

Series: Acts

Lesson: #44

Title: God's Promise Is Never Frustrated

Scripture: Acts 13: 18, 19

Date: 11-13-08

Place: Sovereign Grace Baptist Church of Princeton, New Jersey

**Acts 13: 14: But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down. 15: And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, *Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.* 16: Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with *his* hand said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience.**

Imagine coming to the church house to worship only to hear the preacher tell you that God's favor is toward you because of some good he foresaw in you.

What if it was declared to you that you become a child of God by your obedience to the law given on Mt. Sinai? What if you were taught that it is your devotion to the church—the sacrifices you make, your self-denial, your attendance, your coming to an altar, your observance of days? What if you were taught that by confessing your sins to the priest you would be accepted of God? Or that you are more accepted if you pray morning, noon and night? Or what if you were told that washing the outside of your body from worldly defilement would make you more accepted of God?

What if you were taught that when Christ comes he will establish a kingdom here on earth; he will liberate you from the restraints of earthly kings and sinful men and you will be able to have your way in this world like you have always wanted? What if you were told that for others to convert and become children of God that it is not enough that they believe on God, but they are required also to keep the Law of Moses?

What if the preacher declared that you are child of God because of your race? Or what if it was said that you are a child of God because your father was a child of God and his father before him?

That is what the majority in the Jewish church thought God taught in the law and in the prophets. Sadly, that is what the majority in the Christian church think the law and the prophets teach today. And Paul knows that the men and women—Jew and Gentile—who sit before him in this synagogue think the same thing. They had missed Christ. Will you miss him?

Only two things keep sinners from Christ: our sin and our righteousness's. And our righteousness's are the worst of our sin. Paul knew this because he once sat right where they sat, calling death life and life death. So what would Paul stand up and declare?

God's Promise is Never Frustrated: that is what Paul will tell them. That is the title for our message.

**Proposal:** The theme of Paul's sermon is this: God forgives the sin of his elect in Christ Jesus his Son and justifies them because sinners can never be justified—made holy and without blame before God—by anything in our flesh. Paul is declaring that God does all this according to his eternal covenant. Paul declares that nothing can frustrate his purpose and grace to save his people in Christ Jesus his Son.

As Paul closes this sermon he states this plainly: He says in spite of all the sin and rebellion in this world, God faithfully fulfilled the promise he made with Abraham in raising up Christ the promised Seed, the Savior in whom Abraham was forgiven and justified, as well as all those God has saved. **Acts 13: 32: And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, 33: God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.**

Here is the second part of Paul's theme, because of what Christ Jesus accomplished, no amount of sin in you can hinder him from forgiving you of your sins, nor can any amount of obedience you perform justify you, but only Christ can. **Acts 13: 38: Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: 39: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.**

If we keep this theme in mind, we will find these two points in every thing Paul states: God's Promise is Never Frustrated.

Paul begins by saying:

**Acts 13: 17: The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers,**

- Though Abraham was an idolater who would never choose the true and living God, it did not hinder God's promise and purpose of grace because God chose Abraham in Christ before he founded the world.
- Though Ishmael would be born of the wisdom and will of Abraham and Sara, it would not frustrate God's promise and purpose of grace, because God chose Isaac in his Son before he made the world and Isaac would be "the son born, the son given" to typify Christ our Isaac in whom Abraham's true children are called.
- Though Esau and Jacob were twins, though Isaac loved Esau more than Jacob, though Jacob was full of deceit, it would not hinder God's promise and purpose of grace, because God chose Jacob long before the two were ever born, before any of those earthly hindrances had ever come about.

What is this promise and purpose of grace? God's promise was first to his Son. It was a promise that God would give to him a multitude of children more in number than the stars of heaven. It was the promise that though his people had fallen into bondage, God the Father trusted the Son to redeem them and bring them out with his mighty hand. The Son of God would take the likeness of sinful flesh, made of a woman, made under the law, he would be both the Son of God and the Seed of Abraham. In Abraham's Seed all the true sons of Abraham—the Israel of God--would trust and rejoice in the Son of God. God promised his Son that that he should have all preeminence.

