

# Standing on the Promises

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[ 0 : 0 0 ]     they like, sleeping around and doing that sort of thing while we remain faithful to God and only date Christians or remain single or whatever it is, it's hard to believe God's promise that this is the best way to live.

We can sometimes be tempted to doubt God's promises to us, that God's way, the narrow way is better, even though it's pretty obvious when you look at the world after a while.

And so the book of Joshua is a very helpful and relevant for us today, I think, for it reminds us that God does keep his promises and those promises are meant to help us through tough times in life, daunting times.

And that's exactly what Joshua was facing here in chapter one, point one, verse one. After the death of Moses, the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua, son of Nun, Moses is a Moses, my servant is dead.

Now then, you and all these people get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I'm about to give them to the Israelites. Now hopefully you remember our series in Genesis and that in Genesis chapter 12, God made Abraham three great promises.

[ 1 : 1 5 ]     Does anyone remember any of those promises? No? No? Okay, let me remind you. The easy way to remember it is remembering the tennis shot of a lob. You know the lob?

Kind of that, anyway. On the next slide, land, offspring, blessing. Okay, there were the three big promises. And Abraham's descendants, well, God was keeping the second one of offspring because they grew to about 70, went down to Egypt, and then they multiplied like rabbits.

On the next slide, in Exodus chapter 1, this is what it says. The Israelites were exceedingly fruitful and they multiplied greatly, increased in numbers and became so numerous that the land was filled with them.

You see, God has been keeping his promise of offspring, many descendants. But the new king of Egypt saw this as a threat and so he enslaved them, you might remember. And Exodus is really about God saving his people from slavery through Moses, exiting his people, hence Exodus, out of Egypt onto the promised land, the El part of Lob.

Of course, when they came to the promised land, there were people already there whose sin had become so great that God was going to use Israel to judge them, but Israel got scared, do you remember?

[ 2 : 3 3 ]     The people already living in the land were like giants, they said. And so the task of fighting them was too daunting. They did not trust God's promise, but rebelled.

And so now it's 40 years later and they are back on the edge of the promised land. And Moses then gives the sermon of his life, literally, because then he dies. And that's basically what the book of Deuteronomy is about.

And next comes the book of Joshua, which is all about God fulfilling the promise of land, El. And it starts with God saying to Joshua, Moses is dead. Now then you, Joshua, lead people into this land.

Now we need to understand that this would have been a hugely daunting proposition for Joshua. And we know this from the text because Joshua is told to be strong and courageous four times.

Verse 6, verse 7, verse 9, and again in verse 18. And he's told not to be afraid or discouraged, verse 9. Why? Because it's a daunting task.

[ 3 : 35 ] I mean, firstly, he was filling the shoes of the great Moses. Moses. I mean, in Australia, the longest serving prime minister was Robert Menzies, who served for 18 years. And he impacted Australia.

But Moses led Israel for more than twice as many years. And he was with them from the start. He was the greatest prophet in the Old Testament. I mean, if you've got your Bibles there, just look back to the other column, to the end of Deuteronomy.

Don't have to turn a page. It's right there. To verse 10, the end of Deuteronomy. And it says this. Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, who did all those signs and wonders the Lord sent him to do in Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his officials and to the whole land.

This is who Moses was. No one like him. And now Joshua has to fill those shoes. But second, it's also a daunting task because Joshua had to do what Moses could not do.

He had to get the people to trust God and cross into the promised land. And to capture it from those living there, from fortified cities and the people who were like giants.

[ 4 : 48 ] It was a really daunting task. Here at Holy Trinity, we have a kids club called J Kids on Wednesday afternoons. And every year we take them to Luna Park at St Kilda, courtesy of Seb's.

And leading a group of 30 to 40 hyperactive kids who then fill themselves with fairy floss and sugar and run away from you in a busy park where it's easy to get lost. It's not my favorite time of year.

It's daunting. It's trying to hurt a bunch of cats. And sometimes you even have to go on rides with them. And so like this ride on the next slide. It's called Pharaoh's Curse, which is kind of like the scissors.

And just to kind of give you a feeling, how I would be feeling anyway, on the next slide, just take out the picture of the dad on the other side. It's like this, I'm going to die, I'm going to die kind of face. And that feeling that you get on those rides, I guess, is akin to the feeling that Joshua might have had at the prospect of his task.

