial portfolio, a successful career, stable family life, healthy body, or your own abilities. All of those may vanish in a moment. Almighty God will never leave or forsake you. By faith, lean in to that promise with all your weight, and it will always hold you up.

In **Joshua 1:9** we read, "Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God *is* with thee whithersoever thou goest." Think about the context of this unconditional promise. Moses is dead, and Joshua is responsible for leading Israel into the Promised Land. The first generation of the emancipated Hebrews has died off in the wilderness. The people are without their great leader (who is thought of as even greater now that he is gone). They are about to enter the Promised Land where they will face overwhelming odds in the form of overflowing rivers, walled cities, giants, and Canaanite confederations. But they are reminded: God is with us! He will always be there. (He will never fail you.) He will always be there on your behalf. (He will never forsake you.)

The harder reality gets, the greater the opportunity to realize and enjoy the fact that God is with us. He never withdraws from us during difficult days. Just the opposite is true, if we are humble when we have been humbled. **Psalms 34:18**, "The LORD *is* nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit."



God's assurances for us are His promises to us so that we may walk by faith while we wait for Him to work.

GOD IS ALWAYS WITH ME

(I will not fear)

“And the LORD, he *it is* that doth go before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed.”

- Deuteronomy 31:8



Always True *God's Promises When Life is Hard*

Promise #2 – God is Always in Control (I will not doubt)

I have never regretted trusting God, but when I have doubted the Lord and His word bad choices were made. Regrets always spring forth from bad choices. God has never let me – or anyone – down. His sovereignty is always at work for the good of His people and the glory of His name. We do not need to worry. We just need to trust God. He will be faithful to us, because He is faithful to Himself and His promises.

Proverbs 3:5-6: “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”

The Problem: Doubt

Doubt should drive us towards rather than away from God's promises, but too often that is not the case. What cancer is to the body, doubt is to the soul. *Doubt* is devastating and destructive, because it *expresses a lack of confidence that God will keep His promises*. *Faith*, on the other hand, *is an active confidence in the fact that God's promises are always true*.

Doubt is fertile soil for fear.

In **Luke 24:36-39** the resurrected Jesus appeared to the disciples. This should have caused their spirits to soar. Eventually it did, but not at first. Initially they doubted because they were afraid. **Mark 16:14** suggests that the condition of their hearts led to the expression of their fears. That is always the case. (We either express fear or faith based on our heart's – spiritual – condition.)

In **James 1:5-6** we are told: “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all *men* liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering [*i.e. pray without doubt*]. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.” Doubt causes instability, a constant back and forth, back and forth disruption. Doubt will cause us to get seasick, or cause us to sink.

Doubt is the direct result of taking our eyes off the Lord.

In **Matthew 14:28-31** Peter got out of the boat and, keeping his eyes fastened on the Lord Jesus, he walked on storm tossed, wind whipped water. But Peter got distracted. The howling wind in his face, the churning waters under feet, he looked away from his Lord, and focused on his circumstances. Then he began to doubt. That is when he started to sink.

That situation is not unique to Peter. We often go under water today, not because Christ Jesus is unable to hold up our weight, but because we focus on the waves – the pitch and roll of our financial situation – or listen only to the howling winds – the incessant voices of doom and gloom all around us. When we take our cues from what the faithless say and do, or when we are racked with doubt instead of faith, then we are sunk.

Instead of being seasick or sunk, let's stand firm on the solid promises of God. **Isaiah 26:3-4** says, "Thou wilt keep *him* in perfect peace, *whose mind is stayed on thee*: because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength."

The Promise: God is Always in Control (I will not doubt)

The way of the Christian – and a local church – is a life of faith. In order to stand on the promises we have to believe, *we must trust* that God's promises will hold and not buckle. All other ground is sinking sand, but the scriptures – God's promises – are solid rock. Living by faith in God's promises secures strength and stability during shaky times.

