

BFF436 God is Committed

Scott Moore: Welcome to the "Building Faith and Family" podcast with Steve Demme. I'm your host, Scott Moore. Thanks for joining us today. Good morning, Steve. How are you today?

Steve: I'm well. I've been up bright and early this morning.

Steve: I was asked to do an online devotional being produced by SPED Homeschool. As I was preparing for that, I realized there's overlap for what I wanted to talk about today. So I worked on both of them. I don't even want to tell you what time it was because I got up in the middle of the night and worked on it first, and then I got up this morning and put finishing touches on it.

As I was praying about what's the next podcast we could do about understanding who God is or what we've been calling it, "Rebuilding our understanding of God according to Scripture," and as I prayed, this one word kept coming to me, "He's committed," which is an interesting word because I don't think I've ever seen that on lists of attributes of God, but He's committed, which is very close to being faithful.

I'm going to start with a really strange scripture, and then we'll pray. How is that for an introduction?

Scott: Nice.

Steve: If you have already familiar with this, I'm going to be really impressed, Scott. Here you go. In Joshua 6, the Israelites have just conquered Jericho. They had crossed the Jordan and were about to battle Jericho. God gave them a plan.

The last three verses of chapter six say, "They burned the city with fire and everything in it. Only the silver and gold and the vessels of bronze and of iron, they put into the treasury of the house of Jehovah. But Rahab, the prostitute, and her father's household, and all who belong to her, Joshua saved alive.

"And she has lived in Jericho to this day because she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho. Joshua laid an oath on them at that time saying, 'Cursed before Jehovah is the man who rises up and builds this city Jericho. At the cost of his firstborn shall he lay its foundation, and at the cost of his youngest son shall he set up its gates.'"

So Joshua destroyed the city, and he says that anybody who rebuilds the city is going to pay the ultimate price. He's going to lose two children.

1 Kings 16, we read about Ahab, one of the wickedest kings in the history of Israel, Scripture declares, "Ahab did more to provoke Jehovah, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him. In his days, Hiel..." -- H-I-E-L -- "...of Bethel built Jericho. He laid its foundation at the cost of Abiram, his firstborn, and set up its gates at the cost of his youngest son, Segub, according to the word of Jehovah, which he spoke by Joshua, the son of Nun."

Did you know that one?

Scott: I did not. I mean, I've read them, but I never connected them. Wow.

Steve: God is watching over His word, "Which he spoke by Joshua, the son of Nun." Let's pray. Father, here is this scripture that many of us that have read the Bible for decades, we just don't see the connection, but here it is right in front of us. Joshua speaks in the spirit, and You follow through because You're committed to Your word. You're committed that the words that You speak and that the words that Your servants have spoken inspired by Your spirit.

Help us today, though, to see past this kind of strange, little interplay here going on with the construction and destruction of Jericho, but help us to see beyond that to Your commitment to us and to Your word. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Scott: Amen.

Steve: In the Book of Jeremiah, the first chapter, "The word of Jehovah came to me saying, 'What do you see, Jeremiah?' And I said, 'I see a rod of an almond tree.' Then Jehovah said to me, 'You have seen well, for I am watching over My word to perform it.'" This is Jeremiah 1:11-12.

The word "to perform it" "Watching over My word to perform it," is "shaqad", which is translated four times in the Bible, "almond, or an almond tree." "Shaqad," when you look up the word, it means "to watch, to be alert, to be wakeful, vigilant, sleepless, to be on the lookout."

So God tells him, "I see an almond tree, a rod of an almond tree," and God says, "Good job, Jeremiah," but then He kind of makes a pun. "You have seen well. I am watching over My word to perform it," because this is what almond represent. God made promises, and those almonds remind us that He is watchful. He's alert. He's vigilant. He's sleepless. He is watching over His word to perform it. He's committed.

Matthew 5 17-18. "Do not think that I came to abolish the law or the prophets. I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest stroke or letter shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished."

