

God is the God of Promise

Exodus 3 - 6

I. God wants us to know Him as the God who makes promises. He makes promises because of the goodness and love that are the very nature of his character. Those promises are connected to the fulfillment of his salvation and kingdom purposes in the world.

A. Since the creation of the world God has been a God of good promise. All of creation has always been dependent on God for life itself to be sustained

1. His commitment to create a *dependent* world binds him to his promise to sustain and care for it. The world is dependent on God and cannot exist or sustain itself on its own.

That is the way God has created things to be. And because He is good, he will follow through to care for the earth

"...he is before all things, and in him all things hold together." **Gen 1:2; Col 1:15-17**

"...for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being." **Rev 4:11**

"The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world and all who live in it."

Psalms 24:1

"To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal? Says the Holy One. Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing." **Isaiah 40:25,26**

2. After the fall into sin, God made another promise -His commitment to save, redeem and restore mankind and creation to his original purposes. (Gen 3:15) God has bound himself to his promise to accomplish both our salvation and the establishment of his kingdom reign over the earth; as well as fulfilling all the (almost) countless attending promises he makes to us as his children. He has made these promises because he is good and loves to do so. We are as dependent on Him keeping his promise for our salvation as we are for the sustaining of life itself.

B. **Exodus 3:6-10** "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob...."

God is restating the loving nature of his promises to Moses and to the people of Israel in their bondage in Egypt. "I am the God who made promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; promises to make you a blessing to the nations of the earth, and I am here to fulfill them. I love you. I have seen your misery. I am fully aware of your need and I am here to show you my compassion and faithfulness."

Gen 3:15, Gen 9:8-11 and Gen 12:2-3, 15:14-17 are the backdrop of God's promises (his covenants) that he is making to Moses and the Hebrew people.

He will remind the people of Israel of these things again later in their history (Isaiah 49:13-16, 22-26 cf 51:1-3) and he reminds us that these foundational promises are the basis of God's work among us as well - **Matthew 1:1** cf. Genesis 12:1ff & II Samuel 7:11-13; **Matthew 1:21-23; Luke 1:31-33** cf. Ephesians 1:18-23; Revelation 5:6-13

II. God wants us to trust Him as the God who can and will fulfill his promises

A. God will keep his promises because of the goodness of his character. (It is not possible for God not to keep his promises.) He makes the promises because he is good, and he will keep them because he is good.

1. God has chosen to put his very character at stake in the promises he has made.

In Genesis 15 God tells Abraham his promise to make him into a nation of people that cannot be counted, and that he will take possession of the land he is now in - and Abraham believed God (15:6). Then immediately, Abraham says, "How can I know for sure?" What does God appeal to? *His own character confirmed by a vow* - **Genesis 15:9-21. Cf. Hebrews 6:13-20.**

At all times, and especially in the middle of trials, like the Christians in the book of Hebrews or like the Israelites in Moses' day, we need to know how to be confident in our faith. What God appeals to for our confidence and says is really on the line, *is the very character of God Himself*. He has promised salvation and justice and godly discipline and training that will yield the fruit of righteousness. Can God be trusted? Will he do what he said he would do? His answer is a resounding yes! He always has. Psalm 89.

The assurance for our hearts to be strengthened is ultimately based on the fact that Jesus Christ, God's own Son, whom he gave on our behalf, is standing in His presence as an advocate for us, offering his own blood as the payment for our sin and securing for us the full rights of Sons and Daughters of God, who can be certain the promises of God will be given to us.. Romans 8:31ff cf. **James 1:13-18.**

When we don't trust God, we are really calling his character into question. He gives us grace and forgiveness for this, but we need to know what lies at the heart of our unbelief.

2. God's promises are related to his character, not ours. He will keep his promises because *He is good*, not because we are good.

