

## God's Unchanging Promises.

Hello again church family. Your encouragement and kind words have made it easier to get up here again. Which is helpful, because here I am again. I have not had near a decade to work on this sermon, yet it is the one that is ready next. Sometimes that is how the Spirit of God works; but that is a different sermon.

A note for the back row Baptists. There is no row behind the sound booth, it is the ultimate back row, and it is looking for volunteers.

Okay, let's start.

- God's Unchanging Promises -

Last time I was up here, I pulled verses from all over the scriptures for the message. I warned you it would be scattered.

Today will be no different. Why? Because it is all the same story.

Every book has Jesus in it, has God's plan and love. And it is the same plan, and the same love. We do not see an evolution or refinement of the plan as the Bible gets closer to Jesus.

God had the whole plan for salvation already worked out, before Adam disobeyed and needed it. My God lines up so many tiny details, I can be reading something I've read a dozen times before and suddenly be struck with the significance of the preposition, or one specific word choice.

For example the first gospel reference,

Genesis 3:15

I will put enmity between you and the woman,  
and between your offspring[seed] and her offspring[seed];  
he shall bruise your head,  
and you shall bruise his heel.”

A study Bible should have the footnote that “offspring” here is the Hebrew word for seed, not child or descendant or fruit.

If we use a farming analogy, man has the seed and woman has the field. To talk about the end product he would say fruit. That would work well as the metaphor for children.

God knows this, he just built woman in the previous chapter (Genesis 2:22) and would not have forgotten so quickly how offspring are made.

God does not make mistakes. How is it the woman's seed? A child without man's seed, without an earthly father. Virgin birth, right there in Genesis. The plan has been the plan since the beginning, including the details like which miracles would be involved when.

Now you are probably saying Mike, don't you think that is putting too much significance on a single word? If this was any other author, probably. But this is scripture, and every word is God breathed. Look at Jesus setting the Sadducees straight.

“And as for the dead being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the bush, how God spoke to him, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not God of the dead, but of the living. You are quite wrong.”

Mark 12:26-27 ESV

Jesus puts the Sadducees in their place because God says "I am" instead of "I was". One verb tense, and it is given as proof that Abraham is still alive, having received the resurrection and living with God. God said woman's seed, instead of woman's fruit or man's seed, on purpose because there is only one who will crush the serpent's head. Jesus Christ, born of a virgin.

The importance of the virgin birth as more than a miracle, as a necessity for the math of salvation, is another sermon. That one still needs a couple years for me to pull together. The point I'm trying to make here is He planned it all. This book is God's track record, his credit score, and he is unchanging.

Isaiah 40:28

Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable.

So, it is no surprise that the living God, unchanging from before creation, is working in the same way as he did pre-Calvary.

Now, let's follow another point from the same passage. "I Am the God of Abraham" points out that Abraham has received the resurrection. How did he qualify?

Genesis 15:6

6 Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

What did Abram, not yet renamed Abraham, believe?

God told him that He would populate a nation with his descendants. Abraham was elderly and childless at the time God told him this, and he believed. He believes so hard, that even when he receives instructions that look contradictory to this promise, he obeys and trusts God to solve the puzzle.

And Isaac said to his father Abraham, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." He said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Abraham said, "God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." So they went both of them together.

Genesis 22:7-8 ESV

If you don't know it, that is from the story where God tells Abraham to kill the son God gave him. It looks like God's instructions contradict God's promise, but Isaac lives. It's a good story, another foreshadow of the gospel. Because Abraham believed in Genesis 15 and obeyed in Genesis 22, he got this promise:

and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice."  
Genesis 22:18 ESV

All the nations, not just the descendants of Abraham. The gospel again. For God so loved the world that gentiles were included from the start. Even at this point, when starting the promised family that

becomes the nation of Israel, where it looks like God is playing favorites, God's plan is unchanged and includes the whole earth.

Once more. Before the nation of Israel came about and was God's chosen people, what did Abraham believe?

He believed that God would fulfill his promise. Today we have the details of how God did that, but the details are not required. Abraham did not have the details. Belief is enough.

God keeps his Word. Believe it. God made a promise, Abraham believed and was saved.

What assurance do I have that God will count my debt as paid through the actions of Jesus Christ? His Word. God promises us that Jesus paid our debt, and accepting that gift is all it takes to be reconciled to God. He keeps his word. Believe it.

Numbers 23:19

God is not man, that he should lie,  
or a son of man, that he should change his mind.

Has he said, and will he not do it?

Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?

Before the Mosaic law was given, and the system of sacrifices was set up, salvation was available.

God is unchanging.

Hebrews 13:8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

He has the same plan since the beginning. Same requirement since the beginning.

Same salvation since the beginning.

