

I am Forgiven and Free
God Keeps His Promises
August 14, 2022

There are a host of issues with what happened, but one thing it illustrates is that we don't trust any more. Some don't trust the government, even law enforcement, while others don't trust a former president.

We have come to a place where we simply do not feel that we can trust even the things that should be trustworthy. I wonder if it is the great deceiver Satan, the father of all lies, that is causing all this division, this mistrust.

Now, we in the church say we can trust God.

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;*¹

But what can we trust Him for, and do we really mean it when we say it?

That's what this series is all about. "God Keeps His Promises" will look at 10 promises God has made. And we will ask ourselves if we really do trust God.

Each week, we will look at 2 promises. I invite you to turn to page 4 in your bulletin, or if you are online, have your spiritual journal available. And if you have forgotten your journal, well, that's the advantage of being online: you can pause me.

So, let's get started.

The first promise we are going to look at is the promise of Forgiveness.

This is one of those promises that we count on the greatest, because it might be our greatest need.

Each and every one of us in this sanctuary or watching online knows that we have sinned, and there are some sins of our past, and maybe even our present, that we are grievous of committing. They bring us a sense of pain and sorrow when they come to mind. And so we desperately need forgiveness.

The Bible says a great deal about forgiveness. Let's consider a few passages.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Colossians:

*For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son, who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins.*²

The NIV translates that last part:

*in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*³

The Greek word means a release on payment of a ransom for slave or debtor.⁴

Through His sacrificial death on the cross, Christ has redeemed us, purchase us and forgiven our sins.

The prophet Isaiah also talks about forgiveness. In the first chapter of his book, it says:

*The LORD says, "Come, let us talk about these things. Though your sins are like scarlet, they can be as white as snow. Though your sins are deep red, they can be white like wool."*⁵

¹ Proverbs 3:5 (NIV)

² Colossians 1:13-14 (NLT2)

³ Colossians 1:14 (NIV)

⁴ Word Pictures in the New Testament, Colossians 1:14

⁵ Isaiah 1:18 (NCV)

We all know what color scarlet is. Its deep-red permanent dye would cause a deep stain that virtually impossible to remove from clothing. God is saying that our sins are like that; stain us permanently, but He can remove sin's stain from our life. We don't have to go through life permanently soiled. Our lives can be as white as snow.

I'm reminded of the words of the great hymn that was sadly omitted from our hymnal:

*Jesus paid it all,
All to Him I owe;
Sin had left a crimson stain,
He washed it white as snow.*

A third Scripture is one that I was told to memorize a long time ago. From 1 John 1:9, these words:

*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*⁶

John tells us that when we confess our sins, God is faithful and just. Faithful and just is virtually a single concept. It indicates that God's response toward those who confess their sins will be in accordance with His nature and His gracious commitment to His people. He is both faithful as well as just to forgive us and get rid of all the junk we brought into our lives.

That's what the Bible says, but do we believe it? Do we really believe it?

Here's the thing: God's promise of forgiveness is so powerful, so effective, that it can take away sins; all the power, guilt, and infection of sin. All sin of every kind, with all its influence and consequences.

Yet, how often do we think, "God can never forgive that. I'm too far gone to be forgiven."

A little girl once asked her pastor whether Jesus always forgave us for our sins as soon as we asked Him.

The pastor said, "Yes, of course He does."

"Just as soon" she repeated, doubtfully.

"Yes," the pastor replied, "the very minute we ask, He forgives us."

"Well," the girl said deliberately, "I cannot believe that. I should think He would make us feel sorry for two or three days first. And then I should think He would make us ask Him a great many times, and in a very pretty way too, not just in common talk. And I believe that is the way He does, and you need not try to make me think He forgives me right at once, no matter what the Bible says."

She only said what most Christians think, and what is worse, what most Christians act on, making their discouragement and their very remorse separate them infinitely further off from God than their sin would have done. Yet it is so totally contrary to the way we like our children to act towards us, that I wonder how we ever could have conceived such an idea of God. How a mother grieves when a naughty child goes off alone in despairing remorse, and doubts her willingness to forgive; and how, on the other hand, her whole heart goes out in welcoming love to the darling who runs to her at once and begs her forgiveness!

⁶ 1 John 1:9 (ESV)

Someone once said, "To enjoy the future, accept God's forgiveness for the past."⁷

God's Word assures us that if we are willing and obedient, Christ will forgive and remove our most indelible stains. The question is: will you believe God's word? Will you believe He can forgive you? Will you ask Him to make you clean?