Not only filling Moses' shoes, but leading this people who have had a terrible track record of trusting God. Leading them into this land of giants.

[ 6 : 01 ] And so God makes two promises to help Joshua persevere in this task. Point to verse 3. He says, I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses.

Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon and from the great river, the Euphrates, or the Hittite country to the Mediterranean Sea in the west. Notice the first promise here.

See, God says, I will give you the land. In fact, God has already said that in verse 2. He says, the land I am about to give you. In other words, God's promise is that he will do it.

He is the one who will give the land into Joshua's hands. He is the one who will work through them. In effect, God is saying, don't worry, I will keep my promise. You don't have to keep my promise.

I will keep my promise and give you the land. This is a great encouragement for us, really, isn't it? No matter what happens in life, God's promises to us will stand.

[ 7 : 04 ]     Because they don't depend on us to be kept. They depend on God. And he will keep them. Including giving Joshua the land. But notice, God will still use Joshua to keep this promise.

And Joshua will still need to fight. But God will be with him to enable him to win. And so inherit the land. Do you see verse 5?

He says, no one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life. Why? Well, as I was with Moses, so I will be with you.

I will never leave you nor forsake you. He says. No one will stand against Joshua. Well, not for long anyway. Joshua will win because God is with him.

God will never leave him nor forsake him. And so we have these two related promises here. To help Joshua with his daunting task. That God will give him the land.

[ 8 : 04 ]     And he will give it by being with Joshua. And enabling him to get the land. And given these promises, what does he require of Joshua?

Well, to trust and obey. See verse 6? He says, be strong and courageous. In other words, trust me because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their ancestors to give them.

Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you. Do not turn from it to the right or to the left. That you may be successful wherever you go.

Keep this book of the law always on your lips. Meditate on it day and night. So that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Have I not commanded you?

Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid. Do not be discouraged. For the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go. Here God gives Joshua two requirements.

[ 9 : 05 ]     First, Joshua is to be strong and courageous. And the repetition makes it pretty clear, doesn't it? And in other words, Joshua is to trust God. He's to courageously stand on God's promises.

To live in light of them. No matter how daunting the task may feel. He's to trust that God will give him the land by being with him and working through him to make it happen.

But the other requirement for Joshua was to obey. In fact, just as the two promises are linked with each other, you know, God will give the land by being with Joshua and helping him win.

Well, so these two promises are also linked. In our translations, there's actually a word missing. So on the slide is, I've put the word in. So verse seven, literally on the next slide says, Only be very strong and courageous that or so that you may keep and do all the law my servant Moses commanded you.

See, Joshua is to have a courageous trust in God so that he will obey God. A courageous trust in God's promises is meant to issue in obedience to God's word.

[ 10 : 15 ]     Trust and obedience, they go together, don't they? And so he knows what to obey is to meditate on God's word night and day. You see, taking this promised land is not going to be an overnight activity.

It's going to take time. And there will be temptations, as we'll see. And so Joshua is to keep reading God's word so that he'll keep remembering who God is and how to obey him.

I've often talked with people who just around this kind of age, you know, young adults and so on, who just want to know what God wants for them in life. You know, what uncourse to do, what career to pursue, whether to marry and if so, who will stay single, that kind of thing.

And they spend so much time worrying about that, that they forget about this. Where God actually does tell us what he wants for us in life. Oh, sure, the Bible doesn't tell us exactly what career to have or which person to marry or whether to stay single and so on.

But it does tell us what God really wants for us, which is to be like Christ, to be godly. And that is actually more important to God. So we need to keep reading God's word.

[ 11 : 24 ] But it's also worth noting again that even God will enable Joshua to trust and obey. Because how does God's speech end in verse 9?

With another reminder of his promise to be with Joshua. Do you see that? In fact, on the next slide, you could actually break up the passage like this. Where God's promise to be with Joshua kind of surrounds the requirements.

It bookends them, if you like. Because God will help Joshua to do this. He will help him to be strong and courageous and to obey. And yet at the same time, Joshua still needs to do it himself.

And so does he. Well, let's find out. At point 3, verse 10. So Joshua ordered the officers of the people to pack up and go home.

No. To go through the camp and tell the people, get your provisions ready. Three days from now, you will cross the Jordan here to go in and take possession of the land.

[ 12 : 26 ] The Lord your God is giving you for your own. Joshua responds with obedience, doesn't he? As soon as God stops talking, Joshua starts acting in obedience.

