

God is Faithful

Old Faithful is a geyser in Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming that was named in 1870 by members of an expedition party. As I'm sure you know, they named it Old Faithful because of its predictability. According to the park's website, Old Faithful currently erupts around 17 times every day. Its eruptions can be predicted with about ninety percent accuracy to within a ten-minute variation. This is part of what makes it the most popular geyser in Yellowstone even though there are bigger geysers in the park. No one wants to stand for hours upon hours waiting to see a geyser erupt if you don't really have any idea of when it is going to happen. They want something that they can count on. They want something predictable. They want Old Faithful.

Now, here's the dirty little secret about Old Faithful – its called Old Faithful because it is predictable, but the reality is that there is still a fair bit of variation in its eruptions. Intervals between eruptions can range from 60-110 minutes. As well, over the years the interval length has been slowly increasing due to a number of earthquakes that have affected the subterranean water levels. And so maybe a better name for Old Faithful would be Old Fairly Faithful. But that doesn't have the same ring about it and so I'm guessing it will stay Old Faithful.

Now here's the deal, when it comes to God, we never have to qualify His faithfulness. We never have to say that He is fairly faithful, because God is perfect and unchanging in His faithfulness. And in the same way that it is good news to tourists in Yellowstone that Old Faithful is fairly predictable, it is very good news to us that God is perfect in His faithfulness.

Today, as we wrap up our look at the character of God we are going to look at the truth that God is faithful. We are wrapping up this series today, not because we've exhausted what the Bible reveals about God or that we've even come close to looking at every important truth about the nature of God; we wrap up because Steve is back from His sabbatical next Sunday and he is probably going to have some things that God has been leading him to say.

To get us into this attribute of God, I'd like to read a passage from 1 Kings 8. After the people of Israel have dedicated the temple, King Solomon proclaims this before the people:

Blessed be the LORD, who has given rest to His people Israel, according to all that He promised; not one word has failed of all His good promise, which He promised through Moses His servant.

Solomon does not use the term, "faithful," but that's what he is talking about. God kept His promises made through Moses – promises made some 480 years earlier when God brought Israel out of slavery in Egypt (1 Kings 6:1). *Not one word* that God promised failed to come about. Solomon gives us a pretty good definition of God's faithfulness in

this statement. It is very similar to how Wayne Grudem defines God's faithfulness in his systematic theology. He says:

God's faithfulness means that God will always do what he has said and fulfill what he has promised (195).

God will do what He has promised. It may take 480 years, but God will always do everything that He has promised.

As we look at God's faithfulness today, I'd like to briefly look at some of the ways that His faithfulness is described in the Scriptures and then after that I want us to look at what God's faithfulness can produce in us when we stand on the truth that He is faithful. And so let's look first at how God's faithfulness is described.

I. **God's Faithfulness is . . .**

The Scriptures paint a beautiful picture of God's faithfulness. God's faithfulness is described as **great**. Psalm 36:5 says that His faithfulness *reaches to the skies*. His faithfulness is also **eternal**. Psalm 100:5 says that His faithfulness is *to all generations*. There is no end to it. It will not run out. God's faithfulness is **pervasive**. Psalm 33:4 says that *All His work is done in faithfulness*. There is not one thing that God does that is not an expression of His faithfulness. It runs through all of His actions. It is pervasive.

God's faithfulness is also **unaffected**. Over the years, geological events such as earthquakes have caused the average time between eruptions of Old Faithful to get longer and longer. Other things have acted upon Old Faithful. It has been affected. But when it comes to God, nothing can affect His faithfulness. Not even your own unfaithfulness. Here what Paul says in 2 Timothy 2:11-13:

¹¹ *It is a trustworthy statement:
For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him;*
¹² *If we endure, we will also reign with Him;
If we deny Him, He also will deny us;*
¹³ *If we are faithless, He remains faithful,
for He cannot deny Himself.*

Though we at times might not be faithful, God *remains faithful*. For God not to be faithful would be to *deny Himself*. It would be to do something that is inconsistent with His unchanging character. There is no force that can affect God in any way. Not even your own faithfulness. He is unaffected.