This same promise which God made between God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is the covenant the LORD God made with made Abraham? The LORD said, "Abraham, in thy Seed shall all the nations of the earth shall be blessed. Now Abraham, look past all your children down through time to Bethlehem, to the Seed of woman, that's the Seed, I'm speaking of, Abraham. My Son shall be made in the likeness of sinful flesh, of your stock Abraham....In thy Seed, shall all the nations of the earth be blessed—now Abraham, look past all the people in all the nations and behold those I've chosen from among them, just like I've chosen you from among all these idolaters in your family and in your land. I've chosen them in my Son. Though they fall into the bondage of sin and self-righteousness, I will deliver them in thy Seed, my Son. And nothing, not one thing, shall hinder me from fulfilling my everlasting covenant to my Son and to you Abraham, nor from fulfilling this same covenant I will make in the hearts of this chosen children from among all the nations."

**Galatians 3: 16: Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.**

**and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt,**

- Though the people were strangers to Pharaoh; though he did everything in his power to kill all the male children in Israel so that Christ the Seed could never be born; still, God multiplied them, birthed them into his nation, just as he promised and purposed beforehand. Christ must be born of the flesh and be the Firstborn from the dead. And all these chosen children of God must be born of the flesh and then born the second time of the Spirit of God, therefore God multiplied them in spite of all the opposition against him.

**and with an high arm brought he them out of it.**

- Though Pharaoh did everything in his power to hinder their deliverance out of his hand, God slew all the firstborn in the houses of both the Egyptians and the Israelites. The difference is that God provided a Lamb for the Israelites who died in the place of their firstborn. Thus in delivering this people of Israel, the God of this people declared how he justly punishes the sin of all men, some in themselves, but his chosen in the Lamb he has provided, and thus he just to show them mercy in delivering them. God delivers through his Preeminent Arm, Christ the Lord.

“Now if that is not enough to prove that God is faithful to bring forth the Seed, Christ Jesus his Son whom he promised Abraham, and through Christ deliver his people from their sin and their self-righteousness, then consider this,” Paul says.

**Acts 13: 18: And about the time of forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness.**

The Jews idolized the fathers in Israel. They thought they were children of God by blood kinship to them. So Paul begins by declaring that those fathers who were truly saved were saved from their sin, by grace, in Christ, according to God’s promise and not because of anything in them.

**Illustration:** Gabe Stalnaker and the Beatles

**Acts 13: 18: And about the time of forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness.**

**A. How soon they murmured and how often and what about.**

Remember, this was a people who had felt the whip of the Pharisees on their own backs. They had worked with their own hands making bricks. Each one had gone home from working long hours, to a LITTLE fish or a few vegetables then slept a few hours and were back at it again the next day just like the day before. They beheld the fury of God’s wrath poured out on the Egyptians whom he had not provided a lamb. They saw it in the plaques and in the final plague of death to the first born in Egypt.

a. Yet, as soon as they grew fearful and uncomfortable, they minimized the suffering they endured as Pharaoh’s slaves! They declared Pharaoh’s provisions as grand and the Lord’s provision as miniscule, they wished their first born and they themselves had died when God passed through Egypt rather than delight in God deliverance out of Egypt. When they saw Pharaoh approaching: **Exodus 14: 11: And they said unto Moses, Because *there were* no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? 12: *Is* not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For *it had been* better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness.**

b. **Exodus 16: 1: And they took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came unto the wilderness of Sin, which *is* between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Egypt. 2: And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness: 3: And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, *and* when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger. 4: Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I**

will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no.

c. Exodus 17: 1: And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, after their journeys, according to the commandment of the LORD, and pitched in Rephidim: and *there was* no water for the people to drink. 2: Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide ye with me? wherefore do ye tempt the LORD? 3: And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore *is* this *that* thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst? 4: And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me. 5: And the LORD said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go. 6: Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. 7: And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying, Is the LORD among us, or not?

d. Exodus 32: 1: And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for *as for* this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. 2: And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which *are* in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring *them* unto me. 3: And all the people brake off the golden earrings which *were* in their ears, and brought *them* unto Aaron. 4: And he received *them* at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These *be* thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. 5: And when Aaron saw *it*, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, To morrow *is* a feast to the LORD. 6: And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play. 7: And the LORD said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted *themselves*: 8: They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These *be* thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

e. Numbers 21: 4: And they journeyed from mount Hor by the way of the Red sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way. 5: And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for *there is* no bread, neither *is*

