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Does God Really Keep His Promises?

Psalm 89:34: (NASB) *My covenant I will not violate, nor will I alter the utterance of My lips.*



Promises, promises! Did you ever stop to think about how much of our lives revolve around promises? There are promises at every level of life - those made by a child to secure a privilege, those made when you agree to the conditions of your job, those made between a man and a woman at marriage, those made in political campaigns. Then there are the private promises we make to ourselves and to God. We judge character by the keeping of promises. A promise keeper is a trustworthy person. Then there are the promises God makes to us. It seems like there are a lot of them, but to many people it seems God has not kept them. So, is God a trustworthy promise keeper?

This program was created because a listener wrote in with the following question: *"Why does God fail to help those in despair who believe in Him and His promises? How does God reconcile his non-action to His promises in the following Scriptures: Psalm 89:34, Joshua 23:14, John 14:14 and Matthew 7:8. When man makes a promise and breaks it he is called a liar. Is God exempt from this label?"* This is a great question!

Merriam Webster Dictionary: promise - a declaration that one will do or refrain from doing something specified.

It simply means you stand 100% behind what you say. The problem is, this does not mean much anymore. **The Bible tells us our word should be our bond:** Numbers 30:1-2

God tells us His word is always reliable. The following texts are all from our listener's question: Joshua 23:14 Psalm 89:34 John 14:14 Matthew 7:8 It is pretty cut and dry - God offers and we can help ourselves...is this really true?

How do we become positioned to have this assurance Joshua had before he died? Joshua 23:14:

One (wrong) way to TRY and go about it is to demand it of God. Romans 11:35: (NIV) *Who has ever given to God, that God should repay them?* God's promises can stir up pride in us that God "owes" us.

Let's look deeper at the context of that Joshua promise. **Joshua is dying and giving the people his last perspective:** Joshua 23:6-13: God's favor is clearly with those who live according to HIS ways with firmness and tenacity! God's displeasure is clearly focused on those who do not follow through in living HIS goodness! Joshua 23:14-15: God was talking to the Jewish nation, already in covenant relationship with Him. There is accountability on our part to receive God's promises.

God IS as good as His word. He does keep His promises - both positive and negative - depending on our obedience to Him and our following His way. There are consequences to living a God-dishonoring life.

PROMISE LESSON: We should not expect goodness and blessing when we are not "all in" in our pursuit of God's will.



Introduction, *The Wall: A Hopeless Situation*, Jon Jorgenson

- The wall at Jericho was an impenetrable force to any army that was trying to overtake the city. Before even dealing with the wall, the attacking troops would have to navigate their way across a 27-foot wide, nine-foot deep pit that lined the outer edges of the city. Then there was the wall itself. Seventeen-foot high, five-foot thick, pure mass solid stone. If the attacking army managed to get this far without getting shot down by archers, all that was left was to defeat the well-trained Canaanite army that was waiting within. This was the reality for a young leader named Joshua and his ragtag Israelite army. These Israelites, who had seen an entire generation live and die while wandering through the desert, were tired, hungry and facing what seemed like an impossible task. A hopeless situation.*



(Our Theme Text) How do we get this assurance? Psalm 89:34: (NASB) *My covenant I will not violate, nor will I alter the utterance of My lips.*

This Psalm uses David as a picture of Christ: Psalms 89:20-28: All is roses, right? Glory! Honor! Power! Promises are piling up...then how do we explain Jesus suffering and dying? Sure seems like a broken promise...

The rest of the story...Isaiah 53:3,7: Sometimes we see God's unfinished work and interpret it as a broken promise. God's promises are a predetermined plan, not just a short instant message text.

Psalms 89:29-32: We can see a different tone here. For those who are the beneficiaries of God's mercy through the sacrifice of Jesus, there needs to be a threshold of obedience for them to individually benefit. If we do not align ourselves HIS way, in HIS time and with HIS conditions, why would we expect His promises to apply to us?

Now, a glimpse of the Psalms 89 promise fulfilled! Philippians 2:8-10: Remember, however, Psalms 89 was a promise made to Jesus. We would not expect it to apply directly to us.

PROMISE LESSON: God's promises sometimes take a very long time to fulfill but are worth the wait!



