

MAKING THE PROMISE LAND PERMANENT

Joshua 24:14-15-16

In our series, thus far, we began with a crucified life of the Passover in Egypt, and the Spirit-filled life in crossing Jordan, and the wilderness journey made up of testings, miracles, and the meeting of different people including ourselves, and then the crossing into the promise land. And we considered last week, how to live in the promise land. And we discussed with you abiding in Christ - the place of an altar, and the armour needed to live in the promise land on a high spiritual plain.

Now, how can we make this permanent. This is the thing that we all want to be interested in today - the fabulous future in the promise land - how was it to be made secure. How were the people of Israel supposed to continue now in a definite detailed, permanent fashion. This is what took up Joshua's consideration. He dealt with this especially when he came to close out his life. He brings to them the challenge. They have put away the gods of their fathers on the other side of the flood, those they had in Egypt. And now they are to serve the Lord. And he says, I'm setting an example. My entire household is going to serve God. And he makes a choice. And you have to make a choice. And this is the thing that each person today has to make a choice.

Now this is a fabulous idea - when you come to think about how to live in the promise land.

As I think about the American Presidents - by way of introduction, many of them had slogans in their administrations as they had new hope, and looked for a better

tomorrow. Franklin D. Roosevelt - The New Deal. Harry Truman - The Fair Deal.
John Kennedy - The New Frontier. Lyndon Johnson - The Great Society.

Now inspite of the dark clouds of war, each of these men tried some great idea to anticipate the future. I wonder what Roosevelt would say today with the staggering future that belongs to us, in the way of travel. In the way the newspapers roll out and the T. V. carry on their propaganda.

Let me by way of introduction say, that God is not absent. As a Christian, with our Bibles in our hands, we can survey the world scene. And we can be aware that God is here in the shadow of history. The Christian is not disturbed by the violence, the strife, and the threat of wars, that fill the daily newspapers. We know that some of these things are the consequences of man's sin and greed. Now if anything else were happening, we would have a right to doubt the Bible. Everyday we see a thousand evidences of the fulfillment, of Bible prophecy - and what the Bible says. And no matter how we may look at the future or at history, we have to believe that the New Testament knows for us, that the best is yet to come. The Bible tells us that the future is all in God's hands. And the future is not in the hands of the Devil. And so he is not the determining thing.

The Psalmist said the Lord is my light and my salvation - whom shall I fear. The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid. ^{1?} Psalm 27:1.

The story of a boy on a railway compartment in England - at one of the stations and elderly gentleman engaged him in conversation. Are you traveling all alone, Sonny? Yes, Sir. How far are you traveling. Are you not afraid to take such a long journey all by yourself. No, I am not. Why not? Because my father is the engineer. No wonder the boy had such great confidence and feared nothing. His

father was in control. His father knew his son was somewhere on the train. God our Father, is in control of the world. He knows his own. And he knows where we are on this planet.

Oliver Cromwell's, secretary was dispatched to the continent on some important business. He stayed one night in a seaport town and tossed on his bed unable to sleep. According to an old custom, a servant slept in his room. And on this occasion, he slept soundly enough that the secretary at length awakened the man, and asked how it was that his master could not sleep. I am so afraid that something will go wrong with this trip, was the reply. Then the servant said, may I ask a question or two. Did God rule the world before we were born. Most assuredly he did. And will he rule it again after we are dead. Certainly he will. Then master, said the servant, why not let him rule the present too. The secretary's faith was stirred, peace was the result, and in a few minutes he and his servant were in sound sleep.

History is going somewhere. And David said, my times are in thy hand. Psalm 31:15. We know full well that God is doing all he can to bring things under his control. Now if we are going to live in the Spirit with God in control - knowing that God is not absent - then there are going to be at least three things that will take place and this will help us to make the promise land permanent.

