Lesson: Keep Your Promise Day

This observance, which occurs on November 3, is proposed for celebrating promises kept. Have you ever made a promise that you did not keep? I guess everyone has. I have, and I remember feeling very guilty about it, so much that I wanted to go back in time and fix it; but that was not possible. Guilt is a motivator, if it is healthy guilt. If you did something wrong and you felt guilty, that is a healthy reaction. Anyone with a conscience should feel guilt when they have gone back on their word. The guilt reminds us that God, who never goes back on His Word, is in control. Guilt motivates us to discontinue the behavior that caused the guilt and try to make amends to those we hurt.

Unhealthy guilt is another story; this is when you feel guilty for something you didn’t do, or when you carry a fault endlessly without forgiving yourself. It is very difficult to make amends to someone you have not harmed, much less to yourself. A good example of unhealthy guilt is survivor’s guilt; for example, a combat soldier who witnessed the fall of a comrade may feel guilty and suffer from post-traumatic stress. There is no way to resolve unearned guilt until the individual accepts that Christ has taken the guilt upon Himself. People need to know, God forgives regardless of what one has done, or not done; those accepting God’s forgiveness can begin the healing process by forgiving themselves. Forgiving will come a lot easier with Christ.

* PSA 32:5 ~ I confessed my sins to God, I did not try to hide them, and He forgave me.
* PSA 130:3–4 ~ Lord, if you enumerated our sins, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with you that you may be feared.
* EZE 18:20 ~ The righteousness of a godly man will be credited to him alone, and the wickedness of an evil man will be charged only to him.
* 1 CO 4:3–5 ~ To be judged by another person is insignificant to me. In fact, I cannot judge myself because I do not know me as well as the Lord does. Therefore, do not judge anyone before the Lord returns. He will bring to light all that is hidden, even the secrets of our hearts. Then everyone will praise God.
* 2 CO 7:9–10 ~ I am glad that you were sorry for your sins and repented. Spiritual sorrow for one’s sins works repentance unto salvation; but the sorrow of the world works death.
* 1 JO 1:9 ~ If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from unrighteousness.

**God presents promises to those who believe in Him and trust Him completely. Clearly, the greatest of God’s promises is eternal life, which includes an inheritance in His kingdom. The only thing people must do to receive these gifts is believe that they will, whereas disbelief will ensure that they will not. This requires faith in God’s Word, the Bible, and God’s Son who is the Word in human form, whom God gave to us as an offering for the sin of the world. Christ accepted all the guilt and shame to be put on Him, setting us free of it. It is our belief in the salvation of Christ that gives us confidence in God’s promises, and the hope of everlasting life with Him, without which we would not think it possible.**

* DEU 4:29–31 ~ If, from this time forward, you will seek the Lord, provided you seek Him with all your heart and soul, you will find Him. If you are in tribulation, even in the later days, and you turn to God and are obedient to Him, God who is merciful will not forsake you or destroy you. God will never forget the covenant He made with your ancestors.
* ISA 64:4 ~ Since the world began, nobody has heard, seen, or perceived, except God, the wonderful things He has prepared for those who wait for Him.
* JOH 14:2–3~ Jesus said, “In my Father’s house are many mansions; I go to prepare such a place for you. I will return for you, so that where I am you can be also.”
* **ROM 10:9 ~** If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.
* EPH 1:13 ~ You were included with Christ when you listened to the words of truth and believed the good news of salvation, being marked by the Holy Spirit who has guaranteed your inheritance in God’s kingdom.
* TIT 1:2 ~ Our faith and knowledge rests on the hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before the beginning of time.
* 2 PE 3:13 ~ We, according to God’s promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness.

Once you accept the free gifts of salvation and eternal life, you must make an effort to improve. You cannot ignore your conscience or try to repress the guilt; instead, confess and repent and God will forgive you, again and again. But if you continue to commit the same sin repeatedly, then your confession will not be sincere. Because true godly sorrow comes with a promise to try harder, to obey God’s will by following His Son. God gives everyone the power, strength, and motivation to become more like Christ, equipping us for works of righteousness. He empowers us to face and overcome trials, tribulation, and adversity if we invite His Holy Spirit to indwell us. With this power we can and will do better, knowing we will never reach the mark until we are welcomed into God’s kingdom spotless, clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

* DEU 31:6 ~ Be strong and courageous; do not be fearful or dismayed. For the Lord God goes with you; he will never fail you or forsake you.
* JOB 14:14 ~ If a person dies, can he or she live again? All the days of my appointed time I will wait, until my change comes.
* **MAT 11:28–30 ~** Jesus said, “Come to me all who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”
* ROM 8:28 ~ All things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose.
* 1 CO 10:13 ~ The temptations before you are common to humanity. God is faithful and will not cause you to be tempted beyond your ability to endure, and He will always provide a way to escape the temptation.

God also promises prosperity, provision, and protection to those who remain faithful. These promises come with peace, joy, and a purpose which unbelievers cannot comprehend. Our lives are given greater meaning, direction, and importance; this equates to spiritual growth through sanctification by the Holy Spirit. The power vested by Him authorizes us to forgive sins.