We must choose to trust God, and that trust must be unlimited. Consider again our focus passage. **Proverbs 3:5-6**:

- **"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart..."** – Deliberately turn from doubt to God and His promises. Make a discernible choice to walk by faith instead of being trampled by doubt.
- **"And lean not unto thine own understanding..."** – We cannot trust God with all our heart and depend on our own abilities at the same time. Our confidence is either in God or in ourselves. If we catch ourselves saying stuff like: *"I know how to fix this"* or *"I don't need any help"* then we have a limited rather than unlimited trust in the Lord. We are not claiming the victory inherent to this promise if we doubt God's Word and lean only on what we can see or figure out for ourselves.¹
- **"In all thy ways acknowledge him..."** – In every choice, in every decision, in every detail of life, recognize God and factor in His participation. Seek to please God. In everything put Him first. That honors Him. Here is a real practical – and often contentious – example of doing this. It is called *giving a tithe and offering*. When the money is flowing or when the well runs dry, always give first to God. That means giving a tithe (10%) and an offering (anything above 10%) *to your local church*. If we acknowledge God in all our ways, then we will be confident that 90% (or 85%) with God's help is more than 100% on our own without God. Put God first – even with your finances – and trust Him to keep His promises.²
- **"And he shall direct thy paths."** – This is a *conditional promise* from God. He **will direct our paths** – make the way passable – but only **if we trust, lean on, and acknowledge Him**. God will pave the way. He will make the way passable. This does not mean it will be easy as a breeze. It does mean it will be possible **WITH GOD'S HELP**. All things are possible with God. He promises to do His part. Will we do ours? Do we think we will do better than God with our problem?

"Is anything too hard for the LORD?" That is the question God asked Abraham in **Genesis 18:14**. The answer is obvious. God always proves true, because God is always in control. The term for that is sovereign. ***No matter what happens or comes your way, God is in complete control*** – that is what sovereignty means.³ The truth of God's sovereignty is the source of personal comfort for your own heart, and the best basis from which we may comfort others. If God is not in control, what good are His promises? God's promises are no better than the next guy's, if He is not sovereign. Comfort is not that we will be shielded from hard times. Comfort is found in the fact that the sovereign God will direct our paths and lead us through the hard times, if we trust Him with all our heart.

¹ Read **Romans 12:16-20; Ephesians 4:2-3, 15-16, 29-32; 1 Corinthians 13:4-7** for a few insights and examples of the way that trusting God works in relationships.

² **Malachi 3:10; 2 Corinthians 8:1-9; 9:1-14; 1 Timothy 6:17-19** are a few biblical examples of the necessity and the blessing of trusting God by financial giving.

³ Sometimes people will say, "To me God is..." and they are immediately off track because that premise is wrong. God is who He is no matter what you and I think.

God is never blind-sided. God is never caught flat-footed. His hold never slips, and we are in His hands.

- ★ **God is sovereign over the universe.** Of course He is. God made the world and everything in it (**Acts 17:24**).
- ★ **God is sovereign over humanity.** God is the Lord of our very existence, not to mention Lord of every people group, political nation, and government (**Acts 17:25-28**).
- ★ **God is sovereign over our rebellion.** This *does not mean that God authors our rebellion*. This simply means that God's Will will be done, whether we joyfully and faithfully follow it, or if we dig in with our heels and are backslidden. The Lord's good purposes – and all His purposes are good – are immutable. Doubt that? Ask **Jonah 1:4, 17; 2:2, 10; 3:10; 4:6-11**.
- ★ **God is sovereign over sin.** Again, this *does not suggest that God tempts or causes man to sin*, but that God is ruling and over-ruling in all things for the ultimate good of His people and the glory of His name. Doubt that? Ask Joseph.⁴ He said to his brothers "Fear not: for *am* I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; *but* God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as *it is* this day, to save much people alive" **Genesis 50:19-20**. Sin is always wrong and never of God, but sin is not stronger than God. He will over-rule it to accomplish His purposes.
- ★ **God is sovereign over world events.** This truth is taught throughout scripture. The books of **Esther** and **Daniel** come prominent to my mind, but there are many more examples. This fact is succinctly stated in **Proverbs 16:33**, "The lot is cast in the lap; but the whole disposing thereof *is* of the LORD." (c.f **Proverbs 21:1**)
- ★ **We can be confident in (and comforted by) God's sovereignty.** There is no refuge from God, but there is refuge in Him. Read **Hebrews 6:17-19** if you doubt that, and anchor your soul to this blessed truth!

