

## ***PROMISED LAND 1: Lesson Ten, Looking It Over*** ***Joshua – 1 Samuel 12***

**Subject:** The Israelites settled the Promised Land throughout the periods of the Conquest and the Judges.

**Main Idea:** God has proved His faithfulness to His promises and His people.

**Principles:**

1. *God is faithful to all His promises.*
2. *God is faithful to His people, even when they are not faithful to Him.*

### **Introduction**

Throughout these summaries of our study, the spiritual symbolism of entering the Promised Land has been repeatedly emphasized. The Israelites' departure from Egypt depicts the life of an individual who, by faith, trusts Christ for salvation from the penalty and power of sin. Just as the Israelites had been enslaved, we were once enslaved to sin and under a death penalty. Just as the Israelites were physical freed from bondage, by putting our faith in the work of Christ, we are freed spiritually. The Promised Land that God offers those who have trusted in Christ is an abundant life that begins here and now and extends throughout eternity. The hope of Heaven is secured for all who believe, as is the abundant life in Christ while on earth. But the degree to which we *experience* that abundant life on earth depends upon our obedience to God's commands. The same was true for Israel: God promised the Patriarchs unconditionally that their descendants would inherit Canaan, but remaining in the land and enjoyment of the blessings of the land were conditional upon their obedience. Perhaps we might think of it this way: A person who is married is entitled to all the legal benefits of marriage. Those are guaranteed. But the degree to which that marriage partner flourishes and enjoys the marriage is dependent (at least in part) on the effort he or she puts into it. So, for quite a few weeks, the application of our study has primarily been focused on *our* efforts in fighting spiritual battles against sin and in establishing habits that are helpful to our spiritual growth.

However, since these Bible studies are known as "*GOD of the WORD*" Bible studies, before we conclude, we must shift our focus. We will miss a most important lesson from Joshua, Judges, Ruth, and 1 Samuel 1-12 if we fail to look at what this part of the Bible emphasizes about *God*. Many truths have been revealed. We have come to know Him as the righteous Judge of all the Earth, who decreed judgment on the Canaanites. We have read of His great wisdom and demonstrations of power in presenting battle plans and ensuring victories. We have learned that He is sovereign, the rightful King and Lord who deserves our loyalty and obedience. Perhaps above all else, the Scriptural story of Israel's Settlement Period emphasizes God's faithfulness. So, we conclude our study with a second look at Israel's Settlement Period in this light. God proved His faithfulness to His promises and His people.

The Settlement Period can be divided into the time of Israel's conquest of Canaan (the Conquest) and the time of their leadership under Judges.

# I. The Conquest of Canaan

## A. Joshua 1 – 12

- i. Transition of Leadership: The book of Joshua begins with the reminder that Moses had just died and that his aid, Joshua, was God’s newly appointed leader. Assuming the responsibilities of a man like Moses was no small undertaking, but God assured Joshua that He would be with him wherever he went. The Israelites had spent forty years wandering in the desert because they did not believe that God would give them the land of Canaan, as He promised. Moses and most of the adult Israelites who exited Egypt had died during those years. The only two men from that generation who lived to enter Canaan were Joshua and Caleb, the two faithful spies who had encouraged the Israelites to trust God to help them overthrow the Canaanites. God promised that these two men would live to enter the land. Not only did Joshua enter the land, God appointed him leader over the now grown children of those who had died in the desert. According to Joshua 1-12, Joshua led them in battle against the Canaanites and according to Joshua 13-24, he oversaw the division of the land, appointing tracts for each Israelite tribe. Thus, the book of Joshua can be neatly divided in two: Joshua’s oversight of the military campaigns and Joshua’s oversight of the land division.
- ii. Preparation for Conquest: Joshua 1-5 describes Israel’s preparation for conquest. The Lord told Joshua to get the people ready to cross into Canaan. They prepared for the battles that would ensue by sending spies into the strategically important city of Jericho, crossing the river, circumcising all the males, and observing Passover. The Israelites’ preparations remind us that if we want to claim all God has promised us today, we will face *spiritual* warfare and that God has provided spiritual “armor” (as Paul calls it in Ephesians 6) with which we must equip ourselves.
  1. The Lord told Joshua to meditate on His word. Knowing and internalizing the Bible is critical to victory in our spiritual battles.
  2. The Israelites needed faith to step into the Jordan at flood stage, trusting that once they took this step, God would roll back the waters so they could safely cross. Jesus said that with faith as small as a mustard seed (the smallest of seeds), nothing is impossible (Matthew 17:20, Luke 17:5-6). However, faith that is not exercised is not true faith. We will never win spiritual battles without taking steps of faith.
  3. The Israelites’ circumcision and observation of Passover, in preparation for battle, remind us of the Gospel. Circumcision is a reminder of our need to have our sins removed and Passover reminds us of the provision of Jesus, the Lamb of God, who died in