God's best work, The Wall: A Hopeless Situation, Jon Jorgenson

- Now I haven't lived very long, but I've lived long enough to know this - that running into walls is a part of life. The bigger the wall, the more hopeless the situation can seem. The large walls of sickness, loss, divorce, addiction, they pop up all around us and they seem impenetrable. And just like the wall at Jericho, these walls rarely stand alone. The walls of our lives are often accompanied by a deep pit of pain, suffering, and despair. And all the while an army of hopelessness attacks us on every side. The question is asked all the time: If God loves us so much and is so powerful, then how can He allow these walls to pop up around me? Now, I don't pretend to have the answer to any of those questions nor do I pretend to understand just how deep or dark your suffering has been. I simply want to suggest that maybe God does His best work from seemingly hopeless situations.*

Matthew 7:8: (NASB) *For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.* Who is the everyone spoken of? This is still part of the Sermon on the Mount spoken to Jesus' true followers while in the company of the multitudes.

Jesus tells us we are being carefully watched. Matthew 7:1-5,7-11 After we are thoroughly warned to stand apart from sinful thinking, the promise comes. Such a promise is conditional upon our behavior and attitude. We must be in line with God's will.

PROMISE LESSON: To live as a true disciple of Christ dramatically changes what we would ask God for.

How do we get *this* promise? John 14:14: (NASB) *If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.* Who is the *you* here? Jesus is talking to his followers, not the majority of the "everybody else." The New Testament is not written for those who have not dedicated their lives to Christ. That does not mean one could not get wonderful principles to live by, but those promises of God are for those with whom He has a relationship. Just intellectually reading the New Testament is like reading someone else's mail.

The last night before his crucifixion, Jesus pours out encouragement: John 14:1-15: Jesus is asking for a great application of faith in their lives - that they would be willing to unquestioningly follow him into spiritual but unknown places...

One has to live the words in order to be in line for the promise. What does it mean *to ask in his name*? It does not mean to simply use the word, "Jesus." Jesus had just explained what would be expected of them regarding their faith and their actions as his disciples - as those who live in accordance with his name. So, to *ask in his name* is an outgrowth of living his name.



PROMISE LESSON: To "ask in Jesus' name" carries with it the requirement to LIVE in Jesus's name - to represent him in your everyday. A prayer from such a one will surely be answered!

))) All hopeless, *The Wall: A Hopeless Situation, Jon Jorgenson*

- *I cannot find a single person who walked faithfully with God without first facing a hopeless situation. Adam and Eve ruined paradise by inviting sin and death into a perfect world. A hopeless case. Joseph was betrayed by his brothers for his pride and put in prison. A hopeless case. Moses was cornered on the banks of the Red Sea with the most powerful army in the world breathing down his neck. A hopeless case. Gideon was 300 against 300,000. David stood across the valley from a bloodthirsty giant. Esther was a woman trying to gain a word with a prideful king. Daniel's roommate was a lion, his friends were thrown in an oven. Jonah sucked at his job and got stuck in a whale. Peter was a coward. Paul was imprisoned. The 5,000 had no food. Lazarus was dead. Timothy was too young. Abraham was too old. The youngest son was too stupid. The walls of Jericho were too strong and Jesus was humiliated, hung on a cross, and buried in a tomb, burying all hopes of the revolution that was hoped for for thousands of years.*

Can we really expect that we will get what we ask for and be delivered out of our trials?

1 Corinthians 10:13: In context, the Apostle Paul was talking about the errant experiences and attitudes of Israel after their exodus from Egypt. They did many things wrong and Paul listed some of their failures: craving evil things, idolatry, immorality, tempting God and grumbling.

1 Corinthians 10:12: (NASB) *Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall.* Perhaps Paul is saying just as Israel was delivered from the evil slavery of Egypt and were therefore essentially homeless, so we, having been delivered from the slavery of sin, are also homeless in this world and susceptible to the same failures. They were given great miracles and deliverance but were wandering, which caused a lot of their difficulties. We have been delivered as well, but our true home is in heaven. We are "homeless" until we get there. We are still frail and broken and are susceptible to sin.

1 Corinthians 10:13: (NASB) *No temptation <3986> has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape <1545> also, so that you will be able to endure it <5297>.*

Temptation: Strongs #3986 peirasmos (pi-ras-mos'); a putting to proof (by experiment [of good], experience [of evil], solicitation, discipline or provocation); by implication, adversity
- in other words, a testing

Way of escape: Strongs #1545 ekbasis (ek'-bas-is); ...an exit (literally or figuratively)

Endure: Strongs #5297 hupophero (hoop-of-er'-o); to bear from underneath,
i.e. (figuratively) to undergo hardship

A way of escape and a way to endure seem to be contradictory. How can you escape something and still be bearing the weight of it? The way of escape IS a way to endure. God is not going to take the trial away from us but will help us "escape" by helping us understand it is part of the process, part of the contract, so we can carry the weight of it with a purpose in mind. If you are carrying misery without purpose or hope, it will defeat you. If you go through it with purpose and hope, there is a light at the end of the tunnel.

