

Open your Bibles to Joshua 21:43. I'm going to read from that in just a minute but as you're turning there, let me tell you a story:

The summer of 2002 had come to a close and I was driving my 1990 Mercury Grand Marquis back to college to begin my senior in college. The trip was an eleven-hour drive from the west side of Michigan to the northeast corner of Pennsylvania... I had made this trip plenty of times before, and each trip had gone fairly smoothly... until it came to this one. I was traveling along interstate 80 and had just crossed the Ohio state line heading into Pennsylvania when I had to slow down for construction traffic.

Which shouldn't have been a big deal but shortly after I came to a stop, my engine shut off. I shifted it up into park and tried to restart the car... but nothing. Some of who are mechanical might already be going, I wonder if it was this or possibly it could be that... Me, on the other hand, I was a twenty-two year old guy with no idea of what to look for. Even worse, I didn't have a credit card/debit card to pay for repairs nor did I have a cell phone.

All I had was enough money to pay a tow truck to get my car off the highway and to a place where I could use a pay phone to call someone. For those that don't know what I'm talking about, this is a payphone, and you could drop in a quarter and call whomever you needed. It was time to phone a friend. I called Laura, we weren't married yet but she was already living in that part of Pennsylvania that I was traveling to. So I gave her a call and asked her to come pick me up.

It wasn't a long, drawn out conversation. I told her my car broke down, told her where I was at, (maybe a 2 or 3 minute conversation) and she was on her way to get me. Keep in mind, neither of us had cell phones... so as I waited for the next 4 ½ hours sitting around at a gas station waiting to be picked up, all I was reassured by was her word. So I sat there on that curb at a gas station alongside of interstate 80 for that 4 ½ hours anticipating her arrival. For she had made a promise, "I'll be there as soon as I can."

And promises are a big deal! When someone makes a promise to you they are declaring that they will do something, give something, or they will arrange a particular thing. On that day in the summer of 2002, Laura came through with her promise. It's not enough to make a promise... you need to come through with your promise.

And today we are going to begin a new study that focuses in on the faithfulness of God in fulfilling His promises. This morning's message is entitled **"Standing on the Promises of God."** We are jumping into the Old Testament today and beginning a study through the book of Joshua. The book of Joshua has so much to say about God fulfilling His promises.

God is a faithful God and when He says that He's going to do something, there is no doubt that He is going to come through with fulfilling that promise. There have been times in my life where I have made a promise and failed to come through. Sometimes it's due to my poor planning, or something happens that I can't control, or I willfully change my mind on the commitment that I previously made. But when it comes to God and Him making a promise, He always comes through. God never fails in fulfilling His Word.

That's what I hope you will be encouraged by as we begin walking our way through the book of Joshua over the next several months. We're going to look at the book of Joshua in a little bit, but let me give you an idea of where we're going with our preaching on Sunday mornings. I sat down and mapped out our journey through this book and it will take approximately 22 weeks to get through. In our time together on Sunday mornings, we will take a week off here and there. But primarily we are going to spend a lot of our time together in the book of Joshua in 2017.

It will be a little different than our time that was spent in Colossians. In the book of Colossians we made an effort to explain every verse that the Apostle Paul had written to the church in Colossae. We're not going to do that with the book of Joshua. Some portions of this book we will spend a week studying a paragraph and on other Sunday mornings we will cover three or four chapters at a time.

When we do that, when we summarize several chapters, I don't want you to get the impression that some verses in scripture are not important. "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16) I truly do believe that. But certain portions of scripture, when it comes to preaching through, are better to be summarized rather than taking the time read to through every king was that defeated, or how allotment of land was broken down. So I can I ask you all to do something for me? I want to encourage you to take the time on your own to read through the book of Joshua.

As we make our way through this book you will discover that the book Joshua lays out a lot of *history* of what took place with the people of Israel. In fact we typically classify the book of Joshua as a historical book alongside of Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & Kings, and 1 & 2 Chronicles. And I believe that history is significant as it gives us an understanding of why a group people did the things they did and how they became who they are. When we study historical events we can also learn from the mistakes that were made so that we don't make them ourselves.

I agree with Edmund Burke's statement that, "Those who don't know history are destined to repeat it." We can learn so much from history. And I hope that we can do that over the next several months together.

But... I don't want us to study this exclusively as a historical book. It's not simply a record of ancient facts. While some of us can get really geeked up and excited up

over historical details, others find history dry and dull and uninteresting. If you're on that end of the spectrum, I don't want you to hear that we're going to study Joshua for 22 weeks and it's just going to be a history class. Because it's not. For when you study God's Word, it should never be simply be a history class. For God's Word reveals God!