our place for our sins. The Gospel is the good news of what Christ's atoning death and His righteous life have accomplished on our behalf. The Gospel gives us confidence that we are victors in Christ daily. Spiritual battles are ours for the taking!

iii. Military Campaigns: Joshua 6-12 describe Israel's military campaigns.

1. *Central Campaign*: Once the Israelites were prepared for battle, the Lord gave specific instructions. By capturing the central portion of the land first, the Israelites divided the city-states of northern Canaan from those in the south. However, after a dramatic victory in the power of the Lord at the strategic city of Jericho, an Israelite named Achan sinned by keeping some of the plunder. As a result, the Israelites were defeated at the much smaller Ai. Once the sin was revealed and punished, Israel defeated Ai. A second failure occurred when the Israelites' trusted their own judgment and were deceived by the Gibeonites into entering a peace treaty. These failures taught the Israelites to take obedience to and reliance on the Lord seriously.
2. *Southern and Northern Campaigns*: The Gibeonites' willingness to bargain alarmed the kings of the south and a coalition of five southern kings attacked them. In keeping with their agreement, the Israelites came to their aid. The conflict ended with a significant portion of southern Canaan under Israelite control. When the kings of northern Canaan learned of this, a large northern coalition was formed and an enormous army marched out to fight against Israel. Once again, the Lord gave Joshua and the Israelites victory. This left them with control in northern, central, and southern Canaan.
3. *Hērem*: God ordered the mass execution of a great number of Canaanites. The Hebrew term that indicates holy war (*hērem*) is used repeatedly throughout these chapters, often translated, "under the ban," "devoted to destruction" or "liable to destruction." As the Owner of all the earth, God has the right to recall one's life, family, and possessions. The Canaanite people groups had heard of the power of the God of Israel. Over a period of many centuries, they had proved their determination to ignore the warnings of their consciences by practicing the most extreme sexual perversion, human sacrifice, and other horrors. Considering their hard-heartedness, it is amazing that God delayed their judgment so long. However, the Lord knew it was impossible for the Israelites to live as His holy representatives while surrounded by the Canaanites' evil influence, so He commanded the Israelites to completely destroy them. Any who repented and embraced the Israelites and their God (as did Rahab) were spared.

## B. Joshua 13 – 24

- i. Remaining Canaanites: The last half of the book of Joshua indicates that the Israelites' rest from warfare was premature. Despite Joshua's great victories, when he was old, substantial portions of the land were yet to be taken. Joshua had to trust God that the younger Israelites would finish the work he began and remove all remaining pockets of Canaanites. Moses had warned their forefathers that remaining in the land and enjoying its blessings were dependent on complete obedience to the Lord, which in this case meant the destruction of the remaining Canaanites.
- ii. Division of the Land – Joshua 13-22: Two-and-a-half of the tribes had already received their inheritance east of the Jordan River, in the area known as the Transjordan. Under the leadership of Joshua and Eleazar (the high priest), the land west of the river (the Cis-Jordan) was divided among the remaining nine-and-a-half tribes.
  1. *Tribal Allotments*: Judah, the important tribe from whom the Messiah would one day descend (Genesis 49:10), received their inheritance first and in the south. Caleb received a special inheritance among them. Next, the large tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh were given land in the north. Then, the remaining tracts of land were surveyed and divided among the final seven tribes.
  2. *Special Cities*: Three cities on each side of the Jordan were designated "cities of refuge," to which manslayers could flee while awaiting trial. Towns throughout all parts of the land were given to the Levites, who received no large tract of their own. They had the unique privileges of serving at Israel's worship center and teaching His laws throughout the land.
  3. *A Significant Misunderstanding*: A misunderstanding about the nature of an altar built by the Transjordanian tribes nearly resulted in a civil war, but Phinehas, son of Eleazar, was able to clarify its purpose to the satisfaction of the western tribes.
- iii. Joshua's Final Words and Warning – Joshua 23-24: Before Joshua's death, he summoned the Israelites and exhorted them to obey the Lord, emphasizing the dangers of intermarrying with the remaining Canaanites and associating with their gods. He then led the Israelites in a renewal of their covenant with the Lord, ending with another warning against idolatry and the consequences of disobedience.

