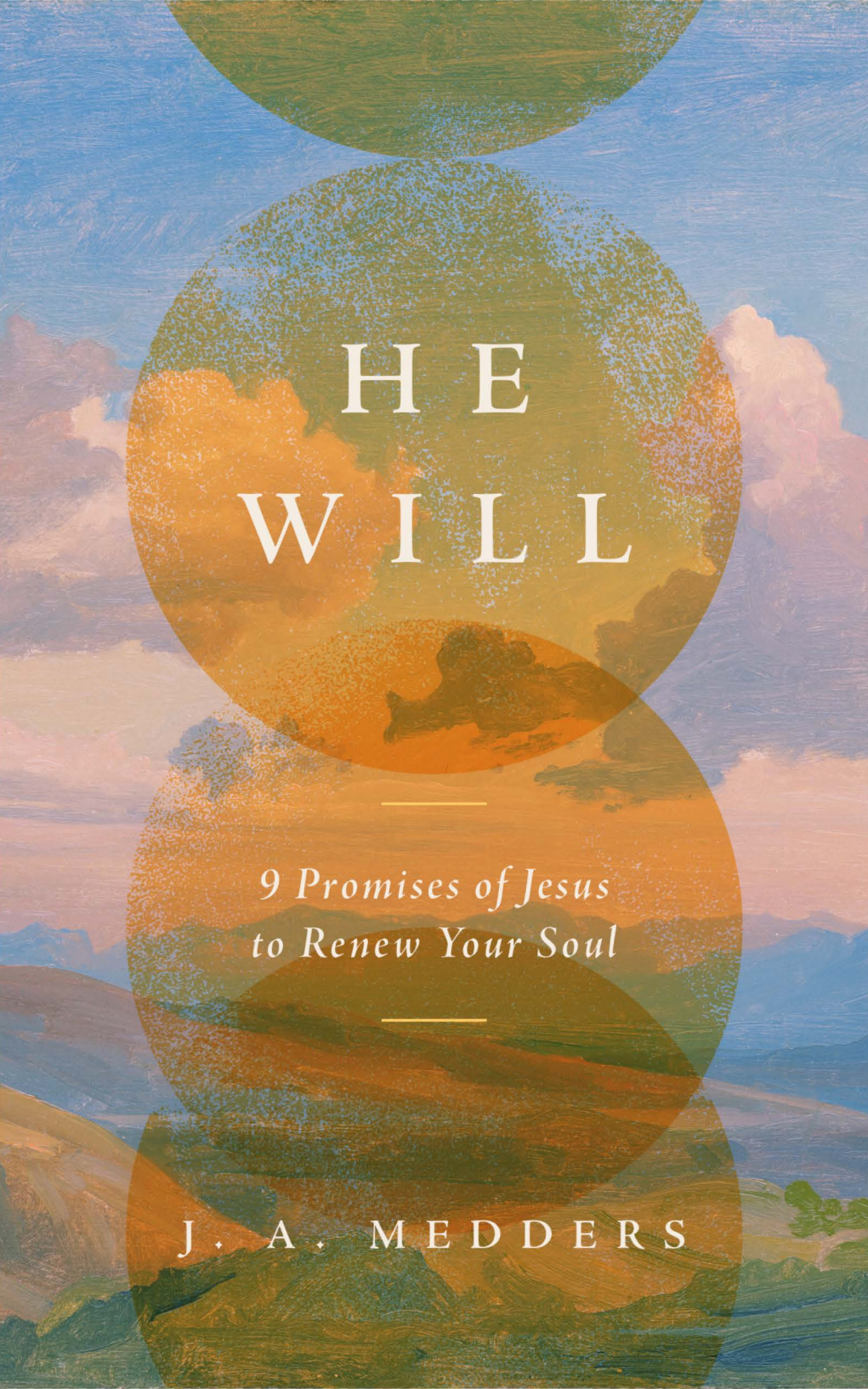




HE WILL

*9 Promises of Jesus
to Renew Your Soul*

J. A. MEDDERS

“He Will was a deep drink of refreshment to my soul. Many have focused their attention on the ‘I am’ statements of Jesus, but this intentional look at his ‘I will’ statements provides the opportunity to linger over truths we may have too quickly hurried past. Medders helps us think clearly on select Scriptures while constantly applying them to the heart.”

