

# Prophecy vs. Policy

## *Part 2: Believing Personal Promises*

(preached 1/28/24)

### LAST WEEK:

- Are we believing and living according to the prophetic promises God made in the Bible like the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming and our resurrection?
- Or are we living according to the policies of man and external circumstances?
- Which has a greater effect on our emotions, words, thoughts, and actions?
- Examples: are high taxes, forbidding gas stoves/heating, and other policies dragging us down: Making us angry, frustrated, and wanting to give up hope?
- Dan's 3 friends had to decide between prophecy vs. policy & circumstances.
- Mary and Joseph had to do the same.
- So did the Apostles when thrown in jail and then interrogated by the Sanhedrin.
- When God declares a thing, it comes true!
- When God makes a promise, He always keeps it!
- God promises clash with the policies of man, even when the man and his government are the most powerful in the world.
- God's promises defy external circumstances, both personal and global.
- God prophecies override, overarch, and overcome all!
- When we live according to what He has declared, we'll be more stable in our hearts and minds...even if the world is in the middle of Armageddon.

TODAY we zero in on *personal promises made to us by the Lord Himself* and I begin with a personal testimony I've shared before.

**GATEWAY FIRST BEGAN** in September 2003 in the evening and night 1 was packed. After worship Pastor Fran took the pulpit and the first thing he said was "*I'm a church planter and will only be here for a few years...at which time the Lord will raise up one from among you to take over as Gateway's Pastor.*"

**My stomach did a major belly flop** that, for me, came out of nowhere. I've never been pregnant and won't ever be, but it felt like some living being did a somersault in my stomach. Like when John the Baptist turns over in his mom's belly when he meets Jesus Who's still in Mary's belly.

**I asked the Lord what happened and He said “it’s going to be you.”** I immediately rebuked and bound the voice of pride and threw in Satan just to cover my bases, commanding both to silence. There was no chance of me taking over: I didn’t know Fran that well and he didn’t know me...and I wasn’t sure if I even liked him yet. He’d already picked his leadership team, all of whom were Christians far more seasoned than me. I didn’t show up at Gateway with any desire to be its Pastor, or to be a pastor anywhere!

**Less than 2 years later I was being ordained as the pastor of our church.** As soon as that happened, Fran told me to get on my face and ask for a prophetic promise from God for Gateway. So I did. The Lord led me to the famous *Matthew 16:18*:

[Mat 16:18 ESV] “And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

**PETER MEANS “LITTLE ROCK”** and Jesus is the Big Rock, the Chief Cornerstone of the Church. Peter is one of the smaller stones in the spiritual edifice that Jesus calls His Bride. Jesus is making a promise for His global church: *that Hell won’t overcome it, kill it, corrupt it, or put out its fire. Not ever.*

**God went on to tell me He was applying this promise specifically to Gateway.** He brought me to the letters He wrote to the 7 churches in Revelation chapters 2 & 3 where He threatens to “take the lampstand away” from one of them if they don’t repent. He showed me how various churches had shut down in the modern age and I took it to mean their lampstands had been taken away!

**I felt very good and invigorated by this promise!** The Lord followed this up with additional prophetic witnesses including words from others and a dramatic dream of walking down a long, dark tunnel and ending up at the New Jerusalem! Therefore I went into my new calling with a spring in my step and oodles of hope for our church!

**Until things went south.** I’m not getting into detail so let me give the really short version: I messed up big time. Big mistakes, church-killing level errors, one right after another. My pride, attempt to control and micromanage people, and desire to be liked and admired by everybody practically tore Gateway apart at the seams and people began to leave in droves.

**The lowest moment** was one Sunday morning when I had to literally drag myself to church...and I was the pastor. I forced myself there and it was the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday where about 10 people were showing up: and 4 of those 10 were myself, Becky, and our 2 kids at the time. I recall one of the ladies approaching me and saying “*you don’t have to keep the church open for us, Pastor Scott. If you need to close Gateway down, don’t let us stop you.*”

**I WENT HOME THAT DAY AND BAWLED MY EYES OUT.** I'd failed God, pastor Fran, my family, and everyone in the congregation. There was a voice in my head that was getting louder and louder as all this was going on, and that day it was the loudest it had ever been.

