

=BIBLE PROMISES=

Lesson 5

Bible Promises About God's Ability

AIM: to call to the attention of my pupils the absolute power and ability which God has and to encourage them to trust Him completely.

POINT OF CONTACT: Imagine the cockpit of an airplane. Besides the pilot and the copilot, there is the man who has the title of navigator. The navigator has set the course, and he keeps check on the course which the plane follows, comparing it with the course, depending upon traffic or weather conditions. Whatever directions and altitude which the navigator and ground control direct are what the pilot of the plane must follow. He will follow these directions because he recognizes the ability of those who are directing his course.

INTRODUCTION: The promise which we will study this week bears the nature that many, many promises of the Bible have—it is in the nature of a stated fact. The fact of this statement is true now, has always been true, and will always be true. Because the statement of this fact can always be depended upon, it is wonderful that we can claim it as a promise: “Ah Lord GOD! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee.” The promise is found in Jeremiah 32:17. The setting in which this statement was first made is a fascinating account of history, but there is nothing fantastic about it—it could happen today. The tale involves the nation of Israel; but, as we have said before concerning other Bible lessons, the lesson from this event is given in the Bible so that we can profit by it. Let us begin our lesson by telling the background of the statement. It was made by Jeremiah at the conclusion of some historical events and before the occurrence of other episodes of which God had told him. (The reading of the book of Jeremiah will aid in this study.)

I. GOD CAUSED THE EVENTS.

1. The prophet Jeremiah was commanded to foretell these events. (A true prophet has been defined as being one who both tells forth and foretells for the Lord.)
  - 1) Jeremiah was probably about 20 years old when he began to prophesy. Jeremiah was probably about the same age as King Josiah. Josiah began to reign as king over Judah when he was eight years old. In Josiah's thirteenth year of reign, God called Jeremiah to be a prophet. This was in 629 B.C.
  - 2) Jeremiah was commanded to tell kings and the people how wicked they had been. He was to tell them that they had turned away from the Lord. They had disobeyed Him in spite of the fact that He had showered them with His goodness. God said, “Tell them about their sin, in case they will turn back to Me.”
  - 3) This was during the period of history when the nation of Israel was divided into two kingdoms—the southern kingdom of Judah and the northern kingdom of Israel. The northern kingdom had fallen to Assyria in 722 B.C. The southern kingdom was still standing. She was being threatened and was having to pay tribute to Egypt. Then Babylon began to move in.
  - 4) Jeremiah, prophesying for about 41 years, warned about the final destruction which would come upon Jerusalem. He warned the kings, and he stood in the gates and in the temple to warn the people. Three different times the enemy, Babylon, came to the doorstep of Judah and took some captives. The first time was during the reign of Jehoiakim—607-606 B.C.—when Daniel and his friends were among those taken; the second was during the reign of Jehoiachin—about 597 B.C.—when 10,000 people were taken; and the third and final was about 590-588 B.C.—during the reign of Zedekiah. The final captivity included the complete burning of the city of Jerusalem.
2. There were false prophets saying that the enemy would flee from Judah. In their unrepentant, sinful condition, the people wanted to believe the false prophets and to disbelieve Jeremiah. In fact, the people began to call Jeremiah a traitor because he was trying to convince the kings, especially Zedekiah, to surrender to the Babylonians. Through the course of events, Jeremiah was imprisoned and was even thrown down into a dungeon where his steps sank down into mire.
  - 1) Jeremiah was pleading with the people to turn from their sinful ways. They would burn incense to a false god called the “queen of heaven,” and even erected a large idol. From their rooftops,

the people in their houses were conducting their false worship. The Lord kept saying through Jeremiah to the people, "Please turn from your wicked ways so that I will not have to punish you." (Jeremiah 2:35; 3:12; 4:1; 6:8, 16; 7:7, 8; 18:8; 29:13, 14.)

- 2) The people would not really turn from their wicked ways—they pretended at times to do so. These were evidences of their wickedness—Jeremiah 6:13-16; 7:5-18. Jeremiah finally said, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." The leaders and the majority of the people had lived in their sinful ways so long that they could not turn from them and repent, Jeremiah 13:23.
- 3) The people preferred to hear the false prophets. Even Jeremiah wanted to believe one, Jeremiah 28:6. God, however, testified against the false prophets saying that they had not been sent by Him and that their message was not His, Jeremiah 5:31; 14:13-16.
4. Jeremiah needed assurance that his prophecy was truly correct. He received this assurance: the Lord had told him that his cousin would come and offer a field for sale in Anathoth (2 1/2 miles northeast of Jerusalem). Jeremiah was to buy it so that it could remain in his family as an inheritance, Jeremiah 32:7-15. Because Jeremiah believed that after seventy years of captivity in Babylon the people would return to Israel, he bought the field. Jeremiah rejoiced that, true to the Word of the Lord, his cousin came and offered the field to Jeremiah. Jeremiah had the sale properly recorded with witnesses and the record stored in an earthen jar for preservation against decay. After all this transaction was completed, Jeremiah then began his prayer of worship to the Lord, Jeremiah 32:16-25.