Let's trust God with all our heart. Let's not lean on our own understanding. Let's refuse to take our cues from what life looks like at the moment. Let's refuse to listen – or speak – the doom and gloom theories that dominate our news. Instead, let's acknowledge God in all our ways, and He will pave the way for us.

Psalms 37:3-5: "Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring *it* to pass."



God's assurances for us are His promises to us that we may walk by faith while we wait for Him to work.

⁴ The entire story of Joseph may be read in **Genesis 37-50**.

GOD IS ALWAYS IN CONTROL

(I will not doubt)

“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”

- Proverbs 3:5-6



Always True *God's Promises When Life is Hard*

Promise #3 – God is Always Good (I will not despair)

God **is** a Promiser by nature. Therefore, no believer need be dominated by fear, because the Lord is always present. God **keeps** all His promises. For that reason, no believer need be doubtful, because the Lord is always in control. God **wants** His promises tested, so no believer need be in despair, because God is always good, always proving Himself true. **Joshua 21:45**, "There failed not ought of any good thing which the LORD had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass." (c.f. **1 Kings 8:56; Psalm 119:140; Matthew 6:33; Philippians 4:19**)

Please understand, to state that God wants His promises tested is not a contradiction to Jesus' own words from **Matthew 4:7**, in which He quoted **Deuteronomy 6:16**, when He rebuked Satan with "Thou shalt not tempt [put to the test] the Lord thy God." The Lord Jesus' warning means two things (neither of them that God does not want His promises tested):

1. Do not expect God to bail out your foolishness. For instance, the promises of Matthew 6:33 and Philippians 4:19 were listed in the first paragraph. Those promises do not mean that believers sit at home or only occupy themselves with "spiritual" things, expecting God to provide their basic necessities (or fulfill their every desire). God miraculously provided the Israelites manna for forty years in the wilderness, but they still had to go and gather it. Do everything you can do, all the while trusting God to do what you cannot.
2. Do not expect God to respond to coercion or manipulation. Jesus only quoted the first half of Deuteronomy 6:16. The second half says, "...as ye tempted *him* in Massah." What happened there? That refers to **Exodus 17** when the Israelites, after having been supernaturally emancipated from slavery, protected from their enemies, fed from the heavens, and had seen and tasted bitter water made sweet; after all that they complained again about their lack of water, to the point that Moses feared for his life. Moses said to them, "Why chide ye with me? Wherefore do ye tempt the LORD?" (**Exodus 17:2b**) The amazing thing is that God **did provide water from a rock**, but not because of the Israelites' behavior. God in His abundant grace, His unending goodness, and for the glory of His name gave them water to drink. But wrongfully putting God to the test will never end well. After all, only two of that generation ever occupied the Promised Land.

God wants us to get out on the water and test His Word, to be sure from its truth and experience that it will hold our weight. God wants us to rest our lives on His promises but keeping one foot on the boat while exploring the water with your toe is a sure way to get all wet. Believe God's promises. Jump out of the boat. He will hold your weight.

God knows what He is doing, and is worthy of every moment of trust. Test His promises and find Him good and faithful, and the more you go through in life, the deeper your love for the Lord will grow. God is always good, and His goodness is stamped all over the scriptures. Take as one example the inspired honesty of David from **Psalm 27:13**, "*I had fainted*, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living."

The Problem: Despair

The Merriam-Webster definition of despair is “to no longer have any hope or belief that a situation will improve or change; to lose all hope or confidence.” An accurate picture of despair is being deep down in a damp, dark cave, far from sunshine or warmth, no light, no hope, and alone. No one wants to go to despair, and for the one in despair, nothing positive for the future can be seen. If our focus is on the dark, deep, and the damp, then we are plummeting deeper into the cave of despair.

