

God Keeps His Promises

Joshua 1:1-6; 11:16-19, 21-23

SS Lesson for 06/05/2011

Devotional Scripture: Rom 4:13-25

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Introduction

Overview and Approach to Lesson

The lesson outline came from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator. This week's lesson describes how **God Keeps His Promises**. The **study's aim** is to demonstrate that God is a promise keeping God. The **study's application** is to learn that when we obey God, we will experience His blessings.

Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Promises and Piecrusts

Is it true that promises, like piecrusts, are made to be broken? That statement has been traced back to 1681, when a British periodical criticized a certain individual by claiming, "He makes no more of breaking Acts of Parliaments, than if they were like Promises and Pie-crust, made to be broken." Things haven't changed much in 430 years! Politicians running for office are still accused of making promises they cannot keep. Many politicians make promises with all good intentions of keeping them. Some people, sadly, make promises with no intention of keeping them. An automobile dealer relates the story of an individual who made the down payment on a car and drove away. He disappeared and could not be found. The world would be much different if people simply kept their promises. Think of what the world would be like if there were no more "piecrust promises"!

Lesson Background

God sometimes makes promises that he does not wish to keep. An excellent example is the occasion of Jonah's dramatic announcement to the people of Nineveh that it would be destroyed in 40 days. It was not destroyed at that time, and Jesus provided the explanation: the people of Nineveh genuinely repented when they heard Jonah's message (Matthew 12:41). One conclusion is that God makes at least two types of promises: absolute and conditional. An example of an absolute promise is God's decision to grant the land of Canaan to Abram's descendants (Genesis 12:7). The promise was repeated (15:18; 17:8), and significant information was added (15:13). The promise that was first given to Abram was also given to his son Isaac (26:3), and then to Isaac's son Jacob (35:12). Joseph, one of Jacob's sons, had confidence in that promise (50:24, 25). The Lord's promise about Canaan was repeated when he challenged Moses to lead the Hebrews from slavery to the land "flowing with milk and honey" (Exodus 3:8; compare Leviticus 20:24; Numbers 13:27; Deuteronomy 31:20). As the book of Joshua begins, the Israelites were camped in the plains of Moab at the edge of Canaan, across the Jordan River from Jericho (Numbers 22:1). It had been 40 years since they left Egypt. They had been camped in Moab for as long as 8 or 9 months. Their presence in the area was considered a threat to Balak, the king of Moab (Numbers 22-24). Balak sent for Balaam, a highly regarded prophet, to come and curse the Israelites. The memorable incident of his donkey's talking to him occurred during Balaam's sojourn to Moab (Numbers 22:23-35). Balaam, however, blessed Israel instead of cursing this new nation. Subsequent events included a war with the Midianites (Numbers 25:16-18), accounts of a second military census (Numbers 26), and the commissioning of Joshua to succeed Moses (27:1-23). Two and one-half tribes made a request to Moses to remain in the territory east of the Jordan, and this was granted (32:33). Moses gave three farewell addresses in the book of Deuteronomy before his death. This was followed by a 30-day period of mourning (Deuteronomy 34:8). This lengthy review is intended to show that God had a plan for his people. Much time had elapsed since those promises were first given, including the 40 years since the exodus from Egypt. Moses was dead, and Joshua was waiting for instructions from the Lord. God's promise was about to be fulfilled.

From the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

Some of us grew up singing a little chorus that said, "Every promise in the Book is mine, every chapter, every verse, every line." While the melody is catchy and easy to remember many years later, the message is a bit misleading. As children we did not analyze everything we sang; we just sang for the fun of it. As

adults, however, we should pay better attention and realize that many songs and choruses are actually theologically inaccurate. There are promises in the Bible that were for Israel only, for example, and are not for us today. That does not negate the fact that God's Word is full of promises for His children today. How sad it is that many believers fail to spend quality time in the Bible and as a result do not benefit from those precious promises! Furthermore, as we study how God worked with His people in both the Old and the New Testament, we gain further insight into how He fulfills His promises. These situations provide encouragement for us to faithfully trust God. It is significant that from the early days of Moses and even before, God had been telling His people that one day they would come into their very own land. Years passed, and they were still waiting for those promises to come to pass. It must have been hard for them to keep trusting a God who worked so slowly, and indeed their faith faltered; but God blessed them despite their erring ways. Our lesson this week shows us how God's people learned some lessons about trusting their God. He could be trusted because He would never fail them. He is always true.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

The Promise of a Land (Joshua 1:1-6)

1 After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, it came to pass that the Lord spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, saying:

2 "Moses My servant is dead. Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them — the children of Israel.