There will be first a spontaneous focus. This will be number one. Now this is like setting a camera. This was what Joshua was saying - now I don't know what other people are going to do, but he says, my house - we are going to serve the Lord. In the matter of focusing a camera, some cameras have an automatic eye, or light, that lets in more light or shuts out light and makes it just right for the picture to be in focus every time. It is in this matter of focus - getting your life in the

right perspective.

Now I hope we can make this simple enough and plain enough that each one can understand it. (Joshua 22:10) when the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh gathered on the Jordan border - they had a purpose. They gathered and erected a great altar. They wanted to get their lives in focus. It was erected as a witness of God to following generations - v. 27. And the altar was to be a witness between us that the Lord is God. v. 34. They called it the altar of witness.

Now there is one spiritual activity that supersedes all others in importance. And when it receives the proper emphasis - the others have a way. If it is lacking, God will withdraw the fullness of his power.

Now I speak of God's witness through your life. It is by the It isn't your witness, so much - as it is his. He gives expression through you. Perhaps the major problem today in evangelism is that we are to witness for Him. We are not to witness for Him so much of Him. And we only do this by learning to witness, and depend on this is the goal of your journey's end and this is the goal that is permanent. And witnessing is the goal. The objective of your journey's purpose of your life - think of it. You are on a journey. Peter has given unto us exceeding great and precious promises. That by the Spirit we are partakers of the divine nature. 2 Peter 1:4. Now God wants to fill you with his divine nature.



THE OLD SCOT guide just back from taking the new minister on a grouse shooting trip over the moors, sank wearily into his chair before the fire.

"Here's a cup of hot tea for you, Angus," said his wife. "And is the new minister a good shot?"

The old fellow answered slowly, "Aye, old woman, a fine shot he is—but 'tis marvelous indeed how the Lord protects the bird when he's shooting!"

—ARKANSAS BAPTIST

Romans 8:29 - To be conformed to the image of his son - your life is to be full of God.

The motive behind all God did for Israel was the witness of God through them.

Ex. 16:7-12. That is, his will today. He wants to express his life through you,
for a witness of himself in this Godless world. And his image must be projected
clearly. When other things crowd into the picture, you suffer a double exposure
and the image is blurred. *Trich Photography* — *fish 3# long - 6"*

Now I hope that you understand what we are saying about spontaneous focus here.
This is the first thing. And it is imperative that you pay attention to this first
of all.

I do not know whether or not you have had any dealing with a magnifying glass.
It is a powerful little thing. Some of them come in a little case - pocket size.
And of course, some of them have lost their prestige now. It is a wonderful
instrument in the school room and it has wonderful power. And it was a wonder to
me as many years ago - that people used magnifying glasses. It has never ceased
to puzzle me that you could take one of those magnifying glasses and look at a
bug and see all the colors and parts of that insect. How you could take a small
lettering on a label and read it word for word. And how you could take that
magnifying glass and without a match focus it on a piece of paper - and you could
start a fire without a match. The lens will draw several light rays to focus at a
common point. You move it back and forth, and you get properly focused until you
have one tiny image of the sun on that piece of paper. And it will ignite and
burst it into flames.

Now what I am saying is you can do the same thing with your life. If you will
move your life in between the son of God and this lost world - and when you move it
back and forth, and when you get it in proper focus, then the image of Jesus Christ
is going to be projected through your life in this world. Now the result of this
is going to be the powerful combustion that will set things a fire. You must give
first of all, strict attention to the focus of your life.

II. SENSITIVE TO SPIRITUAL LAWS

Now after you get your life in focus so that it will be spontaneous with you, to stay focused under the power of Jesus Christ, that your life is going to stay in focus. It is not going to be changing. Then the second thing that is going to help you make the promise land permanent, is your sensitivity to the spiritual laws of God. Just like the camera, you are going to ^{BE} sensitive and controlled by these laws. And this is going to give you stability. And you will be able to project a perfect image each time. And this is what Joshua was talking about when he said, as for him and his household, they were going to be controlled by the living God. And they were going to serve the Lord. And so the openness and the sensitivity of the spiritual laws is going to mean that you are going to keep your life open to the full reflection of the Son - the Lord Jesus Christ. And this is the thing that is going to transform us, into his likeness.