Despair Accelerants

1. **Surprise** – “*I did not see this coming.*” A heart attack. Car accident. Retirement devaluation. Betrayal.
2. **Severity** – “*I never imagined this could be so difficult.*” Like a parent losing their child. A singer losing their voice. An active person losing their mobility and vitality.
3. **Settledness** – “*It’s happened.*” She died. He left. The strength will not return. The train has left the station.

Buying into any of those three mind-sets is like pouring accelerant on your despair. Better to step away from the flame, and get God’s perspective on the problem. “*I had fainted, unless I had believed* to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.” David focused his gaze on God and His goodness rather than himself and his despair.⁵

The Promise: God is Always Good (I will not depair)

God is Good

- ✓ God’s goodness is something He wants us to experience. **Psalm 34:8**, “O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man *that* trusteth in him.” He wants us to experience this personally.
- ✓ God’s goodness is the eventual conclusion of every generation of His followers. **Psalm 100:5**, “For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth *endureth* to all generations.” God’s disposition is kindness. His default action is for our benefit. He is good. Good is not just what He occasionally does, and while it may not always appear so, we will taste it someday. Every generation of believer ultimately learns and experiences that blessed truth.
- ✓ God’s goodness is present in everything He does. **Psalm 145:9**, “The LORD is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works.” The Lord is rarely, if ever, quick to answer the question “Why?” He is, however, good in everything He does.
- ✓ God’s goodness may not be immediately obvious. **Lamentations 3:25**, “The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul *that* seeketh him.” God is always good in **what** He does AND **when** He does it. If you do not see it, sense it, or feel it, then wait for it trusting, but do not get bitter.
- ✓ God’s Goodness is a refuge, and He is aware of those who shelter in Him. **Nahum 1:7**, “The LORD is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him.” Our God knows if we are – or are not – trusting Him. God knows who is resting in His promises and who is resisting them. God has promised that we will find refuge only in Him, but also that there is no refuge from Him. The former is far better.
- ✓ We grow in our awareness of God’s goodness. Eventually we see that our momentary pain was part of a much larger picture that God was painting. Give your trial time, walk by faith, hold on to the promises, believe that you will taste God’s goodness, and you will.

⁵ Exodus 14:13-14; Psalm 46:10; Isaiah 30:15

People who walk away from despair believe the Word of God. Believe that God will act on their behalf, because He is holy, righteous, and good, and the suffering that God allows into their life will be used for their good and God's glory.

God's Plans are Good

Since He is good, of course His plans are too. **Jeremiah 29:11**, "For I know the thoughts [*plans*] that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts [*plans*] of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end [*a future and a hope*]." This prophecy was directed towards the nation while they were in exile in a foreign land, and Jerusalem and the Temple were in ruins. It may have been easy for the Israelites to doubt the goodness of God's plan for them. Did they think, "How could this possibly get us to a better place?" **Have you?**

When it comes to God's plans for us – His will if you like – we get fixated on the details: Who will I marry? Where will I live? What will be my career? All of that is important, and God is in the details. BUT God's plans are primarily focused on developing our character and our embracing His righteousness. THEN those details will work themselves out in time and according to plan.

We can be certain that His **eternal plans** are for our **total peace**, and God's plans cannot be derailed. Not even by us. We can be certain that His plans are **not for evil**. Living in sin is not God's plan for us. His plans take us away from evil. While He is sovereign over all situations, circumstances, and decisions, God is never the cause of evil, but He is the solution. His purposes will be accomplished. That is good news, because His eternal plans for us are to **give us a future and a hope**. No matter what has happened or is happening, better things are on the horizon for God's people. That is not pie in the sky theology. It is rock solid Biblical truth!

Romans 8:28, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose." This is not something we kind-of, sort-of think, maybe might happen. We **KNOW!** How do we know? That knowledge is known because God's Word says it is so, because we have been there, we have tested God's promise, and He have jumped out into the middle of the frozen lake, and He has always and will always hold our weight.

