The Blessings on God’s People

SESSION IN A SENTENCE: God is faithful to keep His promise to bless His people.

MAIN PASSAGES: Numbers 23:19-23; 24:5-9,17-19; 1 Corinthians 15:25-26

During the late 1800s, the Canadian government wanted to construct the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) to unite the country from coast to coast, but doing so required land from some Native American territories. In 1883, when the Blackfoot Confederation of tribes retaliated against the railroad, a Native American chief named Crowfoot, a spokesperson for the Blackfoot Confederacy, negotiated with the government for compensation of land elsewhere. In recognition of Crowfoot’s statesmanship, the CPR vice-president awarded him with a lifetime railway pass in 1887. Crowfoot wore this pass on a chain around his neck for the rest of his life, though he most likely never used it.  

What are some promises we might hold on to but never use?
Group Time

**Point 1:** God blesses His people by delivering them (Num. 23:19-23).

19 God is not a man, that he might lie, or a son of man, that he might change his mind. Does he speak and not act, or promise and not fulfill? 20 I have indeed received a command to bless; since he has blessed, I cannot change it. 21 He considers no disaster for Jacob; he sees no trouble for Israel. The Lord their God is with them, and there is rejoicing over the King among them. 22 God brought them out of Egypt; he is like the horns of a wild ox for them. 23 There is no magic curse against Jacob and no divination against Israel. It will now be said about Jacob and Israel, “What great things God has done!”

In Balaam’s second oracle, we are reminded that God does not lie and He does not renege on His promises. Ever. Therefore, it was impossible for Balaam to curse the Israelites because God had promised to bless Israel. The Lord is steadfast and faithful in His commitment to His people because He is unchanging. 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 not be powerful enough to keep His word; He would be just like us—flawed and weak. But while we are like Him, created in His image, He is not like us.

How should knowing that God is unchanging encourage us to trust Him more and live more faithfully?

The Moabites feared the Israelites, thinking they had delivered themselves from Egypt and defeated the Amorites. It was not the Israelites, however, who should have caused them to tremble but rather God who delivered the Israelites. God displays His immeasurable power to all the world though His people who are weak and sinful. He does so with the goal that all the world will recognize that there is nothing and no one greater than our God and therefore praise Him.

**Voices from the Church**

“God's grace and faithfulness are stronger than those who would hurt us ... There is no greater power than the one we have in Jesus. If your life is hidden in Christ, you have no reason to fear any curse from anyone because God has all power.”

—Africa Study Bible
**Point 2: God blesses His people by keeping His covenant promises (Num. 24:5-9).**

5 How beautiful are your tents, Jacob, your dwellings, Israel. 6 They stretch out like river valleys, like gardens beside a stream, like aloes the LORD has planted, like cedars beside the water. 7 Water will flow from his buckets, and his seed will be by abundant water. His king will be greater than Agag, and his kingdom will be exalted. 8 God brought him out of Egypt; he is like the horns of a wild ox for them. He will feed on enemy nations and gnaw their bones; he will strike them with his arrows. 9 He crouches, he lies down like a lion or a lioness—who dares to rouse him? Those who bless you will be blessed, and those who curse you will be cursed.

While the Israelites rested in the wilderness, they were likely unaware of Balak’s repeated attempts to curse them. God, though, was aware and He was working on behalf of His people to protect and preserve them, as He had promised. 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. Just as God was with the Israelites, providing for them and protecting them in the wilderness, He is with us as well.

How should God’s faithfulness to protect and provide for His people address our temptation to worry about the needs of tomorrow?

Three times Balak attempted to bribe Balaam into cursing the Israelites, and each time Balaam responded with the Lord’s blessing for His people. Not a person or a thing in this world can stop God’s promises (Rom. 8:38-39). In fact, anyone who tries is cursed, for God is like a lion lying down ready to crush anyone who attempts to come against Him and His children. No one can stop God from being faithful to us, even ourselves. Our faithlessness can’t stop the promises of God from being fulfilled (2 Tim. 2:13).

**God Is Faithful:** God’s faithfulness means He keeps His ____________ and always fulfills His ______________. God’s faithfulness is demonstrated in His fulfillment of the promises He made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We ____________ God by keeping the promises we make to Him and to others.

What should our response to our sin be knowing that God’s promises are secure no matter what?
Point 3: God blesses His people by providing a conquering King (Num. 24:17-19; 1 Cor. 15:25-26).