That's the kind of way the narrative is written. He obeys God's command, given way back in verse 2, to get ready to cross the Jordan. He orders them to, that is Joshua, orders the people to get provisions ready.

And he says with confidence that they will cross the Jordan and they will take possession of the land. But then he also reminds two and a half tribes about their promise to help.

You see on the next slide, the land was divided into 12 tribes, represented by different colours, I think, on the next slide. So that's the big picture view of what it kind of ended up after they took the land.

And you'll notice on the next slide, I've got to zoom in a bit so it's hopefully a bit clear. Now, the big blue line in the middle is the Jordan River. It's not straight like that, obviously. I didn't know how to do a wiggly line. But anyway, the Israelites are already on the right-hand side on the east.

[ 13 : 32 ] And they're probably camped around where that black dot is. They're going to cross the Jordan River and they're going to meet Ai and Jericho soon. And you'll notice on the right-hand side that there's three colours which represent three, well, literally two and a half tribes.

They're kind of disproportionate. You've got in the brown east Manasseh, so that's the half tribe, even though it's quite big. And then you've got Gad and then you've got Reuben down the bottom. And so what happened was when they arrived, these tribes already got their land.

They already got their inheritance. And so Joshua reminds them of the promise that these tribes made to Moses about helping the rest get their land.

And so on the next slide is their promise that they made to Moses. He says, these are the tribes. We would like to build pens here for our livestock and cities for our women and children on the right-hand side of the river.

But we are ready to arm ourselves and go ahead of the Israelites until we have brought them to their place. We will not return to our homes until every Israelite has received his inheritance.

[ 14 : 40 ] And so here Joshua reminds them of that promise. The promise to help the other tribes take the land and receive their inheritance.

And so in your Bibles there, verse 12, But to the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half tribe of Manasseh, Joshua said, Remember the command that Moses, the servant of the Lord, gave you after he said, The Lord your God will give you rest by giving you this land on the right-hand side of the river.

Your wives, your children and your livestock may stay in the land that Moses gave you east of the Jordan. But all your fighting men ready for battle must cross over ahead of your fellow Israelites.

You are to help them until the Lord gives them rest as he has done for you. And until they too have taken possession of the land the Lord your God is giving them. After that, you may go back and occupy your own land, which Moses, the servant of the Lord, gave you east of the Jordan towards the sunrise.

And then they answered Joshua, Whatever you have commanded us, we will do. And wherever you send us, we will go. Just as we fully obeyed Moses, Well, I'm not sure they did, so we will obey you.

[ 15 : 47 ] Only may the Lord your God be with you as he was with Moses. Whoever rebels against your word and does not obey it, whatever you may command them will be put to death. Only be strong and courageous.

That's really an encouragement, not a command to Joshua. There. So here Joshua reminds them that the taking of this land is actually a family affair, doesn't he?

They are to help each other until they all find rest, until they all receive their inheritance from God. They're meant to do it together. Oh, that's Joshua chapter 1.

What does it all mean for us? Point 3. Well, in Christ, God has made us a promise of an inheritance as well. The inheritance of heaven.

And so on the next slide is a passage from, actually, I don't think it is. I'm going to get you into Bibles to turn to 1 Peter chapter 1. So 1 Peter chapter 1 verse 3 says this, The living hope is then described in verse 4 without the end, You see, just as God saved the Israelites from slavery in Egypt and brought them to the promised land, their inheritance, So God, through Jesus, has saved us from slavery to sin and promised us a heavenly inheritance.

[ 17 : 35 ] He's given us a new birth into his family and into a living hope, a certain hope of a heavenly inheritance for us, one that will never perish, spoil or fade.

This is God's promise to us. And if he has done the hardest thing of giving up his only son to secure that heavenly inheritance, you know, by his death and resurrection, then do you not think God will do the easier thing of bringing us home to it?

Indeed, for all those who have faith, Peter says there in verse 5 that we are shielded by God's power. God will keep us and hold us until our salvation comes in full, until we reach our heavenly inheritance.

But it does say through faith, doesn't it? Verse 5. For us who have faith, God will guard us and keep us until that day. But do you?

Do you have faith? This promise is for those who trust in Jesus, his death and resurrection, because it's only Jesus and his death and resurrection that brings this living hope, this inheritance.