Finally, this is not just about you and me. Let's understand that Romans 8:28 is not just about our personal blueprint for life. The ultimate good of this truth is God's blueprint for the universe and our place in it. Let's be committed to God's purposes, for His will to be fulfilled and His kingdom advanced.



God's assurances for us are His promises to us that we may walk by faith while we wait for Him to work.

GOD IS ALWAYS GOOD

(I will not despair)

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to *his* purpose.”

- Romans 8:28



Always True *God's Promises When Life is Hard*

Promise #4 – God is Always Watching (I will not falter)

Faith is the key. God's promises may only be activated by faith. **Matthew 13:58** is a sad verse. There we read "And he did not many mighty works there **because of their unbelief.**" That is a sad commentary on Nazareth, the Lord's hometown, but be careful in your judgment of them. Sometimes Jesus does little to nothing through me, my family, and my church because of my lack of faith (**c.f. James 4:2-3**).

Faith is the victory, and faith is not passive. Faith is an action. God's promises give us hope. How many scriptural promises do you know by heart? Which ones are on the tip of your tongue? If your answer is "Not many" then no wonder you are filled with anxiety and worry. No wonder you have little to no hope. You are not holding on to anything that will sustain you.

Hold on tightly to God's exceeding great and precious promises, and do not worry if your grip slips. God's got you. By faith, do what you can do. Then, by faith, trust God to do what only He can do. Put some action behind what you say you believe. Faith has to be active to be real.

The Problem: Faltering

Up to this point in our study we have discussed fear, doubt, and despair. With this lesson we tackle **faltering**, a word that describes a person slipping down, going under, giving in, and losing the battle. The pressure to falter is great, because the obstacles in our way are great, because the adversary who opposes God and God's people is great. BUT GREATER IS HE THAT IS IN ME, THAN HE THAT IS IN THE WORLD!⁶

The temptation to falter is greatest when faced with overwhelming obstacles, and when we are bountifully blessed. In the case of the latter, God warned His people in **Deuteronomy 8:7-20** against faltering due to abundant gifts, but they "forgot His works, and His wonders that He had shewed them" (**Psalms 78:11**). They faltered because of their forgetfulness.

Overwhelming Obstacles

These overwhelming obstacles may be the opposition of others. There are many examples of this in scripture.

- ✓ Joseph hated, detained, and sold into slavery by his own brothers.
- ✓ David opposed by Saul.
- ✓ Elijah opposed by Ahab, 450 prophets of Baal, and Jezebel
- ✓ Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah as captives of the Babylonians, and then the Persians.
- ✓ Esther and all the Jews opposed by Haman.
- ✓ The early churches opposed by the Jewish religious authorities and the Roman government.

⁶ 1 John 4:4

Sometimes the obstacles are of our own doing, and they are used by God to correct our sin and refine our hearts. Read **Isaiah 42:17-25**.

Being deaf and blind, robbed and spoiled, hidden in holes, and trapped in prisons sounds like faltering. Does it not? The context of this faltering is God's judgment on His people. They were habitually rebellious. Their attitudes were antagonistic at worst and apathetic at best towards the things of God. Therefore, the Lord was allowing them to feel *the weight of all the garbage they had created by not trusting Him*.

But do not stop there. Now we must read **Isaiah 43:1-3a**, one of the greatest promises to God's children in all of God's Word. Knowing the context will make the promise all the sweeter.

"But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called *thee* by thy name; thou *art* mine. When thou passest through the waters, I *will be* with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I *am* the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour."

The Lord Jesus is our *Redeemer*. Before Christ, we were morally and spiritually bankrupt, and owed an insurmountable debt. BUT CHRIST redeemed us. The price was His own death, His shed blood on the cross. His resurrection three days later was proof positive that the payment was satisfactory to God. The Lord Jesus Christ has settled our debt. Now we are free from sin. Free to joyfully serve our Redeemer. God leads us into difficult seasons, but He always brings us through them. You will emerge on the other side. This means that big problems to us – those overwhelming obstacles, even that are of our own doing – never overwhelm God. He redeemed us. What will He not do for us now? Fear not and do not falter!

