

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS
Commentary by Michael Sigler
June 5, 2011

God's Promises Fulfilled

Joshua 1:1-6 & 11:16-19, 21-23

Key verse: "As the Lord had commanded his servant Moses, so Moses commanded Joshua, and so Joshua did; he left nothing undone of all that the Lord had commanded Moses" (Joshua 11:15).

In his sermon titled "A Twinge of Nostalgia," Vic Pentz shared the following experience: "About a year and a half ago, I bought a new navy blazer at Nordstrom. It was one of those cases you may have gone through where you buy an item of clothing and the more you wear it, the more you realize you don't like it. My blazer wasn't the right color, and to make matters worse, it attracted lint like it was going out of style. After wearing it pretty regularly for six months or so, I stuck it in my closet and didn't wear it for a long time.

"Tucked away in the back of my mind all the while was that famous Nordstrom unconditional-return policy. I thought, *I've had this thing for a year and a half. I've worn it lots of times, and there's just no way they're going to take it back.* About two weeks ago I decided I had nothing to lose. I pulled the blazer out, threw a lot of lint on it to make it look bad, and took it down to Nordstrom's men's department.

"I walked in, and immediately I felt nervous. I felt like I was about to pull a scam of some sort, but I played it straight. I walked right up to the first salesman I saw and gave this little prepared speech. I said, 'I am about to put your famous unconditional-return policy to its ultimate test. I have here a blazer. I've worn it lots. I've had it for a year and a half. I don't like it. It's the wrong color, and it attracts lint like it's going out of style. But I want to return this blazer for another blazer that I like.' Then I stood there.

"I couldn't believe it. This guy with a big handlebar mustache just looked at me and shook his head. He said, 'For heaven's sake, what took you so long? Let's go find you a blazer.' Ten minutes later I walked out with another blazer that was marked seventy-five dollars more than I paid for the one that I brought in. It was perfect for me. Didn't cost me a penny.

"God is like Nordstrom. God makes all sorts of outlandish promises that we cannot bring ourselves to believe. Can we? When we get up enough courage or we're desperate enough, we finally take him at his word. He looks at us and he shakes his head. 'For heaven's sake,' he says, 'What took you so long?'"

God is faithful to keep His promises. When God called Joshua to lead the Israelites into Canaan, God was keeping a promise that He had first made to Abraham many years earlier: “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 12: 1-3).

God’s promise was not fulfilled for many years—through the time of Israel’s slavery in Egypt, the exodus under Moses’ leadership, and the years of wilderness wandering. But now God was raising up Joshua to lead the conquest and settlement of the Promised Land. As God called Joshua to this task, He expanded the promise made previously to Abraham and to Moses: “No one shall be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. Be strong and courageous; for you shall put this people in possession of the land that I swore to their ancestors to give them” (Joshua 1:5-6).

What promises do you need to believe God for your life? Could God be thinking, *What’s taking him so long? When will he decide to take me at my word?*

Obedying God leads to blessing. Obedience was a key to Joshua’s success. “As the Lord had commanded his servant Moses, so Moses commanded Joshua, and so Joshua did; he left nothing undone of all that the Lord had commanded Moses” (Joshua 11:15). The result of Joshua’s obedience to God? “So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the Lord had spoken to Moses; and Joshua gave it for an inheritance to Israel according to their tribal allotments. And the land had rest from war” (11:23).

Obedience is still a key to blessing. The Lord wants to lead us, guide us, bless us, and make us a blessing. But we must be faithful to obey the Lord. John Ortberg shared a story that illustrates the importance of following the Lord by obeying Him:

“Nancy and I were in a part of the country we had never seen before. We were going to be driving on obscure back roads so we got a rental car, and the guy at the counter said to me, ‘Along with this car, if you want, you can also get a GPS system.’My immediate response was ‘No. That is going to cost something. I don’t need that. I can find where I’m going without that.’ Anybody want to guess what my wife weighed in with? ‘Get the GPS.’ So we got the GPS.

“Here’s the deal: You can get the GPS. You can have the lady’s voice on it telling you which way to go. But that doesn’t mean you trust her. If you trust her, what do you do? You do what she says. You go where she tells you to go. She says, ‘Turn left,’ you turn left..

“To follow Jesus means I will do what He says. I will mess up a lot. I’m going to need His power. I know that, but I form the intention. I say to Him, ‘Lord, with your

help, as best I can, I will do what you say. I will give you my life, my time, my obedience.”

God gives us victory, but we must “walk it out.” God told Joshua, “Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you” (Joshua 1:3). Notice that God’s promise of victory was conditional. God would give the victory, but Joshua would need to walk in obedience. A lot of walking, a lot of fighting, a lot of praying, and a lot of obeying went between Joshua 1:3 and Joshua 11:23 (which says, “So Joshua took the whole land....”).

The great evangelist D.L. Moody once said: “When I was converted [to Christ], I made this mistake. I thought the battle was already mine, the victory already won, the crown already in my grasp. I thought the old things had passed away, that all things had become new, and that my old corrupt nature, the old life, was gone. But I found out after serving Christ for a few months that conversion was only like enlisting in the army—that there was a battle on hand.”

As we fight the good fight of faith, remember:

God is faithful to keep His promises.

Obeying God leads to blessing.

God gives us victory, but we must “walk it out.”

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