17 I see him, but not now; I perceive him, but not near. A star will come from Jacob, and a scepter will arise from Israel. He will smash the forehead of Moab and strike down all the Shethites. 18 Edom will become a possession; Seir will become a possession of its enemies, but Israel will be triumphant. 19 One who comes from Jacob will rule; he will destroy the city’s survivors.

Balak’s plan for Balaam to curse the Israelites had not worked. This was a victory, yes, but it was not the victory God’s people needed. The Israelites would need to battle the Moabites at some point, and God chose that one day He would provide a king for His people—David—to bring them this victory. David would be the first fulfillment of this fourth and final oracle from God through Balaam, but he would not be the last.

David was a great king, the promised conqueror of the Moabites, but because of his own sin, he would not be able to provide God’s people with the greatest victory they truly needed, the victory over the greatest enemies of sin and death. So one day, God would send another king—Jesus—the perfect, sinless Savior who would crush sin and death on behalf of His people. This fourth oracle from Balaam points to David but also past him to the One whose birth would be heralded by a star and who is the “descendant of David, the bright morning star” (Rev. 22:16).

25 For he must reign until he puts all his enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy to be abolished is death.

What has caused you to long for the fulfillment of King Jesus’ reign and the final victory over sin and death?
My Mission

Because we have received God’s faithful blessings out of His kindness and grace, we seek to be a blessing to the world around us, ultimately by sharing how others can experience God’s greatest blessing of salvation through Christ.

• What steps will you take in belief that God is faithful to His promises to bless His people?

• How can your group work together to bless your community in the name of Jesus?

• How will you use God’s blessings to you and His promises to share the gospel with unbelievers?

Notes
**Daily Study**

**Day 1: Read Numbers 22:1-41**

In Numbers 22, the Moabites saw the Israelites encamped in the wilderness and feared for their lives. They heard what the Israelites had done to the Amorites and feared that the same fate would come to them. So Balak, the king of Moab, sought the help of a diviner named Balaam to curse the Israelites. But the Lord came to Balaam and told him not to go to Balak because the Israelites were blessed (v. 12).

This is a fascinating account full of mystery (who was Balaam and why was he known to listen to God?) as well as the supernatural (a talking donkey!). But don’t lose sight of an important detail that is easily missed: The Israelites were not present in this story. They didn’t see the fear of the Moabites. They didn’t see Balaam’s encounter with a talking donkey. They didn’t hear the oracles Balaam spoke. Instead, they were off in the distance while these events unfolded. Even when the Israelites could not see it, God was working for their good.

God is always working all things for the good of those who love Him (Rom. 8:28). There may be times when we feel like we are walking through a desolate wilderness, when we feel hopeless, and when God seems far off. But we know this is not true, and knowing that God is working in ways that we cannot see to bless us, even through hardship, is what we cling to.

How has God’s faithfulness helped you remain faithful to Him even in the midst of difficult circumstances?
Day 2: Read Numbers 23:1-26

In Balaam’s first oracle to Balak, God declared that those whom He has blessed cannot be cursed (v. 8). In the second oracle, God declared Himself to be a protection for Israel, like the horns of a wild ox (v. 22). In both of Balaam’s first two oracles, God’s message to Balak, as he tried to curse Israel, was that He cannot be controlled. God had blessed Israel, and He would not change His mind because He is faithful and true.

No one and nothing can thwart God’s plans for His people. Not even Satan can do anything to curse the people of God (Job 1:12). Our God is like a wild ox and He fights for us. Even though we may face persecution and difficult times, there is nothing that can stop God from fulfilling all that He has planned and promised. God has placed stories of His work in the Bible so that we can see how He works for the good of His people and realize that He works for us in the same way. Then in light of God’s unstoppable faithfulness, we can be faithful to Him, trusting that as we live for Him, He is fighting for us and for our good.

How can seeing the unstoppable faithfulness of God in Scripture change the way you approach difficult situations today?

Day 3: Read Numbers 23:27–24:13

In Balaam’s third oracle, God gave the diviner a vision of the future blessing that the Israelites would enjoy, and He warned Balak not to come against His people. The promise of blessing that God spoke through Balaam was a promise of abundant provision and powerful leadership. The warning that God gave Balak was a warning of destruction should he attempt to fight against Israel.