MATT BOSWELL, Hymnwriter of “His Mercy Is More” and
Author of *Create in Me a Clean Heart*

“Meditating on these promises has been a much-needed balm for my sometimes weary soul. Just as the ‘I am’ statements of Jesus in John’s Gospel reveal the glory of his majesty and divinity, so these ‘I will’ statements clearly show the great love of our Savior for his own. Jeff’s work in this book is a gift to all of us, pointing us over and over again to the one in whom every promise finds its yes and amen!”

BOB LEPINE, Pastor, Author, and Host of *Truth for Life with Alistair Begg* and *Mornings* on Family Radio

“This book is a Christ-saturated breath of fresh air! Clear, warm, and above all deeply encouraging. I am sure that God will use this short but immensely rich book to strengthen everyone who reads it.”

GARY MILLAR, Principal, Queensland Theological College, Australia
and Author of *Saving Eutychus*

“He Will is a joyful, soul-fortifying reminder that Jesus kept—and will keep—every promise he has made. This book is thick with gospel hope, and in it Jeff lifts your chin to look at the one who loves you the most no matter what you’ve done or how you’ve sinned. You will love Jesus more when you finish this book.”

GLENNA MARSHALL, Author of *Everyday Faithfulness*, *Memorizing Scripture*, and *Known & Loved*

“I’ve never confessed sin in a book endorsement, but when Jeff Medders first told me his idea for this book—shifting from Jesus’ famous ‘I am’ statements to his ‘I will’ statements—I was envious. Why didn’t I think of that? Thankfully, Jeff did, and page after page he shows what those two little words mean for guilt, weakness, prayer, church hurt, death, and the hope beyond it. *He Will* turns our eyes away from ourselves and back to the King who keeps every promise he makes.”

MATT SMETHURST, Lead Pastor, River City Baptist Church,
Richmond, Virginia; Author of *The Life Jesus Gives* and *Tim Keller on the Christian Life*; Cohost, *The Everyday Pastor*

“This is my favorite book that my friend, Dr. J.A. Medders, has written so far. He has a gift for taking biblical truth and making it come alive with warmth, clarity, wisdom, and a touch of joy-filled humor. In *He Will*, Jeff invites us to slow down and savor the promises of Jesus. Many people have heard of the ‘I am’ statements of Jesus, but these ‘I will’ statements should also be cherished. Whether you are exploring the faith, or are a believer looking to be strengthened in your faith, I encourage you to read and consider these astonishing promises of Jesus.”

TONY MERIDA, Founding Pastor of Imago Dei Church, Raleigh, NC,
and the Vice President of Planter Development for Send Network

“This book has come at the right time in my life. I forget how desperately I need the soul-sustaining promises of Jesus—they are like oxygen for the Christian. Medders reminds us to count on Christ in such a pastoral, down-to-earth way. I already have a list of people in mind who I’ll be buying this for.”

JIMMY NEEDHAM, Teaching Pastor, Artist, Author,
and Cohost of the *Clearly* podcast

“With compelling prose, Jeff Medders draws readers into the beauty, assurance, and comfort of Christ’s promises. Take up and read this book, that your soul might be strengthened and renewed. Jesus has made incredible and precious promises to his people, and he will keep them all—the promises and the people.”

MITCHELL L. CHASE, Associate Professor of Biblical Studies
at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Preaching Pastor,
Kosmosdale Baptist Church in Louisville

J . A . M E D D E R S

HE WILL

*Nine Promises of Jesus
to Renew Your Soul*

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*To Ivy,
the golden daughter*

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The “I will” Statements

I WILL GIVE MY FLESH

I WILL RISE AGAIN

I WILL DRAW ALL PEOPLE TO MYSELF

I WILL SEND THE SPIRIT

I WILL NOT LEAVE YOU AS ORPHANS

I WILL GIVE YOU LIVING WATER

I WILL NEVER CAST YOU OUT

I WILL GIVE YOU REST

I WILL LOVE YOU AND MANIFEST MYSELF

I WILL MAKE YOU FISHERS OF MEN

I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH

I WILL GIVE YOU THE KEYS

I WILL ANSWER PRAYER

I WILL RAISE YOU UP

I WILL SEE YOU AGAIN AND YOUR HEARTS WILL REJOICE

I WILL COME AGAIN AND TAKE YOU TO MYSELF

Introduction

She runs out of the house in a hurry. Grabs her car keys and takes off. Again.