**Summary Statement:** Overall, the book of Joshua shows God's faithfulness to His promise that the Israelites would inherit Canaan.

**Principle:** *God is faithful to all His promises.*

For hundreds of years, the Israelites awaited the fulfillment of God's promise to give them the land of Canaan. In God's time, they crossed the Jordan, took the land, and settled it. If we fail to emphasize God's faithfulness in keeping this promise, we miss a most important emphasis of this part of the Holy Scriptures. A second, but perhaps less immediately obvious, way in which God's faithfulness to His promises is emphasized is through Joshua, who is a type of Christ. Colossians 1:18 calls Jesus "the head of the church, the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead." Just as Joshua led the Israelites into the Land of Promise, Jesus opened the way for us to receive an abundant life in Him, here and now, and an eternity in Heaven. Joshua's very name means "Yahweh saves (or delivers)," reminding the Israelites of God's ultimate promise to send a Deliverer who would save us from sin and its death penalty. In the Old Greek traditions (Septuagint), Joshua's name appears in the same form the New Testament uses for the name "Jesus." As Joshua led the Israelites into Canaan, in fulfillment of one prophetic promise, the Israelites would have realized that the Lord would surely also be faithful to His promise to send a Messiah. The fact that Jesus came and completed His work on the Cross should give us who live in this age even more confidence in God's faithfulness to His promises.

**Application:** Many of us have had our lives profoundly impacted by someone who failed to keep their promises. Has a spouse been unfaithful? Did a parent repeatedly fail to keep their word? Has your boss made significant career promises that have never been kept? Perhaps someone in whom you've invested years of your life has let you down. You may find yourself still struggling with fears, insecurity, and timidity, as a result. Perhaps you wrestle with cynicism. In the worst moments, you may have even doubted God's existence.

Whether or not this is true of you, a lack of confidence in God's faithfulness reveals itself in all of us by our unwillingness to completely trust Him with our everyday problems. Praise God that He has given and preserved His word so that we have a historical record of specific promises that have been very specifically fulfilled!

The fact that God did not fulfill His promises to the Patriarchs in their lifetimes is instructive. 400 years passed between the time God promised Canaan to Abraham and the fulfillment of that promise in Joshua's lifetime. Thousands of years passed between God's promise that Eve's seed would crush the head of the Serpent and the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. These delays are meant to teach us that, even when we do not see all of God's promises yet fulfilled, He is faithful, and in His time, He will fulfill every one of them.

Today, we await the promised Second Coming of Jesus. There are other promises that we wait to see fulfilled. In our lifetime, we do not gain the perfect health that we will one day receive. Neither do we completely overcome our struggle with sin, see all the wrongs set right, experience freedom from conflict, or feel our potential fully satisfied. There are real needs that await provision and hungers that are not quenched. Evil often seems to be winning the battle.

Any doubts that plague us are surely not greater than those that plagued the Israelite generations who never saw or entered Canaan in their lifetime. Hebrews 11:1 tells us that “faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what *we do not see*” [my emphasis]. Verse 13 follows up: “All these [Patriarchs] were still living by faith when they died. They only saw and welcomed [God’s promises] from a distance.” Although we do not currently see the fulfillment of all God’s promises, one day we will declare with Joshua, “Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed” (21:45, 23:14).

How would your life be different today if your confidence that God is faithful to His promises was absolute? What discouraging situation would be met with good cheer? What temptations would be conquered? Which fears and anxieties would vanish? Peace, hope, and joy are the by-products of complete confidence in God’s faithfulness.

**Transition:** The book of Joshua covers only about 25 or 30 years of time. Following that, Judges led Israel for another 150 to 350 years.