The Promise: God is Always Watching (I will not falter)

Scripture regularly refers to the "eyes of the Lord:"

- *The eyes of the Lord are inescapable* – **Proverbs 5:21**, "For the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD, and he pondereth all his goings." God is **able** to see all. He is that powerful. God **does** see all. He is that involved.
- *The eyes of the Lord are synonymous with righteousness and truth* – **Deuteronomy 6:18**, "And thou shalt do *that which is* right and good in the sight of the LORD: that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest go in and possess the good land which the LORD swore unto thy fathers,"
- *The eyes of the Lord are attentive to His own* – **1 Peter 3:12**, "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are *open* unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord *is* against them that do evil." God does not miss anything, but His predisposition is fixed on the lives of His children, to extend loving care to them.
- *The eyes of Lord are looking for a need to fill* – **2 Chronicles 16:9a**, "For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of *them* whose heart *is* perfect toward him." Looking to show Himself strong, and for people on whom to show His favor.
- *The eyes of the Lord are full of grace* – **Genesis 6:8**, "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD." Grace is received not earned. Grace motivates obedience, but is not the fruit of it. God is full of amazing grace!

Why does He watch?

We have to look at **Isaiah 43** again to know why. **Verse 4a** says, “Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honorable, and I have loved thee.” Remember the word “precious” from the first lesson? Precious is a word that expresses weight and value. God’s promises are exceedingly great and precious to us, and God says that His people are precious to Him.

Please understand. This does not suggest that you and I have intrinsic value. In other words, we are not precious in God’s sight because we are precious. We are precious in God’s sight because we are valued by God, not in and of ourselves valuable. We are declared precious because God has chosen to set His love upon us. No one deserves that, but He is amazingly full of grace. We do not have value. We are valued. God has set a value on us that is not inherent to us, and that value is based on what God has said about us (**Ephesians 1:4**). Rather than saying, “I have value.” Say this, “I am valued by God, precious in His sight.”

He provides a way of escape and victory.

God is watching, and He wants us to succeed in life. **1 Corinthians 10:13**, “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”

Most often the only difference between a temptation and a trial is motivation. Temptations are from the adversary, and they are meant for our destruction (**James 1:12-15; Matthew 4:1-11**). Trials are from the Lord, and they are meant for our edification, to refine us (**James 1:2-5; 1 Peter 2:19-24; 3:12-18; 4:12-17**). Bottom line is this, God is faithful. Trials and temptations are not everlasting, but our faithful God is.

Have you ever felt that no one has endured what you must? That is a common thought, but one that is always inaccurate. Do not falter because you think your difficulty is unique. You are not the first to experience this. You will not be the last. You do not know what will happen next, and neither did the people before, nor will the people after you. Here is what we know. God is faithful. He is watching, and He will provide a way of escape and victory. God protects His own. They are precious in His sight. We do not have to falter. We do not have to lose it. We can keep going for another hour, another day, another week, another month, as long as necessary, all the way to the end, because God has promised that He will enable us to bear – by His grace and power – what is unbearable apart from Him. His promises never get stale. Instead, “*They are new every morning: great is thy [God’s] faithfulness.*” (**Lamentations 3:23**).

Here are some ways of escape God provides His children when they need them most:

- *The trial may end suddenly.* Prayerfully persevere and God will move on your behalf (**Acts 12:5-19**).
- *Encouragement to keep going, and/or help to shoulder the burden will be given.* God will prompt the hearts of others to encourage your own. Belonging to a local church is sweet for the soul (**Galatians 6:1-2**).
- *Wisdom will be supplied.* We often are clueless regarding what to do in the midst of difficult days, but God will supply wisdom and provide direction. Ask for it. Recognize it. Obey it (**James 1:5**).
- *His strength is always sufficient.* When you are certain that it is all over and you cannot get up off the mat one more time, trust God. His strength is made perfect in our weakness (**2 Corinthians 12:9-10**).

