



## Sermon Notes from 15 March

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### Possessing the Promises (*Exodus 23:20-33*)

by Pastor GL Wong

God reveals to His people what they can expect from Him as they prepare to enter into Canaan, the promised land. All whom God has graciously called to Himself are called to have faith in Him. God sets His people apart for a life of faith in Him. The most appropriate object of faith is not something; it is a someone – God.

#### 3 Faith Steps in the Journey towards the Promised Land:

##### **1) Trust in God**

In leading Israel out of Egypt, God was not leading them to a place where there was an immediate sense of peace and order. In His covenant, God had promised them the land of Canaan, but 7 people groups were already living there, each worshipping their own gods and were hostile towards them. God was calling His people to put their faith in Him and not in the situation they saw. Oftentimes, we doubt in times of trial. Throughout all of scripture, we see stories of God's people wrestling with doubt. Yet God was merciful to them, just as He would be towards us. This is all part of a Christian's journey of faith. God calls for us to have faith in Him, not in what we see. True faith requires belief in God's fight for us amidst danger. God assures His people by sending an Angel (the pre-incarnate Christ) to guard, lead and fight for them (v20). To the Israelites, the Angel warrior represents God, just as for us, His Son Jesus Christ represents God. God promises His presence to guard His people. Yahweh, our faithful God, is here to stay! God is in sovereign control, and He is the One who will gain victory for His chosen people (vv25-27). God times His intervention in a precise way that it would end up working maximally for the good of His chosen people (vv29-30). When God fights for us, the duration may take longer than what we prefer, but the outcome would be better than

we imagine. Trust in God, for He knows best!

##### **2) Obey God's commands**

v24 – God calls for His people to obey His commands: they are forbidden to worship the gods of the people in Canaan and they are to destroy their idols and sacred stones. In the ancient world, agricultural success was often attributed to the worship of foreign gods through the offering of sacrifices. In Canaan, there was already a culture of pagan idolatry. This was opposed to the ways of God, and He commanded His people not just to avoid, but destroy them. The Israelites did not obey, and because of their disobedience, they never took full possession of the promised land until the time of David. As God's people, we are set apart to obey God's commandments to worship Him alone. Our top priority is to distance ourselves from sin, and this means not conforming to the sinful idolatrous patterns of this world. Seek to live obedient lives that actively glow with the love of Christ!

##### **3) Remember God's promise of blessing**

vv25-26 – God had promised great blessings to His people conditioned on their obedience. What He had promised then was for a specific time and people, and for specific purposes. For us as Christians today, we are given promises of blessing through our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Through His perfect obedience and death for us on the cross, He has secured entry for us into the promised land; the heavenly city with no more sickness, tears, pain and death, but only fullness of joy and eternal life forevermore! We enter into this promised land by faith as the children of promise! All of God's promises find 'yes!' and 'amen!' through Jesus Christ! It is in God that we find true hope!