## II. The Leadership of the Judges

### A. Israel’s Apostasy Explained – Judges 1:1 – 3:6

- i. The Israelites’ Failure: Judges led Israel throughout the remainder of the Settlement Period. It was a time marked by moral failure, political disunity, and social unrest resulting from Israel’s failure to remove all the Canaanites. Despite their great victories, Judges 1 indicates that nearly every Israelite tribe allowed some Canaanites to remain among them. They did not set out to do the wrong thing; they simply tired of warfare and convinced themselves that they could co-exist with the remaining Canaanites and still receive the Lord’s blessing. They got comfortable with the progress that they had made and became lazy about finishing the job. The warning today is against believing that we will ever reach a place in our spiritual growth where we can coast along, ignoring pockets of sin in our lives, however small and seemingly unthreatening, without serious consequences.
- ii. The Cycle of Rebellion: Chapter 2 and half of chapter 3 describe a cycle that was repeated over the several centuries. When the Israelites’ intermarried with the Canaanites and began serving their gods, the Lord handed them over to raiding, enemy nations who subjected and oppressed them. Eventually, in their misery, the Israelites cried out to the Lord and, every time they did, He raised up a leader (a Judge) to deliver them. But after each Judge died, the Israelites returned to their idolatry and immoral lifestyle.

## B. Israel's Cycle of Apostasy Illustrated – Judges 3:7 – 21:25

### i. Israel's Judges – Judges 3:7 – 16:31

1. *Their Role*: The center section of the book of Judges shows the cycle repeating, giving us a small amount of information about six Judges and a larger amount about another six. The twelve listed Judges listed may be only a representative number. They seem to have mostly been regional leaders, rather than national leaders (like Moses and Joshua). While there is some evidence that they had a judicial role, they are largely portrayed as military leaders whom the Lord used to preserve Israel.
2. *Their Behavior*: The Judges are listed in an order that portrays them as progressively unfaithful (not unlike the people they ruled). The first three “major” Judges were Othniel, Ehud, and Deborah. Of these, only Ehud acted in a way that was somewhat suspect. However, the behavior of the next three is increasingly troublesome. Gideon was idolatrous in the later part of his life, Jephthah sacrificed his own daughter, and Samson, who repeatedly broke his Nazirite vow, was ultimately undone by his unbridled passions (particularly with foreign women).

### ii. Two Concluding Illustrations of Israel's Unfaithfulness – Judges 17-21:

The last chapters of Judges show Israel at its worst. In these chapters, the Israelites are repeatedly described as “doing as they saw fit” (17:6, 21:25). The comment is illustrated by two stories.

1. *Ignorance and Unfaithfulness of Israel and their Priests*: The first illustration emphasizes the role of the Levites in Israel's ignorance and disobedience of God's laws and resulting idolatry. It begins by describing the idolatry of a man named Micah and his family, with the cooperation of a young Levite, progresses to show that Levite cooperating with the entire tribe of Dan in the same idolatry and abuses of the Law, and concludes with the surprising revelation that the young Levite was Moses' own grandson!
2. *Immorality and War with the Benjamites*: The second illustration of Israel's terrible condition occurred early in the period of the Judges (when Phinehas was high priest), but was apparently strategically placed at the book's end as a climactic statement. By implication, the story compares the Israelites' immorality to that of the men of Sodom and Gomorrah prior to their judgment with fire and brimstone. Like the first illustration, the story involves a Levite. He and his concubine stopped for the night in the Benjamite town of Gibeah, where the men of the town attempted to rape the Levite. In order to save himself, the Levite sent out his concubine, whom they abused throughout the night. The Levite found her dead in the

morning, cut her body into twelve pieces, and sent them to the tribes of Israel, who insisted that the men of Gibeah be punished. When the Benjamites refused to hand them over, a civil war ensued and nearly every Benjamite was killed. God had intended that the Israelites would flourish in the land He gave them, but instead, they reaped the serious civic and political consequences of their moral failures. This final story and the repeated statement that “Israel had no king” (17:6; 18:1, 19:1, 21:25) set the stage for the events of 1 Samuel, in which Saul, a Benjamite, became Israel’s first king.

**C. The Faithfulness of King David’s Ancestors** – Ruth 1-4: The book of Ruth is set in the period of the Judges but offers a welcome contrast, showing that at a time when the Israelites, at large, were prostituting themselves to foreign gods, God faithfully preserved a remnant of godly individuals.