GOD IS ALWAYS WATCHING

(I will not falter)

“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way of escape, that ye may be able to bear *it*.”

- 2 Corinthians 10:13



Always True *God's Promises When Life is Hard*

Promise #5 – God is Always Victorious (I will not fail)

We have come to the end of the matter. This is a good time to be quickly refreshed with what we have already discussed:

1. **God is a promiser by nature.** Therefore, no believer need be dominated by fear, because the Lord is always present. The Lord Jesus said, "I am with you always, *even* unto the end of the world" (**Matthew 28:18-20**).
2. **God keeps all His promises.** For that reason, no believer need be doubtful, because the Lord is always in control, and so we read in **Hebrews 1:3** that Jesus is "upholding all things by the word of his power."
3. **God wants us to test His promises.** No believer need be in despair, because God is always good, always proving Himself true. The Lord Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep" (**John 10:11**). The sheep can count on the shepherd to do all that is good and necessary for us.
4. **God's promises are activated by faith.** He is always watching, He knows our condition and situation. We need not falter, but should confidently walk in and with Jesus (**Colossians 2:6-7**).

Finally (for this study) we learn that when life is hard, we are promised that God is always victorious. We will not fail, because we are hidden in Christ Jesus. God's promises are all experienced in Jesus Christ. **Romans 11:36**, "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen." Jesus Christ **is the Promises** of God! God does not give us something for the hard times, like a doctor gives you a prescription. As believers we have Jesus Christ indwelling us. The Lord Jesus Christ is the something.

1. *Christ's presence takes away our fear.*
2. *Christ's sovereignty provides assurance and calmness in the face of doubt.*
3. *Christ's goodness renews us when we are weighed down by despair.*
4. *Christ's watch-care and intervention keeps us from faltering.*
5. *Christ's inevitable victory assures us that we will not fail.*

We sing that faith is the victory that overcomes the world, and rightly so, but we understand that it is not simply faith which is the victory, but faith in Christ, because Jesus Christ is the victory. He is the power which enables Christian living (**Galatians 2:20**). God has made no provision for us to live the Christian life on our own or our way. The Christian life is "Christ in you, the hope of glory," **Colossians 1:27**.

To let that sink down deep in our hearts, let's consider **1 Thessalonians 5:16-24**:

"Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil. And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and *I pray God* your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. **Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.**"

Do not think that this is *only* a laundry list of “Christian stuff” we must do on our own. Reread that last verse. The Lord does not just call us to this life, **He does it**. Jesus Christ **is** the Christian life. We cannot save ourselves. Only Jesus can do that. We cannot sanctify ourselves. Only Jesus can do that. The same total dependence we expressed when we trusted Christ to save us from our sins, is the same total dependence needed to live the Christian life. He is our only hope for everything at all times.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the promises of God, and He will be forever victorious. Therefore, those whose lives are hidden in His will be too. Faith in Christ is the victory that overcomes the world, because Christ has overcome the world (1 John 4:4).

The Problem: Uncertainty (aka Insecurity)

Perhaps the greatest factor which triggers our fears, doubts, causing us to despair and falter is uncertainty about how it will all end. For many, if not all, of us, the most difficult aspect of any trial is that we do not know the outcome. If we just knew how things would fall out we could prepare ourselves, but the not knowing pushes us to the limit. Another name for this uncertainty is insecurity.

- “What will happen if _____?”
- “What will the doctor say this time?”
- “If the cancer is back, then what?”
- “How will the family survive without their dad?”
- “Should the pastor retire, how will the church survive?”
- “I just don’t know how all this will end up!”

That list could continue indefinitely. But no matter what, as God’s children we are assured of victory, because God is always victorious. We will not fail!

The Promise: God is Always Victorious (I will not fail)

God wins, and we are in Him.⁷ Read the promise first made to the postexilic Israelites that returned to Jerusalem, but by God’s grace, a promise that extends to all His children.. **Isaiah 54:17**, “No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue *that* shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This *is* the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness *is* of me, saith the LORD.”