I look out the window and instantly see why my daughter is acting this way.

The sunset is unreal.

Cotton-candy pink, burnt orange, dotted and stretched clouds. It's hard to keep from saying "whoa" when the sky is dazzling. And when Ivy sees a sunset—a brilliant one—she stops what she's doing and drives to the fake lake in our neighborhood to get the best view of the sunset. She goes there just to enjoy it. And also to take pictures of it so she can remember it and text it to me. She even has an album in her photo app full of sunsets. They are awesome.

It seems hardwired in us to declare the beauty created by the sun's rising and setting. Even though the sun is the most obvious giant, flaming orb in the sky, we don't want people to miss it, so we exclaim, "Look at that! Wow. It's beautiful. Have you seen it?" It's a reflex to herald something amazing.

On our annual family beach trip, it's impossible to ignore the sunsets. Every evening, the sky pops with vibrant colors. The four of us migrate to the balcony, grab chairs, and stare. We savor. We slow down. We *ooh* and *ahh*. We talk about

the colors, the clouds, and enjoy the scene set before us. We are hardwired to call out and communally enjoy beautiful, awe-inspiring, and glorious sights.

And that's what I want to do in this book.

I've seen rays of glory burst from the words of Jesus.

Glorious sights shine from Christ's sentences. I'm here to call your attention to the awesomeness of Jesus' promises. I'm inviting you to behold, to stare at a particular phrase from Jesus that can brighten your worship of Jesus, deepen your trust in Jesus, and elevate your enjoyment of Jesus.

This book exists because a statement from Jesus caught my eye, and it propelled me into his heart.

THE PROMISES OF JESUS

Are you familiar with the "I am" statements of Jesus in the Gospel of John? They are amazing and unique metaphors Jesus uses to describe his person and work. "I am the bread of life," "I am the door," and so on. Multiple books and sermon series on these words of Jesus have served the church for decades. But that's not what jumped out to me.

Have you ever noticed the "I will" statements of Jesus?

While working through my regular Bible-reading plan, a phrase from Jesus caught my attention that I'd never paid attention to before.

I will...

It stopped my eyes from going further down the page. It struck me how Jesus was making a promise. He was showing his resolve. His commitment to me. That I can take this promise he is making and count on it—he *will* do it.

The next morning, with my Bible open, I saw another "I will" from Jesus. I circled it, kept reading, and then another—this chapter was packed with promises from Jesus. My mind began to run through the Gospels, recalling other times when Jesus said, "I will..."

I started compiling, stacking, surveying—and savoring.

“I will never cast out” (John 6:37); *“I will give you rest”* (Matthew 11:28); *“I will build my church”* (Matthew 16:18); *“I will come again”* (John 14:3) and more.

As I took in the magnitude of Jesus’ promises, my heart swelled with gratitude, praise, and confidence in Christ and his word. I was awash in the goodness of Jesus. And the same can happen to you. I wrote this book because I believe that Christ’s “I will” statements—what he promises you, wants for you, will do for you—can be used by God to renew your soul.

SPIRITUAL RENEWAL

If you are spiritually hungry and thirsty—if you are craving more enjoyment of Christ—these “I will” statements from Jesus are like a multicourse dinner. Each chapter presents nourishing promises from Jesus that will strengthen, comfort, and delight. Savor them. Meditate on them. A banquet awaits.

Maybe you’ve picked up this book, and you are feeling spiritually depleted or lukewarm—and you want to change. The power of Christ’s promises is a great prescription for your condition. A groggy spirituality can be revived by what’s revealed in your Lord’s “I will” statements. A spiritual sleepiness can be awakened by the brightness of your Lord’s promises to you. His steady strength can serve a sluggish spirit.

Perhaps you’ve been on spiritual autopilot, just cruising through the Christian life, going to church, reading the Bible, and doing Christian-y things, but you feel disengaged, cold, like there’s one last ember in the firepit—the “I will” statements of Jesus can de-tranquilize your heart. These specific statements can spread a fire in your soul. Because, in these promises, you can see Christ’s care, power, love, commitment, and generosity all directed at you. Come and be warmed by the words of Jesus.