Ark of Covenant - altar - sacrifices - Solomon - moral into temple -

2 Cor. 3:18 - But we all with open face reflecting as in a glass the glory of the Lord are changed into the same image from glory to glory even as by the spirit of the Lord.

Do you realize what this means, if our lives close up to his witness through us, we cease to be changed. When we are not in focus, then he only expresses his life in us by releasing it through us. It is a spiritual law - that as we follow these spiritual laws our transformation will equal our transparency. Now we must keep this in view. We Christians have no veil over our faces. We can be mirrors that brightly reflect the glory of the Lord. And as the Spirit of the Lord works within us - we become more and more like him.

The ultimate objective of the Spirit-filled life is to witness and the deepest desire in the heart of God is the deepest thought in the mind of God. And the

deepest action is the will of God - and is expressed through and in your life.

How can you claim to live in the promise land, if the activity of your life is not centered in witnessing. Everybody living in God's country will be concerned with witnessing of Him. They will have tried and failed, struggled and cried, trusted and won, until their lives begin to effect and influence others. This will become a life-style with you. Joshua 24:20 - If ye forsake the Lord, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good.

The person that is controlled and filled with the Holy Spirit, will witness as naturally as breathing, as naturally as the radio commentator gives the news, as naturally as the football player puts on a helmet.

And I say this in deep conviction, God will cease to fill any life, that closes itself off from the world. God's life must pass through you. And in the process, you are changed. And as you are sensitive to the spiritual laws, you will be controlled by them.

More than 100 years ago the best known singer in the world was Jenny Lind. The sweetest soprano. Her voice was discovered in 1829 at the age of 9. She was carefully trained in Sweden, France, and Germany. From 1838-1849, she had a brilliant career in opera and concert. The famous American showman, P. T. Barnham brought the Swedish nightingale to the United States in 1850. She was guaranteed \$1,000 per night for a tour of the country - lasting 150 nights. Following this, she made other highly successful tours and concert appearance. In 1852 while still a young woman, she gave up opera and the stage.

Considering her voice a gift from God, she said (I will sing for God.) Thousands of dollars were given away for religious and charity work. She sang religious songs for the salvation of lost souls and to bless the lives of those who heard her. Once a friend found her sitting alone reading her Bible. The friend inquired why she had given up fame and fortune, at the height of her career. Jenny Lind, holding up her Bible replied, every day made me think nothing at all of this. What else could I do?

If we keep in the proper focus to the spiritual laws, God's great book will come alive in your life.

III. SHARE THE AMAZING GRACE AS A SERVANT

Now we have considered getting our lives in focus. We have thought about the spiritual laws that will control us. And now, we must think of sharing the amazing grace as servants of God. For when your life is first brought into proper focus, you will want to then share the important life, which you have with others.

At this point, we remember again, that (if) the magnifying glass or lens is to fulfill it's purpose it must be the proper distance and length. And then it will give full strength and help.

Now mark it down, your life will never have much influence on those you know from a far off. You will never be an effective witness if you keep everyone at arms length. You must get close to people - about 10". You must really get next

to people for an effective witness. ~~Now~~ this will mean that you must share with them face to face.

I remember reading about man in Illinois who was talking to a young man on the street about being a Christian. He had made no impression on him, and then he said to him - your mother wants you to become a Christian doesn't she? And the young man began to cry. Then the man asked him, your father wants you to become a Christian, does he not? And there was no answer. But soon the young man made this statement - my father is an officer in the church. And my mother is a leader in the work of the Woman's Society. But neither of them has ever spoken to me about my soul.

I believe many a father and mother will stand before the judge on the great day of awards and hear the words, "you are crownless". Your children were not saved or if they were, in their salvation - you have had no part in it. And you might have had this crown but some body else has taken it.