We can see this in the context of **Genesis 3:15; Genesis 8:21; Exodus 20 ff (which is preceded by Exodus 5:21; 14:11,12; 15:24; 16:2,3,19,20; and 17:1-3; I Kings 11:34, II Kings 13:23; Hosea 11:1-11**

God's determination to love freely, not our "goodness" in deserving his promises, is the source of his follow through for our salvation and the fulfillment of his promises cf Isaiah **57:14-19**

B. God will keep his promises because he has the power and wisdom to make sure they will be fulfilled

1. Exodus 3:13-22 When God declares himself to be the God of Promise, Moses asks the initial question which underlies every other question he (Moses) asks throughout these next chapters, and every question that will emerge from himself and the Israelites throughout his 40 year experience with them:

"What is your Name?" Meaning: who are you that you make such promises? Who are you that you can do such a thing as this? (Remember: Moses knew something of both the power of Egypt and the bitterness of the Hebrews, Exodus 2:11 ff.)

And here is God's answer: "I AM WHO I AM." Meaning: "I will be who I will be. I can do anything and everything I say, and there is no one or no thing that can stop me. I have all the power, all the wisdom, all the presence, and all the character to do whatever I say I will do."

To demonstrate the sweeping nature of his power to fulfill his will, God tells Moses exactly what will happen in the following verses, including this “humanly impossible scenario,” that not only will Israel come out of Egypt, but they will come out so honored by their enemies that the Egyptians will freely hand over their riches to the people of Israel, and it will be a plundering like no one has ever heard of before.

And God *proves* the faithfulness and the power to keep his promises throughout the history of the people of God in both the Old and New Testaments - regardless of how messy his people get in their sin; regardless of how complicated the opposition is from evil men; regardless of how sinister Satan’s plots are to destroy the work of God. Nothing can thwart him.

God supernaturally delivers Israel - **Exodus**. He supernaturally sustains his people in the wilderness. He supernaturally gives them victory over their enemies in Canaan. He supernaturally blesses their deliverers over and over again. He supernaturally blesses David. He even supernaturally blesses them in their darkest hour of discipline when they have been driven from their homeland- cf. Daniel, Shadrach, etc. So much so that Nebuchadnezzar must confess God is the only God, and Cyrus King of Persia is moved to restore and rebuild the Temple.....and Satan’s most evil moment of betrayal becomes the very means of salvation for the whole world through Christ’s death on the cross. All because it is God’s character and promise at stake and he has the power behind his promise to fulfill it. **Acts 4:23-31**

2. God makes these startling, humanly-impossible-to-attain, but divinely-guaranteed promises throughout Scripture-

The birth of Isaac and the blessing to all nations on earth; Joseph as a ruler of the nations; the conquering of the nations in the Promised Land of Canaan; David’s “Son” who will inherit all the nations of the earth; the promise of the age of the Spirit when all people will receive the salvation of God; the promise that *every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord of all things*; the promise of a new heaven and a new earth; the promise of the reconciliation of all things under the Lordship of Jesus Christ

.....and he makes incredible, humanly-impossible promises for you and me today.... that we are new creations, and everything old that defined us is gone and replaced; that our sins will never define us and be our master, but now righteousness defines us, by grace - Romans 6; that we have a seal,

guaranteeing our salvation- the Holy Spirit, who is the down payment of God's promise of what is yet to come **Ephesians 1**; that God will work absolutely everything together for our good and will do nothing less than shape us in the image of Christ himself and make us partakers in the very nature and character of God **Romans 8:28, I Peter 1**; "Jesus Christ is the same - yesterday, today and forever" **Hebrews 13:5-8** is a statement about his promise to be with us forever and the freedom to never be afraid of men - the very same thing Moses was wrestling with; and the promise that God is building us into the Church, the body of Christ and that he wants to bring justice and righteousness on earth through us. **Ephesians 1:15-23**

C. God will keep his promises regardless of the state of faith of mankind

1. If we have little faith - Moses **Exodus 4:1-14**

The obstacles can appear to be so great in our minds that we can't see past them. It is beyond our ability to reason through how God's promises can actually take place, because our experience screams at us that the promises of God cannot possibly overcome the impossible crises in which we find ourselves. And yet, God did what he said he would do for Moses- and he does it for us as well..