The Lord Jesus made many promises to comfort, strengthen, and renew our souls. We only need to make use of them.¹

What good is an unused promise? It might as well be buried, sunken, forgotten treasure. But a promise put to work can transform you. Like a child waiting for the promise of ice cream to be fulfilled—eager, energized, expectant, engaged, focused, and ready. The promises of Jesus are designed to have the same effect on all who believe.

When you read these promises over the next nine chapters, I invite you to *use* them, to claim them. Don't simply view them as a tracking number for a package of promises arriving some time in the future, which you forget about until delivery. You can *live* on these promises. As the 19th-century "Prince of Preachers," Charles Spurgeon, said, "Whenever you read your Bible, and see a great promise, do not hesitate to claim it."² And, "Go to the Bible, and whatever promise you find there addressed to a child of God, stretch yourself upon it, and so make it your own, and it will be so."³ Believe that these promises from Jesus are yours. Living on these promises means they will change your life today. Your joy, hope, assurance of salvation, battle against temptations, discouragements, sufferings, prayers, and more are transformed by Christ's promises when you expect Jesus to deliver on them now. His promises propel you forward in faithfulness to the one who is "Faithful and True" (Revelation 19:11). They are unleaded, unfiltered truths you can pour into your heart. These are promises you can actually name and claim!

Don't hesitate. Don't hold back. And don't doubt his promises either.

The Son of God will not break his word to you. Christ's promises are more sure and stable than the fabric of the created universe. "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away" (Matthew 24:35). You can count on Jesus' promises more than the sun setting and rising tomorrow. The Son of God is even more dependable than that.

The devil will try to sneak in doubts—wield the promises against him. Your flesh will escort discouragements to the front of your mind—kick them out with the promises. The world will try to woo you with pleasures—turn them down with promises of Jesus. If we put the promises to work in our lives, we will echo the writer of Psalm 119: “Your promise is well tried, and your servant loves it” (v 140). *Love*. That’s what we will discover from the “I will” statements of Jesus, which I’ve sorted into nine overarching promises for us to examine, explore, and enjoy. Join me on the balcony of the Bible, pull up a chair, and let’s slow down as we take in these words of Jesus. Every promise, like individual sunsets, offers us unique shades and sights of our Savior’s heart. I pray that in these chapters you’ll behold Jesus’ love and boomerang love back to him.

When we see and believe Christ’s goodness, love, and care for us—as seen in his promises—it snaps us out of autopilot, pushes us past a plateaued pursuit of him, and invigorates our inner life. No second-guessing Jesus’ promises. Run to them. Claim them. They are yours, Christian. Your soul will be renewed as you behold this certain, unstoppable, steadfast, unchanging, immovable, unfailing, absolute, guaranteed, indisputable truth: *he will*.

CHAPTER 1

Jesus Will Give You Life

Trust is at an all-time low. More than ever, people are suspicious of institutions, doctors, news outlets, tech companies, and even churches and pastors.⁴ Hardly any sector of life is immune to the erosion of trust. Why is this happening?

While distrust and doubt are on the rise for many reasons, I bet we can agree on one of them: lies.

You look at institutions and leaders and find lies, scandals, and failures to do the right thing. This ripples across our lives, leading us to wonder if *that* voice is telling the truth. To wonder if we can trust *this* leader. Broken promises break down trust.

And now, with the advent of AI, we don't know whether a photo, a video, or a report on social media is genuine. Even a book titled *The Future of Truth: How AI Reshapes Reality* has fabricated quotes produced by—you guessed it—AI.⁵

In this smoggy world of lies, we need fresh air. We need reality.

We need that one leader that we can always trust, the public and suffering servant, the King of kings.

We need that one and only church leader, the chief Shepherd, who will never fail to live up to his word.

We need Jesus.

He never lies. He's never failed. He never changes.

He sees all, knows all, and is hindered by none. He will keep his word.

You can trust Jesus with everything you are and everything you've got—because he will fulfill everything he's promised. The first two "I will" statements we'll examine reveal Christ's trustworthiness. He kept two of the most profound and powerful promises we could ever hear.

