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SERMON TITLE: **Trusting God's Promises**
SCRIPTURE: **Genesis 28:10-22**
DATE **January 8, 2023**
Online service at www.fpcd.org/live

Read also Hebrews 6:11-19.

How do you feel about this statement?

“God bound himself with an oath, so that those who received the promise could be perfectly sure that he would never change his mind. So God has given both his promise and his oath. These two things are unchangeable because it is impossible for God to lie. Therefore, we who have fled to him for refuge can have great confidence as we hold to the hope that lies before us” (Heb. 6:17-18).

What emotion does it raise in you? Elation? Reservation?

Maybe both!

God's promise is the topic today.

Can you think of any promises you have made today?

Did you promise your mother you would come to church?

Did you promise your dentist you would floss? (I did for years. But my gums still bled. Then I actually started flossing and guess what . . . no more bleeding gums!)

Promises kept have untold power to change lives. How are you doing with your promises?

A few weeks ago we talked about Abraham's promise that he would become a very huge family. He was getting old; Isaac was 40 years old and unmarried. It would take marriage for the promise to come true. So Abraham set about making that happen, but it had to be exactly according to God's parameters: the wife had to be from Abraham's people; NOT a Canaanite. She would have to leave home and come to live where Isaac was—in “The Promised Land.”

Abraham's servant about had a heart attack over this assignment! But Abraham said, “Pray about it. God will deliver.”

And God did! Rebecca moved to the Promised Land and became the wife of Isaac. They had twins, Jacob and Esau. Esau, the elder son, would serve Jacob the younger son.

Well now Isaac is old. There's been a big fallout between Jacob and Esau. Jacob has to flee for his life because he received

Isaac's blessing meant for Esau. Jacob is leaving the Promised Land and he is unmarried. How will God's Promise be fulfilled?

Circumstances do not look promising! Let's read the story: READ Gen. 28:10-22

Jacob is in a state of anxiety. He's deceived his father at the instigation of his mother—but truth is, Jacob was always trying to gain his father's blessing.

Isn't that the most natural thing in the world? Doesn't every man want the blessing of his father? Some fathers fail to give it, and a man may seek it his whole lifetime. Some sons live foolishly, so never gain their father's blessing. Fathers and sons are often complicated! However, **God is called our Father in the Bible because God is a caring, merciful example of a Father who does keep his promises.** God's example of being a promise-keeper is a witness for you to follow.

God does not quit.

God has been keeping promises for years. I promise I will make you a great nation.

Here is God's goal:

1. **To bless the nations**—through you, through your faithfulness to Him.

Here is God's goal:

2. **To have mercy so that people are saved.**

Here is God's goal:

3. **To establish goodness, justice, and peace on the earth.**

It all began with a promise to this family: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Now note, each of these men had to establish his own relationship with God. It is the same for you and your sons. This descendancy was not rote or automatic; it would not roll on without their full, individual involvement. Each man was responsible for responding to God's promise.

- ❖ Abraham had to listen to the voice he heard; follow; wait patiently; and obey, even to the point of willingness to sacrifice his son.
- ❖ Isaac had to marry the wife selected from Abraham's clan—NOT a pagan; he had to stay in the Promised land, even when famine hit. Isaac had to trust God would take care of him, just as God had promised.
- ❖ Jacob had to trust God's words to him on a dark night when he was fleeing his angry, murderous brother.

Have you ever had those nights when everything had fallen apart and you have to trust that God would keep his promise to be with you and help you?

That night Jacob said, If God will be with me and protect me, and provide for me and keep me safe until I return here, then the LORD will certainly be my God . . . and I will present to God a tenth of everything he gives me. (read Gen. 28:20-22)

His positive response secured the promise that had begun with Abraham, passed to Isaac and was now complete in Jacob, who would have the twelve sons that led to the twelve tribes of the nation of Israel.

This positive response would carry on to Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Naomi, Ruth, David, the northern and southern kingdoms, Esther, the tribe of Judah, the town of Bethlehem, Jesus, the establishment of Christ's Church, the writing of the Scriptures, all the way to First Presbyterian Church Duncanville, along with every single church on every corner.

That's the power of God's promises.

God had amazing things in mind and there's amazing power as you follow for you not to just survive, but to thrive.

Any of these men—and women—could have freaked out and run off with all kinds of excuses. People do it all the time, every day. Their problems become bigger in their mind than God's promises.

For example, some churches fail to experience the Promise of God because they fail to actively follow God's Promise. In our North Texas Presbytery since 2013 we have lost 43.5 percent of members. Over 40 churches have closed and their buildings sold. What causes this to happen? They shrink back from commitment, inconsistently attend, go off track from biblical principles; fail to reach out to the community, fail to fill the niche God has for them. They don't grasp God's powerful promises, which come with parameters. I'm sorry to share these discouraging numbers!

So how do we, First Presbyterian Church Duncanville, be a success story?

Let's go back to that first declaration in Hebrews:

"God bound himself with an oath, so that those who received the promise could be perfectly sure that he would never change his mind. So God has given both his promise and his oath. These two things are unchangeable because it is impossible for God to lie. Therefore, we who have fled to him for refuge can have great confidence as we hold to the hope that lies before us" (Heb. 6:17-18).

Look at these catch phrases:

- He would never change his mind
- Both the promise and the oath are unchangeable
- We can be perfectly sure
- Impossible for God to lie
- Therefore
- Hope lies before us
- Have great confidence

We must have confidence in God's Promise-Keeping!

Then, let examine our response. We too can insist on God's way like Abraham; trust God like Isaac; seek God in prayer like Rebecca; desire God's blessing like Jacob; value the Bible like Moses; be faithful to our families like Ruth; have courage like David. You get the picture. Your trust and confidence in God's promises affects the next generation. God is good. God is faithful. God keeps promises. And that is why we are here today.

AMEN