2. If others have a sour faith - Israel **Exodus 5:15-23, 6:1-12**

The discouragement of the people of Israel became a source of discouragement for Moses, but it did not change God's promise one single bit, nor what God was about to do.

That same discouragement exists throughout the pages of Scripture- yet God continues to fulfill his promise. In Corinth **1 Cor 1**; in Sardis **Revelation 1**; in Israel - Deborah and Barak **Judges 4&5**; Gideon **Judges 6:14ff**; David's brothers **1 Samuel 17:26ff**; the people who returned to rebuild Jerusalem **Zechariah 8**.

3. If many have no faith - Pharaoh Exodus 5:1-14

The Philistines didn't have faith in God; nor did the Assyrians, nor the Babylonians, nor the Persians, nor the Romans. It simply doesn't matter to God. The Philistines became subject to Israel through a rock and a sling - **I Samuel 17:45-47**. The Assyrians were taken out by an Angel who brought death - **2 Chronicles 32:10-21**; Babylon made a decree that all the nations they had conquered should worship God **Daniel 4:1-3, 34,35**; Persia ordered the rebuilding of the Temple **Ezra 1:1-4**; and Rome, under Constantine, declared the worship of Jesus Christ and the protection of the ministers of the Gospel as the State supported religion of the whole of western Europe. *All these were sworn enemies of God; sworn enemies of the Gospel. But none of them could stop God from fulfilling his promises.* And God is still at work in the world today bringing the nations under the authority of Jesus Christ.

We need to know our faith does not activate God's promise, as if he will do nothing in the world unless we "let him" or "help him" through our faith. What our faith does is allow us the freedom and privilege of entering into and enjoying the unfolding of God's promises in the world. Many in Jesus' day did not believe. He "could not do miracles in those places (Matt 13:58)." Why? Because he chose to make the condition of our personal involvement in those miracles our own faith Hebrews **11:6**. However, even if we don't believe, God will not be stopped in fulfilling his promises of salvation and justice. **Isaiah 42:1-4; 43:25-44:5**

The Nature of God's Promises

Exodus 3:7-10 Moses and the people of God had very explicit promises. They were in Egypt as slaves who were oppressed, and God had come making a promise to set them free. Has God made us promises? explicit promises? promises that we can say- "I know God will fulfill this, because he clearly said he would. And I am so sure of it that I can go back to God and claim the promise, unquestioningly, unqualified, for me - for us, together as the people of God?"

I. Knowing the Core Promise of God and the Supporting Promises of the Covenant

One of the great testing/maturing points of the Christian life is to be sure we understand the good promises God has made to us. As we rightly know and believe these promises, our faith will be increasingly strengthened because we will be much more aware of actively seeing the unfolding of God's promises in our lives and throughout the world.

Genesis 3. The heart of Satan's deception in the Garden of Eden was to call the promise of God into question: "I have provided for you. You may eat from any tree in the garden except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" – Lucifer's interpretation: "That is not a good, or fair or true promise. You won't die. God is actually trying to keep you from reaching your potential - to be like God yourself."

Luke 4. This was also at the heart of Satan's temptation of Christ in the wilderness – "if you really are loved by God - make bread; throw yourself down from the Temple; and certainly, find some easier way to be Lord of the nations. Satan even uses the language of Scripture promise: "it is written - you will not strike your foot against a stone."

Satan's approach hasn't changed any. If we don't understand the good things God has actually promised we can be very susceptible to Satan and to our own fleshly desires to distort the promises; from there we try to hold God accountable for what we have decided the promises mean, and in the end, we can despise or disbelieve God for failing to meet those promises (which at this point =our expectations).