[ 18 : 40 ] And so do you believe in Jesus? That's the first question. Have you put your trust in him? For us who have, then we are to keep trusting God and stand courageously on his promises, including this one.

We are to trust that God will deliver that promise, that he will bring us home, that we will have an inheritance. That we'll never perish, spoil or fade.

And we're to let that promise help us persevere through daunting and tough times in life. There's a lady at our church who doesn't make it to church very often, but I occasionally visit.

She lives in a nursing home. The room is about the size of... No, it's a little bit bigger without at all about the size of that music. No, it's a little bit bigger than that.

But it's not much bigger than that. It's very small. She has grown up children, none of whom are Christians, and she laments that and mourns over them. She's in constant pain.

[ 19 : 43 ] She's on the strongest pain medication possible. She has every reason to be angry with God, and yet she continues to trust God. Why?

Because she knows this promise of a heavenly inheritance, where she will have a new body and glory that will more than make up for any suffering she has in this life.

You see, it's not easy for her to trust, given her circumstances, but she stands courageously on this promise. That's what we are to do.

We are to trust in God's promise. We are to stand courageously on them. Keep believing. Keep obeying, as Joshua was to do. That's not always easy, is it?

But we also have the other promise that God gave to Joshua, that he is always with us to help us and enable us. And so on the next slide, Paul writes these things. Well, certainly in Philippians, at least.

[ 20 : 46 ] He says, continue to work out your salvation. Now, keep growing as a Christian. Keep resisting temptation. Don't give in to the world. Keep working out your salvation with fear and trembling. Why?

Well, because it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good pleasure. See, we're not alone. God is with us, working in us and through us by his spirit, helping us to keep trusting.

To resist the ways of the world. To not believe the lies that living the world's way is better or more fun or more fulfilling. And what's more in Hebrews, at the bottom of the slide there, we also have a similar thing.

He says, keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have. Because God has said, never will I leave you. Never will I forsake you. You see, we're not alone. God is with us.

He will never leave us nor forsake us. And so we don't need to do what other people do and chase after money and career and so on. We can instead seek first God's kingdom and his glory.

[ 21 : 47 ] Or like we heard from our second reading tonight, that Jesus will be with us to the very end of the age. And so we're not alone as we go about making disciples of all nations, making the most of opportunities we have to share Jesus with our friends.

We're not alone. God is with us to help us and enable us to keep trusting him, to help us to keep living for him. And so these promises are like the \$20 at the start are meant to motivate us to keep going, to keep trusting, to keep obeying.

And lastly, we're not alone because we also have each other. And we're to help each other. And just as Joshua calls the tribes to help the rest of Israel enter their rest, find their inheritance, so too we are to help one another inherit our heavenly rest, our heavenly inheritance.

You see, it's meant to be a family affair, God's family affair, all for one, one for all. And so we're to encourage one another, pray for one another, ask after each other.

So can I encourage you to do that? Do you pray for your church here at five o'clock during the week? I mean, not here now. When you hear a friend who's doing it tough, do you pray for them?

[ 23 : 11 ] And if you are doing it tough, then do you ask for prayer? Or are you too ashamed that you're doing it tough? Everyone does. You're not alone. You're not meant to be alone.

You see, God has saved us to a family where we are to help each other to heaven. We're not meant to live the Christian life alone. Which is why meeting together is so important, whether at church or Bible study or for chicken and chips.

We've been brought together as God's people, and we're to help each other to heaven under God, who is always with us. I remember a 1030 family who, well, they were going through a downtime, and their oven had broken and gone on the blink.

And there was a few other things happening as well, which I won't go into. But another family from 1030 Church then decided to buy an oven and get another member from 1030 Church, who was an electrician, to install it.

And just that act, or just that act, that act encouraged them and saw the love that they have as part of the family. And it helped them to keep trusting God despite the tough time they're going through.

[ 24 : 24 ] We're to help each other to heaven in small and big ways like that. And so will you stand courageously on God's promises, the promise of a heavenly inheritance?

Will you keep trusting Jesus, knowing that you are not alone? And will you keep helping one another to heaven? Let's pray. Our gracious Heavenly Father, we do thank you for this event in history where you called your servant Joshua and gave him two great promises to help him persevere through a tough time in his life.

Our Father, we pray that you would help us to remember your promises, in fact, the same ones to us, that we too might persevere in our trust in you, that we might keep remembering that we're not alone.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.