

Why God's Promises Matter To God's People

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February 9, 2018 [Dripping Springs Church of Christ](#) [Article](#)

From the beginning of scripture, we begin to recognize a unique characteristic of God: He makes and keeps promises. Early on, these promises are known as “Covenants” in which God enters into an agreement with humanity. For example, he promised Noah post-flood that he would not bring that form of judgment on the earth again ([Gen. 9:11](#)); He still keeps that promise today. He promised Abraham that He would give his descendants the land of Canaan ([Gen. 13:14-16](#)) and fulfills it ([1 Kings 8:56](#)). We continue to see this pattern throughout: God binds Himself to His people through covenant, and the nation responds in trusting obedience in order to receive the full benefits of that promise.

In this, we see the heart of salvation in every era: God in grace promising to save His people by His power, and man receiving, by obedient faith, the blessing of that salvation. We see this continuing theme within the New Testament as well. Our hearts “cry out” in faith to the Lord ([Acts 2: 21](#); [22:16](#)) for Him to fulfill the promise of His powerful working in Christ through baptism ([Col. 2:12](#)). As a new creation, we then walk in trusting obedience, not in our own power, but in the hope that God will keep His covenant with us and bring us into the final rest ([Heb. 4:9](#)). This means that the greatest treasure of God's people in every generation is His promises. This is true in particularly difficult times when present circumstances threaten our faith. It is in those moments that we cling more fully to the Lord's past promises and look with hope to their future fulfillment. We catch a glimpse of this in [Exodus 6](#).

“Thus says the Lord, Israel is my firstborn son, and I say to you Let my son go that he may serve me” ([Ex. 4:22-23](#)). Moses (with Aaron) does just this, and Pharaoh responds by making the burden of the Israelites even more oppressive by refusing to provide the straw they need for their bricks ([Ex. 5:7-8](#)). When the foremen learn this after a severe beating, they come back to Moses and say, “The LORD look on you and judge, because you have made us stink in the sight of Pharaoh and his servants and have put a sword in their hand to kill us” (5:21). Moses then “turns to the Lord” and accuses Him:

“O Lord, why have you done evil to this people? Why did you ever send me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has done evil to this people, and you have not delivered your people at all.”—[Exodus 5:22-23](#)

Notice what Moses is questioning: the fulfillment of God’s promise to deliver His people from oppression. Not only has God not freed them from slavery, He has made their burden more severe. The faith of God’s people suddenly collides with the reality of great wickedness: where is God? Didn’t He promise to help us? Is He going to do what he said he would do? It is at this point that the Lord responds to those fears:

“God spoke to Moses and said to him, “I am the Lord. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by my name the Lord, I did not make myself known to them. I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they lived as sojourners. Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the people of Israel whom the Egyptians hold as slaves, and I have remembered my covenant. Say therefore to the people of Israel, I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you for a possession. I am the Lord.”—

[Exodus 6:2-8](#)

but it was nothing that the Almighty I AM couldn't handle. This is especially true when it comes to the fulfillment of his promise (6:4): He made a promise and He is going to keep it (6:8). This is the truth that God turns His people to when they are struggling in their faith: His character and power. Particularly, His past promises and their future fulfillment. Notice the words He uses to describe what He has done in the past:

- "I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob..." (v.3)
- "I also established my covenant..." (v. 4)
- "I have heard the groaning..." (v. 5)

God was present in their past, anchored Himself in the promotion of their good, and heard their current distress. Because of this, future action is coming:

- "I will bring you out from the burdens of the Egyptians..." (6:6)
- "I will deliver you from slavery to them..." (6:6b)
- "I will redeem you with an outstretched arm..." (6:6c)
- "I will take you to be my people..." (6:7)
- "I will be your God..." (6:7)
- "I will bring you into the land..." (6:8)
- "I will give it to you as a possession..." (6:8b)

In their distress and anguish, God not only reminds His people of His power but His active presence: he appeared to them in the past, is aware of their present hardship, and will work to save them in the near future. There is also an implication that the blessings the Lord has waiting for them far outweigh the current distress they are experiencing. All of this is based on the reality of God's promises: that he has made and will fulfill them. As we think of God's response to Israel's fears, we can't help but question our response to current troubles.

There are days when the world seems so dark. With school shootings, rampant immorality, evil regimes, etc. it is difficult to not have a lack of faith in God's promise. It is in those moments, and on those days, that we must remember who God is: that he appeared to us

in the past ([John 1:14](#)), that he is aware of our current distress, and will work to save us in the future (1 Pet

“God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.” ([1 Cor. 1:9](#)). – *Jacob Rutledge*

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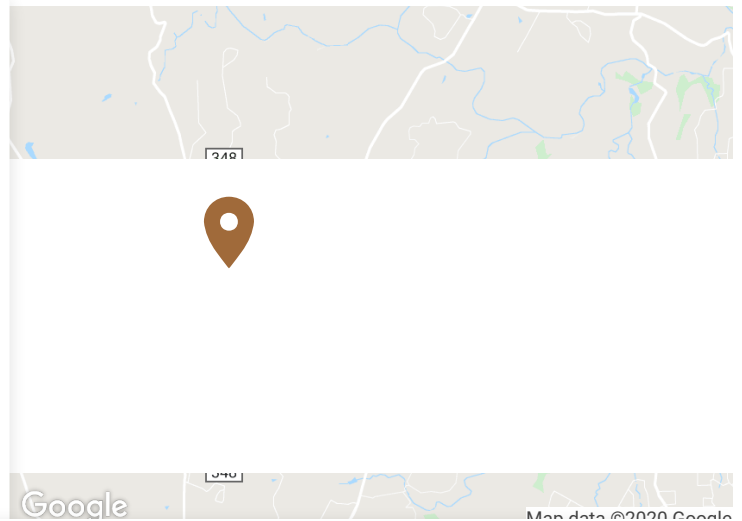
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