

Cat.1 #2 Promises.

By Helene Bos

Lately I had to think about the whole subject of promises.

Human promises are many times not very trustworthy, also not when they are given by people of integrity. The Lord warns us not to make a promise too quickly. And *He holds us responsible for the promises we have made.*

When we realize how serious the Lord takes our promises and how we deal with them, we can conclude from this that **He Himself takes His own promises very, very serious. We can believe that He will not make a promise that He will not fulfil from His side..**

Joshua said to the Israelites at the end of his life, Joshua 23:14:

"And you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one thing has failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spoke concerning you. All have come to pass for you; not one word of them has failed".

So we also can be convinced that no promise the Lord ever gave in His Word will fail from His side.

Yet, the letter to the Hebrews makes it clear *that a whole generation of Israelites did not receive the promise of entering the Promised Land.* But it was not because the Lord failed them, it was because they failed the Lord. Because of their unbelief they could not enter.

How is this for our own lives? How is it for a whole people-group, for a nation?

THE chapter to meditate on, of course, is Hebrews 11. And THE verse is:

"Now, faith is the SUBSTANCE of things hoped for..."

This is the definition of faith!

The Greek word for Faith is PISTIS.

Vine's dictionary says: This means: *a strong conviction*, based upon hearing. In the N.T. it is always used of *faith in God or Jesus Christ, or spiritual things.* This noun and in the verb related to it, bring out the relation to the invisible God. It expresses a **conviction of Gods truth, and His truthfulness.**

It is distinct from faith in man. *The object of this faith is not a promise, but God himself.*

Vine adds to this that the object of Abraham's faith was not God's promise to him, that was only the occasion of the exercise. *His faith rested on God Himself.*

When there is faith in God, all things are possible. Faith always has to do with God, outside myself. So it has nothing to do with my feelings! Also, we may *receive* faith. Then we may walk in faith, not faith of ourselves but faith of God. It is a gift of the Holy Spirit.

We can feel a tension here between (some/many) promises of the Lord, and what some people call "reality". There were moments that I could lay hold on a promise, but another time I could not lay hold of the same promise, though I wanted.

In those cases I read about God's faithfulness to Abraham, to David. Many times the Lord says that He does something for Israel, because of His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He refers to His covenant with David many times. A few examples: Exodus 2:24, Leviticus 26:41a, 42; 2Chron 21:7; Jer. 33:17,-22,25-26. I read about Gods creative power, about His love towards us. And when I had myself immersed with the traits of His character, well, then the doubts withdrew. Although I did not yet see the outcome, I did know that this God does not lie. And I could say to myself: in His time the promise will become true. But then I would put the promise on the shelf.

Recently however I understood that in doing that, putting the promise on the shelf, I made a serious mistake.

My attention was focused anew on the Scripture "Now, faith is the SUBSTANCE of things hoped for..." and I was meditating on it when I was doing my household chores.

Then, for some reason, I started to read the preface to the "Cheque Book of the Bank of Faith", daily, devotional, readings written by the man of God C.H. Spurgeon. (Christian Focus Publications).

This was a beautiful help in coming to understand the issue that was holding my attention. *In this preface Spurgeon compares a promise from God with a cheque payable to order.*

The promise, he says, is given to the believer with the view of bestowing upon him some good thing, and he has to treat the promise as a reality, as a man treats a cheque.

I quote: "He is to take the promise, and endorse it with his own name by personally receiving it as true. He is by faith to accept it as his own."

By putting his name to it he testifies to the receipt of the blessing. Having done this, he has to believingly present the promise to the Lord, as a man presents a cheque at the counter of the Bank. He presents it to the Lord, pleading in prayer, expecting to have it fulfilled. The time when the Lord fulfils the promise can vary. One promise is meant for NOW, and when we take that promise to heaven's bank, we can expect to have it fulfilled today. Another promise has a date on it further on in time, and we have to exercise patience, till the arrival date. But the Bank, says Spurgeon, is sure to pay when the due time arrives.

Believing that the Lord will fulfil that promise at the right time is already exercising faith. Believing in God's faithfulness, His utter reliability and trustworthiness.

It started to dawn on me that here is *the key to believing God's promises in the Bible*.

Spurgeon warns: "Some fail to place the endorsement of faith upon the cheque, and so they get nothing; others are slack in presenting it, and these also receive nothing. This is not the fault of the promise, but of those who do not act with it in a common-sense, business-like manner."

Sometimes we realize that there are promises that we believe to be real in general, but we fail "to place the endorsement of faith upon the "cheque", so we do not receive the fulfilment.

Placing this endorsement of faith upon the promise, and presenting it to the Lord, requires a decision, it requires an act of the will.

