

God Keeps His Promises

Text: Acts 13:13-43

We are in the throes of an election campaign.

Politicians from all sides of the political divide are making promises, offering funding, tempting us with goodies...from tax cuts to increased hospital funding and lollies all round.

The question is...do we trust our politicians?

In a recent survey by the Readers Digest (2006) called Australia's Most Trusted Professions

What do you reckon were in the top 5?

What do you reckon comes at the bottom?

It was great to see Ambulance Paramedics, Chemists and doctors at the top.

But was disappointing to read that Ministers of Religion come way down the scale (No. 16).

Not surprising is that Car salesmen are at the bottom.

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| 1. Ambulance officers | 9. Police officers |
| 2. Firefighters | 10. Teachers |
| 3. Mothers | |
| 4. Nurses | 26. Journalists |
| 5. Pilots | 27. Psychics |
| 6. Doctors | 28. Real-estate agents |
| 7. Pharmacists | 29. Car salesmen |
| 8. Fathers | 30. Politicians |

We are so used to Politicians not keeping their campaign promises we hardly bother to note them.

But it does bother us when someone we love and trust fails to keep an important promise.

When promises are broken it often leaves a trail of grief and destruction.

We're hurt when people fail to keep promises.

If I were to go on a long trip and you promised to look after my home.

I'd be shocked to find that you had sold off everything in a Garage Sale (Carboot)...

Even if it was for missions!

Have you ever made promises and failed to keep them?

Said you would do something for someone...but failed to do it?

Maybe you made some great excuses...but you still failed to keep a promise!

Said you would be somewhere but forgot to go?

Good friends coming over for a special dinner...we planned a great meal.

They forgot to come!

That hurts...we are still friends...I think we even did it to them once too!

If promises can be easily broken, put aside with some great excuses...
how do we approach God and the promises that he makes?

If you are going to trust God with your soul for eternity...
It is important to know that he keeps his promises.
I think that many of us have had the experience of being disappointed with God.

We trusted him for something that we thought he had promised...
But it didn't work out as we had hoped.
Maybe we have failed to understand his promises, or properly apply them.

But on the matter of our eternal destiny, it is crucial we properly understand and apply God's promise of salvation.

The passage we read together is the Apostle Paul's 1st and longest recorded sermon...
It deals with the theme of God's promise of salvation.
Read verse 23, 26, 32-33.

It breaks into three parts:
The promise made (13-25)
The promise kept (26-37)
Your Response (38-41).
I'm sure that what we have here is a summary of his sermon...
It would undoubtedly have been much longer.
Luke has distilled and presented the essential argument and teaching of the Paul.

Setting the Scene

(Use Map on Screen)

After having completed the work in Paphos the team of missionaries travelled northward to the mainland and landed at Perga in the province of Pamphilia.

There is no record that the team did any preaching in Perga,
Perhaps there was no Synagogue in this city (to the Jews 1st)
Instead they headed north to Pisidian Antioch (modern day Turkey)
some 150kms up the river valleys.
Paul & Barnabas had to go through some dangerous mountain passes,
infested with robbers to get there.
Maybe this danger is one of the reasons of Mark's defection from the team.

Pisidian Antioch was a city of mixed ethnicity, including Jew, Greek, and Roman.
It was a Roman colony, which made it the military and administrative centre of the country.

The stage is now set for Paul to proclaim the good news that God has fulfilled the promises he made to David and that those in Pisidian Antioch can benefit in the blessing.

The first point is:

The Promise is Made (13-25)

Many of the sermons in Acts look back over Israel's history.

This is because the believers understood that God has a sovereign plan for the human race that spans all time.

Events were not seen as random acts...but as the out workings of a perfect and exciting, eternal purpose...all moving toward a certain goal.

The goal was the salvation of people achieved through the Jesus Christ.

Paul is pointing out that everything in the history of Israel was leading up to the coming of Jesus and the great salvation for sinners that he would accomplish when he died and rose again.

John Piper points out that the passage is about God and his story...

The text is utterly saturated with God.

He notes that 16x Paul presses home the truth that God is the central actor in history.

Some examples to show that...

Verse 17 has three mentions of God's work and control.

And so it goes on through the passage.

Now think about all this for a moment.

Don't take this kind of narration of history for granted.

It is a strange way of telling history.

Is this the way you tell stories about what happened?

When you tell somebody about the past, do you say, "God did this and God did that and God did that and God did that, etc."?

Do you say that God did virtually everything?

Probably not...but Paul chose to preach this way.

He consciously chose to narrate history this way.

He was making a statement.

One that we need to listen to again and again today.

He was saying, There is a great and glorious God.

Know him. Reckon with him. Think about him.

He was saying that God is really working in history.

He is the main Worker in history.

He is the explanation for the meaning of everything.

We live in an age where this is not believed.

We have disconnected God from our history.

Our constitution might talk about humbly relying on Almighty God,
and 'with hope in God'
But as a nation we have abandoned that.

But check out your own thinking.
Do you connect God with everything?
Or is he distant...calling on him to step in and act...intervene in our history?
Our media, our world, live in ignorance about God and his work in history...
Probably because that is sometimes hard to reconcile,
Hard to match what we see with a gracious God.

But, again, what about you?
Can you trace the work of God in your life?
In the life of the DCRC?
God is at work through all of this!

As Paul addresses the congregation he starts with facts
Ones that all Jews present would know and could agree on.
Up to verse 22 every head in the synagogue would have been nodding in agreement
with Paul.