The bread that *I will* give for the life of the world is my flesh. (John 6:51)

Destroy this temple, and in three days *I will* raise it up. (John 2:19)

These two "I will" statements from Jesus—promising to die on the cross and rise from the dead—ought to form our souls to trust the Lord Jesus and count on every promise he makes. These two promises from Jesus, his crucifixion and resurrection, are the light and heat of the gospel flame that revives our souls. And they are from a source that can never die out or be snuffed out because Jesus kept his word to die and rise again. These two promises, summed up in the gospel, spread throughout our hearts, illuminating and powering our understanding of the rest of Christ's promises. These two "I wills" set the stage for receiving, believing, and enjoying the rest of the "I will" statements Jesus makes in the Gospels.

While Christ's saying, *I will give my flesh* is not the first promise Jesus makes in the Gospels chronologically, it is the logical starting point for this book. Here's what I want to establish: the gospel is the grand revelation of Christ's

commitment to you, his love for you, and your new life in him. He suffered a violent and intense death—a death for your sins, for you. A death where he knew every detail about how it would happen. A death he promised to go through for you. The keeping of this “I will” promise from Jesus cements the load-bearing location of our trust in him.

Let’s go further into his promises to die on the cross.

GIVING HIS LIFE

Right before Jesus made the promise of the cross, he performed a massive miracle.

All four Gospel writers record Jesus feeding 5,000 men from five loaves and two fish, with the total number being closer to 20,000 people if we include the women and children. After the miracle, the crowd was in awe. But rather than wanting Jesus, they wanted more *from* Jesus. They didn’t want to follow Jesus; they wanted to be fed by Jesus. More bread was their endgame. But Jesus says he has a far superior bread to offer.

I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that *I will* give for the life of the world is my flesh. (John 6:51)

In this single verse, we see Jesus point to his *person*—who he is—and his *work*—what he will do on the cross. He also gives one of his famous “I am” statements, connecting to our first “I will” statement. He says, “I am the living bread that came down from heaven,” revealing that he is God incarnate. And as God in flesh, the living bread from heaven, he promised to give his flesh.

But what does he mean by *giving his flesh*? Jesus is pointing us to his sacrificial death on the cross. The gravity of this promise is staggering.

Picture the ground there in the Garden of Gethsemane, moments before he was arrested, where “his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground” (Luke 22:44). Glance into the governor’s quarters and see Jesus slumped over after being flogged, whipped, and tortured. Can you see the mangled crown of thorns? Follow the trail of blood all along the footpath to Golgotha, where Jesus would be nailed to a cross atop a place that means “Place of a Skull” (Matthew 27:33; Mark 15:22; John 19:17). This was all a part of Jesus’ promise to give his flesh. As Christ stated in another “I will” in the Gospel of John, “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.’ He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die” (John 12:32-33). Jesus knew the crucifixion was around the corner—and he knew he would be drawing you to himself for salvation, for new and eternal life.

I hope this stuns you as it did me—while our Lord knew this was what awaited him, he still promised with an emphatic and well-informed “I will” that he would go through it all for us. The arrest, betrayal from a friend, slander and lies, beatings, torture, mocking, used Roman nails, blood loss, excruciating pain (which literally means “out of crucifying”) with a public execution before his friends and family—and yet, he promised he would give himself to the cross for our sins. This promise stirs my soul on two points.

First, the New Testament is clear: Christ’s life wasn’t taken from him. Nor did he merely predict that his life would end in crucifixion. It was prophesied and promised, as Jesus said in John 10:18, that he would lay it down of his own “accord” (ESV), his own “initiative” (NASB95), that he would die for us “voluntarily” (NLT). The apostle Paul dispatches the word *gave* as a dominant descriptor of Christ’s death.

- “... who *gave* himself for our sins” (Galatians 1:4)

- “... who *gave* himself as a ransom for all” (1 Timothy 2:6)
- “... who *gave* himself for us” (Titus 2:14)

No one took Christ's life from him. Even when Pontius Pilate assumed he held the power to release or crucify Jesus, our Lord corrected him: “You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given to you from above” (John 19:11). When Jesus made this “I will” statement in John 6, he knew what it entailed—and he kept his promise. And he gave because he loved.

