

Promises, Promises, Promises – Outline and notes

1. Promises - What they are, how to obtain them, nature of faith, God, etc.
 - a. Have you ever had a promise made to you that was broken?
 - i. Most of us have. Some of us have bitter memories of a parent's promise to do something for us and their failure to fulfill that promise.
 - ii. I read this week some stories of families whose relationships that were shattered by broken promises, and unfulfilled dreams.
 - b. And yet, there are things that are out of our control that affect our promises and our ability to keep them.
 - i. One story I read was a Dad who promised his son a car for his 16th birthday, ever since he was 10. He built his son's dreams up for years upon this promise. But when the son was 15, his mother contracted cancer and the medical treatments took every penny they had. The son was torn, saddened by the loss of his mother and crushed by the loss of his dream that was based upon a promise. His disappointment turned to bitterness and to a place where he stopped speaking with his father.
2. People often let us down don't they?
 - a. Why do you think that we have such a tough time keeping our promises?
 - i. Many of you probably made resolutions this weekend..."I am going to start exercising" or "I am going to stop eating chocolate" or "I am going to pray ½ hour ever day!"
 - ii. By the end of the year, how many of those resolutions will have been kept?
 - b. I want to share with you some of the reasons we as human beings fail in keeping our word:
 - i. **We forget the promise.**
 1. We lack the ability to remember things.
 2. How often when someone asks you to pray for them do you actually remember to do so?
 3. Our intentions are good but our memories are flawed
 4. We make promises..."I won't yell at the kids anymore." 15 minutes later we break that promise. We didn't mean to. But we have forgotten our promise.
 - ii. **We don't have power to keep the promise**
 1. Sometimes we make promises we cannot keep. We mean well.
 2. You promise to go to your child's soccer game but your boss makes you work late, or a traffic accident ties up traffic and you pull up to the game to watch the kids walking off the field at the end of the game.
 3. You and I cannot control our circumstances nor can we control all of the events in our lives.

4. **But God can control things.** He has the power to keep His word. He alone has the power to alter situations, history and even the hearts of men.
 - iii. **We lie or deceive others when we make our promise**
 1. Sometimes we make promises just to get someone off our back. We never mean to keep our promise.
 2. Has anyone asked you for a favor, you say “sure” and never really intend to do it?
 - iv. **We change our minds**
 1. Back when I was single, I met a young lady who was recently divorced. As a Christian, I was rather wary, so I asked why she divorced her husband. I expected to hear something like “he was abusive” or “he was a drunk” but instead she said, “I didn’t find him attractive anymore...he gained weight after we got married.”
 - a. Gee, if that were the criteria for divorce, there wouldn’t be too many of us who would still be married!
 - b. She had basically changed her mind. Her promise to love and to cherish was conditional.
3. Contrast all of this with God’s Promises
- a. **God is not like us! He keeps His promises!**
 - i. Is 55:8-9 *“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, and your ways are not My ways.” [This is] the Lord's declaration. “For as heaven is higher than earth, so My ways are higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.”*
 - ii. Too often we treat God as if He were made in our image rather than the other way around.
 - iii. Sacred history is filled with testimonies of how God has kept His promises.
 1. From the promises in the garden to Adam to Noah and the Ark, Abraham promised descendents as numerous as sands on the sea. Moses in the exodus and God’s provision in the wilderness; David and his kingdom and Solomon and the temple; to the greatest promise of all...that of a savior who would take away our sins,
 2. God has been faithful...Great is His faithfulness! (Amen?)
 - iv. Listen to what God says about Himself:
 1. Psalm 89:34 *“Do you think I'd withdraw my holy promise? or take back words I'd already spoken?.”* (The Message).
 2. Perfectly! Jos 23:14 *“As you can see, I'm about to go the way we all end up going. Know this with all your heart, with everything in you, that not one detail has failed of all the good things GOD, your God, promised you. It has all happened. Nothing's left undone--not so much as a word. (Message)*

3. The promises of God are YES and AMEN! He does what He says!
- b. **God cannot lie. He never deceives us. He never changes his mind.**
- i. Listen to this: Numbers 23:19 *“God is not a man, that he should lie. He is not a human, that he should change his mind. Has he ever spoken and failed to act? Has he ever promised and not carried it through?”*
 - ii. God’s character is not like ours. He doesn’t lie! He doesn’t change His mind. When you read His word and hear His promises, you can count on them. He isn’t fickle like the idols of the Old Testament, nor is he secretive like Koran makes Him out to be. He is knowable and steadfast.
 - iii. When God makes a promise He keeps it... forever! Did you hear those last two sentences?
 1. Has he ever spoken and failed to act? Has he ever promised and not carried it through?
 2. I imagine that the throne room of heaven is filled with folks recalling the faithfulness of God and His promises.
- c. **Nothing is too hard for God!** He has the POWER to keep His promises.
- i. Jer 32:27 *I am the LORD, the God of all the peoples of the world. Is anything too hard for me?*
 - ii. When we read what God has done, do we excuse it and try to diminish it, or is our faith stirred by what we read?
 - iii. I’m reminded of the little boy who was asked by his dad, "What did you learn in Sunday School today?" The little boy replied, "We learned about how Moses went behind enemy lines to rescue the people of Israel from the Egyptians. Moses ordered the engineers to build a pontoon bridge. After the people crossed, he sent bombers back to blow up the bridge and the Egyptian army that was chasing them. And then..." The father interrupted, "Did your teacher really tell it like that?" His son said, "No, but if I told you what he did say, you’d never believe it!"
 - iv. We fall in one of two camps when it comes to God’s promises and His mighty deeds.
 1. If you are having trouble believing what the bible says about what God did, you are going to have even more trouble believing what God says He’s going to do.
 2. We don’t need great faith in God, we only need faith in a Great God.
 - a. When we bring God down to our level, we will have nothing to place faith in that is greater than ourselves.
 3. Do you remember Gabriel’s words to Mary when he announced she would be pregnant without human intervention? “Nothing is impossible for God!”

