

2-2018

God is Faithful

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Recommended Citation

Willmington, Harold, "God is Faithful" (2018). *The Three-in-One File*. 21.
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GOD IS FAITHFUL

INTRODUCTION:

Many years ago, a Methodist life insurance agent by the name of Thomas Chisholm sat reading for his morning devotions one of the saddest chapters in the entire Old Testament — Lamentations 3. In this passage Jeremiah the prophet stood on the outskirts of Jerusalem, with tears running down his cheeks, watching the beloved city being systematically burned and destroyed by the cruel Babylonian soldiers. His pain and agony seemed almost unendurable. Let me read you his own account:

- The hopelessness of Jeremiah

“I am the man who has seen affliction by the rod of the LORD’s wrath. He has driven me away and made me walk in darkness rather than light; indeed, he has turned his hand against me again and again, all day long. He has made my skin and my flesh grow old and has broken my bones. He has besieged me and surrounded me with bitterness and hardship. He has made me dwell in darkness like those long dead. He has walled me in so I cannot escape; he has weighed me down with chains. Even when I call out or cry for help, He shuts out my prayer. He has barred my way with blocks of stone; He has made my paths crooked. Like a bear lying in wait, like a lion in hiding, He dragged me from the path and mangled me and left me without help. He drew his bow and made me the target for his arrows. He pierced my heart with arrows from his quiver. I became the laughingstock of all my people; they mock me in song all day long. He has filled me with bitter herbs and given me gall to drink. He has broken my teeth with gravel; He has trampled me in the dust. I have been deprived of peace; I have forgotten what prosperity is. So I say, ‘My splendor is gone and all that I had hoped from the LORD.’ I remember my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall. I well remember them, and my soul is downcast within me. Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope” (Lam. 3:1-21, NIV).

- The faithfulness of Jehovah

“Because of the LORD’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, ‘The LORD is my portion; therefore I will wait for him.’ The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD. It is good for a man to bear the yoke while he is young. For no one is cast off by the Lord forever. For he does not willingly bring affliction or grief to anyone. You came near when I called you, and you said, ‘Do not fear.’ You, Lord, took up my case; you redeemed my life” (Lam. 3:22-27, 31, 33, 57, 58 (NIV).

Upon reading Jeremiah’s words, the Methodist life insurance agent picked up a pen and began putting down some of his own words. Thomas Chisholm not only sold insurance but also composed poetry. His poem, based on Lamentations 3, was later set to music. It is certainly one of my favorite hymns. Here are the words:

Great is Thy Faithfulness

*Great is Thy faithfulness, oh God my Father;
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not;
As Thou hast been, Thou forever wilt be.*

*Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see.
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided;
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!*

*Summer and winter and springtime and harvest,
Sun, moon, and stars in their courses above
Join with all nature in manifold witness
to Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.*

*Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see.
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided;
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!*

*Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!*

*Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see.
And all I have needed Thy hand hath provided;
Great is Thy faithfulness,
Great is Thy faithfulness,
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!*

- In these last days of international betrayal, increasing marriage infidelity, etc., how refreshing and reassuring to contemplate god's faithfulness. Let me begin by defining this wonderful divine attribute.

God's faithfulness refers to His self-loyalty and to His loyalty to His entire creation. He will not (indeed, He cannot) change his character nor fail to perform all He has promised. This attribute of God's faithfulness is testified to by at least three Old Testament individuals:

A. By Balaam, a false prophet. Even so, he acknowledged this great truth:

"God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?" (Num. 23:19, NKJV)

B. By Joshua

“Not a word failed of any good thing which the LORD had spoken to the house of Israel. All came to pass” (Josh. 21:45, NKJV).

“Behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth. And you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one thing has failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spoke concerning you. All have come to pass for you; not one word of them has failed” (Josh. 23:14, NKJV).

C. By Solomon

“And so it was, when Solomon had finished praying all this prayer and supplication to the LORD, that he arose from before the altar of the LORD, from kneeling on his knees with his hands spread up to heaven. When he stood and blessed all the assembly of Israel with a loud voice, saying: ‘Blessed be the LORD, who has given rest to His people Israel, according to all that He promised. There has not failed one word of all His good promise, which He promised through His servant Moses’” (1 Kings 8:54-56, NKJV).

- Thus, He will always do what He has promised to do! This of course is not the case with human beings. There are (at least) three reasons why we do not do what we have promised to do:
 - A. We might decide we simply don’t want to do it.
 - B. We might be unable to do it.
 - C. We might forget about doing it.

But none of these human frailties and failure apply to God:

- A. He never changes His mind (Rom. 11:29).
- B. He is able to keep all His promises (Eph. 3:20; Phil. 1:6).
- C. He always remembers (Psa. 9:12, 105:8; Isa. 49:15).