It said *"maybe you missed it? Maybe God never called you to be a pastor? Maybe that was just your pride? Maybe God never promised Gateway would survive? Perhaps you misinterpreted what you heard and saw in your dream? Maybe you read in what you wanted to hear vs. the truth?"*

**The next day I went to work at the tree farm,** but couldn't do anything. All I did was cry and agree with the voice. Clearly I wasn't called into the ministry and Gateway wasn't going to make it. The lady at church had been right: it was time for me to call Pastor Fran and step down in shame. To disband the church and encourage the few remaining to go somewhere else.

**We would end up somewhere else too,** and I was already prophesying the humiliation of people asking me *"aren't you the pastor of your own church? What are you doing here?"*

**I laid face down in the dirt**—for real. I figured I would submit my resignation to God first, and started telling Him all about how I'd failed and messed everything up. And the Lord said *"what did I tell you before? I promised that the Gates of Hell wouldn't prevail against the Church, and I included Gateway."* I argued of course—every circumstance showed exactly the opposite of Matthew 16:18. I informed Him that most everyone had already left, no one trusted me to shepherd them, and that it was over.

**"GET UP" HE SAID.** Remember the final scene in Bambi? The hunters shot his mom, the forest is on fire, and Bambi is all broken and has given up. He's lying on the ground and waiting for the flames to take him. Then his dad shows up. *"Get up"* he says to Bambi, *"you must get up."* Bambi doesn't want to because he feels that life is over and he just wants to give up. His dad repeats himself *"Get up."* Bambi does...***and his father leads him out of the fire.***

**"Get up" God said to me.** While there's nothing wrong in being prostrate before God, there is when one is about to let fires of despair consume them. There's something wrong when one stops believing in the calling and promises of God. I wasn't before the Lord in submission, despite my posture, but unbelief and rebellion. I was telling God "no" and saying He lied about Gateway surviving. I was deciding the course of my life vs. obeying Him.

**I got up and our Heavenly Father led us out of the fire...and Gateway is still here almost 2 decades later.**

**Do you have a prophetic promise that was given to you by God years ago?**

One that He spoke it to you directly or through someone else?

**Have policies and external circumstances gone against the promise?** Most if not all evidence seems to defy what God said to you years ago?

**Was the promise God made you confirmed by multiple witnesses?** (Have you sought confirmation?)

*[Psa 119:38 ESV]* "Confirm to your servant your promise, that you may be feared."

**If you feel you already have one, seek confirmation.** The Lord promised to build a Temple where He would live and years went by. David asked for confirmation, and the Lord gave it...then this happened years later through his son Solomon:

*[1Ki 8:20 ESV]* 20 Now the LORD has fulfilled his promise that he made. For I have risen in the place of David my father, and sit on the throne of Israel, as the LORD promised, and I have built the house for the name of the LORD, the God of Israel.

**JOSEPH HAD EVERY REASON TO BELIEVE GOD'S PROMISES TO HIM WOULD NEVER COME TRUE.** All the circumstances in his life actually seemed to bring him in the OPPOSITE direction of the prophetic destiny God spoke over him. He's given the following 2 dreams when he's a teenager:

*[Gen 37:7-11 ESV]* 7 Behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and behold, my sheaf arose and stood upright. And behold, your sheaves gathered around it and bowed down to my sheaf." 8 His brothers said to him, "Are you indeed to reign over us? Or are you indeed to rule over us?" So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words. 9 Then he dreamed another dream and told it to his brothers and said, "Behold, I have dreamed another dream. Behold, the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me." 10 But when he told it to his father and to his brothers, his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow ourselves to the ground before you?" 11 And his brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the saying in mind.

In other words, **Joseph won't just be the greatest among their family, but clearly in a position of great power** indicated by the sun and moon bowing down to him as well.

