

GOD KEEPS HIS PROMISES

Can you believe what people say? Can you depend on someone to do what he says he will do? It depends on who is doing the talking. If you saw the news coverage of the recent events in China, they you can appreciate the significance of the Big Lie. The government leaders were literally saying there was not a slaughter of demonstrating students in Beijing. We have seen leaders in our own government live to protect themselves even when they are caught in doing something unethical. We can recall the promises made during political campaigns that never were acted upon when those doing the promising are elected. On the other hand, there are people that will do everything in their power to do exactly what they have said. There are individuals that keep their word even when it hurts them. What makes the difference? Good question. Basic question. The question is as basic as what is the difference in "good" and "evil". Modern psychiatry is just now starting to explore the subject of good and evil that has for so long been the domain of "religious" examination.

Jesus characterized Satan as being the "father of lies" and in His prayer in the Garden He declared that God's word is Truth. So we have the contrast drawn between truth versus lies, good versus evil, and God versus Satan. We associate God with goodness and truth and Satan with evil and lies. The very nature of each is characterized relative to the confidence one can put in the promises made. The Bible has been described as a book of promises and we put our confidence in these promises to the extent that we believe in the character of God to be good and that His word is true. The passage that we will examine in this lesson demonstrates that God keeps His word even though it may take a long time to accomplish it. We can count on God's promises to happen.

God had promised Abraham that the land of Canaan would be given to him. Abraham lived in the land but never really owned any of it except by faith. Isaac and Jacob lived in the land and they really didn't own it either. Near the end of Jacob's life the family moved away to Egypt and his descendants spent more than 400 years in Egypt. All this time it appeared that God's promises were not of much effect. Approximately 600 years had gone by and many of the people of Israel had pretty much quit counting on possessing the land of Canaan that had been promised to their ancestors. However, God had not forgotten His promise. When Moses brought the Children of Israel out of Egypt it was but one step in God's plan to make His promise come true.

God had promised them the land; however, as you saw in the account of the Battle of Jericho, they had to take it away from those that inhabited it. There were battles to be fought and when the people did as God commanded them, they were victorious. When they disobeyed, they were not successful.

There is probably a significant spiritual lesson for us to learn. When Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead, He defeated Satan and proved it to any who could see what had happened. Before He left His disciples He told them to occupy until He returned. He told them that all power in Heaven and earth had been given to Him and that the church had access to His power. The early church started out occupying by spreading its influence and there were thousands upon thousands added to the church. Then something happened and great growth and miracles were

not seen. The church was not victorious but rather took on a rather weak demeanor. I believe that the reason is because the church let sin and disobedience creep in and no correction was taken. All the promises of Jesus are true and they will come to pass; but, the church must stop limiting God by disbelief and disobedience. When the nation of Israel got serious about obedience, then God gave them victory after victory until they had the land.

JOSHUA 21:43-45 More than 600 year had passed and the promises came into reality for this generation. Not only did they occupy the land they had learned to trust in God and this gave them an inner tranquillity that they had never had before. This peace, stemming from confidence in God, would allow them to take on whatever challenge or battle without fear. This passage speaks of the people entering into "rest". This is rather much like a Sabbath time. As you know, it did not last for the people of Israel--it was not a permanent rest. The book of Hebrews makes mention of this rest that Joshua attained for the people. This is a picture of salvation that we enter through the Spiritual Joshua (Jesus). We are to enter His rest as we cease our own work (trying to earn salvation) and simply rest in Him and His grace. As we do and truly trust Him, then we will find that all His promises to us will come to pass.

JOSHUA 22:1-6 The three family groups (Reuben, Gad, Manasseh) were to make their homes on the east side of the Jordan River. That land had already been conquered before the main body crossed over the Jordan. They had secured their inheritance; however, they did not just settle down and let the other nine family groups fight their own battles alone--they joined in to secure the victory for their countrymen. In this sense, they could not enjoy their time of rest as long as others were still struggling to obtain what God had promised them. We could learn some thing from these in the spiritual realm. Many Christians do not perceive a need to help other people find salvation. They get theirs and do not venture out to help their fellow human being find what God has promised for everyone. Just as God expected these that would live on the east side of the Jordan to enter into the battle for the sake of others, God expects us to be involved in spiritual warfare to help others.

Now that the battle had been won, these people were to be discharged and to be return to the business of building their homes and cities, planting crops and raising families. Joshua gave them an exhortation to not neglect to do what God had commanded them to do just because there was a lull in the fighting.

When the battle was raging and the people felt that they were in danger, they had no trouble in thinking about God and asking for His help. There was a concern that when life got around to the mundane, that people would neglect to depend on God since they would think they are the ones that made it happen. This danger is a present reality for the church today--we need to be on our guard to not slip into thinking that we are sufficient in and of ourselves but that we need those promises of God that He is faithful to deliver.