- i. Ruth Commits to Naomi and Her God – Ruth 1: Although named for Ruth, this book is actually the story of Naomi, a widow whose sons died in a foreign land without fathering children. Ruth, a Moabitess and one of Naomi’s daughters-in-law, returned with Naomi to her native Bethlehem, vowing faithfulness to Naomi, her people, and her God.
- ii. Boaz Rescues Ruth and Naomi – Ruth 2-4
  1. *Boaz’ Hese*d: To keep herself and Naomi from starving, Ruth set out to glean barley behind paid workers, as the Law of Moses allowed the poor to do. As it turned out, she found herself working in the fields of Boaz, a righteous man, who also happened to be Naomi’s relative. Ruth and Naomi survived because Boaz extended *hesed*, a Hebrew word that includes the concepts of love, faithfulness, loyalty, kindness, grace and mercy. Boaz depicts the Lord’s faithful, loving-kindness and mercy to the Israelites, at a time when they were largely unfaithful. Faith survived and the fulfillment of God’s promises was preserved during this period, because of the Lord’s *hesed*.
  2. *Boaz as Kinsman-Redeemer*: Naomi revealed to Ruth that Boaz qualified to be their “kinsman-redeemer,” and according to the laws of Israel, could rescue Naomi and Ruth from their desperate condition. If he was willing, he could marry Ruth and redeem their land inheritance. Happily, Boaz agreed and in so doing, became a type of Christ, our kinsman-redeemer.
  3. *Ancestral Record*: The touching love story concludes by revealing that Ruth and Boaz gave birth to a son named Obed and that Obed became the grandfather of King David, preparing us for the coming of the Hebrew monarchy.

**D. Israel's Last Judges** – 1 Samuel 1-3: 1 Samuel is a book of transition from leadership by Judges to Israel's monarchy. The first chapters tell about the Israel's last two Judges: Eli and Samuel.

- i. Eli: Eli was a priest whose wicked sons took advantage of their position. The Lord brought disaster upon Eli's family and, ultimately, transferred the high priesthood out of their family line.
- ii. Samuel: Samuel was born to godly parents. His formerly barren mother had begged the Lord for a son, promising to dedicate him to the Lord for a life of service. When Samuel was born and weaned, she kept her vow and brought him to Eli at the worship center in Shiloh. As a boy, Samuel served in Shiloh as Eli's apprentice. One night, the Lord came to him and foretold the future of Eli's family. This was the beginning of Samuel's career as a prophet. Samuel also served as Israel's last Judge. Unlike earlier Judges who served regionally, Samuel's leadership appears to have been national. As a man of prayer and an obedient servant of the Lord, his leadership sharply contrasts with that of Eli's sons.

**E. Contrast Between the Leadership of Eli's Sons and Samuel** – 1 Samuel 4-7

- i. The Capture of the Ark – 1 Samuel 4-6: During the period of the Judges, the Philistines were one of Israel's primary enemies. In one particular battle, the Israelites wrongly assumed that they could harness God's power and defeat the Philistines by having Eli's sons deliver the Ark of the Lord into their camp. As it turned out, Eli's sons were killed and the Ark was captured. Since the Ark was a symbol of God's presence, its exile into a foreign land leaves us wondering whether God had finally abandoned His covenant people. It was the lowest point in the period of the Judges, but God turned the Ark's exile into a redemptive opportunity. He demonstrated His power over the Philistine god, Dagon, and through plagues on the Philistine people. The Philistines understood that this judgment was from God but sadly, they rejected the opportunity to humble themselves and sent the Ark back to Israel.
- ii. Samuel's Leadership and Israel's Revival – 1 Samuel 7: The Israelites obviously could not go on living as they pleased and expect God to act on their behalf. This had been their habit during the 150 to 350-year period of the Judges. What the Israelites needed was a true change of heart. Sometime after the Ark returned, Samuel sensed their hearts were changing and called them together for corporate confession and fasting. The Philistines used the gathering as an opportunity to come upon them unprepared. When Samuel prayed, the Lord thundered and threw them into such a panic that the Israelites easily routed them.