A. What is The Promise of God?

After Adam's fall into sin (and all mankind and creation with him), God promised to redeem a people for himself from the destruction of sin - through his Son Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit - and to renew us in His image as a people of goodness, redemption and trust (justice-holiness, mercy-compassion, and humility-faith).

*Ever since Adam's sin and the death that came as a result our broken fellowship with God; our broken fellowship with one another; our brokenness inside ourselves; the break between mankind and creation..... God has been fulfilling this promise to bring life and restoration in all these areas by his Son, Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit and has actively been bringing that salvation throughout history to all the nations of the earth. God will keep fulfilling his promise until there is a complete renewal of all things under the headship of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Genesis 3:15 (the seed promise), Colossians 1:9-20, Ephesians 1:9,10 (the fully revealed extent of the promise)***

This is the very heart of God's Promise throughout Scripture. This is a promise that has all kinds of connected implications- which are fleshed out with all the additional supporting promises God has given us in his Word.

B. What are the Major Supporting Promises? The Unfolding of the Covenant.

1. The promise that God's salvation would come through Adam's Offspring and would defeat the work of Satan and restore us to the joy of fellowship and life with God - **Genesis 3:15; Luke 3:23/37; John 3:16; John 17:1-3**

2. The promise that God would sustain the created world for his purposes, no matter how evil men behave- **Genesis 8:21,22, 9:8ff**

3. The promise that God's salvation would bless the nations of the earth, through Adam's Offspring, and specifically through Abraham the man of faith (who had a child born of "promise") and His Offspring **Genesis 12:1-3; Galatians 4:22 ff**

Jesus Christ, born of Abraham, our Savior and Lord - **Galatians 3:16**
And the gift of the Holy Spirit, our Power (enabler, comfort, guide)-
Galatians 3:13,14, through whom we enjoy fellowship with the Father -
Galatians 4:4-7, all of which we receive by faith - **Galatians 3:5**

All the nations who believe are children of Abraham and are one in Christ
- **Galatians 3:26-29**

4. The promise that God would teach us Justice and Mercy through the Law, only to be lived out by receiving righteousness as a gift through faith in Christ **Exodus 20 (Ex & Lev) Deuteronomy 30:11-14, cf Isaiah 2:1-5, Matthew 28:18-20, Romans 3:27-31, 6:15-18**

5. The promise that Adam's Offspring, who would be Abraham's Seed, would also be the Son of David, and as such would be exalted as **The King** of all nations and would rule throughout history to establish justice, mercy and humility in the hearts of men (the establishment of God's kingdom rule and reign)
II Samuel 7:16; Isaiah 9:6,7; Luke 1:31-33; Acts 4:25ff; Rev. 1:4-7

6. The promise that God himself would do this work by the power of the Holy Spirit in the very depths of our hearts, and change our very nature from being people who disbelieve and disobey God, to those who love him and seek to obey him **Jeremiah 31:33,34; Ezekiel 36:24-27; Acts 2:32-39**

7. The promise that he will complete this renewal and restoration and take creation and our lives even beyond the Garden of Eden, to a place where sin can never enter again, the earth and the entire universe will be restored, and

we will live forever in the Presence and fellowship of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **Isaiah 65:17ff, cf Romans 8:19-21; Revelation 21:1-4**

All these promises add up to this: the devastating results of the fall have been, are being and will ultimately, completely be reversed. Satan and sin has been defeated and the ultimate destructiveness of death- separation from God, from each other, from ourselves and from creation- has been reversed because of the love of the Father, the sacrifice and resurrection rule and reign of the Son, and the enduring Presence of the Holy Spirit; and all things are in the process of moving toward complete renewal.