Of the people who were healed by Jesus the big majority, maybe for 99%, made *the decision to go to Jesus*.

I have to decide whether I want to look up to the Lord, to trust Him in believing expectation.

Hebr.11:6, "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." .. I cannot have faith in Him, when I do not believe that He is there.

Here, I believe, lies the key to receiving or not. I have to decide this, also when the promise seems to be contradicted by what the natural mind says.

What that Scripture also tells us is that our faith in Him *pleases* the Lord. Maybe that that pleasure opens the way to His grace to fulfil the promise.

What is the opposite of faith?

Can it be *fear*? Fear for *disappointments*, that it yet will not happen? Fear that God will *reject* us and that He will not grant us our request?

Are we open for the "counter-arguments" of why the Lord probably will not fulfil the promise for us?

Have you been in a situation that you "remember" all the good and loving sayings of the Lord that He is our/your/my healer, that there is healing under His wings, that through the stripes of Jesus we/you are healed? And then the questions come. In our mind, or from outside: But why does the Lord not heal everyone? What about those who are not healed?

What happens here is not : that we are "using the mind that God has given to us" but the enemy comes in with the seed of doubt: "Is it not that God's word does not apply for every sickness?"

And we let him in, into our minds and into our hearts.

Here the assassination of God's character starts. We start to doubt: maybe the Lord does NOT want to heal everybody/ her/him/me. Maybe, He brought sickness in his/her/my life on purpose.

Several years ago a friend, Cristoph Häselbarth, gave us a book that he had written, together with a doctor, and in cooperation with therapists, psychiatrists, and other doctors: "Wie wir geheilt werden können".

In it they share (translated from German): "God's possibilities and ways to heal us, are manifold. In the following we mention pointer-wise (the ways) through which we can receive healing. Often we need to apply a combination of several points, in order to receive healing, eventually also together with an application of treatment".

They then mention 62(!) ways that, apart from the medical way (which the writers accept), can contribute to or bring healing, and which all are related to our walk with the Lord. Sixty two ways!

Do we doubt that the Lord is willing to heal us?

I give this example because we all probably are familiar with a situation in which we, or a loved one, or a friend has been ill. We become *confused* by the suggestive questions of the enemy.

We there and then have to choose: who will I trust, who will I listen to?

When you read the story of Abraham going up the Mount Moriah, with Isaac at his side, we can see, as it were, them going. An old man with a beard, silently walking, step after step...A young boy, walking beside him, talking enthusiastically. His father and he are on an adventure, together! Gradually he will notice that his father does not respond much, he starts to think about this enterprise. Abraham is thinking about this assignment.

Of course *he has to face the issue*: how can the Lord, who gave this child, which is the promised son, ask him to sacrifice him? A custom, human sacrifice, that was part of the religious background that he, Abraham, left behind when he started to journey to the promised land?

Hebrews 11 tells us that Abraham did offer him up to the Lord "concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead" (, "from which he also received him in a figurative sense").

Never before, as far as we know, had somebody been raised up from the dead. It was against all reasoning that Abraham believed that it was possible. I think that he had to deal with the doubts in his mind: would that be possible, for God to bring Isaac back to life, after he had offered him up?

He made a choice: *Abraham decided to have faith in God, to believe that God could do it, though he had never heard that something like that had ever happened before.*

This decision: *to believe not so much the miracle, but God, and so maintain the goodness of God's character,* was a choice. And *God saw it,* and I am convinced: *He was so pleased!*

There is much more to say of that story, but this is what I want to stress now.

When we make the decision to put our trust in God, a spiritual process starts.

Our soul starts to grow towards the Lord. We will trust the Lord more and more. And He gives us challenges to trust Him, AND TO PLEASE HIM. We come to know Him, more and more. His reliability, trustworthiness, goodness, love, provision...

When we make the choice not to trust God, when we give in to the doubts, to the fear, also a spiritual process starts.

Peter, when he walked on the water, he looked at the wind. We cannot see the wind, so he looked at something he could not see. That is also a sort of belief. He feared the wind. When we realize that we did not trust God, out of fear, we need to repent of that decision, and trust the Lord the next time, otherwise *we grow AWAY from Him.* The enemy will give us reasons the next time, and the next time, and the next time,... for not *really trusting the Lord.*

Till we end up with straight unbelief, with ideas about God that are contradicting His character.

Jesus said: Who is not for Me Is against Me

We either grow in the image of Christ, or we lose it.

Hebrews 10: 39 gives us two alternatives:" But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul."

It is either – or. We give in to unbelief, or we believe. That is a choice.

There are many promises, for our personal lives, for loved ones, for the Bride of Christ, for Israel, for our nation.

Let us choose FAITH!