



Unit .07

Session .03

The Blessings on God's People

Scripture



Numbers 23:19 -23; 24:5-9, 17-19

19 God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it? **20** Behold, I received a command to bless: he has blessed, and I cannot revoke it. **21** He has not beheld misfortune in Jacob, nor has he seen trouble in Israel. The LORD their God is with them, and the shout of a king is among them. **22** God brings them out of Egypt and is for them like the horns of the wild ox. **23** For there is no enchantment against Jacob, no divination against Israel; now it shall be said of Jacob and Israel, 'What has God wrought!' ... **5** How lovely are your tents, O Jacob, your encampments, O Israel! **6** Like palm groves that stretch afar, like gardens beside a river, like aloes that the LORD has planted, like cedar trees beside the waters. **7** Water shall flow from his buckets,

and his seed shall be in many waters; his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted. **8** God brings him out of Egypt and is for him like the horns of the wild ox; he shall eat up the nations, his adversaries, and shall break their bones in pieces and pierce them through with his arrows. **9** He crouched, he lay down like a lion and like a lioness; who will rouse him up? Blessed are those who bless you, and cursed are those who curse you." ... **17** I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near: a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel; it shall crush the forehead of Moab and break down all the sons of Sheth. **18** Edom shall be dispossessed; Seir also, his enemies, shall be dispossessed. Israel is doing valiantly. **19** And one from Jacob shall exercise dominion and destroy the survivors of cities!"

Intro Options

Main Point:
**God is faithful to keep
His promise to bless
His people.**

Option 1

There's a story of a Native American chief named Crowfoot who gave the Canadian Pacific Railroad permission to build a railway through his land. In return, the Canadian Pacific gave Crowfoot a lifetime pass to use the train. Crowfoot took the pass he was given, placed it in a leather case, and wore it around his neck for the rest of his life.

He never used it.

Many of us can relate with Crowfoot when it comes to how we treat the promises of God. We too are prone to take God's promises for granted, choosing to hold onto them more like an ornament that we hang around our neck rather than trusting in them and anticipating God's fulfillment of them. But God's promises are so much more than that. God's promises are designed to give us a sure and steadfast hope in life. They have eternal significance, and God will be faithful to fulfill every last one of them. And since God is faithful to keep His promises, even today as we wait for Him to fulfill them, we can live in the reality of their fulfillment that is to come.

- **What are some reasons that we might struggle to live under the reality of God's promises?**

Option 2

- **Describe someone in your life you know is always faithful? What have they done to prove their faithfulness? Do you think they will always remain faithful? If so, explain why.**

In the last session we looked at the deadly effects of sin with its ultimate consequence being separation from God forever. We are all sinners, but just as God made a way for the Israelites to be saved from the consequence of their rebellion, God has made a way for us to be saved from ours. Just as the Israelites repented of their sin and looked to the bronze snake in faith to be healed, we look to Jesus who died on the cross to be saved from the consequences of sin. In this session we will look at the faithfulness of God to keep His promises to bless His people. Because God is faithful, we can trust that He will keep His promises, even in the midst of our unfaithfulness.

TEACHING PLAN

Read Numbers 23:19-23



When the Israelites camped in the plains of Moab, the people there took notice. They had heard of what the Israelites had done to the Amorites, and they were deadly afraid. So Balak, the king of Moab, sent messengers to Balaam, likely a diviner from the town of Pethor. Recognizing that the Israelites were more powerful, Balak's plan was for Balaam to curse God's people so that he would be able to defeat them. Little did Balak know that the power he ascribed to Balaam, that those whom he blessed would be blessed and those whom he cursed would be cursed (Num. 22:6), did not belong to any human diviner, but instead to the Divine God alone (Gen. 12:3, 27:29).

That night God appeared to Balaam and forbade him from bringing a curse upon the Israelites, the people He had blessed (Num. 22:12). Balaam sent Balak's messengers back to their king to give him his answer. Balak sent more messengers, and Balaam later returned with them. Balaam warned Balak that he could only speak the message God put in his mouth (Num. 22:38), but the king persisted.

