

## GOD KEEPS HIS PROMISES



by Grant Hawley

I had the pleasure of staying with two missionaries to Papua New Guinea recently, Rob and his dad, Wade. They came to the Bold Grace Summit at Resurgence Church in Evansville, IN in February of 2016. I loved listening to their stories about their life with the tribes of PNG. They are missionaries with New Tribes, so what they do is to live with the people of a remote tribe for years. While there, they learn the language and the culture before teaching them the Bible, starting with Genesis. The tribes they have stayed with have been animists who believed in many gods who work through deception. Because of this, their interactions with each other are often based on their trying to deceive one another. Because of this cultural trait, the crux statement they use as they teach through the story of Scripture is, "God is not a man, that He should lie" from Num 23:19.

As they teach through Scripture, they are careful to point out God's promises. When they come to passages that talk about the conflict between circumstances and God's promises, they ask the people, "What is God going to do?" After they discuss it a bit, they always come back to that key phrase, "God is not a man, that He should lie." And as they see God keep His promises over and over, even when the Patriarchs or the Israelites don't deserve His doing so, these beloved people begin to see that God is always faithful.

One of the great themes of the Bible is God's promise to Abram in Gen 12:1-3. He said to Abram:

“ **Now the LORD had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, From your family And from your father's house, To a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." (Gen 12:1-3)**

This promise is straightforward, but many years later, circumstances seemed to make it impossible for these promises to be fulfilled. Abraham was getting old and his wife, Sarai, was past natural child-bearing years. So it is understandable that Abraham doubted:

“ **After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward." But Abram said, "Lord GOD, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" Then Abram said, "Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!" (Gen 15:1-3)**

He wondered, "is this it?" God had already promised that He would make a great nation from Abram, but circumstances seemed to say that it wasn't going to happen, or that if it was going to happen, it wouldn't be through his own son. How could God make a great nation from him if he doesn't have any children of his own? But, "God is not a man, that He should lie." So the LORD answered him:

“ **"This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir." Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be." (Gen 15:4-5)**

The LORD is telling Abram that not only will He keep His promises, but it will be much better than he could imagine. "And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness" (Gen 15:6).

But even in this faith, Abram wanted confirmation: "Then He said to him, 'I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit it.' And he said, 'Lord GOD, how shall I know that I will inherit it?'" (Gen 15:7-8). In the following verses, we see God ask Abraham to cut "a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram" (Gen 15:9) in two and to set them on opposite sides of a pathway along with a turtledove and a young pigeon. The gore of this scene has a purpose. In these types of covenants, all parties of the covenant would walk between the pieces of the slain animals. This says that if they don't fulfill their end of the covenant, let it be to them as it was to these animals. But in this case, only God passes between the animal pieces. God alone takes the responsibility to see this covenant to fruition. Abram's descendants will inherit the land God promised to give to them. It is impossible for God to lie (Titus 1:2), but if He lied to Abram, He was saying that He Himself would be cut in two and killed, just as these animals were.

The next 3,500 plus years have unfolded the drama of God working to keep His promise, even though the people proved over and over again that they were not worthy of His favor. When Christ returns, we will see God's promise to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David fulfilled with unimaginable glory (Revelation 21:9-22:5).

Throughout the Bible, God labors to communicate that we can fully trust Him to keep His promises. So, when He says, "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life" (John 5:24), we can be sure that He will keep that promise, too.

We are always safe in Christ because God always keeps His promises.

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### BOLD GRACE MINISTRIES EXISTS TO:

**Unite** believers under the banner of God's grace (Eph 4:3-6), **share** the gospel and aid those who will proclaim it faithfully (Rom 10:14-15), **increase** believers' confidence in the power of the indwelling Christ (Gal 2:20), **love** without hypocrisy (Rom 12:9a), **proclaim** the hope of Christ's glorious kingdom (Rom 8:18-21), and **equip** the saints to share Christ's matchless grace and love with others (2 Tim 2:2).

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