3 Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses.

4 From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the River Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your territory.

5 No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you.

6 Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them.

Promise of a renewed purpose (1-2)

Renewed purpose to fear God and keep His commandments (Eccl 12:13)

13 Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole [duty] of man.

Renewed purpose to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with God (Mic 6:8)

8 He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

Renewed purpose to not lose heart, because God is renewing us daily (2 Cor 4:16)

16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.

Renewed purpose to not lose heart and grow weary in opposing sin (Heb 12:3-4)

3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. 4 In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.

Renewed purpose to not become weary of doing good (Gal 6:9)

9 Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

Renewed purpose in seeking the kingdom of God (Matt 6:31-34)

31 So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'
32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.
33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.
34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Promise of success (3-5)

Success obtained through pleasing God (Rom 14:16-18)

16 Do not allow what you consider good to be spoken of as evil. 17 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, 18 because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men.

Success obtained through living a life worthy of the Lord (Col 1:10)

10 And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God,

Success obtained through working for the Lord (Col 3:23-24)

23 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, 24 since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

Success obtained through being a faithful servant and sharing in God's blessings (Matt 25:21)

21 "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

Success obtained through trusting in God (Prov 28:25)

25 A greedy man stirs up dissension, but he who trusts in the Lord will prosper.

Success obtained through having many godly advisers (Prov 15:22)

22 Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.

Success obtained through committing ourselves to God (Prov 16:3)

3 Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed.

Success obtained through abiding in God (John 15:7)

7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.

Promise of leadership (6)

Leadership that is entrusted with God's work (Titus 1:7)

7 Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless — not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain.

Leadership that is blameless so as to encourage godliness (1 Thess 2:10-12)

10 You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed. 11 For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, 12 encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.

Leadership that is faithful because of being given a trust (1 Cor 4:2)

2 Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.

Leadership that has integrity (Titus 2:7-8)

7 In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness 8 and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.

Leaders that give an account for those over whom they have authority (Heb 13:17)

17 Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.

Leaders that are given much, but from whom much will be required (Luke 12:48)

48 But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.

Leaders that have been given a trust and must be proven faithful (1 Cor 4:2)

2 Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.

The Taking of the Land (Joshua 11:16-19)

16 Thus Joshua took all this land: the mountain country, all the South, all the land of Goshen, the lowland, and the Jordan plain — the mountains of Israel and its lowlands,

17 from Mount Halak and the ascent to Seir, even as far as Baal Gad in the Valley of Lebanon below Mount Hermon. He captured all their kings, and struck them down and killed them.

18 Joshua made war a long time with all those kings.

19 There was not a city that made peace with the children of Israel, except the Hivites, the inhabitants of Gibeon. All the others they took in battle.

Fulfillment of God's promise of the taking of the promised land (16-17)

Fulfillment of promises that God will not violate His covenants (Ps 89:33-36)

33 but I will not take my love from him, nor will I ever betray my faithfulness. 34 I will not violate my covenant or alter what my lips have uttered. 35 Once for all, I have sworn by my holiness — and I will not lie to David — 36 that his line will continue forever and his throne endure before me like the sun;

Fulfillment of promises that God will remember His covenants regardless of our rebellion (Ps 106:43-45)

43 Many times he delivered them, but they were bent on rebellion and they wasted away in their sin. 44 But he took note of their distress when he heard their cry; 45 for their sake he remembered his covenant and out of his great love he relented.

Fulfillment of promises of blessings to continue the redemption of His people (Ps 111:9)

9 He provided redemption for his people; he ordained his covenant forever — holy and awesome is his name.

Fulfillment of promises of blessings to uphold His people and make them a light to others (Isa 42:6)

6 "I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles,

Fulfillment of promises that God will always do (1 Thess 5:24)

24 The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.

Fulfillment of promises that no one can stand against (Deut 7:24)

24 He will give their kings into your hand, and you will wipe out their names from under heaven. No one will be able to stand up against you; you will destroy them.