* PSA 37:4–5 ~ Find your delight in the Lord and He will give to you the desires of your heart. Commit yourself to the Lord and trust in Him, and He will make your desires come to pass.
* LUK 12:8–9 ~ Jesus said, “Whoever confesses me to others, I will confess them before God and His angels; but whoever denies me to others, I will deny them before God and His angels.”
* JOH 20:23 ~ If you forgive anyone’s sins, they are forgiven. If you do not forgive someone’s sins, they are not forgiven.
* ACT 4:21,24,31–32 ~ Finally, after several threats, the Sanhedrin released Peter and John because they couldn’t decide how to punish them, and because the people were praising the Lord for enabling these men of God to heal the lame man. The apostles returned home and told everyone what had occurred. And when the people heard what had happened, they raised their voice to God with one accord, and worshipped Him saying, “Lord, you alone are God, who made heaven, earth, the sea, and all living things.” After their song of prayer, the meeting place began to shake and everybody was filled with the Holy Spirit boldly speaking the words of God. And all the believers were of one heart and mind. Nobody claimed any possessions of their own, but everyone shared their possessions with one another.
* 2 CO 5:21 ~ He made Christ who knew no sin to become sin for us, so that we could receive the righteousness of God that was in Him.
* 2 TH 2:13 ~ We will give thanks to God always for you brothers, beloved of the Lord, because God chose you from the beginning to receive salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief in the truth.
* 1 PE 1:2–5 ~ Christians are chosen by God in advance through sanctification of the Spirit, to be obedient to Christ and cleansed by His blood. Blessed be God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to His abundant mercy, He recreated in us the living hope, brought by the resurrection of Christ from the dead, to receive an incorruptible and undefiled inheritance reserved in heaven and lasting forever. Through faith, He has shielded us by His power until the coming of our salvation which is ready to be revealed on the last day.

God will deliver on His promises each time we come to Him in prayer, often in ways that we do not realize. His answers to our prayers take the form of blessings. God wants to be our Father and give us good things; and He wants us to be His children and ask for good things. Talk to God as you would a parent and He will treat you as His own child. Be obedient to Him and He will reward you, expanding your horizons and entrusting you with greater responsibilities. We can have any good thing that we desire simply by going to our heavenly Father and asking; therefore, our response should be giving to others who ask for our help and support. By cheerfully giving ourselves, our time, our love, and our forgiveness, we are sowing seeds of faith that will expand God’s kingdom through the power of the Holy Spirit.

If a person chooses not to believe, dismisses the Holy Bible, refuses to follow Christ, is not interested in being God’s child or living with Him in heaven forever—well there are promises which God makes to those people too. And those promises are very bad news.

* PSA 52:5 ~ God will destroy the evil ones forever. He will uproot them from the living.
* PRO 24:20 ~ Evil people have no future. Their light will be extinguished.
* PRO 29:16 ~ The righteous will see the downfall of the wicked.
* ISA 26:14 ~ They are dead and will not live; they will not rise. They have been visited with destruction and all memory of them has been wiped out.
* OBA 1:15 ~ The day of the Lord is near for the wicked. As they have done, so shall it be done to them; it will come back upon their heads.
* MAT 25:30, 41 ~ Jesus said, “God will cast the worthless people into outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. They will depart into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.”
* ROM 8:6–8 ~ To set the mind on the flesh results in death, but to set the mind on the Spirit results in life and peace. Because, the carnal mind is enmity against God and will not submit to God’s laws, indeed it cannot. Those who are pleasing the flesh cannot please God.
* PHP 1:6 ~ The Lord who has begun a good work in you will bring it to completion until the day Christ returns.
* GAL 6:7–8 ~ Do not be deceived; for God cannot be mocked. Whatever a man sows that will he also reap. People who sow to please their sinful flesh will reap destruction. People who sow to please the Holy Spirit will reap eternal life.
* 2 TH 1:8–9 ~ God will inflict vengeance upon those who do not know Him and who do not obey the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction and exclusion from the glory of the Lord.
* 2 PE 2:12 ~ These people speak blasphemously about things they know nothing about. They are like animals that cannot reason, creatures of instinct, born to be captured and destroyed.

God is able to make good on every promise, and He has made so many it is hard to keep track of them all; especially seeing how everything in the universe He created for us. We owe it to Him to be respectful and thankful. Place your trust in God and learn about His wonderful promises, extended exclusively to Christians. The world cannot make such promises, neither can it deliver the things God promises. People frequently are unable to deliver on their own promises. But if you do make a promise as in a vow, God will hold you to it; and if you do not honor that vow, there will be consequences. The Israelites lost their land because they violated a covenant with God. Or, look what happened to Samson, when he violated the oath of a Nazarite (NUM 6:1–8; JDG 13:5); but he returned to God, he was forgiven, and he completed his mission.

* LEV 5:4 ~ Anyone who vows to do something foolish, whether sincere or not, is guilty.
* NUM 30:2 ~ If you take an oath before God to do something or not to do something, you should never break that oath.
* MAT 5:34, 37 ~ Jesus said, “Do not swear oaths. To declare something with the addition of an ultimatum is the same as taking an oath. Answer people with a simple yes or no. To strengthen a promise with a vow makes it suspect.”
* HEB 6:16 ~ When someone takes an oath, they are calling upon God to force them to comply and to punish them if they do not.
* JAM 5:12 ~ Do not swear by heaven or by earth, or on anything else. A simple yes or no will suffice, and you will avoid sin and condemnation.

Father, we thank you for making good on all of your promises; help us to rely on you entirely, trusting in the salvation of Christ our Lord. Let us make good on our promises and vows to you and others. Help us to avoid making empty promises or swearing to do something without giving it further thought; help us not to swear at all, especially by using your name in vain. Though we are permitted to make vows in a court of law or at the altar of the Lord, remind us not to violate that oath and enable us to correct it when we do. Forgive us when we have given our word and taken it back again; help us to stop doing that. Let us never give our word of honor and later betray that honor. Help us to follow through with our promises, oaths, and responsibilities. May we never make any foolish promises. Encourage us as we cling to your promises, patiently waiting for answers to our prayers, until the day when we will receive our inheritance as a child of the living God. In the name of Jesus, who bought for us an inheritance in heaven equal to His own, Amen.

By Andrew V. Barber (posted 11/02/2023)