Our worst fears will not materialize. God has promised:

-We will not be separated from God, ever again - His love will always be with us **Romans 8:28 ff.**

-We will not be separated from one another - God will unite us in heart
I John 1:1 ff

- We will not be "undone" by the battle of sin within - the Spirit will lead us into the full rights of sons **Galatians 4:4-7; 5:16-18**

- We will not be undone by creation - our Father is sustaining all things
Matthew 6:25ff

- We will not somehow "miss" the will of God - the Spirit will lead us into true righteousness and holiness **I Corinthians 1:1-9**

- We will not somehow end up under an oppressive "authority" whose power and purposes will define and dictate our lives - Jesus is the King -
Ephesians 1:19-23

- We will never be defined, defeated and discarded by sin's power
Romans 7:14-21

- We will never do all this work in vain - one day we will inherit the earth -
Matthew 5:5; I Corinthians 15:50-58

These are the core of God's promises to us. They are absolute, certain, unconditional promises that we can build our lives on. We need never hesitate to ask God to fulfill these promises in our lives.

II. Understanding what the Promises of God are not: Lessons from Exodus 3 - 6

There is an understanding and a process here that we must recognize and commit ourselves to that is extremely crucial:

The promises of God are absolute, certain, and cannot be thwarted. God is the same yesterday, today and forever. Our understanding of the promises however, is often tainted and obscured by our sin, Satan's lies and the deceptions of our various cultures. Therefore we are going to have to regularly do two things: constantly be willing to re-submit our minds and our understanding to God's Word when things don't look right to us; and, constantly ask God to deepen our understanding of what the promises are/are not telling us.

In every life, every culture and every point in history, Satan will try to find "new ways" to camouflage the old lies about God's promises. The best way to avoid his lies is to know what the good promises of God do guarantee us, and then to strike out the things they don't guarantee from there. **Just like Adam and Eve, we are all called to a relationship of continuous dependent faith in God to teach us good and evil.**

A. Because God promises, that does not mean we won't struggle with doubts

Moses had lots of questions. We've already said this, but just need to restate it one more time. We may naively think that if it is God who has spoken, our hearts won't have struggles with unbelief. Not true. God is not put off by our honest questions.

Listen to Jeremiah's prayer recorded in Jeremiah 12:1-4, and God's response 12:5ff

B. Because God promises, that does not mean others won't oppose the work of God in their unbelief, with real, costly opposition

Pharaoh had the means to oppose the work of God. God even gave him that authority. It's just that Pharaoh's authority was limited, and was not greater than God's.

C. God's promise to accomplish salvation does not mean we will always like how he fulfills his promise

Moses and the Hebrew people both had a hard time with how things were going. It appeared that the "practical" authority belonged to Pharaoh and not to God, though it wasn't true. Even Jesus said, "Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass..."

D. God's promises do not mean we are not going to experience serious physical difficulties

The Hebrews were overworked and beaten right at the time of God's great promise of deliverance. Jesus was physically hungry. Paul did endure all the dangers and physical difficulties in fulfilling his ministry. James, the brother of Jesus, was put to death, as were Peter and Paul. John did spend time isolated on the island of Patmos. The Hebrew Christians did have their property confiscated and the author of Hebrews encourages them with these words – "you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood." **Hebrews 12:4**

E. God's promises do not mean others will be able to see beyond their discouragement and be able to hear the promises in a way that brings hope. **Ezekiel 2:1-9**

So, does God actually promise much? If you want freedom from the dominating power of sin in this life- freedom to love and know God, freedom to love one another and the amazing hope of seeing the kingdom of God fill the earth and the hope of living together in the life to come with God and his people forever and inheriting the earth and all things in Christ - yes.

If you want an across the board, blanket freedom from pain in this life - either any personal pain or the pain associated with the suffering and cost of loving sinners in a sinful world - no. Satan can lie to you all day long and tell you how "unloving" God's promises are, how he really doesn't have your best in mind; and in the end he can leave you disappointed with God, unwilling to learn from the things you suffer; unwillingly to freely enter into the sufferings of Christ for the sake of God's love in other people's lives; and basically controlled by a root of bitterness. **Hebrews 12:1-3**

But in the meantime, God will still be fulfilling his good promises throughout the earth, and his love will be there for you to enter into and enjoy any time you are ready to start believing him.

