

Series: Acts

Lesson: #45

Title: According to Promise

Scripture: Acts 13: 20-23

Date: 11-20-08

Place: Sovereign Grace Baptist Church of Princeton, New Jersey

God's people are sinners saved by sovereign grace *in* Christ the Son of God, *by* Christ the Son of God, *for* Christ the Son of God, according to the promise of God the Father *to* the Son of God.

Paul stood in the synagogue of the Jews at Antioch, Pisidia and here we have an outline of what he spoke: **Acts 13: 17: The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an high arm brought he them out of it. 18: And about the time of forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness. 19: And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Chanaan, he divided their land to them by lot.**

If God had not chosen to entrust a people into Christ we would have never chosen to trust him. If God had not made us his chosen nation by his great love and according to his covenant promise in Christ and revealed his promise in us by the Holy Spirit, we would have gladly taken our place amongst the idolatrous nations of the earth. Were it not for the fully accomplished atonement made by Christ Jesus our Redeemer, and witnessed in our hearts by the Spirit of Christ, we could have never freed ourselves from the bondage of Satan and sin. All the days that we journeyed through the wilderness of sin in our spiritual death and rebellion against God, were it not for the sake of God's covenant promise written in the indelible ink of Christ's blood then he would have never suffered with our manners but he did because he was willing to write that covenant on our hearts through the Holy Spirit. By his power and grace our great God reserved mercy for us, brought us into the land of Canaan and divided our promised inheritance to us when he made Christ All unto us and joined us in vital, saving union with him in spirit and in truth, giving us the earnest of our inheritance the Holy Spirit.

Even now, as we walk by faith we are plagued by sin, within and without. We continually fail miserably in ourselves. The lure of this world endeavors to entrap us, appealing to our old flesh, with such force, that were it not for Christ our Deliverer who refuses to let us go, we would surely perish even now.

Did you know that the book of Judges is a book which teaches the Lord's people that very thing? In the book of Judges God illustrates for the believer that if left to ourselves, if not for God continually exalting Christ before the eye of faith, we would certainly perish in unbelief.

As Paul preached in the synagogue at Antioch, Pisidia, that is exactly what Paul declares to Jew and Gentile concerning the true children of Abraham after their deliverance into the land of Canaan.

**Acts 13: 20: And after that**—(from Egypt to their deliverance into Canaan)—**after about the space of 450 years**—(the Lord) **gave unto them judges...until Samuel the prophet.**

**Proposal:** Everything which Paul declared in the synagogue—as he gives this survey of the law and the prophets—is that God saves his people according to his promise, in spite of the sin of his people, and God does it through the person and work of Christ Jesus the Lord.

**Review:**

- Our fathers did not choose God, God chose them, in his Son, the Seed of Abraham.
- The children of Israel began with but 70 men, but God multiplied them into a nation, just as he exalts his children into his Son, the Israel of God who as a prince has prevailed with God and men.
- The children of Israel were in bondage, God redeemed them through the blood of his Lamb—Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us.
- The children of Israel wandered through the wilderness of sin in rebellion and rejection of God, yet he was longsuffering because of his promise and our Mediator whose intercession is due to the everlasting covenant fulfilled in him.
- The children of Israel could not have overcome those 7 nations which more mighty than they, but God gave them the victory and delivered their inheritance to them by lot, just as God has made his children heirs, and joint-heirs with Christ.

Now Paul says, not only this, but in the children of Israel we behold, the believer is totally unable to persevere in faith apart from the preserving grace of God continually keeping us by our Judge—our Deliverer—Christ our Savior.

As brother Pete so aptly pointed out in his scripture reading last Sunday—for the believer this earth through which we journey is indeed *the valley of the shadow of death*. We begin the life of faith, like the children of Israel began in the book of Judges, full of joy and excited that we have been delivered in Christ. We are accepted of God, sons and daughters of the thrice holy God, the apple of his eye. But soon we realize that as long as we are in this body of death, in this world--this valley of the shadow of death--we are in the valley of Bochim—the valley of weeping.

The book of Judges opens with the children of Israel gladly asking the Lord, “Who shall go up against the Canaanites first, to fight against them?” In the beginning, all were willing to obey God and show no compromise to those who were the enemies of their Lord. Yet, one by one every man did that which was right in his own eyes and made a covenant with the Canaanites whom the Lord commanded them to have no part with. **Judges 2: 1: And an angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swear unto your fathers; and I said,**

**I will never break my covenant with you. 2: And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars: but ye have not obeyed my voice: why have ye done this? 3: Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be *as thorns* in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you. 4: And it came to pass, when the angel of the LORD spake these words unto all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voice, and wept. 5: And they called the name of that place **Bochim**: and they sacrificed there unto the LORD.**

They were not to enter into league with the Canaanites in any way.