What Christian has not heard:

God said it!

I believe it!

That settles it!

In light of God’s faithfulness, however, the second part of the saying is totally unnecessary and out of place. In reality, it should read: God *said* it, and that *settles* it (whether I believe or not).

The bottom line of all the above is summarized in the New Testament by the words of Titus and the book of Hebrews:

"In hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began . . ." (Titus 1:2, NKJV).

". . . that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us" (Heb. 6:18, NKJV).

- All this is true because of the following glorious truths:

A. God never changes His mind:

"For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable" (Rom. 11:29, NKJV).

B. God always remembers:

"When He avenges blood, He remembers them; He does not forget the cry of the humble" (Psa. 9:12, NKJV).

"He remembers His covenant forever, the word which He commanded, for a thousand generations" (Psa. 105:8, NKJV).

"Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, yet I will not forget you" (Isa. 49:15, NKJV).

- We now consider: In what area is God's faithfulness clearly demonstrated in the Bible?

A. It can be seen in nature

"Your faithfulness endures to all generations; You established the earth, and it abides" (Psa. 119:90, NKJV).

"While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease" (Gen. 8:22, NKJV).

In previous years many have worried that our earth could well be destroyed by atomic wars, global warming, massive asteroids which reportedly wiped out the dinosaurs some 65 million years ago, or through huge volcanic eruptions, etc. But not so! God's faithfulness will keep the world intact until He Himself destroys it. The apostle Peter speaks of this:

"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?" (2 Peter 3:10-12, NKJV)

B. It can be seen in keeping His promises to His friends:

1. Adam—He promised Adam that someday a Savior would come from the seed of a woman. (Compare Gen. 3:15 with Gal. 4:4.)

2. Abraham—He promised Abraham he would father a son in his old age. (Compare Gen. 15:4; 18:14 with Gen. 21:1-2.)
3. Moses—He promised Moses that Israel would not leave Egypt empty-handed. (Compare Exod. 3:2 with Exod. 12:35-36.)
4. Joshua—He promised Joshua glorious victory. (Compare Josh. 1:1-5 with Josh. 23:14.)
5. David—He promised David a king would come from his line who would rule eternally. (Compare 2 Sam. 7:12-13 with Luke 1:31-33.)

C. It can be seen in keeping His warning against His enemies:

1. Ahab—He warned wicked King Ahab that because he had murdered godly Naboth, the very location *“where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood.”* (Compare 1 Kings 21:17-19 with 1 Kings 22:34-38.)
2. Jezebel—He warned wicked Jezebel that the wild dogs of Jezreel would someday eat her dead body beside the city wall. (Compare 1 Kings 21:23 with 2 Kings 9:30-37.)

D. It can be seen in times of temptation:

“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it” (1 Cor. 10:13, NKJV).

Three facts can be concluded from this verse:

1. No temptation is new.

The old spiritual song, *“Nobody knows the trouble I’ve seen,”* is not true. Whatever temptation you might be suffering right now has already been experienced by other untold thousands of believers throughout church history.

2. All temptation is allowed by God to come our way.
3. All temptation comes equipped with a special *“escape exit”* provided by God Himself. You see, He knows exactly how much you can endure and His faithfulness assures me the temptation will not be allowed to go beyond that point.
4. Every temptation is necessary:

“My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience . . . Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him” (James 1:2, 3, 12, NKJV).

“In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials” (1 Peter 1:6, NKJV).

“ . . . then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment . . . ” (2 Peter 2:9, NKJV).

From these verses we learn:

- a. Our spiritual growth depends upon it.
- b. Every temptation is to be joyfully endured.
- c. This is because it produces patience, spiritual gold, and a crown of life.

E. It can be seen in chastening His children:

“I know, O LORD, that Your judgments are right, and that in faithfulness You have afflicted me” (Psa. 119:75, NKJV).

“He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly . . . Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of correction will drive it far from him . . . Do not withhold correction from a child, for if you beat him with a rod, he will not die . . . Correct your son, and he will give you rest; yes, he will give delight to your soul” (Prov. 13:24; 22:15; 23:13; 29:17, NKJV).

“And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: ‘My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.’ If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? ¹⁰ For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it” (Heb. 12:5-11, NKJV).

“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent” (Rev. 3:19, NKJV).

The passage in Hebrews tells us we can react to chastening in a three-fold manner:

1. We can take it too lightly.
2. We can faint under it.
3. We can be exercised by it.

F. It can be seen in the forgiving of our sins:

“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered . . . I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden . . . I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,’ and You forgave the iniquity of my sin . . . Have mercy upon me, O God, according to

Your lovingkindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions . . . Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow . . . But He, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and did not destroy them. Yes, many a time He turned His anger away, and did not stir up all His wrath. You have taken away all Your wrath; You have turned from the fierceness of Your anger . . . Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases” (Psa. 32:1, 5; 51:1-3, 7; 78:38; 85:3; 103:3, NKJV).