God’s promise of eternal life for us is a promise of shelter in His presence and provision that we will delight in (Rev. 7:15-16). We live in a broken world full of broken people, and we look forward to a life with God where brokenness will be no more. As we live today with this hope, we are called to proclaim the good news that Jesus has died on the cross for our sins. The hope that we have is not just for us. The message of the gospel is a message for all the world. God has saved us to display the immeasurable riches of His grace for the rest of eternity, and He calls us to start now by inviting those who don’t know Jesus to trust in Him and enjoy His presence and provision forevermore.

How will your guarantee of eternal life in Christ motivate you to share the gospel today?
Day 4: Read Numbers 24:14-25

Balaam’s final oracle to Balak was a promise to preserve and protect the people of God. While this oracle would come to pass in part through King David, King Jesus would be its ultimate fulfillment.

On the day we trust in Christ, His righteousness is credited to us (Rom. 3:21-26; 2 Cor. 5:21). The righteousness of God given to us does not mean that we no longer sin, but it does mean that Jesus’ perfect life was given to us as He took our sin onto Himself. It means that because our sin has been removed and we have Christ’s perfect righteousness, we are completely preserved and protected from the eternal consequences of sin and credited as being fully obedient to the Father.

When we trust in Jesus, we do not trust in Him merely for our salvation and then place that salvation in a safe place only to take out again in the future. We trust in His forgiveness but we also trust in His rule over us, knowing He has done everything necessary for our salvation and righteousness. Therefore, we are called to live in obedience out of love and gratitude for what He has done.

What is your motivation for obeying God? Why?

Day 5: Read 1 Corinthians 15:20-28

Through Adam, sin and death came into the world. Through Jesus, salvation came into the world and sin and death have been conquered. Jesus’ work on earth overcame all the wrong done by Adam, and his descendants, for those who trust in Him. Where Adam disobeyed, Jesus obeyed. Where Adam doubted, Jesus trusted. Where Adam went into the ground and remained there, Jesus went into the ground and burst forth on the third day.

Jesus is the firstfruits of the resurrection, which means He is not the only one who will experience it. One day, we too will spring forth from the clutches of death into everlasting life. But that life does not begin on that day—it is completed on it. One day Christ Jesus will return, and He will make all things new and kill death for good. At the death of death and the restoration of all things, the rule and reign of Christ will be unchallenged and unhindered. We can trust in God’s ability to conquer all things now since He has already conquered death, which is our greatest enemy.

How does knowing Jesus conquered our greatest enemy—death—give you boldness when sharing the gospel?
Encourage One Another

Join together with 2-4 people from your group, or with your family, sometime during the week to reflect on the session and to share how God is working and you are responding.

Share your thoughts and reflections on the truths from Scripture in this session:

- God blesses His people by delivering them (Num. 23:19-23).
- God blesses His people by keeping His covenant promises (Num. 24:5-9).
- God blesses His people by providing a conquering King (Num. 24:17-19; 1 Cor. 15:25-26).

How have you responded to these truths from Scripture?

What are some promises of God that have encouraged you and can encourage others in the faith?

How are you being a conduit of God’s blessing to unbelievers so they can know about and believe in Jesus?

Notes
UNIT 7
SESSION 1
1. Tony Evans, *Tony Evans' Book of Illustrations* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 2009) [eBook].

SESSION 2

SESSION 3

SESSION 4

UNIT 8
SESSION 1
1. Noël Piper, *Treasuring God in our Traditions* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003), 64.

SESSION 2

SESSION 3

EASTER SESSION

UNIT 9
SESSION 1

SESSION 2

SESSION 3

SESSION 4

SESSION 5
Trevin Wax

General Editor—The Gospel Project
Author of multiple books, including This Is Our Time: Everyday Myths in Light of the Gospel

In these sessions of The Gospel Project, we experience some of the most exciting narratives in Scripture. There are accounts here of sin and judgment, of moral decline and merciful intervention, and of rescuers who need rescue. Through it all, one thing is clear: God is with His people and He is faithful to His promise.

It’s important to keep that central theme in mind because many people read these stories about the conquest of the land and try to find examples for emulation. To be clear, we can learn a lot from these Old Testament heroes (see 1 Cor. 10), but we cannot implement their virtues apart from our connection to the Vine—Jesus Christ Himself, the One who bears fruit in us and through us.

As we walk through our present wilderness, struggling against sin and encountering sorrow, we know that the God who has gone before us is faithful. He is the One who prepares the way for us to be His ambassadors. He is the One who breaks the chains of our idolatry and lifts our gaze to His unchanging glory.