So my hope as we begin studying Joshua, is that this portion of God's Word would inform you, but it would also convict you. I pray that the study of Joshua would enlighten you, but that it would also comfort you. The book of Joshua is preaching material sent to Israel, and to us, in the form of a historical narrative. What we need to clearly see when we study any portion of the Old Testament is that it is a declaration from God about God.

And what God declares about Himself in the book of Joshua is that He fulfills His promises. He always comes through.

The promise that He is going to fulfill is a commitment/covenant that He made with a man by the name of Abram, who would later be named Abraham. God had promised to Abram that He would give the land of the Canaan to his offspring. All the way back in Genesis 12 the promise was given. This is what it said,

⁶Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land.⁷Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built there an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him.

As you read through your Old Testament, this promise is not fulfilled right away. In fact, the space between God making that promise to Abram and God fulfilling His promise by giving the land to the Israelites, in the book of Joshua, is several hundred years. This is several hundred years of waiting, several hundred years of anticipating this land that is prosperous; a place that is described as flowing with milk and honey. Several hundred years of anticipating the land that they could call their own. [My four hours of waiting at a gas station is nothing compared to that.](#) But God comes through! He always comes through!!

That's why I had you turn to Joshua 21, for in that chapter, the book of Joshua is summarized fairly well.

⁴³Thus the LORD gave to Israel all the land that he swore to give to their fathers. And they took possession of it, and they settled there.⁴⁴And the LORD gave them rest on every side just as he had sworn to their fathers. Not one of all their enemies had withstood them, for the LORD had given all their enemies into their hands.⁴⁵Not one word of all the good promises that the LORD had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass.

This book shows how God kept his covenant promise to give the land to Israel. The Israelites could stand on the promises of God, and so can we!

So turn in your Bibles to the very beginning of Joshua and let's begin our journey of studying this book together.

READ JOSHUA 1:1-6

The book of Joshua begins with a funeral. It begins with the death of Moses. Moses was one of the most crucial figures of the Old Testament. If you recall, Moses had been born into an Israelite family, and to make a longer story short, Moses had been adopted and raised within the household of the Egyptian Pharaoh's daughter rather than being killed when the pharaoh ordered that all new Israelite babies to be murdered.

When Moses was a young man, he killed an Egyptian slave driver in a fit of rage. He then escaped to into the rugged land of Midian and remained there for forty years. After forty years, the Lord appeared to him in a burning bush on the side of Mt. Sinai where God instructed Moses to head back to Egypt. God was going to use Moses to lead the people *out* of slavery in Egypt and make the trek to the Promise Land of Canaan.

Moses isn't really sure about that and lacks confidence in his own abilities, so God allows him to bring along his brother Aaron as a spokesman. From that point a number of plagues are brought upon the land of Egypt as Moses brings God's message to "let my people go!" And for a period of time, Pharaoh keeps on saying, "No!" Eventually the plagues become so severe that Pharaoh gives in and allows the Israelites to leave.

The Israelites begin their journey toward the Promise Land with Moses as God's appointed leader. Out of Egypt, God led His people to the Red Sea, where God directs Moses to raise up his staff, and stretch out his hand over the sea and divide it. From there, God parted the waters and the people walked across on dry land. Moses led the people from the Red Sea to Mt. Sinai and at that place Moses received the law, which included the 10 Commandments.

We can spend a lot of time talking about Moses and Israelites wanderings in the wilderness. We could talk a lot about the significance of Moses leadership; the places he succeeded, but also the places he failed! Moses lived for 120 years and he was beloved figure and definite leader amongst the Israelites. And as we see here in the opening verse of Joshua, he has now died.

But even the death of prominent leader like Moses doesn't slow down the promises of God. God's promises do not hinge or are not held together by mankind. They are not put on hold because one particular person is not there any longer. *That was true for Israel and that is true for today. Jesus once said, "I will build my church, and the*

gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” That promise didn’t stop once all of the disciples stopped living. That promise is still true today. Jesus is going to build His church and one particular person does not hold it together. People are important. Leadership in the church is important. But for example, I could step off the curb tomorrow and be hit by a bus... or here in Middlefield, it would be more likely that I would be hit by a buggy, but regardless, God could still carry out His promise.

God’s promises are not contingent on a man. Moses, the longtime leader of Israel has died, but another leader has been raised up to carry the plan of God forward. That man is Joshua. Now, in the coming weeks we will talk about who Joshua is, but I want you to see today what God told Joshua.