The second promise we can count on and believe is God's promise of Freedom.

Freedom is a big theme in the Bible, especially for a nation who spent 400 years in slavery in Egypt. When a people have known the terrible sin of slavery, freedom is like a cold glass of water to the thirsty, or a blanket to one who is cold, or a warm chocolate chip cookie to anyone.

Jesus said this in John 8:32:

*And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.*⁸

"And the truth will set you free." It was a saying amongst the Jews, "No man was free, but he who exercised himself in the meditation of the law." No one is truly free, but the person in whose heart the power of sin is destroyed, and who has received the truth.

Adam Clark wrote, "The bondage of sin is the most grievous bondage; and freedom from its guilt and influence is the greatest liberty."⁹

But in order to receive this freedom, we need the truth. But what is the truth here? Jesus Himself is the truth that sets us free. He is the source of truth, the perfect standard of what is right. He frees us from continued slavery to sin, from self-deception, and from deception by Satan. He shows us clearly the way to eternal life with God. Thus, Jesus does not give us freedom to do what we want, but freedom to follow God. As we seek to serve God, Jesus' perfect truth frees us to be all that God meant us to be.¹⁰

Paul added to our understanding of freedom. To his co-worker Titus, he wrote:

*He gave his life to free us from every kind of sin, to cleanse us, and to make us his very own people, totally committed to doing good deeds.*¹¹

Paul says that through Christ's sacrifice, we can receive freedom, and this freedom is not only for ourselves. This freedom now allows us to do good works for the kingdom. We are free to serve another.

The final passage I want to look at this morning is from Galatians 5. Paul had to chastise the Galatian people for being deceived and turning the wrong way. Galatians 3:1 from the Message reads:

*You crazy Galatians! Did someone put a hex on you? Have you taken leave of your senses? Something crazy has happened, for it's obvious that you no longer have the crucified Jesus in clear focus in your lives. His sacrifice on the Cross was certainly set before you clearly enough.*¹²

⁷ Our Daily Bread, Aug 13, 2003

⁸ John 8:32 (NLT2)

⁹ Adam Clarke's Commentary, John 8:32

¹⁰ Life Application Study Bible, John 8:32

¹¹ Titus 2:14, NLT2)

¹² Galatians 3:1 (MSG)

They had become convinced that the Law was required for salvation. But Paul wrote in chapter 5:1:

*So Christ has truly set us free. Now make sure that you stay free, and don't get tied up again in slavery to the law.*¹³

He tells them to stay free. How often do we fall back into some kind of bondage? Like the person with some kind of addiction, be it drugs or alcohol or pornography or chocolate chip cookies, we have a tendency to go back to what enslaves us.

Remember the children of Israel in the wilderness after the Exodus. When things got tough, they wanted to go back to their slavery in Egypt.¹⁴ So, too, we return to the bondage.

Friends, Christ died to set us free from sin and from a long list of laws and regulations. Christ came to set us free—not free to do whatever we want because that would lead us back into slavery to our selfish desires. Rather, thanks to Christ, we are now free and able to do what was impossible before—to live unselfishly. Those who appeal to their freedom so that they can have their own way or indulge their own desires are falling back into sin. But it is also wrong to put a burden of law-keeping on Christians. We must stand against those who would enslave us with rules, methods, or special conditions for being saved or growing in Christ.¹⁵

Yesterday, I had to do some flying.

Psalm 103:12 reads:

*[God] has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west.*¹⁶

Why didn't God use "north-south" direction? An airplane going north would end at North Pole and then, after that, if it still kept going, it would be going where? It would be going down south. But when you flying east or west, it never becomes the other. It will forever be eastward or westward. When God forgives, He forgets. It is gone forever! It can never be recovered.¹⁷

*So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.*¹⁸

What sin is holding you back from the freedom you can have in Christ? Seek God's forgiveness today, and you will be free indeed.

¹³ Galatians 5:1 (NLT2)

¹⁴ See Numbers 14:4

¹⁵ Life Application Study Bible, Galatians 5:1

¹⁶ Psalm 103:12 (NLT2)

¹⁷ Encyclopedia of 15,000 Illustrations: Signs of the Times, 1 John 1:9

¹⁸ John 8:36 (ESV)