In years gone by many who have been unwilling to give a spoken witness have excused themselves by saying, I witness by my life. Well, their witness is usually inadequate. Because such a person fails to get close to people. Such a witness is usually done a far off. Besides, if your life is indeed a good example, people will not likely know that Christ is the source of your strength unless you tell them. Otherwise you get the glory for being good.

Now witnessing - person to person requires closeness. Face to face in proper focus. And this is what we usually refer to as personal soul-winning. Now this may turn some people off to mention soul-winning. Most folks don't enjoy this emphasis. We all feel guilty about our neglect and our own concern. But let it be known, no man reaches the promise land without developing a personal concern for others.

Moreover, once you are in the promise land, if not before - you will share that

concern by speaking or expression - person to person. It is impossible to experience the blessings of the promise land and keep quiet about it.

You will share with the lost.

Jesus said it. And ye shall be witnesses unto me. Not you might be, but he says, you will be.

The Old Testament has a good story on this. The Syrians beseiged Samaria - they camped outside until the Samaritans ran out of food. The famine was desperate. So desperate that babies were boiled and eaten. 2 Kings 6. During the night, the Lord made the Syrians hear a sound like the thundering of horses hoofs - like a mighty host riding against them. They thought the Egyptians had been called in and they panicked. Left their camp and all their possessions behind.

Four leperous beggars ventured out of the famine ridden Samaria and went into the camp of the Syrians. They found it deserted. The lepers shouted for joy. They ran through the camp, they entered the tents, they ate their fill of the spoils of the goods and had all they could carry. And they thought about their friends that were starving. Being men of principle, they said one to another - this isn't right. This is wonderful news and we aren't sharing it with any one. Let's go back and tell the people. 2 Kings 7:9.

The people who get in the promise land have known an experience just like that. And the Lord has taken care of the enemy. They have entered the camp. They have experienced what it is to be filled with wonderful blessings. Now, inevitably, they will respond. This is good wonderful news. And we aren't sharing it with anyone. Come on - let's go back and tell the people of God. The people that Christ

died for.

Now some Christians have entered the promise land only to quickly fall away from spiritual wealth. Because they never became witnesses. They refused to share their good news. Now God will withhold his richest blessings from such a man.

If you are going to make it ermanent, you have got to remember as we have stated here - that there must be a spontaneous focus in your life which must be proper. There must be a sensitiveness to the spiritual laws of God. And third, and finally, there must be a sharing of the amazing grace. Which I am urging you to witness. Is it nothing to you that the masses know not our Lord. Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost.

What is the driving ambition of your life. Can you be saved and refuse to help rescue others. Can you be spiritually full and be unconcerned for those who are empty. Can you expect God to give you your life and his fullest attention if you ignore those in need of you. I think not. Excuses are unexceptable.

If you seldom lead anyone to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, your life is less than what God expects. There is a direction of life that leads to wonderful fullness. And you need to share all of this with others.

God wants us to get alive in his world. And he does not intend for the Gospel of the amazing grace to stop with you. He reaches through you to others.

A Quaker minister told of a friend whose child had been borned blind. He was brought to Indianapolis and this Quaker was asked to find a specialist who would successfully treat him. Such a one was found. When the operation had been finished

he announced that the boy would certainly see. And sure enough, he opened his eyes. His first glance rested upon his mother Whom he had never known but by finger touch. The mother bend down to see if she was to be recognized - crying out, oh my son, my son!

The boy gazed at his mother and when he knew her - he cried out, oh mother, is this heaven. It shall be heaven for us when the scales shall be taken from our eyes. And the vale that dims our vision shall be removed. And we shall see him face to face. What a feeling it will be when we arise completely and totally in the promise land. And hear him say, well done, good and faithful servant - enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. And we shall have a glimpse of his face. And the promise land will then be permanent.