Living by Faith in the Promises of God

I. Learning to Believe the Promises of God

A. An act of humility

As we progress through life, God's intention is for us to grow more and more in our faith and the resulting obedience in him. This applies to every area of life - business, family, neighbors, world issues, inward, personal thoughts and actions. But at many, many turns (sometimes daily, sometimes every fifteen minutes) we will be confronted with a sometimes subtle, sometimes overwhelming sense of unbelief - a lack of trust in God. That can be brought on by one of several factors: the opposition of the unbelieving world that constantly tries to factor God out of any equation about life and offers a self-serving alternative; Satan's barrage of lies that call God's faithfulness into question, particularly in the midst of trials; or, our own sinful desires that arise from our fleshly sin nature that remains within us and is opposed to the work of the Spirit of God within. **1 John 2:7-17, 4:1-3, 7-12; 5:21; Galatians 5:16-18**

1. The promises are where we are going to go to get our minds cleared and our faith renewed, and this requires humility

a. The first question is this- whose report will you believe? And where will you go to get the report? As you experience life, what's really going on? How do you make sense of it? How do you know where things are really going

The questions are legitimate. God never rebukes his children for having questions. He sometimes rebukes us for the way we ask them- in humility, or in arrogant unbelief - but the problem is not if the questions arise. The real issue is where you go with them. Do you resort to your own understanding? your own assessment of life? your experience and what "you have learned" from life?

Or, do you start by coming back to God to re-learn, to deepen your understanding of what it is God has actually promised us as his people. This is essentially what Job did; and David; and Abraham; and Moses; and even Christ himself as he answered Satan- "It is written, man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." That is God's promise - "You need bread, but it is only a part of the answer for what will sustain you. What really sustains you, and all things, is my promise, my word. You need to know how to interpret life, not from the ultimate point of bread, but from the ultimate point of my faithful, sustaining promise."

This is an act of humility because it means surrendering our “right” to interpret life on our own. It means we acknowledge that we can’t trust our own mental processes to come to the knowledge of the truth. It is a return to learning good and evil from God, as we were created to learn it at the beginning.

Many people miss a lot of the benefit of their faith simply because they insist on listening to themselves. Their hearts cry out “injustice, bitterness” and they choose to believe that rather than humbling themselves in the sight of God. **Isaiah 66:2**

This process of humbling ourselves and listening to God can be something very brief, or at times, very lengthy. Many Psalms give us the highlight of this kind of battle, but on closer look reveal a longer-term struggle (**Psalm 41; 42**). No matter how long the battle, the issue remains the same: to humble ourselves before God and learn his love and promises.

b. What we need to return to, to listen to, to wrestle with before God is his Promise given to us in Christ.

II Peter 1:3,4 tells us God has given us great and precious promises, through which (by believing them) we participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

God tells us to listen to His Word, but he does not simply tell us in harsh reality tones “This is life. This is reality. This is truth. Take it or leave it, it is still true.” *God always speaks to us as the God of loving promise.* He tells us the problems are the problems of sin, and the problems of living in a fallen world, and that we ourselves are self-centered in our understanding. *But he always promises his love and grace and wisdom and power for us as his children,* and that he will use everything in life to fulfill the most deeply meaningful purpose of all: to draw us more into his love and more into love for others, and the establishment of his kingdom on earth. *We are children of promise Galatians 4:28 and everything about our life in relationship to God is based on promise Galatians 3:5,* and it all comes to us because of the finished work of Christ **Romans 8:31ff.**

Every command God gives us, every insight he offers us about life, every bit of knowledge about creation is always packaged as a promise to us as his children. Every command he gives, he will enable us to follow by grace; every bit of insight is given with the promise of enjoying God more and loving others with greater insight. God doesn't just command us to

be humble and then he will dwell with us. He also promises to lead us in the process - cf **Psalm 107; Luke 22:31,32.**

B. Believing the promises is an act of trust

Learning to walk as those who believe the promises of God begins as an act of humility - submitting our hearts and minds to listen to what God has said he is doing and will do - and then it must move into an act of trust. Moses had a choice. He heard God's answer- his promise of love and faithfulness. Then, he needed to make a choice to trust God to fulfill his word.

