

Kington Baptist Church

MESSAGE BOARD – 79

In times of great uncertainty the pressing need of the Christian is to be able to rely on the promises of God; to rest in the hope he gives in the gospel. There are many Christians who seem to feel that the promises of God – St. Peter called them God's *exceedingly great promises* – are remote from the realities of our everyday lives. If that's how we feel we must ask, What, in a time of uncertainty, can we rely on, what can we be sure of?

The first thing we must try to grasp is that God's promises, indeed all God's words, are *true*. It may seem to us that these promises don't belong in our day to day lives – it's not unusual to feel that is the case. The solution is found, not in doubting the promises of God, but in recognising that most probably we've not understood what these promises mean and how they work-out in our lives.

The most vital of all God's promises, those that give us the firmest anchor to our souls, are those already fulfilled, in the birth, life, and especially in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Truth is that all that concerned the life and death of Jesus had been foretold and promised many years before he appeared on earth.

Those promises, above every other promise, are the promises we must hold onto most firmly. They meet us in the deepest and most urgent of our needs. Our deepest need is to be right with God, the need for forgiveness and, beyond forgiveness, to find hope. We need to be held in the love of God, to know his love '*shed abroad in our hearts*'. Through God's mercy we are forgiven. Through his grace we are given righteousness and hope. *Mercy* means we don't suffer what our sins deserve. *Grace* means we freely receive an inheritance we could never deserve. Through mercy and grace we're assured of welcome when we stand in the presence of God. We may have firm trust in the promises of God, due entirely to God's mercy and grace. We have nothing to fear and may rely entirely on the hope he gives in and through the Lord Jesus Christ.

The achievements of the Lord Jesus on our behalf are not the result of wishful thinking. We didn't dream-up or invent this person and the achievements of his life and death. Christ for us is rooted in history – he was born, lived and died. The record of his history isn't a strange, secret and exclusive message or hidden code. We have all this in a book, open to all, written by eye-witnesses, with the imprimatur of God himself, who cannot deceive or lie; a record inspired by the Holy Spirit who is truth.

A question immediately comes to mind: Why is it that then that the world doesn't believe this story? That's an unavoidable question. But before we answer it we ought to notice that billions *do* believe, they believe the story and they trust the Person at the heart and centre of this story. But still many do not believe. So why is that?

Firstly, we must remember and never ignore that there is one whose whole intention is to close minds and hearts to all that God says. He did this at the beginning, with Eve in the Garden of Eden. The serpent who spoke to her is still peddling the same line: *'Has God said?..'* His question is intended to put doubts in our minds and breed resentment towards God. He's been doing this monotonously ever since. His influence is subtle and hidden but real, dangerous and devastating.

Secondly, we are told that people don't believe this good news because they cannot. We're told *'the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit, neither can he...'* A blindness afflicts the mind and soul; more profoundly, we're told the natural man is spiritually dead. Until the Holy Spirit opens ears and eyes, and renews hearts spiritual realities seem foolishness. Jesus explained this to Nicodemus, in John chapter 3. Jesus spoke of the vital and indispensable need to be *'born again'*.

That which has birth from the flesh is flesh, and that which has birth from the Spirit is spirit. Do not be surprised that I say to you, you must be born again. The wind goes where it chooses, you hear its sound, but you are unable to say where it comes from and where it goes: so is everyone born of the Spirit. (John 3.6-8)

These words remind us that we need this work in our hearts; we need God's Spirit to shine the light of God's truth into our minds; to give us spiritual faculties to see *the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*. We should always recognise that if Jesus Christ is real to us, if our faith and trust is in him, this is possible only because he has opened our hearts and gifted us with faith: *'we love him because he first loved us'*. Thank him for his mercy and grace, and keep in mind, *'that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion in the day of Jesus Christ'*.

For it is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 4.6)

A certain woman named Lydia, a worshiper of God, was listening to us; she was from the city of Thyatira and a dealer in purple cloth. The Lord opened her heart to respond to what was said by Paul. (Acts 16.14)