

Explore the Bible: Commitment Kept

December 6, 2016

- *The Explore the Bible lesson for Dec. 18 focuses Joshua 10:6-14.*

When my older sister started dating, she told me about something my father did I've never forgotten. Dad knew she would not be under his watchful eye everywhere she went. He also knew, having been raised in a family of faith, she likely would find herself in situations from time to time that tested her faith to its limits.

Dad knew my sister would be on her own, and she might find herself with people or in situations that weren't all that safe, for one reason or another. Although he hoped she always would date respectful young men, he knew he couldn't always control that. So, Dad did the next best thing he could.

He gave my sister a quarter. She was to keep that quarter with her at all times, no matter who she was with or where they went. Back in that day and time, no one had anything like today's cell phones. However, there were pay phones on nearly any corner, and a quarter was all it cost to use one.

Along with the quarter came these instructions to my sister. If she ever found herself in an unsafe or threatening situation, she was to take that quarter and call home so my dad could rescue her.

It didn't matter who was at fault. The only thing that mattered was whether my sister needed her dad to come to the rescue. Dad promised if she ever used that quarter to call him, no matter where she might be or what time of day or night, he would drop everything and come to her rescue.

My sister never told me if she had to use the quarter. I have no doubt, however, Dad's promise gave her a sense of security and safety because, no matter what, he was never more than a phone call away.

Hard to understand

In this passage in Joshua, we find ourselves again in unfamiliar territory. We find our New Testament faith stretched to the limit in trying to understand why/how God would destroy some of God's children in order to protect others who were also the children of God.

If we push the interpretation of this Scripture to the absolute limit of detail, we might well find ourselves conflicted. How could God—who sent his Son not to condemn the world but so that, through that same Son, the world might be redeemed (John 1)—also be the same God who rained down huge stones from heaven to destroy others of God's own children?

We don't have answers to that question and scores just like it. That's why, in interpreting this text, we not overlook the more significant issue. The God who would later and more fully reveal himself in the coming of Jesus once promised never to abandon God's children. In this text, we see God keeping God's promises.

God will not abandon his redeemed

In more than one sense, the Old Testament is the blueprint for God's promise never to abandon those God intends to redeem. In the New Testament, we see God completely fulfilling God's promise in the person of Christ. In other words, in the Old Testament, God lays the first stones of the foundation of faithfulness he will completely live out and prove in the person of Jesus.

God's saving work in Christ is nothing less than the completing of God's promised faithfulness, as seen in Noah's ark, the Ten Commandments and

the deliverance of God's people from slavery in Egypt.

All of us, from time to time, find ourselves in frightening situations, uncertain how God will be able to deliver us from one dilemma after another. Finances on which we were dependent vaporize like a shallow stream in the desert. Health we once took for granted is suddenly unreliable. People, perhaps even trusted friends, break their promises, and we find ourselves abandoned when we need friends the most.

In this text in Joshua, we find this truth played out repeatedly. Hope is not knowing everything is going to be OK. Hope is knowing we are going to be OK even if everything isn't OK.

Christian hope is based on nothing less than confidence in the character of God—that the God who promised to protect and provide will always keep his word.

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