- **How encouraging is it to know that much like the Israelites here, God is for you and not against you?**

Balaam instructed Balak to build seven altars and offer a bull and a ram on each. Then God met with Balaam and gave him a message to share with Balak. This first oracle did not curse the Israelites, but blessed them instead, much to Balak's consternation. Undeterred, Balak took Balaam to another place where he could look out over the Israelites, and God gave the diviner a second oracle to share.

Balak desperately wanted Balaam to curse the Israelites. The first attempt hadn't gone as planned, but perhaps if Balaam were closer to them—if he could look out over the enemy forces—he might be inspired to offer a curse rather than a blessing the second time. But once again, Balaam shared only what God would allow him to share. And once again, Balaam blessed God's people rather than cursing them.

- **What does it say about God's character that He is isn't willing to go back on the promises He has made?**

In Balaam's second oracle, we are reminded that God does not lie and He does not relent on His promises. Ever. For any reason. The Lord is steadfast in His commitment to His people. Steadfastness and faithfulness are just two of God's unchanging divine attributes. If God were anything less than one hundred percent faithful to His word, He would not be God. He would either not be true or He would not be powerful enough to keep His word. He would be just like us—flawed and weak.



- **How does knowing that God will never lie or fail to keep a promise encourage you to trust Him more?**

Balaam knew that God desired to bless Israel, and the Spirit of God came upon him. Balaam began the third oracle by describing both Israel's current state of blessing and the future blessings that they would enjoy.

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
God is faithful to keep
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His people.

Numbers 23–24

23:19-23. In Balaam's second oracle, God declared to Balak that His power had been, and would continue to be, displayed through Israel. Before this, God had promised to deliver the Israelites out of slavery from the most powerful nation in the world, and He did (Ex. 6:6-7). And in doing so, God showed His people and the nations that worldly power is inconsequential to Him. His power dwarfs the greatest power humanity can hope to muster. God had declared that the Egyptians, and consequently the whole world, would know that He is God through His deliverance of the Israelites, and that's precisely what happened.

The Moabites feared the Israelites, thinking they had delivered themselves from Egypt and defeated the Amorites (Num. 22:3-4). The Moabites were right to be afraid, only they were afraid of the wrong thing. It was not the Israelites who should have caused them to tremble, but rather God. Here, in the second oracle to Balak, God, through Balaam, declared that it was He who delivered the Israelites and gave them victory over the Amorites. Balak's attempt to curse and destroy the Israelites was futile because God, who is like a wild ox that cannot be controlled by man, was with them.

24:5-9. Our future hope of eternal life rests in the faithfulness of God, not ourselves, which also means that not even God will prevent His promises from being fulfilled. Though God's anger burns hot toward sin, He has placed His wrath on Jesus. We can live now like we someday will, holy and blameless, in the midst of a broken world because God is going to fulfill all that He has promised. He has not lied, He will not change His mind, and He will be faithful. He is presently refining us and purifying us and one day, we will finally stand before Him with all sin cast apart from us forevermore.

This is why our hope is not like the world's hope, a wishy-washy emotional optimism that is anything but secure. The world hopes for stronger economies, peace between nations, advances in medicine, and the like, not with confident expectation, but wishful thinking and longing. And often, the world's hope is thwarted. Economies collapse. Treaties are broken. Medical advances prove ineffective. But our hope in God is not like this. Our hope is a confident expectation that whatever God has promised will come to pass. No matter how unlikely it seems. No matter how much we mess up and seem to disqualify ourselves. And no matter how many adversaries rise up against us. Our hope is secure because it is rooted in a perfect God, who always holds firm on what He has promised.

99 Essential Doctrines (p. 24, DDG)

God is Faithful

God's faithfulness means He keeps His word and always fulfills His promises (1 Cor. 1:9; 2 Tim. 2:13; 1 Pet. 4:19). God's faithfulness is demonstrated in His fulfillment of the promises He made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The apostle Paul linked the attribute of "faithful" to God's coming through on His word: "He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it" (1 Thess. 5:24). We reflect God by keeping the promises we make to Him and to others.