Double-mindedness- trying to believe God's interpretation/promise and your own assessment (where it differs from God's) at the same time, is at the core an issue of pride. What does God say? **James 1:5-8; cf 4:1-10**

II. The Effect of Believing the Promises - Participating in the Divine Nature **2 Peter 1:3,4**

A. Increased enjoyment of our fellowship with God that leads us to trust him more

Moses believed God's promises, saw God fulfill his promises, and enjoyed fellowship with God that led him into a life of praise and worship and love and obedience. In general, many of the Israelites did not make that step into faith and trust of God's goodness to fulfill his word..

Consequently, every new crisis was a new cause to doubt God's love, instead of an opportunity to see his faithful promises unfold. As soon as Moses was gone for 30 days, the Israelites "worship" turned to idolatry. They wanted a "god" they could count on to lead them in a way they thought fit. **Exodus 32:1**

B. Becoming a People of Hope – a confidence that God will work his goodness on the earth

1. *Believing the promises of God gives us Hope for the present situation.* If God is good, and has committed himself to love us, and has promised to use his almighty power and wisdom to direct our lives to fulfill his good purposes, then *either he is going to be working those promises right now, in our present circumstances (even if they are difficult) or his promise is not true.*

If we believe and know God is at work today, we will start looking at our situations through his wisdom instead of our own and begin learning to see and anticipate his promises already being fulfilled now. "Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness" **Lamentations 3:22, 23.**

If we are not looking for that, we can miss a lot of what God is doing. "For the word of the Lord is right and true; he is faithful in all he does. The Lord loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of his unfailing love." **Psalm 33:4,5**

2. *Hope for the future.* As we see God more clearly working in the present, it will increasingly make us a people of hope for the future. If there is nothing to fear today, because God has given us Christ, and with him - all things (**Romans 8:32**), and we are increasingly seeing the unfolding of God's promise now, then what does the future hold? If we are learning to love more now, learning to enjoy God's love more - not despite, but even through the trials and difficulties of life- then what hope do we have, whatever comes tomorrow? Just greater love **Romans 5:1-5.** And that hope is sure, because God has promised and already told us where things are headed- to the restoration of all things and to a life forever with God.

People who lose hope either do not have or do not practically know the promise of God's love and faithfulness for today.

C. Endurance through Trials

As we believe God's promises, and see them unfold, we become a people of endurance. Paul says we can endure when we know the outcome is good. And how do we know? By faith in God who keeps his promises. **Romans 8:18-25**

D. Change in our Character

By the believing the promises of God, we benefit through the trials we endure. We cannot just grit our teeth and grow in our endurance in the Christian life and gain the benefit of what God wants to teach us. We must believe God. He requires it of us. Not because he is trying to make it hard on us, but because he created us for love and fellowship with him. Enduring trials without the love and fellowship that come through trust and faith doesn't yield the fruit of righteousness. It may yield the fruit of hard-nosed, no nonsense, joyless Christianity, but that is not really God's

intention. He wants a people who can laugh with those who laugh and weep with those who weep **Romans 12:9-16**. He wants us to be free from the inner motivations of fear and hate and selfish desire that drive other men. We can learn those things as experience God's faithfulness to keep his promises through times of trial.

E. Increased Confidence to Risk for the Kingdom

The net result of these things, gained through believing the promises of God, is a greater freedom to risk everything for the kingdom. It produces the liberty to die daily; to hold all created things loosely; to not grab after power; to freely enter into the sufferings of Christ.

2 Corinthians 3:12-4:15