We fight from NOT for victory

Our confidence does not come from our ability but from God’s promises, and He has promised that no weapon – tool, utensil, *anything* anyone would use against you for evil intent – will prosper. Nothing built, sharpened, aimed, fired, concocted, or said against you, your family, your church, God’s kingdom will succeed. They *may seem* to win for awhile, but in the end even these tragedies will assist God’s prospering His own.⁸

⁷ Remember, just as we are not inherently valuable, we are not intrinsically victorious either. We are precious in God’s sight because He values us, not because we are valuable. We are victorious, we are “more than conquerors **through Him that loved us**” (**Romans 8:37**). Our victory, indeed our everything, is hid in Christ Jesus, not inherent to ourselves (**2 Corinthians 5:21; Colossians 2:3-17; 3:1-4**).

⁸ Balaam could not curse Israel. His attempts ended up as blessings (**Numbers 22-24**). Sure, there were many Israelites who stumbled and were overthrown because of Balaam teaching Israel to compromise, since he could not curse them, but their failure was in not trusting God.

Joshua tells the people in **23:10**, “One man of you shall chase a thousand: **for the LORD your God, he it is that fighteth for you, as he hath promised you.**” The reason no weapon formed against us shall prosper is not because we are tough, hardened warriors for Christ, but because the LORD fights for us, *as we fight our battles*. Even if some weapon seems to be prospering in the moment, it will not prosper in the end.⁹

No weapon will prosper against God’s people, and that includes words spoken against you. Have you ever been the target of hurtful words *because of your stand for the Lord*? Have you experienced ridicule where you live and/or work because of your loyalty to the Lord Jesus? Do you know what it is like to be scorned for the truth? If the answer to these questions is “no,” then that is not a good sign, because it most likely means that the people around you have never noticed a direct connection between you and God. If people do, there will be blow-back. **2 Timothy 3:12** does say, “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” *If we never risk standing for Christ we will never fully discover the faithfulness of His promises.*

Those who are gainsaying you and oppose you will not have the last word. God will. Trust Him to do what is just. We do not need to defend ourselves or get even. God is in the justice business. Only He is perfectly righteous in all His judgments, and there is coming a day of judgment. In the meantime, let us never forget that our righteousness **is not our own** but is from the Lord. I do not deserve favor with God. I do not deserve God’s love and protection, but His grace is amazing and available to any and all who will humble themselves before Him in repentance and faith (**Galatians 2:20**). That is the power and the glory of the gospel.

At the moment, we are all in the ultimate race. It is called life. Before we know it, it – life – is going to be over. None of us wants to look back and say, “I could have gone further in my walk with the Lord, but I held back.” Today is our opportunity to honor God. Today is our opportunity to prove the superiority of a life lived in and for Jesus Christ. Now is not the time to hold back but to let loose!

Sure there are uncertainties – health concerns, family issues, problems on the job, marital strife – we are all struggling with something, and none of those struggles are unique to just us. But we have Jesus Christ – if you are saved – the Spirit of God indwells you. So you have the grace to love when hated. The grace to bless when reviled. The grace to forgive when abused. You have strength to give even though you have been taken advantage of by others. You have God’s word on all that and more.

Run today with your eyes fixed on the end, and the Lord who is already there (**2 Timothy 4:6-8**). God is always victorious. His purposes are always accomplished. His enemies are always defeated His faithful followers are always rewarded. The throne of our Savior and King will be established forever.



God’s assurances for us are His promises to us that we may walk by faith while we wait for Him to work.

⁹ If you want to encourage your heart, study the incredible journey of the Jewish people. In spite of what God has allowed them to endure and the blindness that veils their eyes during this current season when the Gentiles are being grafted in (**Romans 11**), study how God has protected and preserved Israel as a people. God has made some promises about His protection to a literal Israel. He has and is keeping those promises.

GOD IS ALWAYS VICTORIOUS

(I will not fail)

“No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper;
and every tongue *that* shall rise against thee in
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- Isaiah 57:17