TEACHING PLAN

Read Numbers 24:5-9



As Balaam looked out into the wilderness at the Israelites, God gave him a vision. The diviner described the tents of Israel as beautiful and their provisions as abundant. Even in the wilderness, where the Israelites were forced to wander for forty years because of their unfaithfulness, God had blessed them and given them all they needed in abundance. Though they didn't currently dwell in the promised land, they were satisfied and they sat camped in the wilderness, enjoying rest (22:1). While Balak sought to destroy the Israelites, God planned to preserve them and bless them even in the midst of their disobedience.

But the rest and ample provisions that the Israelites enjoyed in that moment were not the true rest and the greatest provisions God had in store for His people. God had promised to give the Israelites rest in the land of Canaan, a land flowing with milk and honey (Ex. 33:14). Because all of the promises of God are as sure as the rising sun (Hos. 6:3), the Israelites could trust that God was going to do what He said He would do. He would not leave His people wandering in the wilderness forever, nor would He abandon them. The rest and provisions they enjoyed were shadows of the substance that was to come. They could rest, eat, and drink where they camped knowing that God was continuing to work to bring about all that He had planned and promised, in His time and in His way.

- **How does God's promise to restore and make all things new one day prompt the way we live each day now?**

Three times Balak had called on Balaam to curse God's people. And three times Balaam spoke blessing over them instead. On the surface, Balak was upset with Balaam for not cursing the Israelites, but we see in his dismissal of Balaam that he understood that God was really the one he should have been frustrated with. It was not Balaam who refused to curse the Israelites, but rather God. And this God who was not done with the Israelites was not done with Balak yet either. He had one more message for the king of Moab, a fourth oracle that looked into the future, beyond the conquest of the promised land to a time when God would provide a king for His people.

Read Numbers 24:17-19



Even though Balak's plan to curse the Israelites had failed, it was true that Israel would still need to do battle against the Moabites. And in this oracle, God spoke of the future defeat of the Moabites, which would come at the hands of a king: David (2 Sam. 8:1-12). God would give David to the Israelites to lead them, protect them, and provide a greater victory than this day's over Balak, but David would not be able to provide God's people with the greatest victory—the victory they truly needed—the victory over their greatest enemies of sin and death. And in this fourth oracle, we see a hint of God's plan to send another King, a greater king who would be perfect. God would send Jesus, the sinless Savior who would crush sin and death on behalf of His people and win a greater victory than the one God would give David over the Moabites.



- **What smaller victories do we tend to focus on and find contentment in rather than longing for the greatest victory God has given us in Christ?**

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
God is faithful to keep
His promise to bless
His people.

Numbers 24

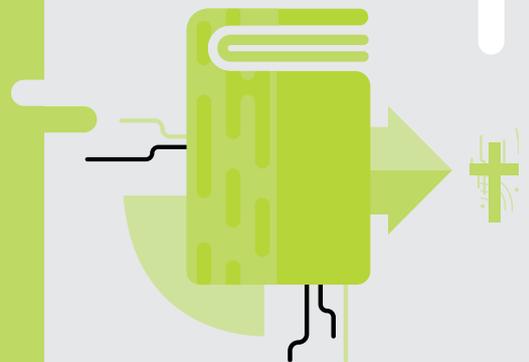
17-19. It would be a while, but God would eventually provide the Israelites with kings who would lead them and conquer their enemies. But like David, no king God raised up was completely faithful to God, and their failure to be faithful affected the entire nation. Saul, the first king set the pace for Israel's future kings when he disobeyed God twice out of the gate by sacrificing unlawfully (1 Sam. 13) and not completely destroying the Amalekites (2 Sam. 15). David committed adultery with Bathsheba and killed her husband, Uriah (2 Sam. 11). Solomon, the wisest king to ever live, married and had immoral relations with one thousand women from other nations, and then worshiped their gods (1 Kings 11). Rehoboam chose to listen to the foolish council of others and led to the kingdom splitting in two (1 King. 12). And then a series of kings ruled over Judah and Israel, many of whom it is written that they did more evil in God's sight than the others before them. (see 1 Kings. 14:9; 16:25; 16:30.)