- The Son of God, who *loved* me and *gave* himself for me... (Galatians 2:20)
- Christ *loved* us and *gave* himself up for us. (Ephesians 5:2)
- Christ *loved* the church and *gave* himself up for her. (Ephesians 5:25)

Second, Jesus didn't swerve from going to the cross for a single moment. He never looked for an exit—even when they were offered to him.

When Jesus told the disciples he would be crucified in Jerusalem, Peter pulled Jesus aside and told him he was simply not going to the cross. But Jesus wasn't interested in Peter's ideas, replying “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me” (Matthew 16:23). Even though Jesus knew the horrible pain awaiting him—the mocking of his name, and the weight of our sins—he was not entertaining any elimination of the cross. Even as the cross drew near, Jesus told his disciples, “Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But for this purpose I have come to this hour.” (John 12:27). Jesus wasn't looking for the eject button. He knew he could appeal to his Father to “at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?”

(Matthew 26:53-54). Jesus wasn't interested in being rescued. He came to rescue. And while being crucified, he endured the mocking and the calls to prove himself by saving himself from the cross. But by giving his flesh, by keeping his "I will" promise, he was saving the thief next to him, the Roman centurion keeping watch, his disciples, and you and me.

Jesus gives us life because he gave up his life on the cross. Look away from your works, and look at his. Disconnect your soul's jumper cables from the vain promises you've made God, and live on the live wire of Christ's powerful promises. His tomb also proves his trustworthiness.

HE CANNOT BE STOPPED

The public and certified nature of death by crucifixion set the stage for another "I will" statement of Jesus.

Destroy this temple, and in three days *I will* raise it up.
(John 2:19)

When Jesus made this "I will" statement, those listening thought he was talking about the temple in Jerusalem. "But he was speaking about the temple of his body" (v 21). Remember, Jesus died a very public death. Crucifixion was a spectacle in the city. Jesus died in the presence of nearly all of Jerusalem. Jewish leaders, Gentiles, Roman soldiers, they all saw what happened to Jesus. His death was unignorable. As Paul says in Acts 26:26, "This has not been done in a corner."

Rome confirmed Christ's death with a spear in his side. And Jesus was buried, which didn't normally happen for those crucified. His tomb was even guarded by soldiers (Matthew 27:62-66). If you could have glanced into that tomb on Friday night or Saturday, you'd have seen lifeless limbs, a cold body, grave clothes, and the aroma of burial spices.

But Jesus had made a promise.

In three days, I will rise again.

On the third day, he kept his word.

Christ's cerebral cortex came back online. Lungs inflated. His core temperature climbed. Blood began coursing through his body. Christ kept his promise. He is not a pile of bone dust. Jesus lives!

Because he lives, we are raised to new life (Romans 6:4).

Because he lives, we are not dead in our sins (1 Corinthians 15:17-20).

Because he lives, we are born again to a living hope (1 Peter 1:3).

Because he lives, we can now seek and set our minds on things above (Colossians 3:1-2).

Because he lives, we can face yesterday, today, and tomorrow. His keeping of the "I will" promises of the cross and resurrection is the spark our lethargic souls need to ignite awe of and trust in him.

Since Jesus didn't back out on this promise of the cross, we can be convinced of every biblical promise he's made. You can trust Jesus. You can bank and stake everything on him. Since he followed through on his promise to give his flesh, your faith in him can rise.

We've all made promises that proved too costly to follow through on. Not Jesus.

We've made promises that ended up being more complex or complicated for us to keep. Not Jesus.

We've made promises that were derailed by things beyond our control. Not Jesus.

The fact that Jesus fulfilled his "I will" promise of the cross reveals to us that there is nothing *inside* Jesus that would ever cause him to flake out on a promise. He will never turn on you. He will always be faithful to you. There's no *internal* reason for why Jesus would wiggle out of a promise. When he makes a promise, he is going to keep it.

And since Jesus kept his “I will” promise to rise from the dead, we know that nothing *outside* of Jesus could ever keep him from fulfilling a promise. His resurrection shows us that Jesus truly is unstoppable, undefeatable. There’s no *external* force that could prohibit or limit Christ’s ability to follow through on a single promise he’s made to us.