Taking the land through God's empowerment to conquer (18-19)

Conquerors because whether we live or die it is gain through Jesus (Phil 1:21)

21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

Conquerors because we can overcome the world (1 John 5:4-5)

4 for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. 5 Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

Conquerors because we have the victory (1 Cor 15:56-57)

56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Conquerors because God's grace is sufficient (2 Cor 12:9-10)

9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. 10 That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

The Completion of the Task (Joshua 11:21-23)

21 And at that time Joshua came and cut off the Anakim from the mountains: from Hebron, from Debir, from Anab, from all the mountains of Judah, and from all the mountains of Israel; Joshua utterly destroyed them with their cities.

22 None of the Anakim were left in the land of the children of Israel; they remained only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod.

23 So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the Lord had said to Moses; and Joshua gave it as an inheritance to Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. Then the land rested from war.

Task of a final defeat (21-22)

Final defeat to show that we should not fear our enemies (Josh 10:8-10)

8 The Lord said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid of them; I have given them into your hand. Not one of them will be able to withstand you." 9 After an all-night march from Gilgal, Joshua took them by surprise. 10 The Lord threw them into confusion before Israel, who defeated them in a great

victory at Gibeon. Israel pursued them along the road going up to Beth Horon and cut them down all the way to Azekah and Makkedah.

Final defeat because God goes with those who belong to Him to bring victory (Deut 20:4)

4 For the Lord your God is the one who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies to give you victory."

Final defeat because the victory rests with God (Prov 21:31)

31 The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but victory rests with the Lord.

Final defeat because God defeats spiritual enemies (1 Cor 15:57)

57 But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Final defeat because God defeats worldly enemies (1 John 5:4)

4 for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.

Task of peace (23)

Peace through trust in God (Rom 15:13)

13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Peace from the God of peace (1 Cor 14:33)

33 For God is not a God of disorder but of peace. As in all the congregations of the saints,

Peace through the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22)

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

Peace through Jesus (Eph 2:14)

14 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility,

Peace that transcends all understanding (Phil 4:7)

7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Peace that comes with having a Lord of all (Acts 10:36)

36 You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.

Peace that comes from having a Savior who overcame the world (John 16:33)

33 "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Any structured society must have obedience to its governing precepts. Without that, anarchy will result. The concept of obedience is best learned early. Parents may use a variety of methods to enforce what is said. Each child is different, and the good parent will recognize the differences and guide each child accordingly. If a child does not learn to obey, he or she may develop disrespect for all who are in authority—teachers, employers, law enforcement officers, and even God. Some parents abdicate this responsibility. Perhaps they hope the child-care workers or the public schools will come to the rescue. Those who work in these areas are to be admired for the good things they accomplish, but learning to obey should begin early—in the home. The Israelites learned that disobedience brought tragedy. Obedience was vital for them; it still is for us.