**JACOB SHOULD HAVE GOTTEN THIS** and realized it was from God—he has his own God-led story of overcoming impossible odds, having a jealous brother, being restricted by policies made by tradition and his father-in-law, and tough circumstances to receive what God intended for him. Yet even Jacob turned Israel rebukes his son and is against him on this.

*You know what happens from there:* his brothers, who hate him, throw him into a pit to kill him. When he doesn't die, they sell him as a slave to the Midianites who sell him to Potiphar the Egyptian. Slavery is a policy.

**Things are going fairly well at Potiphar's** house and Joseph becomes head slave, if you will, *but is this the destiny God promised?* No. Even though he's head slave, he's still a slave! The Bible described Joseph as a handsome man who's well built...and Potiphar's wife notices...and makes a pass at him.

**Joseph does the right thing and runs away!** Yet she lies and claims that he tried something with her, Potiphar believes her, and throws Joe in prison. Again I remind you: prisons back then must have been horrible: confined in a small space with no electric, flush toilets, running water, heat, or A/C. Nevertheless, Joseph becomes the head prisoner, trusted by the warden. **Is this the prophetic destiny God has for him?** No! He might be head prisoner, but he's still an inmate and locked in jail!

Thus far, **none of the circumstances** in Joseph's life indicate God fulfilling His promise. Quite the opposite, I would say.

**Joseph interprets the dreams of Pharaoh's cup bearer** who clearly fell out of favor with the ruler. God shows the cup bearer will be restored to his position and, when he is, will he put in a good word for Joseph to get him out of jail? The cup bearer promises and is freed just as the Lord said he would...but then forgets all about his promise to Joseph.

**2 years pass...is this what God promised to Joseph? To languish in jail?**

**FINALLY PHARAOH HAS A DREAM** and the cup bearer remembers: tells him Joseph can interpret. Pharaoh brings Joseph before him, Joe interprets, then shares more of God's wisdom on how to solve the problem. Next thing you know this happens:

**[Gen 41:37-44 ESV]** 37 This proposal pleased Pharaoh and all his servants. 38 And Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find a man like this, in whom is the Spirit of God?" 39 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has shown you all this, there is none so discerning and wise as you are. 40 **You shall be over my house, and all my people shall order themselves as you command. Only as regards the throne will I be greater than you.**" 41 And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt." 42 Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph's hand, and clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain about his neck. 43 And he made him ride in his second chariot. And they called out before him, "Bow the knee!" Thus he set him over all the land of Egypt. 44 Moreover, Pharaoh said to Joseph, **"I am Pharaoh, and without your consent no one shall lift up hand or foot in all the land of Egypt."**

**Joe goes from being an inmate to the 2<sup>nd</sup> most powerful man in Egypt in one day.** While that seems fast, please remember He was 17 years old when his brothers threw him into the pit, and Genesis records that one the day he was exalted to this status he was 30. As great as all this is, ***it's still not the fulfillment of God's prophetic promise.***

***Just as Pharaoh dreamed,*** there were 7 years of plenty and then 7 years of famine. People begin coming from other countries to Egypt to buy food that Joseph told them to store. Back in the Canaan, Jacob sends his sons—Joseph's brothers—to Egypt to buy grain. Then this happens:

**[Gen 42:5-6 ESV]** 5 Thus the sons of Israel came to buy among the others who came, for the famine was in the land of Canaan. 6 Now Joseph was governor over the land. He was the one who sold to all the people of the land. **And Joseph's brothers came and bowed themselves before him with their faces to the ground.**

**FINALLY THE PROPHECY IS FULFILLED!** After 13 years of slavery and prison, where every policy and external circumstance is against him, God brings His promise into reality. Joseph would go on to fully reconcile with his brothers and father and bring them to live in Egypt to avoid starvation.

***It isn't that Joseph overcame these odds...it was His faith that God would overcome and override to bring His destiny about.***

***Did God make a personal promise to you years ago?***  
**Was the promise confirmed by additional witnesses?**

If yes, then let's pray right now for a fresh wave of faith to overcome policy and circumstances so that we will believe.