The greatest personal cost—death on a cross—and the greatest obstacle—being dead—were overcome by Christ. You can flat-out trust Jesus and every word he says to you. His death and resurrection are confirmation that Jesus will keep every “I will” statement he’s made.

Early Church Father Augustine of Hippo captured this point when he said, “Since Christ is himself the Word of God, even the act of the Word is a word to us.”⁶ Everything Jesus did speaks. His actions are as loud as his words. Everything our Savior did serves as a sermon. So, even as off-ramps and escape hatches were presented to him to avoid a death reserved for the worst of Roman society, he showed up for his appointed time. He kept this promise. And as he lay in the tomb, lifeless—as dead as anyone has ever been dead before—he kept his word. He arose. So, why do we doubt him?

When are you tempted to doubt Jesus? Maybe you are wondering about his goodness to you—be convinced by his keeping his promise of the cross. Are you doubting his power? Be convinced by his promise to overcome the grave. His power has no end. Are you slow to trust him and his word? The bloody cross and empty tomb are ironclad evidence for why you can depend on Jesus. He keeps his word. He’s *the* promise-keeper. He is always faithful.

And this is amazing news for our souls.

LIVE ON THE PROMISE

“The bread that I will give for the life of the world.”

Real, spiritual, and eternal life is offered by the “bread” of

Christ's flesh. Kneaded at the cross. Baked in the tomb. Risen and available to all who are hungry.

When the Lord Jesus made the promise to give his flesh "for the life of the world," he was offering a life of sustained sustenance in his work and his word. Jesus' promise of life entails salvation and sanctification. Life in our initial response to Christ and life in our everyday responses to his promises. This bread isn't a one-time meal. Christ calls us to a new spiritual diet that "feeds" on his flesh and blood (John 6:56). And unlike the world's offers, this food won't spoil or poison you.

The promises and pleasures of the world match the nutritional benefits of deep-fried butter. Empty. If you look for *life*—meaning and wholeness—in work, you'll see that more money, authority, or success doesn't fill your soul. If you look for *life*—deliverance and freedom—in vacations, body fat percentage, or a relationship, you'll discover these come with chains, too. And those who look for *life*—joy and satisfaction—in the things that moth and rust destroy will be left with a pile of disappointment. But there is *life* in Christ.

"There is life," preached Charles Spurgeon, "in a look at the crucified one; there is life at this moment for you. Look to him now and live."⁷ There is *life* in looking at the one who kept his promise to give his flesh. There's life in "his precious and very great promises ... through [which] you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire" (2 Peter 1:4). His promises—when trusted and believed—invite us to experience knowing, loving, and following the Lord. We even become more like Jesus. As we trust his promises, our doubts are purged, our longings are purified, and our walks are powered by faith in his "I will" statements. We see this pattern displayed in Abraham and in King Solomon.

When God made a promise to Abraham back in Genesis, "since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by

himself, saying, ‘Surely *I will* bless you and multiply you.’” (Hebrews 6:14). God guaranteed this promise with an *I will*, to show the “unchangeable character of his purpose” and that it is “impossible for God to lie”—which ought to convince us to have “strong encouragement” in the “sure and steadfast anchor” of our souls: Jesus Christ (v 17-19). While we live in a world of eroding trust, we can look at Jesus and see the steadiest and most dependable person in the universe. He isn’t wishy-washy. He is our anchor, but not to earth. Our anchor is above. Our anchor is in heaven. He keeps us grounded to his throne, reign, and rule. He keeps us tethered to the ultimate and eternal reality.

King Solomon saw God fulfill the promises of land, blessing, and the construction of the temple. He praised God for giving rest and peace to Israel, “according to all that he promised. Not one word has failed of all his good promise” (1 Kings 8:56). Not a single word fell through the cracks. God delivered. Therefore, the right response is “Let your heart therefore be *wholly true* to the LORD our God, walking in his statutes and keeping his commandments” (v 61). And yet, in his old age, Solomon’s “heart was not *wholly true* to the Lord his God” and he “did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and did not *wholly follow* the Lord” (11:4-6). A heart that isn’t wholly true is lying. Half-true following the Lord is wandering. We are to be *wholly* his. Solomon shows us that we cannot put the word of the Lord—his promises and commands—in the background. We cling to them. The Lord’s faithfulness to us ought to fuel our faithfulness to him. Christ’s kept promises are coals in the furnace of faith—coals that fuel a life of following Jesus.