Concluding Thoughts from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

Joshua 11:23 stands as the final summarizing statement of this week's lesson, and it serves as the magnificent summary of all that the Lord accomplished through His servant Joshua as recorded in the first eleven chapters of the book of Joshua. It also illumines the shining fulfillment of the promise and command given to Joshua at the beginning of his leadership of the nation of Israel. In Joshua 1 we read that after the death of the great leader Moses, God commissioned Joshua as the new leader of Israel and commanded him to take possession of the land that had been promised: "Go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast" (vss. 2-4). In relation to this command and promise, the text gives the decisive verdict: Mission Accomplished. "Joshua took the whole land." All that he had set out to do under the Lord's direction he fulfilled. God was obviously pleased with His servant, for Joshua had carried out His orders to a T. He fulfilled the divine will, which was not something made up on the spot but rather had been known much earlier: "according to all that the Lord said unto Moses." It had been a long campaign, spanning several years and encompassing all sorts of battle contingencies and conditions. There had been moments of great triumph as well as crises, but through it all Joshua persevered and saw the faithfulness of the Lord bring about the promised result. At this point, however, some might be wondering how the text can make the bold claim that "Joshua took the whole land." Just a bit later in the book we read of the Lord telling Joshua himself, "Thou art old and stricken in years, and there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed" (13:1). Judges 1:21-36 gives a long list of cities the Israelites did not take and peoples they did not drive out. Even by the time of David, the Jebusites still controlled the city that would become Jerusalem after he finally conquered it (2 Sam. 5:6-10). Is this a classic case of a biblical contradiction, as numerous critics have charged over the years? The short answer is, of course, that it is manifestly not. If it were a contradiction, would Joshua not have noticed it himself, as well as all those with him? When the text says that "Joshua took the whole land," it means "he gained control of the whole region even though he did not take every city" (Gaebelein, gen. ed., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Zondervan). In contrast to the patriarchs, who were sojourners in a land belonging to others, Joshua and his people had control of its length and breadth. There would be battles to fight and trials to endure, but that the land was theirs was not in doubt. The situation could be summarized once again: the mission was accomplished, but the work was just now beginning.

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

1. The ultimate fulfillment of God's plan is never dependent on man (Josh. 1:1-2)
2. When God makes a promise for your future, you can consider it already done (vs. 3-4)
3. We can take courage in God's promised presence, provision, and protection (vs. 5-6)
4. God's promises often include our hard work (11:16-17)
5. God fulfills His promises in His time and way (vs. 18-19)

6. Under the authority and with the power of God, no assigned task is too big (vs. 21-22)
7. God always keeps His promises (vs. 23)

Heart of the Lesson from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

A new era had begun. Moses was dead; after forty years in the wilderness, Israel had a new leader. The task before him and the people remained the same, however. They were to enter the land God had promised to them.

A promise given (Josh. 1:1-6)

Following Moses' death, the Lord spoke directly to Joshua, telling him to cross the Jordan and enter the land of Canaan. God had long before promised to give this land to His people. They needed only to follow the Lord's instructions. But Joshua was undoubtedly anxious at the prospect. Joshua had been beside Moses through the wilderness years. He had seen the repeated rebellion of the people against the Lord and the Lord's chosen leader. Joshua had been there years before; and the nation had rejected his call to enter that bountiful land because they feared the people who lived there (Num. 13-14). Now it was Joshua leading this nation of uncooperative people, numbering perhaps three million. The Lord answered Joshua's doubts by giving him a wonderful promise. He was assured that he would lead the people in successfully securing the Promised Land. No one would be able to stand before the Lord's people. The one thing Joshua had to do was to be strong and courageous. He was to boldly follow the Lord in the face of opposition, and he needed to continue in obedience. But where would such strength and courage come from? The Lord did not say to be strong and courageous in order to take the land but to be strong and courageous because of the Lord's promise to give Israel the land (Josh. 1:6). God's promise was sure, and it would give Joshua strength and boldness in the years ahead. This was a reminder that God, not Joshua, was the real leader of Israel. Joshua did not have to rely on his own abilities or knowledge to successfully lead the people. He needed only to trust God, believing the promise He had given. This is what God calls us to do as well: trust and follow Him regardless of the circumstances. Our success is based on His promises, not our abilities.

A promise fulfilled (Josh. 11:16-19, 21-22)

It took Joshua and Israel seven years to conquer Canaan. It was not easy, and there were failures along the way. But God was faithful to His word. Now there were no more military campaigns to be carried out. With the exception of Gibeon, which had secured a peace treaty with Israel, the cities of the land were conquered. Even the children of Anak, a dreaded race of giants who had struck fear in the hearts of the Israelite spies years before (Num. 13:28), were defeated. Any doubts that might have lingered for Joshua fell before him as God's promise was fulfilled in the conquest of Canaan.

A promise summarized (Josh. 11:23)

There was still more to do. The conquered land had to be divided among the tribes of Israel. But the God who had kept His promise to give Israel victory also could be trusted to fulfill His promise to give them this land as an inheritance. As we trust the Lord and follow Him, we always find Him faithful to His promises. That, in turn, encourages us to continue to trust and follow Him.