Read Verses 2-4

Let’s stop there for a second. It’s time to enter the Promise Land! Joshua had been close before to entering into this land forty years before, but due to rebellion and a large group of the Israelites doubting God’s ability to give them victory in this land, they had been denied entrance. They had been wandering through the wilderness for forty years. In the grand scheme of things, forty years compared to eternity doesn’t seem very long.

But imagine waiting for a huge event to take place in your life... the time just drags by. Think about how slow one day can go when all you have to do is work this eight or ten hour day and then you’ve got a week off for vacation. You find your self checking the clock, asking yourself if that minute hand is moving at all. You’re anticipating something good! That’s what Joshua has been doing for forty years!!! And the day has officially arrived for them to cross that Jordan river and take ahold of the land that God had promised them.

And I love what verse 3 says,

Read verse 3

Every step you take is a God-given piece of land. God had made a promise to Abraham; He repeated that message to Moses, and now He is expressing that same promise to Joshua.

God keeps going in verse 5 saying,

Read verse 5-6

God is going to have victory. God has already given the land to Israel and it is now commanded of the Israelites to go and take. But before they take possession of it, God pulls their leader off to the side and has a conversation with Joshua. “Joshua, no one will stand in the way God fulfilling His promise. Be assured of that. You can have confidence that I will never abandon you. Just as I was with Moses, Joshua I will be

there with you as well. There's nothing that will happen that will cause Me to leave you forsake you. So be strong and courageous."

You look at that and go, Wow! How incredible is that?! God made a promise specifically to Joshua; I'm not going to leave you. I'm going to forsake you. Forsake gives the idea of disowning, or quitting on you. The Lord assures Joshua that He's not going to do that. He tells Joshua that, "I'm going to be with you every step of the way." That's incredible. Those ought to embolden Joshua to walk into the Promise Land with confidence because God's not going to bail out on Joshua and the Israelites for anything. Wouldn't it be amazing if God gave us that promise?

Oh wait... He did, didn't He? Read your Bible, we believe that this is the Word of God given to us. And all throughout your Bible you will find it declaring very clearly that God is faithful and that God does not abandon His children.

Deuteronomy 31:6, Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; **"He will never leave you nor forsake you."**

Psalms 37:28, For the LORD loves the just **and will not forsake his faithful ones. "They will be protected forever,** but the offspring of the wicked will be cut off;"

Psalms 94:14 "For the LORD will not reject his people; he will never forsake his inheritance."

Isaiah 42:16 "I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them; I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth. These are the things I will do; **I will not forsake them."**

Hebrews 13:5 Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, **"Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."**

We may leave God, but He will never leave us. No matter how bleak the situation, no matter how empty the feeling comes, God will never leave you! His promises are true. His word is above all! We can move forward because, He goes before us. And if God be for us, who can be against us?

In that moment in Israel's history, Joshua and the Israelites were challenged to cling to the Promises of God. And you know what, God came through. God is faithful to His Word. He never left them, never abandoned them. Again and again the Israelites would go into battle as they marched into the land of the Canaanites, and over and over again the Lord gave them victory.

And the same thing is true for us God has never abandoned us. As He fought the battles for the Israelites, so He fights the battles that rage within our lives. He doesn't stand off to the side going, "Good luck." No! The Lord is a warrior who fights on our behalf in our struggle against sin. He never leaves no matter how difficult circumstance. Do you want proof of that? Look at the cross!

In the moment of our deepest need, in the face of our greatest enemy, Satan and sin... our Lord Jesus Christ did not back down. Jesus humbly submitted Himself to a horrendous and lowly death in order that we might have victory over sin; in order that we could one day stand in the presence of God, Jesus was nailed to a cross of wood where He would suffer and die! There is no greater evidence for the lengths that God will go to keep His promises. We have confidence to firmly **Stand on the Promises of God** because He has repeatedly proven Himself to be faithful to His Word.

And today we have an opportunity to spend a little more time reflecting on just how faithful our God is. At Cornerstone Bible Church we always take the first Sunday of the month to celebrate the Lord's Supper together. (*Ask the elders to come*). It's a time of remembrance, it's a time of rejoicing, it's a time to celebrate what Christ accomplished by leaving the throne of heaven to accomplish the will of His Father by taking on Himself the penalty of sin, dying a horrific death, then rising from the grave to return to sit down at the right hand of God.

And I'm going to turn things over to Jonas Byler, one of our elders, and he is going to lead us into our time of communion.