Ask God for the strength to bear the burden. If you embrace the pain as God's overruling power in your life, even if it means the death of a child, you find strength through that. Jesus ended his prayers with *nevertheless, not my will but Your will be done*. We expect all lives to be resurrected, including that of a child. That is why Jesus came and God's biggest promise ever - a ransom for all of sinful mankind to resurrection.

Romans 8:15-18: *The way of escape* = to embrace the experience as for our good; not to have it dissolve into thin air but to have the testing be of a priceless value to our lives. We can then share that value with other lives and teach others how to bear the pain of our trials so we can see God's promises gloriously fulfilled. In reference to our last caller, God did not promise



every sick child would be healed in this day, but He did promise all would be resurrected in the kingdom.

Embrace the testing as what God allows it to be - a test of our fidelity: Romans 8:28,35-37: Through the "slaughter" of our human lives, we can be conquerors. This is what Jesus did and what we need to do.

 **Hope, *The Wall: A Hopeless Situation*, Jon Jorgenson**

- *Now, everybody was ready to close the book on these stories. The end, game over. But if there's one thing we learn from the Scriptures, it's that we can never place a period where God has placed a comma, because when all other options have been worn out, when circumstances couldn't get worse, when everything else has failed - get ready because that is exactly where God shows up! Because Joseph became second in command. The Red Sea parted. Gideon won without lifting a weapon. Goliath's head was on a plate. Esther spoke and the king listened. Daniel tamed the lion. The oven felt like room temperature. Nineveh repented. Peter became the rock. Paul rejoiced. Twelve basketfuls were left over. Lazarus was just kidding. Timothy built a church. Abraham built a family. The youngest son came home to a party. The walls of Jericho came a' tumblin' down and Jesus Christ pulled off the resurrection defeating sin and death and the creation that had been marred so many years was now restored for all time!*

God's promise in 1 Corinthians 10:13 is a true promise of hope for eternity! God's plan is bigger than this moment. Romans 8:38-39

PROMISE LESSON: God promises us deliverance THROUGH testings and not FROM them - this is how we grow!

The end of Stephen's life - was this a fulfillment of God's promised protection for him? Acts 7:52-54,57-58: Wasn't this defeat? **This was victory!** Psalms 116:14-15: How is our death *precious in the sight of God*? God promises to give us as much time as we need to develop a Christ-like character. Hopefully we have been faithful. His promises to us are ultimately fulfilled, not just for a moment but for eternity.

Part of His plan is to allow sin TEMPORARILY so that in the resurrection, our race will know the meaning of godlessness and its results. Our victory, protection and promises from God are all wrapped up in the "simple" task of being like Jesus.

Every promise given is for the end result of heavenly glory: Matthew 10:24-25,28: Walking in Jesus' footsteps requires the testing to be proven faithful so you can receive what God has in store. It is not necessarily all happy all the time at this point. **Give from the depth of your Christian heart and then receive God's promise:** Philippians 4:16-19: We give our will, desire, time, talent, actions - everything we can to be like Jesus. Our needs are supplied from God's spiritual inventory and are not based on our personal wants.

 **Conclusion, *The Wall: A Hopeless Situation*, Jon Jorgenson**

- *With God, what seems like a hopeless situation is not only possible, it's favorable because only God can turn a mess into a message. Only God can turn a trial into a triumph, a test into a testimony, and a victim into a victory. His power is made perfect in weakness, so let us rejoice in our trials and hold unswervingly to the hope we profess. Because He who promised is faithful, was faithful and will always be faithful no matter how hopeless the situation.*

God's promises always have a context and a purpose and sometimes that purpose is beyond what we are capable of seeing. **Bottom line - He is a promise maker and a promise keeper!** Isaiah 55:8-11: Ask in accordance with His will. Seek His will in your life and it will be given to you. God is the ultimate promise keeper. Look at Him in the context of His word, His plan and His will and then see the promises for what they are - the greatest promises ever given.

*So, does God really keep His promises?
For Jonathan and Rick (and Kathy!) and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*