It may be helpful to expand and connect the application of Christ’s promise-keeping of the cross and the empty tomb to areas of spiritual struggle. Let’s bring concerns, weaknesses, and temptations to Christ and his word, specifically, to this “*I will*” promise of his death and resurrection.

If you are wondering, “How can I be made right with God? I’ve done so many heinous and horrible things,” hear Jesus answer: *I will give my flesh and rise again*. That’s how.

If you are thinking, “But how will my sins, all of them, actually be forgiven?” Christ promised, *I will give my flesh and rise again*. Mission accomplished.

“How can I be sure I’m really saved?” Did he give his flesh and rise again? Yes. So, stare at the promises made until you see that the promises were kept.

“I want to be more joyful. What can be done?” Root your joy in Christ keeping his promise: *I will give my flesh and rise again*.

“How do I know I can’t lose my salvation?” Remember, your anchor is the one who promised, *I will give my flesh and rise again*.

Even if there’s a sin you are clinging to, or one you are battling, believe Christ’s promise to give his flesh and rise again for that sin. Live free. Fight. Trust. Leave the chains behind.

We can look back upon these “I will” promises and see that he indeed *gave* his flesh for us at the cross. Promise fulfilled. He indeed rose again. Promise kept. Joy mine. Life realized. These two “I will” statements, both of them already kept and fulfilled by Jesus, convince us of and confirm every other promise we will see in this book.

NO SIDE QUESTS

Let the source of comfort and confidence be Christ and his word—not Christ and our words. He has not promised to fulfill our hopes and dreams.

Throughout the Gospels, we see people present their ideas, demands, and timelines for what Jesus should do for them. This is a great spiritual danger we must avoid today. Don’t try to saddle Jesus with side quests.

You know a side quest when you see it. Most TV shows, movies, books, and even some video games have a main plot,

but then there are these side stories and “adventures” that go nowhere and have little to do with the core storyline. That’s a side quest.

You might use the term jokingly to describe a distraction, an unexpected event, or even the resolve to take up a new hobby or interest. “Sorry, I was late. I had a little side quest at the auto parts store.” Or, “I’m on a real side quest to master the art of the perfect smoked brisket.” Harmless. Unless we start coming up with side quests intended for Jesus to prove himself to us.

Have you compiled your own checklist of things for Christ to do for you, so you’ll know you can trust him and his word? Has this made you a bit skeptical, joyless, maybe even anxious?

Maybe you are still waiting to get married or land that dream job or be healed from a health condition. I don’t know what unfulfilled prayer request is coming to your mind or what unmet expectation you have of Jesus, but please receive this: Jesus does not accept our side quests. He will only fulfill his plans and purposes—not ours—for our lives. “The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me” (Psalm 138:8).

Now, of course, he may answer a particular prayer we have; he even tells us to keep asking. There’s a whole chapter coming that’s dedicated to Jesus inviting us to pray and telling us he will answer prayers. But at the same time, Jesus fulfilling our demands was never on the table. And if we make our word, even our prayers, the ground of trust toward Jesus, we become just like the crowd demanding that he come down from the cross, while missing the sign he had already given them. Jesus will give you life—maybe not the life you’ve always wanted but certainly the life you need. At the end of the day, you can place the keys to your life into the hands of the one who rose from the dead. He’s got it all under control.

Every promise we will examine in this book is stamped in the blood shed at the cross and the blood pumping through

his veins at this very moment. We should have all-out joy and expectation of fulfillment when Jesus promises, “I will never cast you out” (John 6:37), “I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28), and so on. Jesus gives us life according to his work at the cross and grave, according to his word, according to his promise (Psalm 119:25, 156).

And when our Lord promised, “*I will not* leave you as orphans; *I will* come to you” (John 14:18), he promised to come to us in the power of the Holy Spirit, that we would not be abandoned and alone in this world. This new life Christ promises us will be experienced in the giving, empowering, and helping of the Spirit. And that’s the “I will” statement we turn to next.