- Not in sharing land
- Not in business
- Not in marriage
- Not in worship

The Lord was clear. Entering into league with them would *not* result in the Canaanites worshipping the true and living God, but it would result in the children of Israel worshipping the Canaanites god.

Now apply this to yourself personally. You worship God, you put away the big sins, you **Colossians 3: 5: Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:** but you continue in league with some of those things which you regard as small sins, like **8:...anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. 9: Lying...**

Here is how we generally justify doing what is right in our own eyes: “We’ve driven out most of the people of this land. But it won’t hurt if we leave a few of these folks. We can get them to pay tribute. That way, in case our crops fail we will have extra money stored up. Oh, that’s smart business. Now, we can’t be blamed for doing something for our sons and daughters. Oh, he’s a family man. Who knows, we might even prevail in winning some of them over to worship our God. Oh, he’s gracious.” We give our blasphemy beautiful names. God calls it what it is—whoredom.

Where does disobedience to God lead us, personally? Where does it lead our children? Where does it end up? The Lord shows us where their compromise ended, as he declares what the next generation did. **Judges 2: 10: And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel. 11: And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim: 12: And they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that *were* round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the LORD to anger. 13: And they forsook the LORD, and served Baal and Ashtaroth.**

Be sure you understand that it does *not* say they forsook using the *name* of the LORD God of their fathers; it does *not* say that they forsook the *form* of worship which the LORD God of their father's had given them. That is not what they forsook any more than they forsook the *land* which the LORD God of their father's had given them. They merely *added to* what the LORD God had given them. It started by simply leaving a few folks in the land which the LORD God commanded them to drive out. They allowed these folks to live among them. Then slowly but surely the children of Israel became accustomed to the precepts taught by the heathen people and to their way of life. They got used to it. It seemed normal. It became the standard. And God allowed those other nations to remain--just as he has left us in the sin of this flesh--and God used other nations to ravage them to show his true and sons and daughters that sin always results in our own destruction.

But in God's dealing with them we also see the faithfulness of God who is satisfied with his children in Christ our Surety. God the Father deals with his justified sons and daughters as just that, his righteous sons and daughters. He turned them over, and used nations to discipline them just as you would turn your child over your knee and correct them with a belt because you love them and will not allow them to be condemned with the world. And after he turned them from their false way, what did he do? Paul said, **Acts 13: 20: And after that he gave unto them judges...**

**Judges 2: 16: Nevertheless the LORD raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them.**

What a word!—*Nevertheless!* This word magnifies the freeness of God's sovereign grace in Christ. In spite of the rebellion of his children and the rebellion that the believer still is in this flesh, our faithful Father raises up Christ our Deliverer, our Savior. He is our deliverer continually. **Judges 2: 18: And when the LORD raised them up judges, then the LORD was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge: for it repented the LORD because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them. 19: And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they returned, and corrupted themselves more than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them; they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way.**

**Illustration:** In the synagogue as Paul preached there sat folks who had rebelled against God. Their father's had rejected Christ the Lord and thus taught them to do the same. Yet, God raised up two men, Paul and Barnabas. Because these two men would declare that God had raised up the true Savior who has and is and shall deliver his children out of the hand of those who spoiled them.

We come to this place week in and week out because as God blesses the message in our heart he causes us to behold Christ Jesus our Deliverer. Our Deliverer reminds us he has freed us from the bondage of Satan and sin. Our Deliverer frees us from our fleshly notions when we come into this place. The Deliverer comes to us continually and declares I have set you free,

put away your sin, taken the only weapon Satan has out of his hands and bound him, and now there is no condemnation for you, you are free because I have Delivered you. And as Christ our Deliverer bears witness in our spirit through his Spirit we are strengthened to go on and follow him. If God does not raise up the Judge before our eyes, if Christ does not continually Deliver us we would go right back to that law, right back to our flesh and make a league with that old Canaanite called our flesh. Through Christ's love for us we are constrained to want to serve him, not by looking to the law, but by looking to him. The person who is brought to this place will be more obedient than those who are striving to obey the law because he obeys God from the heart, in Christ, through faith and not by the deeds of the flesh. God delivers his people in spite of us.

God, Christ our Savior, is faithful to deliver his people in spite of us. What grace! *Nevertheless!* According to the covenant--**ACCORDING TO PROMISE**--nevertheless, I will not break my covenant with thee! That is what grace is! Are you saved by grace?