## F. Transition to Monarchy – 1 Samuel 8-12

- i. Israel's Request for a King – 1 Samuel 8
  1. *Desire for a Natural Succession*: Despite the good and godly leadership of Samuel and the Lord's demonstration of power at Ebenezer, the question of leadership plagued the Israelites. The leadership of Moses, Joshua, and, after them, the Judges, did not occur by natural succession, as did the dynastic monarchies of other nations. Each leader was uniquely chosen and appointed by God. Therefore, the Israelites were forced to depend on Him to provide human leadership. Rather than acknowledging the advantage that relying utterly on God was to their spiritual health and embracing it, the Israelites lived rebelliously. Their insecurity about not having a natural succession of human leaders was, no doubt, birthed by their own sin.
  2. *To Be Like Other Nations*: Establishing a monarchy was not, in and of itself, a wrong thing. God had foretold that Israel would have kings (Deuteronomy 17). He promised Abraham that kings would descend from him (Genesis 17:6). However, the Israelites wanted a human king for the wrong reasons. The elders of Israel came to Samuel and asked him to appoint a king so they could be like the nations around them. Much to Samuel's disappointment, the Lord told Samuel He would give them what they wanted. Samuel warned the Israelites that they would live with the consequences of their decision, but the Israelites ignored his warning and insisted on having a king.
- ii. Saul's Transition to Kingship – 1 Samuel 9-11: The Lord told Samuel to anoint Saul the Benjamite as king. Samuel did so privately. Saul's anointing was the first of three transitional steps toward his recognition as king over Israel. The second step in the transition was Saul's public selection as king by lottery. The final step in Saul's transition occurred when the Ammonites besieged a Transjordanian town of Israel. Saul boldly led the men of Israel in battle and soundly defeated the Ammonites. After this, the Israelites unanimously supported Saul's leadership. Some of Saul's actions during this transitional period seem to indicate that he was a humble man but, as we will see in the *Promised Land 2* study, once Saul became king, he proved to be defiant.
- iii. Samuel's Speech – 1 Samuel 12: Samuel told the Israelites that, although they had sinned in asking for a king, they and their king could yet be successful by recognizing and submitting to God's ultimate authority. Their unwillingness to completely do so thus far had been at the root of their problems.

**Summary Statement:** The Settlement Period ended with kingship established for the wrong reasons and Canaanites still remaining among them. Although we are hopeful that they and their king will humble themselves and follow the Lord’s commands, their history up to this point indicates that their hearts were not so inclined. The years in which Judges led were characterized by moral failure, political instability, and tribal disunity, God continued to faithfully demonstrate “hesed” to His people.

**Principle:** *God is faithful to His people, even when they are not faithful to Him.*

The short book of Ruth lies between the book of Judges and the stories of Israel’s final two Judges in 1 Samuel. It is not only a historical account of a family who lived in the period. It illustrates God’s faithfulness in a time characterized by Israel’s unfaithfulness. In it, God proved His faithful, loving-kindness to Naomi and her family. By her statement, “[The Lord] has not stopped showing His ‘hesed’ to the living and the dead” (Ruth 2:20), she summarized what is emphasized about God in this part of the Scriptural record. Although Israel was repeatedly unfaithful to the Lord, He faithfully continued demonstrating mercy, love, and grace to His people.

**Application:** I don’t know how you feel, but at times I am discouraged that I am not more faithful in my spiritual walk. Every two steps forward seem to be followed by one step back. It is easy to become self-condemning and myopic. Understanding and trusting in *God’s* faithfulness is the solution. When I look at myself, I only see how short I fall. When I look at Christ, I see victory. *He* will complete my sanctification, as He has promised (Philippians 1:6). He even allows the difficulties of life and the consequences of my unfaithfulness for my benefit (Romans 8:28-29).

Recall the cycle of rebellion that the book of Judges describes. That cycle kept repeating because of the Israelites’ unfaithfulness to the Lord; specifically, because of their ongoing idolatry. In retribution, the Lord sent raiding, enemy nations to invade, plunder, and oppress them. As a result of this discipline, the Israelites cried out to the Lord and, for a time, returned to Him. The point is that God’s discipline is redemptive. When we are unfaithful, we are certain to suffer consequences, but God allows these (and even directs them) for our good. Because He is faithful, He disciplines us for our unfaithfulness (just as a loving parent disciplines their children).

What consequence of your own sin will you trust God to faithfully work for your good? Even when we are not faithful, He remains faithful to us.

## Conclusion

When we look *around us*, it is not difficult to be discouraged by the circumstances of life and to question God's faithfulness. Perhaps the culture in which we live does not seem so different than that of the Israelites at the conclusion of these chapters. Looking around, we do not see much faithfulness. When we look *within ourselves*, we see our own inadequacy and can be equally discouraged. But God has provided the solution by revealing Himself in His word. When we look into it and see God, we find hope. We discover that God is utterly faithful to Himself, His people, and His promises. The more we learn to keep our focus on Him, the deeper will be our joy and the greater will be our confidence that we can enjoy the abundant life in Christ that He offers us.