Then he makes a huge jump from David to David's descendant, Jesus...
Proclaiming Him to be the fulfillment of God's promise of a Saviour.

To counter that shock he comes back to John the Baptist and his view of Jesus.
John, revered by the Jews pointed to Jesus as the Messiah, the Saviour.

The point is to show God sovereignly moving all of history to his purpose...
To fulfill his promise of salvation.

All of us can take great comfort, especially when things in our world seem to be
running out of control.
Nothing gets in the way of God's sovereign purpose in history...
Of the world and in our lives.

He promised to send the Saviour, and he did it despite the many failings of his people
and the strong opposition of his enemies.

But there is a wonderful second theme that Paul weaves through his history lesson:
God's grace permeates his working in history.

God's grace is seen in his sovereign choice of the patriarchs.
God chose Abram...a pagan idolater living in a pagan land...
He had nothing of merit that said to God...Pick Me!
The same is true of all the patriarchs...

God's grace flows the exodus story.

The Israelites weren't all that interested in being delivered.
When they were delivered they wanted to go back!
But God graciously led them to the promised land.

God acted graciously in sending the judges,
and his word through the prophet Samuel.
God graciously raised up David...a man after God's own heart.

In spite of the continued failings throughout that history,
God graciously sent the Saviour.
That's why Paul and Barnabas exhort the believers to continue in the grace of God.

If you think that your standing before God is because of anything in you...
Your choice of God, your basic goodness, your religious practices...
Think again!
God's sovereign grace means that we are saved, in spite of ourselves or anything in us!

God initiated the process with His promise and he moved all of history to accomplish that.

He brings it to us individuals who are rebels deserving of his judgment.
It is all from his grace...to the praise of his glory and grace.

This should be a huge comfort to each one of us.
God has acted in history...God will continue to act.
God has acted graciously...God will continue to act graciously to us.

The second part of Paul's sermon is:

The Promise Kept.

God's salvation comes through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Paul is showing that Jesus Christ is the goal and culmination of history.
Paul sums it up in Romans 11:36: 'For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever. Amen.'

Anyone or anything that diminishes from the centrality and supremacy of Jesus Christ is not from God.

All of the OT was written to point to Jesus Christ.
He fulfilled hundreds of prophecies.
All of the NT centers on the person and work of Jesus Christ.

This is where Paul is heading in verses 26-37.

Anticipating their objections to Jesus as the Saviour Paul shows that the Jewish leaders rejected Jesus because they didn't recognise him when he came...

Because he wasn't a great statesman, soldier or even Rabbi.
But they also missed, and misunderstood, the voices of the prophets.

But even the rejection and killing of Jesus did not in any way thwart the plan of God.
Rather it was fulfilled in the exact way described in the Scriptures.
In verse 29 he talks of Jesus death fulfilling prophecies...
God could and did use the wicked deeds of people to accomplish his sovereign purpose.

The tomb was not the end of the story!
In a note of triumph, Paul reports what most would think impossible...
God raised Jesus from the dead!
God overruled their wicked killing by raising Jesus from the dead.
This was witnessed to by the disciples and others.
It was central to their message.

Without the resurrection, there would be no gospel, no salvation, no Good news.

Paul then quotes from Psalm 2.
This Psalm was considered a Messianic Psalm...pointing to the coming Saviour.
Paul takes this Psalm and shows how it points to Jesus.
His reign is the greater reign...

But Paul is not content to give a history lesson,
Nor to just show who Jesus Christ was.

**Paul challenged the people:
What is YOUR response? (38-39)**

He concludes the argument by saying that Jesus, whom God raised from the dead, is the one through whom forgiveness of sins has become possible!
What a great message!

Paul's audience were trying to gain God's acceptance through keeping the law of Moses.

But right standing with God doesn't come through the law.
The law brings condemnation to all...because all have sinned, and broken God's law.

Paul lays out the good news!
Forgiveness of sins and freedom of guilt are available through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe!
Including you! How good is that!!!

Paul talks about being 'justified' that is the act of God the judge who declares people 'not guilty'

And all that is only because of what Jesus has done.
We stand before God just as if we had never sinned, because the righteousness of Christ is imputed through faith.

Only through believing in Jesus can a person be put right with God.

Have you received this forgiveness?
Do you know it in your heart?

What a wonderful promise...

Your standing before God can change instantly from guilty sinner to justified saint at the moment you put your trust in Jesus as the one who paid your penalty on the cross.

But in verse 40-41 Paul adds a solemn warning.
Be careful not to scoff at God's promise...because scoffers will incur the judgement of God.

The God who keeps his promises is also the God who carries through with his warnings.

Paul's sermon gives evidence that God faithfully kept his gracious promise in sending Jesus as the Saviour of all who believe in him.

Remember that Paul here was speaking to a religious audience.

Everyone there believed in God.

But they needed to personally put their trust in the promise of salvation through Jesus Christ.

People live in a world that promises so much...

But we are left feeling empty and dissatisfied

Even Politicians offer hope, making promises they often can't keep.

And people become sceptical.

But Paul's sermon clearly shows that God is not inactive, that he has not abandoned his creation.

Rather God is bringing about his plan of salvation...

One that has its climax in Jesus Christ...

But one that is also gradually unfolding, even in our lives.

The message of Jesus Christ as Saviour brings hope to the hopeless.

God calls us to believe in Him; this has always been His plan, and will always be His plan.

Full of love, full of grace, full of mercy.

God makes rich promises...he has and will faithfully keep those promises...

Despite you and I.

We all need to stand on the promises of God...which cannot fail!