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- d. **God's promises aren't dependent upon our goodness or strength or even our faith.**
- i. They are dependent upon the goodness, power and faithfulness of God.
 - ii. Abraham & Sarah's faith was not **perfect belief** (she laughed at the promise); but it was a **persistent belief**.
 1. God said He would provide an heir to Abraham. But Abraham is getting up there in years. So Abraham tries to help God out by having a child with his wife's servant, Hagar. That isn't the right choice.
 2. Then angelic messengers come and tell Abraham that He will have a child with Sarah.
 - a. Sarah laughed.
 - b. She knew how old she was!
 - c. She knew that she was past they years of childbearing.
 - d. She had been through menopause.
 3. But Abraham and Sarah believed God.
 - a. They did so by putting their own effort into the equation.
 - b. If they hadn't joined action to the promise, Sarah would have never gotten pregnant.
 4. But they did and Sarah became pregnant, well past her years for childbearing.
 5. Their faith wasn't "perfect" but it was enough because they ACTED upon the promise and word of God. That action demonstrated their faith.
 6. Heb 11:11 – *"It was faith that made Abraham able to become a father, even though he was too old and Sarah herself could not have children. He trusted God to keep his promise."*
 - iii. Our lack of faith doesn't nullify God's promise, it only keeps us from receiving the benefits of that promise.
 1. **Receiving the benefit of God's promises requires faith that is evidenced by action, endurance and persistence.**
 2. (Heb 10:35-36) *"Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised."*
 3. I read a very cute saying this week, "You can't break God's promises by leaning on them!"
4. Since we are talking about using faith to appropriate the Promises of God, we need to understand some principles.
- a. We are called to place our faith in the promissor not the promise.

- i. The promise is only as good as the one who makes it.
 - ii. Just as faith is only as good as the object it is placed in.
 - iii. What is important is not the size of your faith but the size of your God.
- a. My faith in your words is a reflection of what I believe about you.
 - i. If I don't believe you, what does that say about how I think about you?
 - ii. It says that I do not trust you or your character.
 - iii. But if I believe you, I acknowledge that your character is trustworthy and your word is worthwhile to believe.
 - 1. Imagine doubting God! What does that say about what we think of him?
 - 2. Faith is essentially an act of TRUST.
 - 3. It is taking REFUGE in the ability of another to meet your needs.
 - 4. Faith excludes boasting (Romans 3:27)
- b. **Faith believes even though there is contrary evidence.**
 - i. Romans 4:16 *Abraham, who is the father of us all, 17 (as it is written, "A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS HAVE I MADE YOU") in the presence of Him whom he believed, even God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist. 18 In hope against hope he believed, so that he might become a father of many nations according to that which had been spoken, "SO SHALL YOUR DESCENDANTS BE." 19 Without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb; 20 yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, 21 and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform.*
 - ii. "In hope against hope he believed"; "Without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead...yet with respect to the promise of God he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith...and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform."
 - 1. In spite of evidence to the contrary, he did not let it deter him, but instead, he LOOKED to the One who could keep His promises and trusted Him.
 - 2. You don't deny the evidence. You acknowledge it.
 - a. Some people think that faith has to deny the evidence. They have cold symptoms so they say over and over again, "It is a lie, I do not have a cold." As if denying the evidence is faith.
 - b. But the contrary is what faith really is.
 - i. Faith acknowledges the problem.

- iv. **Let's illustrate this.** Your daddy is standing in a swimming pool out a little bit from the edge. You are, let's say, three years old and standing on the edge of the pool. Daddy holds out his arms to you and says, "Jump, I'll catch you. I promise."
 - 1. What happens if you believe him? You will have faith in him and jump.
 - 2. But if you won't jump, if you shake your head and run away from the edge, it looks like you are saying, "he can't catch me" or "he won't catch me" or "it's not a good idea to do what he tells me to do" or "My daddy can't do what he says he can do."
- v. It is only through your deciding to TRUST the infinitely trustworthy One that you will ever experience lasting peace and joy.
- 6. God has sent His son, Jesus, to die in our place upon the Cross and has promised eternal life to all who will forsake themselves and receive Christ as their savior. Eternal life is forever. And God has promised it to us.
 - a. Are you willing to receive this promise? Are you willing to believe it? Will you choose to believe it today? If you do, then it will require action on your part.