This is important for us to hear, because the truth of the matter is that we all struggle to be faithful to God at times. And in our unfaithfulness, we can be tempted to doubt whether God will stand by His promises for us. We can doubt His promise that He will never leave us or reject (Heb. 13:5). We can doubt His promise that nothing shall sepa-

rate us from His love (Rom. 8:31-39). But God is unaffected. Nothing changes His faithfulness. Not even your own unfaithfulness. He still does what He had promised.

Now there are a lot of other ways that God's faithfulness is described in the Scriptures, but hopefully this begins to paint a picture for you. It is great, eternal, pervasive and unaffected. I want to transition now and take a look at what God's faithfulness gives us when we choose to stand on the truth that He is faithful. In our time I want to focus specifically on three broad ideas.

II. **When We Stand on God's Faithfulness, We Find . . .**

First, when we stand on God's faithfulness **we find hope**. Lamentations 3:21-23 says this:

²¹ *This I recall to my mind,
Therefore I have hope.*
²² *The LORD's lovingkindnesses indeed never cease,
For His compassions never fail.*
²³ *They are new every morning;
Great is Your faithfulness.*

The context of Lamentations is the destruction of Jerusalem. It was a devastating event for the people of Jerusalem. It was devastating for the author of Lamentations. But in the midst of such loss, he was reminded of God's faithfulness. He was reminded that God's faithfulness was expressed by His lovingkindness that would never cease and by His compassions that would never fail. As the author called to mind these truths about God's faithfulness he gained hope. Hope was found not by ignoring the horrible situation, but by remembering the character of God's faithful love and compassion. He stood on this truth and was able to say *Therefore I have hope*.

Some of you today find yourself in desperate situations – a health or financial crisis; a relational problem; it can be any number things that life is throwing at you. It might be tempting for you to feel that maybe God has forgotten about you or is not at work. Recall to your mind God's faithfulness.

A week ago Saturday our son, Philip, got married in Wichita. He had gone down earlier in the week in preparation for the wedding. On Thursday morning I got a call from him that his car had overheated – something that we thought we had fixed. So, I told him that we would drive both our van and my Ford Taurus down so he could drive the Taurus to get to their honeymoon. On Saturday morning as he was driving to the church for the wedding I get a call from Philip that the Taurus had broken down and he was stranded. And so I took off in the van to get Philip to try to get him to the church on time. As I was driving to get Philip, my normal reaction with two cars broken down in Wichita would have been frustration and worry and a complaining spirit to God, but for some reason, I didn't go down that path. Instead I found myself recalling to mind some of the things that we've study about God this summer – He is good; He loves us; He

takes care of us. He has always been faithful to us and so why go down the road of worry and anxiety? I didn't. We can find hope when we stand on God's faithfulness.

Secondly, when we stand on God's faithfulness **we find confidence**. We find confidence about a lot of things. I want to touch on four specific things that Scriptures mention. First, we have **confidence of our continued progress in sanctification**. 1 Thess. 5:23-24 says this:

²³ Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.

One of Paul's concerns in the book of 1 Thessalonians is the Thessalonians' sanctification – their growth in Christian maturity. That's his prayer for them here. He is asking that God would *sanctify* [them] *entirely*. Paul's confidence that this prayer would be answered was God's character. He understood that if God called the Thessalonians to salvation and the purpose of sharing Christ's character, then He who is *Faithful* will indeed bring it to pass. He had confidence as he stood on God's faithfulness.

There are times when we can wonder if we are growing in Christ, right? Don't you feel that sometimes? We can have thoughts like, "I'm never going to change. I can't change. I'm the same person I've always been." We can get our eyes on ourselves and become discouraged in the journey of spiritual growth. But here's the deal, we need to focus on the One who has called us. *Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass*. We can be confident that God will continue to transform us.