“And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you” (Eph. 4:32, NKJV).

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 Jn. 1:9, NKJV).

It should be noted here, however, that God’s faithfulness is manifested *only* if we fulfill our duty; that is, to confess our sins. The blood of Christ will cleanse us from every sin, but from not one excuse.

G. It can be seen in answering our prayers:

“Hear my prayer, O LORD, give ear to my supplications! In Your faithfulness answer me, and in Your righteousness” (Psa. 143:1, NKJV).

Perhaps the most tragic fact about idolatry is the worshipper never enjoys the faithfulness of answered prayer. This is graphically brought out in 1 Kings 18 where the priests of Baal desperately attempted to exhort their god to send down the fire. Listen to the account:

“So they took the bull which was given them, and they prepared it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even till noon, saying, ‘O Baal, hear us!’ But there was no voice; no one answered. Then they leaped about the altar which they had made . . . So they cried aloud, and cut themselves, as was their custom, with knives and lances, until the blood gushed out on them. And when midday was past, they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice. But there was no voice; no one answered, no one paid attention” (1 Kings 18:26, 28, 29, NKJV).

One of the important things that distinguishes Christianity from all other religions is that of prayer. It is not the fact of prayer, but rather the freedom and heart devotion involved. For example, contrast this with Islam:

Rosemary Pennington observes:

Every day millions turn toward Mecca and pray. They are required to pray five times a day – at daybreak, noon, mid-afternoon, sunset and evening, although there are some Muslims who combine prayers. The prayers are said in Arabic, no matter what the person’s native tongue. Prayer in Islam is ritualized, with some critics saying the ritual takes away from the spiritual.

However, only a Christ-follower can pray (or indeed sing) with the fullest assurance the following:

My Faith Looks Up to Thee

*My faith looks up to Thee,
Thou Lamb of Calvary, Savior divine!
Now hear me while I pray, take all my guilt away,
O let me from this day be wholly Thine!*

*May Thy rich grace impart
Strength to my fainting heart, my zeal inspire!
As Thou hast died for me, O may my love to Thee,
Pure warm, and changeless be, a living fire!*

*While life's dark maze I tread,
And griefs around me spread, be Thou my Guide;
Bid darkness turn to day, wipe sorrow's tears away,
Nor let me ever stray from Thee aside.*

*When ends life's transient dream,
When death's cold sullen stream over me roll;
Blest Savior, then in love, fear and distrust remove;
O bear me safe above, a ransomed soul!*

In fact Jesus not only commanded us to pray but actually gave instructions on how to pray.

1. The command

"Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart" (Lk. 18:1, NKJV).

2. The method

"In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen" (Mt. 6:9-13, NKJV).

Hymn writer Albert Reitz has summarized all this in musical fashion:

Teach Me to Pray

*Teach me to pray, Lord, teach me to pray;
This is my heart-cry day unto day;
I long to know Thy will and Thy way;
Teach me to pray, Lord, teach me to pray.*

Chorus:

*Living in Thee, Lord, and Thou in me,
Constant abiding, this is my plea;
Grant me Thy power, boundless and free,
Power with men and power with Thee.*

*Power in prayer, Lord, power in prayer!
Here 'mid earth's sin and sorrow and care,
Men lost and dying, souls in despair;
O give me power, power in prayer!*

*My weakened will, Lord, Thou canst renew;
My sinful nature Thou canst subdue;
Fill me just now with power anew;
Power to pray and power to do!*

*Teach me to pray, Lord, teach me to pray;
Thou art my pattern day unto day;
Thou art my surety, now and for aye;
Teach me to pray, Lord, teach me to pray*

H. It can be seen in keeping the saved *saved*:

The Apostle Paul was acutely aware of God's faithfulness along this line. In fact it was this divine attribute that not only saved Paul, but later allowed him to become a faithful worker for Christ. As Paul once reminded Timothy:

"And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief" (1 Tim. 1:12-15, NKJV).

Question: Does the Bible teach a holey or a wholly salvation? In other words, is our solution filled with holes, or is it *blood-tight* complete?

Answer: It's the *latter*.

The apostle present this glorious truth time and again in his epistles to the various local churches. Four examples will suffice here:

1. *" . . . who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Cor. 1:8, 9, NKJV).*

2. *“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it”* (1 Thess. 5:23, 24, NKJV).
3. *“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption”* (Eph. 4:30, NKJV).
4. *“But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one”* (2 Thess. 3:3, NKJV).