The Old Testament is filled with promises that God made. Jesus did not come to destroy them and to start something all afresh. He came to fulfill them. He came to fulfill every stroke and smallest letter of the Law until everything that God is watching over will be accomplished.

Later in Matthew 24:35, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away."

Instead of just talking theoretical, we started with practical, Jericho. We're going to go to another town now, and this town is called Bethlehem. For those listening, you're probably listening to this January. We've just celebrated the Christmas holiday. If you're orthodox, you might be in the middle of your celebration, but Bethlehem is a key piece to this.

At Christmas, we sing "O, Little Town of Bethlehem." Bethlehem is six miles south of Jerusalem. One of the most significant times that we take note of it in the Bible, is where Ruth and Boaz have their courtship and marriage. Boaz and his son Obed are some of the forefathers of David.

This is Bethlehem where there were shepherds. "In the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear.

And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger."

The shepherds connected the dots. It doesn't say that this baby is going to be born in Bethlehem, but it's going to be born in the city of David, and those shepherds knew that the city of David was Bethlehem. This was where his forefather, Boaz and Ruth, were married.

The word "Bethlehem" in Hebrew is two words put together. The first one is "Beth" or "Bayth," "Bayth-Lehem," like B-A-Y-T-H. "Bayth" and "Lehem" has got that guttural in the middle of it. It's not "Lehem," it's "La-Hem." So "Bayth-La-Hem," "Bayth" means house. "Lehem" means bread. It means the house of bread, it's also the city of David. There's so much in that. You know, you grow up singing these Christmas carols, [sings] "O, little town of Bethlehem, how still..." and you have angels, and shepherds, in a creche. We have one right now in our front yard with a light shining on it.

It's deeper than that, though, because there are reasons that Jesus was born in Bethlehem. I'm going to give you three. The first one is because it's the city of David. This is where David was born, and this is really important. Luke 2:4. "Joseph

also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David."

John 7:42, "The Scriptures clearly state that the Messiah will be born of the royal line of David in Bethlehem, the village where King David was born."

Another one is "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet, 'You, O, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah are by no means least among the rulers of Judah, for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd My people Israel.'"

He's quoting from Micah 5:2. It's almost word for word except there's a little thing in there where it says when Matthew says least, he says in Micah, "You, O, Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah," and I thought for the first time this morning, I thought, "Oh, that's where that hymnist got that phrase, "O, little town of Bethlehem." So it's scriptural.

Micah says this little town felt pretty small, and God says to them, "No. A ruler who will shepherd My people, Israel, will come from you."

Now there's all bunch of promises, and I don't want to get lost in the magnitude of them, but God made promises to David, and God who watches over His word to perform it makes some of the most incredulous promises in Psalm 89.

"I have found David, My servant. With My holy oil, I have anointed him with whom My hand will be established, My arm also will strengthen him. I shall make him My firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth. My loving kindness, I will keep for him forever, and My covenant shall be confirmed to him. So I will establish his descendants forever, and his throne is the days of heaven."

He goes on to say in the 30th verse, "My loving kindness will I not utterly take from him nor suffer My faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break nor alter the thing that has gone out of my lips." The next sentences makes you gasp. "Once have I sworn by My holiness, I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established forever as the moon and as the faithful witness in the sky."

This was totally consistent with what we call the covenant of salt as found in 2 Samuel 7. God talking to David says, "He (his descendants).shall build a house for My name..." -- that was Solomon -- "...and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever." Then in the 16th verse, he closes it up, "Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever. Your throne shall be established forever."

So God made promises to David that, "You're going to have somebody sitting on your throne forever," and that's why it says it over and over in the New Testament, and Jesus himself said it over and over. "I am of the root of David."

Isaiah 11, which is quoted in Acts and John. "Out of the stump of David's family will grow a shoot. Yes. A new branch bearing fruit from the old root." I'm going to keep going here. This is good because I like these words "root."

Revelation 22:16, "I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star."

Paul writes to Timothy, "Remember Jesus, the anointed, risen from the dead, the offspring of David as preached in my gospel." (2 Timothy 2:8)

Romans 1:1-4, "Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle set apart for the gospel of God, which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His son, Who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness."