2 Timothy 2:13

If we are faithless, he remains faithful— for he cannot deny himself

God keeps his word! Isn't that awesome? How do we apply this?

If we believe God keeps his Word, as the basis for our eternal forgiveness and salvation, we should pay attention to what it is exactly that God promises.

First, read His word. When you finish, start over and read it again because there will be more meaning for you to glean.

Next, pay attention. Some promises are made to specific people; you cannot claim inheritance of the land of Israel. When you are reading God's good word, do it deliberately.

Seek to understand and He will give you understanding. He promised.

1 Corinthians 2:12 Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.

Jesus promises that spirit to us.

John 14:16-17 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

And The Spirit of truth that is living in us, is also part of another promise. God will never leave you.

Deuteronomy 4:31

31 For the Lord your God is a merciful God. He will not leave you or destroy you or forget the covenant with your fathers that he swore to them.

Deuteronomy 31:6-8

6 Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the Lord your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you.”

7 Then Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, “Be strong and courageous, for you shall go with this people into the land that the Lord has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall put them in possession of it.

8 It is the Lord who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.”

Joshua 1:9

9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

1 Chronicles 28:20

20 Then David said to Solomon his son, “Be strong and courageous and do it. Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed, for the Lord God, even my God, is with you. He will not leave you or forsake you, until all the work for the service of the house of the Lord is finished.

Hebrews 13:5-6

5 Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” 6 So we can confidently say, “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?”

God wont leave you, and you can't be stolen away.

John 10:28-29

I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

John 10:28-29 ESV

I really wish He had promised a wealthy and easygoing life. That would have definitely made it into my list. But he does promise rest.

Matthew 11:28-29

28 Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

This rest is an easing of your mental and emotional burden. You don't have to keep up with the religious hokey pokey when you are a Christian. Jesus declares it finished, when he is on the cross. Debt paid, transaction complete.

Jesus frees us from the checklists and balance scales, but he doesn't just turn us loose to do whatever until kingdom come. God promises direction. He has the plan, and we have steps to follow.

Isaiah 14:24

The Lord of hosts has sworn:

"As I have planned, so shall it be,  
and as I have purposed, so shall it stand,

Psalm 32:8

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;

I will counsel you with my eye upon you.

Jeremiah 29:11

11 For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.

2 Timothy 1:9

God who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began,

The plan has been the plan from the beginning.

God can give us difficult directions, like telling the awkward guy to come out of the sound booth and get on the stage and preach. In front of you and also the whole internet. Hi mom. Hi dad. Or maybe like asking you to volunteer one Sunday a month to fill one of the 50 holes in our fall children's ministries plans. But also God knows that we are fragile, that man is like grass, and he promises us the strength to accomplish what it is he directs us to do.

Isaiah 41:10

"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."

Isaiah 54:17

no weapon that is fashioned against you shall succeed, and you shall refute every tongue that rises against you in judgment. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD and their vindication from me, declares the LORD."

God means what he says, every single word. Rest in the comfort of that thought. And also this:

James 1: 17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

God is unchanging, the plan is unchanged, the Genesis 3 "seed of woman" and Abraham getting the resurrection, the same heaven that we do because it is the same faith in the same God for the same salvation

Malachi 3:6 “For I the Lord do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed. 7 From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the Lord of hosts.

Genesis 28:15

“I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go... I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.”

That is God talking to Jacob, saying the same thing He says to Abraham, Moses, Joseph, David, Solomon, Jeremiah, all the nation of Israel, and you. That is His character, and God does not change. God said it, he keeps his word, so our response should be:

Philippians 1:6 being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Because He said He would. He will be faithful, he cannot deny himself. Believe it.

Final thing, that word "believe". Words are hard, and can be misunderstood, so what does this word look like?

This stool is constructed from sturdy materials, and in a tried and true shape.

I have knowledge that tells me it will support me.

I trust it will support my weight.

But I'm still standing over here on my own legs.

\*sits\*

Now I Believe it. That required action, based on and according to the knowledge and trust that I hold. Do you BELIEVE God will keep his Word? Do you believe that God will count your debt as paid by Jesus, and accept you into His family, forever to be with you, forgiving you as you continue in your walk with Him? Do you believe that He not only tolerates you, looking at you through mercy and grace, but also loves you? AS. HE. SAID. Do you believe it?

Talk to him about it. Get that understanding that He promised. It will take time, because there is a lot to understand, so many layers. But today is a good day to start.

Let's close with prayer.

Lord God Almighty. You are good. Your word is good. Thank you for the promises of rest and understanding. Thank you for your patience and grace. Provide your strength when we doubt, your comfort when we hurt, your direction when we are finally ready to listen and try it your way. Teach us to love you more. Amen.