Each of these kings was a lamppost illuminating a core truth for the Israelites: they needed someone far greater than even the greatest king they could imagine. They needed a true King, an obedient King, a perfect King.

Back when Adam and Eve fell in the Garden of Eden, God promised that one of their offspring would crush the head of the serpent (Gen. 3:15). This offspring that God promised was Jesus, the perfect star from Jacob (Rev. 22:16). Jesus was the promised King who God sent and whose life on earth was marked by humility (Zech. 9:9), faithfulness (Phil. 2:8), and obedience (2 Cor. 5:21). Jesus lived the perfect life that we were supposed to live, and died the death that we were supposed to die. The King of kings offered His perfect life in exchange for our sin-stained souls so that His righteousness might be credited to us (Rom. 3:21-26). In the life, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, God put all things under the feet of Jesus, securing salvation for all who live by faith in Him.

(p. 25, DDG) Christ Connection

Balaam could not curse God's people, but blessed them instead and proclaimed God's faithfulness. Balaam's blessings ultimately were realized centuries later in Jesus. Jesus is the conquering King who fulfilled God's covenant promises and delivered His people from sin and death.



Our Mission

God's Story has always been designed to connect with our story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own. Suggested answers to these questions can be found on the right-hand side of the page for leaders.

Head



How might seeing the stories of God's faithfulness in Scripture affect the way you see His work in your life today?

What are some ways you would like to be used for God's glory in the weeks ahead?

Heart



How should we respond to our sin knowing that God's promises are secure no matter what?

How can God's faithfulness be a motivator to be faithful in our devotion to Him?

Hands



Do you think some people believe the goal of the Christian life ultimately lies in the future? Why is that, and why is belief not true?

How do the future promises of God impact the way we live today?

Main Point: **God is faithful to keep His promise to bless His people.**



Head

The second half of Numbers 23:23 says, “It will now be said about Jacob and Israel, ‘What great things God has done!’” God chooses to use us, though we are weak and sinful, to display His immeasurable power to all the world. We can trust in God’s ability to deliver us from this world and give us eternal life because He has promised to do so and He has the power to fulfill His promise. There is nothing and no one greater than our God. What a blessing that He chooses to display His power in the world through us, His people! Of God’s people, it has been said, is said, and will be said, “what great things God has done!” Not because of who we are, but entirely because of who God is and the great things He has done and will do.



Heart

No one can stop God from being faithful to us, and that includes ourselves. Not even our faithlessness can stop the promises of God from being fulfilled. Our faithlessness reveals the sinfulness of our hearts. Even still, our sinfulness has no power to thwart God’s faithfulness. The good that God is working in the lives of every believer is to conform them into the image of Jesus and to preserve them until the promise of eternal life is fulfilled (Rom. 8:28-29). Because God is the one who planned and promised our salvation, we can be confident that, “...neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:38-39).



Hands

God always works for His glory, our good, and toward the fulfillment of all He has promised, even when we don’t see it. And God is not just concerned about the fulfillment of His promises, but also in how He brings them to pass. Just as God was with the Israelites, providing for them and protecting them in the wilderness, He is with us as well. All who believe in Jesus have the promise of eternal life (John 3:36). Because the promise of eternal life comes from God, who is steadfast in His faithfulness to fulfill His promises, we don’t just wait for a future eternal life, but we experience the blessings of that promise here and now. The free gift of eternal life we have received is not a license for us to sin, knowing that our future is secure thus assuming how we live today doesn’t matter. Instead, it is a license for us to live the way God has called us to live (2 Pet. 3:14). We can live confidently, knowing that God’s promises are sure and that He is the one working now to fulfill all He has promised (2 Pet. 1:5).