I didn't even read all the scriptures that I have. I don't want to overwhelm you. God makes it so clear that He made a promise to David. "You are going to have a son who will reign forever," and that was Jesus. and He made a promise through Micah that this Jesus was going to be born in this little town of Bethlehem, and as if that's not enough, Bethlehem, as we started off, means house of bread.

John 6. There are three passages here. I think we have room for one, but all of John 6 builds on this concept, verses 31 to 35, "Our fathers ate manna in the wilderness. As it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.' Jesus then said to him, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.'

"They said to him, 'Sir, give us this bread always.' Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.'" Then the 41st verse, can't keep it back. He said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven," and he talks about himself as the living bread.

So Jesus was born in the house of bread, and he was the bread of God. Jesus was born in the little town of Bethlehem to fulfill the prophecy to Micah hundreds of years earlier. Jesus was born of the line of David because God, who is committed to His word and watching over His word, made promises to David and fulfilled them to the letter. Isn't that rich?

Scott: That's awesome.

Steve: The application for us would be, it says way towards the end of the Bible in 2 Peter 1:4, "He has granted to us His precious and very great promises." So when you read the Bible and you see how God is carefully and consistently and committedly and faithfully sticking to His word, making promises, and fulfilling them to the letter, it gives us courage.

I thought this morning, "What are some of my favorite promises?" "I will never leave you nor forsake you." "Nothing can separate you from my love." There's a whole bunch of promises. "If you ask, I will forgive your sins and cleanse you from all unrighteousness."

Scripture is a mass of promises because it's God breathed, God spoken, through men of God and women of God that were inspired by God, and we can trust it, and the more we're in it and the more we prove it, the more we convince ourselves, He really will supply all of our needs. He really does give us our daily bread. He really does hear our prayers.

So we could have a whole series of podcasts on precious promises, but I just want to get this thought that God is committed to watching over His word to perform it to the jot and the tittle to the letter and the dot. What did I forget, Scott?

Scott: I don't know if you forgot anything. When you were talking about David, I mean, still to me recently, I noticed one of the things that just blows me away is that David is mentioned all the way in the last few paragraphs of the Bible in. Revelation 22:16. It says, "I am the root and the offspring of David and the bright morning star." There's the line of David still going all the way through the end.

The other verse that came to mind was, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in Me will live even though they die, and whoever lives by believing in Me will never die."

Steve: Amen. He that believes on the Son has eternal life. Doesn't it strengthen your faith to see how God is so carefully watching every jot and tittle of that word?

Scott: Especially the ones that seem like little things or, to me, little things. You know? I mean, I'm sure it was a big deal to the folks who laid the foundation again of Jericho. To me, that's just a little, tiny bit of the Bible, but that's huge.

Steve: It sets the tone because there's a lot of things that we haven't seen yet, and we have to take "by faith," but it strengthens our faith when we see how God is so careful.

I think I've told you this story, but when I was in Israel, our tour guide who was an Israeli and became a friend, mentioned David in disdain. He dissed him because he committed this sin and it's right in the Bible, and yet Jesus goes out of his way to make sure that everybody knows that he's identified with David and he's got David's back because David repented. God forgave him.

There's so much gospel in the life of David to encourage us because he did heinous sins, adultery, murder, deception, was awful, and yet still God saw something in David and He said, "No, I'm committed to you and My son will come from your descendants."

When we sing O Little Town of Bethlehem this Christmas and succeeding Christmases, I hope that we'll take in all these wonderful promises to David.

Father, thank You for Your commitment, Your convictions, Your integrity, which is what's really at stake. You make comments, You say things and You fulfill them.

There is nothing in You that is not committed to Your word to fulfill every scripture.

I pray that You'll put something rocky in each of our faith, that we will stand by You and believe You regardless of what our eyes see. We're going to come on tough times, but we can trust You, and we are trusting You to this day. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Scott: Amen. That's our show for this week, folks. Thanks for joining us for the Building Faith and Family podcast with Steve Demme.