Now, the other three things I want to mention are in a sense a subset of this sanctification. When we stand on God's faithfulness we can have **confidence that he will forgive our sins and cleanse us from unrighteousness**. 1 John 1:9 says:

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

God has made promises to forgive our sins and remember our sins no more (Jer. 31:34). We can have confidence that when we agree with Him about our sin that He will indeed do that. And we can have confidence that He cleanses us. David had this confidence in the Lord in Psalm 51 when we confessed his sin with Bathsheba. He believed that God would make him whiter than snow (Ps. 51:7).

Your sin may be weighing very heavy on your heart this morning. You feel dirty and unclean. You feel like there is no way God would or could forgive you. But for God not to forgive you would be untrue to His character. He has made promises about forgiveness. If you will confess your sin He is faithful to forgive you and to cleanse you. He will always do what He said He will do.

When we stand on God's faithfulness we can also have **confidence of escaping temptation**. 1 Corinthians 10:13 says:

No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.

Do you hear the promise here? God will not allow you to face any kind of temptation that is beyond what you are able. He will ALWAYS provide a way of escape. This is God's promise to you and God is faithful to do this. You can depend up Him. The question for us is - When we are facing temptation do we trust Him and look for that way of escape?

Finally, when we stand on God's faithfulness we can have **confidence of protection**. 2 Thessalonians 3:1-3 says:

¹ Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you; ² and that we will be rescued from perverse and evil men; for not all have faith. ³ But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.

We live in a spiritual world. We have a very real enemy. Paul calls him the *evil one* here. And this *evil one*, Jesus said, comes to kill, steal and destroy (John 10:10). That's his intention towards you. But the promise that God makes to us in this spiritual battle is that *He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one*. God is faithful to do this.

And so when we stand on God's faithfulness we have hope and when we stand on God's faithfulness we have confidence. Finally, **when we stand on God's faithfulness we find courage**. And at times in life we need courage. Sometimes when we are engaged in doing God's will it can be hard; we can suffer for it.

The book of 1 Peter is written to believers living in a pagan society who at times were suffering deeply because of their faith. And so one of the things that Peter is seeking to do in this letter is to encourage the believers to see their suffering in light of eternal realities. In 1 Peter 4:19 he says this:

Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.

When we suffer for doing God's will, the temptation can be to stop doing God's will. We don't want to suffer. But Peter's argument is that for those who *suffer according to the will of God* that they should *entrust their souls to God* and keep *doing what is right*.

And how does he describe God? He calls Him a *faithful Creator*. The use of the term, *Creator*, points to God's power. This powerful God is faithful. Entrust your soul to Him. You can trust Him in your suffering. And when you do so, you find courage to keep doing the will of God.

God is a faithful God. He is unwavering in his faithfulness. Trust Him. Stand on his faithfulness and find hope and confidence and courage.

Now, if you are sitting there thinking, "Yeah, this is all well and good for other people, but it doesn't seem like He is faithful to me," let me ask you a couple of questions. Is it possible that you are expecting God to do something that He never promised – a certain job or income level or a certain relationship or a comfortable life? Sometimes we are expecting God to do stuff that He never promised He would. Is that possible?

Or here's the second question. Is it possible that you are living in the time between – the time between the promise and the fulfillment? It did take God 480 years to give Israel rest in the land so they could build the temple. It did take God a long time before Abraham and Sarah were given a promised son.

I talked to Gene Hoerman the other day about what he's learned about God's faithfulness. Gene is an elderly man from our church who has walked with God for a long time. He made this comment. "As we have walked with Him in relationship, God has verified it over and over again. It's not a matter of if, but when." Is it possible that you are just in the in between place? These are good questions to consider if it seems God is not being faithful to you.

As most of you know, I grew up on a farm. I have a vivid memory of one summer when I was a little boy of a hailstorm that pretty much wiped out some of the crops. I remember standing with dad looking at one of the fields. And with maybe some concern in my heart, I ask dad, "Dad, what will we do?" And his reply was, "We'll just trust God." I don't know if dad even remembers that comment, but it sunk deep within me – trust God. That's what you do when you face a financial challenge. That's what you when you face uncertainty. And we can trust Him because He is faithful.

Amen.