## II. GOD THE CREATOR FINDS NOTHING TOO HARD FOR HIM TO DO.

1. Jeremiah saw testimony of this fact in the affairs of nations.
  - 1) He saw good King Josiah slain in a foolish attempt to stop the king of Egypt. God had promised to spare Josiah the days of judgment against his people. This was because Josiah had repented and had attempted to lead his people back to God, II Chronicles 34 and 35.
  - 2) He saw the death of King Jehoiakim. Jeremiah had predicted his awful death according to the Word of the Lord, Jeremiah 36.
  - 3) He experienced the complete sacking of the city of Jerusalem. Jeremiah was still there when the city was burned—the king's palace and the houses of the people. The walls of the city were broken down, Jeremiah 38:28.
2. We know from history that the second part of Jeremiah's prophecy came true. The captured Jews were permitted to begin returning to Israel after their seventy years of captivity. Those who were dispersed to other countries have their descendants returning now, as Jeremiah prophesied would happen.
3. Remember God's power in other Biblical events. We could mention:
  - 1) The flood. God decided to destroy all His creation except representatives of animal and insect life and those people who trusted Him. He completely restored the world after this great destruction. He has kept the reigns on the temperament of nature in order to keep His promise that never again would the world be destroyed by a flood. He has watched over seasons and over the operations of the universe to keep all His laws operating as He originally set them up, Genesis 8:22.
  - 2) The Exodus. God allowed great calamities to come upon the Egyptian people while He shielded the Israelites from them at the same time. He timed the calamities, allowing them to happen according to His timetable, and caused them to stop when it was time for His people to be released. He is more powerful than the gods of the Egyptians. He brought the Israelites from Egypt and through the wilderness with His mighty arm in miraculous event after miraculous event.
  - 3) The coming of Jesus. His birth was absolutely different from any other birth in the world, not following the laws of nature. He was virgin-born. Jesus the Creator caused Himself to take on the form of flesh and to be born into the world as a little baby boy.

4. We can see God's power in our own lives. We could recount happenings which have no other explanation other than that the Lord planned them to happen to us or for us in order that His plan be worked or His extra blessing be given.

### III. GOD'S CHILDREN ARE TO TRUST COMPLETELY.

1. In what or whom are we to trust?
  - 1) Not in man's abilities. Man has no abilities, intelligence, nor wisdom of his own, Jeremiah 8:9; 9:23, 24. When man has received of the Lord, he is still not to glory in what he has received, but he is to glory in the fact that he knows God.
  - 2) Not in man's defenses nor strength, Zechariah 4:6. Jeremiah said, "O LORD, my strength, and my fortress, and my refuge in the day of affliction...", Jeremiah 16:19.
  - 3) We are to trust in Jesus. There is no strength, no knowledge of purpose, no reason for life apart from Him. Recall the promise which is found in John 5:24. Read Jeremiah 10:23.
  - 4) We are to trust in God's promises. God gave this promise to Jeremiah: "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not," Jeremiah 33:3.
2. When are we to trust Him?
  - 1) Whenever He points us to the Saviour. Those who are not saved must accept Jesus as their only hope for Heaven and for salvation from sin and its punishment, John 5:24.
  - 2) Whenever He tells us to do something for Him. God tells us to bear fruit. He tells us that we can bear fruit by abiding in Jesus and letting His words abide in us, John 15:7. God told Jeremiah that He wanted him to be a prophet. Jeremiah said that he could not. God scolded him for saying that he did not have the ability nor the leadership qualities. This was false humility and lack of trust on Jeremiah's part. God assured Jeremiah of His help and presence, Jeremiah 1:4-10. There is nothing too hard for Him! Who else can know a child even before he is born? Who else can ordain him to greatness? What does God have in mind for our children? We should mold them now in the ways of the Lord. What does God have in mind for the children themselves? He wants them to give themselves to Him for use according to His will.
  - 3) Whenever we have sinned. We are to confess our sins to Him and to believe Him when He says that He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, I John 1:9.
  - 4) Whenever He tells us of future events. He told Jeremiah that Israel would be returning to their land, that they would trust Him with their hearts, and that His law would not have to be written anymore for them to know what it is. See Jeremiah 31. All the things that, according to God's schedule of events, should have taken place by now have taken place. All the events that He says will take place shall definitely happen.

CONCLUSION: There is no power, there is no scheme that can exist and work unless God permits it or ordains it, Jeremiah 29:23; 42:5. He is a witness to all the affairs of men; therefore, He may want to change the course of a nation's history or the lives of individual people at any time. He can do this. Whatever God has said that He will do, He is about to do—we are to believe Him. Whatever God has said that He wants us to do, He will enable us to do—we are to obey and to trust Him. Whatever God has said will happen according to His plans will happen—we are to expect it to happen.