*there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread. 6: And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. 7: Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee; pray unto the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. 8: And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. 9: And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.*

f. After they spied out Canaan and refused to believe the Lord, and the Lord said this: Numbers 14: 11: **And the LORD said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them? 12: I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they. 13: And Moses said unto the LORD, Then the Egyptians shall hear *it*, (for thou broughtest up this people in thy might from among them;) 14: And they will tell *it* to the inhabitants of this land: *for* they have heard that thou LORD *art* among this people, that thou LORD art seen face to face, and *that* thy cloud standeth over them, and *that* thou goest before them, by day time in a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night. 15: Now *if* thou shalt kill *all* this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of thee will speak, saying, 16: Because the LORD was not able to bring this people into the land which he swore unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness. 17: And now, I beseech thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying, 18: The LORD *is* longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing *the guilty*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation*. 19: Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now. 20: And the LORD said, I have pardoned according to thy word: 21: But *as* truly *as* I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD. 22: Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; 23: Surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it: 24: But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it.**

## **II. But in declaring the sinfulness of their father, Paul declares the grace of our God.**

Paul sets their fathers before them as a people so full of iniquity that it was only because of God's promise to his Son, to Abraham, and to those true sons of Abraham to whom the Lord would save according to everlasting covenant of grace, and for the sake of that remnant who would be born of their children, because Christ must be born of the stock of Abraham, the Lord was longsuffering and did not destroy them all.

A. Throughout his longsuffering with those in the wilderness he set Christ before them:

1. The manna—typified Christ the Bread
2. The Smitten Rock—was Christ with whose stripes his people are healed and drink of the water of eternal life.
3. The Brazen Serpent—is Christ who was made the thing which inflicted the venom and was lifted up that all who look to him might be saved.
4. Even Joshua—who led Caleb the faithful dog into Canaan typified Christ our Savior who leads us to God's promised land.

B. This is what Paul is declaring concerning our God:

1. God shall save all whom he has chosen in Christ—those fathers who trusted Christ did not choose God, but God chose them.
2. God exalts—births—his people into his nation, into his kingdom, into his church, into his household and not we, ourselves.
3. God redeems by the blood of his Lamb—his High Arm—Christ Jesus the Son of God.
4. God does this not because of blood—for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, as you see by your fathers—but God saves by free and sovereign grace in Christ according to promise.
5. God suffers long because of the promise to his Son, and because all his people shall be brought to repentance and faith in him.
6. Because God is a God of covenant promise who changes not, neither can he be frustrated in fulfilling his promise, he shall make good on his promise—

**Acts 13: 19: And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Chanaan, he divided their land to them by lot.**

**Joshua 21: 43: And the LORD gave unto Israel all the land which he sware to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein. 44: And the LORD gave them rest round about, according to all that he sware unto their fathers: and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; the LORD delivered all their enemies into their hand. 45: There failed not ought of any good thing which the LORD had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass.**

**Romans 3: 3: For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? 4: God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.**

**Acts 13: 23: Of this man's seed hath God according to *his* promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus:**

### **Application:**

This is why Paul was longsuffering in the midst of those who opposed Christ. Because he was convinced:

**1) That God is sovereign and saves by his sovereign grace**

**2) God shall have his Son glorified**

**3) God will call out those he put in Christ**

**And none can stay his hand or say to him, What are you doing?**

Paul knew that God was directing him to sinners whom Christ had purged of all sin, who were reconciled to God, by the death of Christ and would live by his Life. He knew he was sent to those who were set apart and holy in Christ, a people whom God would call out, whom he would give a heart to rejoice in Christ, who he would bring to glory.

So for Christ's sake, and for the sake of those, Paul suffered long—put up with those who rejected his Lord, who kept insisting on the flesh—but he did so that he might preach Christ, and watch as God called out his sheep.

Paul merely preached Christ because through him God would feed his people with Christ the Bread, with water out of the Rock, he would shod their feet with the preparation of Christ so that their feet would not swell, nor their shoes wear out in the journey. Paul did so because he knew that our faithful Joshua would lead all his faithful dogs into his promised land.

So Paul ends his sermon by pointing them to God who saves by covenant promise, declaring:  
**Acts 13: 33: God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again...38: Be it known unto you therefore, men *and* brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: 39: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.**

I urge you, flee from idolatry, Christ is the Way. God's Promise is Never Frustrated.