

**GOD IS FAITHFUL & TRUE****EXODUS 34:6, et al**

A father and son were looking to buy a set of weights so the son could make good on a new goal to build bulging muscles. When the son found a set he really admired, he said, "Please, Dad. I promise I'll use 'em every day." Dad responded, "I don't know. It's really going to be a commitment on your part. They're not cheap either." The son observed, "I'll use 'em, Dad, I promise. You'll see." Finally won over by his son's insistence, Dad paid for the equipment and headed for the door. After a few steps, his heard his son behind him say, "What? You mean I have to carry them to the car?" Right there is the problem we human beings have about keeping promises. We're a whole lot better making them than we are at keeping them.

Keeping promises is all about being faithful and true. Only God is perfectly faithful and true. This is my final message in a series I've entitled *What's Most Important About You? What You Think About God*. Who you believe God to be – or not to be – determines – more than any other single factor - how you look at life and how you live your life. We've looked at several of God's attributes. An attribute is something the Bible tells us about God. God's faithfulness and truthfulness go hand in hand, much like His mercy and grace which were God's attributes we thought about last week. But what significance or value do faithfulness and truthfulness have in how we live out our lives?

The Bible is full of verses that celebrate God's faithfulness. By the way, you can find all the Scripture references I use today as well as an outline of today's message on our website. Just click on that black button: Get The Latest News. Then, click on Worship. Finally, click on Message Notes. Here's what God said about Himself in Ex. 34:6 (NLT), "The Lord! The God of compassion and mercy! I am slow to anger and filled with unfailing love and faithfulness." Lam. 3:22-23 says, "The faithful love of the Lord never ends! His mercies never cease. Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each morning." Ps. 89:1-2, 8 (NLT) really drills down on this attribute of God, "I will sing of the Lord's unfailing love forever! Young and old will hear of your faithfulness. Your unfailing love will last forever. Your faithfulness is as enduring as the heavens.... Where is there anyone as mighty as you, O Lord? You are entirely faithful."

When it comes to truthfulness, the Bible often equates God or Jesus with the truth. In Jo. 1:17 (NIV), we read, "For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." Jesus said of Himself in Jo. 14:6 (NIV), "I am the way and the truth and the life." When truthfulness is applied to God, it means He's stable, reliable, consistent, and absolutely trustworthy. It means God cannot lie to us or deceive us. Maybe the clearest biblical statement about God's truthfulness is found in Num. 23:19 (NLT), "God is not a man, so he does not lie. He is not human, so he does not change his mind. Has he ever spoken and failed to act? Has he ever promised and not carried it through?" What's the obvious answer to those questions? No, of course not! When I reflect on the impact God's faithfulness and truthfulness have on all of us, four ideas keep rising to the surface. First of all, because God is faithful and true...

**I CAN TRUST HIM TO NEVER CHANGE.**

Change is an unavoidable fact of life. We've been experiencing a colossal amount of change in the first half of 2020. Now, not all change is bad. Some changes can even be welcomed. Everything is in a state of change. Planets and stars move and change. The earth we live upon is subject to change. Every day is different. Seasons change. We change. Our bodies change as we age. Our health changes. Our interests and passions change as we journey through life. We hold different jobs. Relationships change. Marriages both begin and end. Even a healthy marriage will go through changes. Families change. Kids grow up and move out. And then, of course, the death of people we love is one of the greatest changes we can ever experience.

People living in New Hampshire experienced the reality of unexpected change one foggy night back in May of 2003. A 40-foot tall natural outcropping of granite ledges referred to as the Old Man of the Mountain - because it looked like the profile of an old man - broke apart unexpectedly and slid down the side of a mountain in the dark. 200 years ago, Nathaniel Hawthorn wrote a famous story about it called "The Great Stone Face." The image was on New Hampshire license plates. It was the official state emblem. People thought it would last forever. One New Hampshireite said, "It's something that has been a part of our lives forever. At first it was disbelief. No one could believe he came down. It's like a member of your family dying." There are times when it seems the most reliable, dependable presence in your life just disappears into the fog in the middle of the night. That "mountain" you've depended on is just gone.

If something is subject to change, it means it's not permanent and can't be relied upon in any ultimate sense. But God does not and cannot change. That's an essential part of His faithfulness and truthfulness. The Psalmist said this about God in 102:27 (NLT), "But you are always the same; you will live forever." I'm sure you remember these familiar words about Jesus in Heb. 13:8 NLT), "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever." That simply means God's character never changes. God will never act in some way inconsistent with who He is. He isn't good one day and evil the next. He isn't merciful one day and merciless the next. He isn't loving one day and hateful the next. You and I can be like that unfortunately. But God? Never! All that God is – He's that same way every day. He was that way in the past. He's that way right now in the present. And He will be that same way in the future. He's permanent and can be relied upon and trusted always.

Because God can't change, God's truth never changes. For example, He loves spiritually lost people just as much today as when Jesus hung on the cross for us 2000 years ago. God still wants us to pray to Him, worship Him, enjoy a personal relationship with Him, and obey Him. As we walk through life, our opinions change on different issues as we get more information. All of us have had to retract something we said because it longer squares with the truth. But God never changes His outlook on anything. He never needs new information. He never has to correct Himself. God's plans ever change. We have to alter our plans all the time, don't we? Sometimes we find the old way of doing something is wrong or no longer useful, so we pick a new and better way. Not God. Truly, God alone is the only fixed point in a turning, changing world. I can trust Him to never change. Secondly, because God is faithful and true...

## **I CAN TRUST HIM TO KEEP HIS PROMISES.**

The Bible is full of God's promises. How can we be sure God is going to keep all of His promises? Because He's faithful and true. He can't make a promise and then wiggle out of it, or refuse to honor it, or fail to keep it. All of us have broken promises to other people. Maybe we made a foolish promise or perhaps it just became too painful or inconvenient to keep a promise we made. I'm sure all of us have been on the receiving end of broken promises which is hurtful and disillusioning. A broken promise is one kind of a lie and God cannot lie. In the book of Hebrews 6:18 (NLT) we find this verse, "So God has given both his promise and his oath. These two things are unchangeable because it is impossible for God to lie. Therefore, we who have fled to him for refuge can have great confidence as we hold to the hope that lies before us." Because God cannot lie, we can live today and tomorrow confidently. God keeps His promises.

We don't have time today to review all of God's promises in the Bible, but there are four kinds of promises we should be aware of. First, we can trust God's promises to spiritually lost people in two different, but important ways. One, God promises eternal separation from Him if we reject the salvation He's offered through Jesus. He won't change that promise even for moral, good people who still reject Jesus or for people we love who still reject Jesus. Two, God promises forgiveness of sin, adoption into His family, and eternal life in Heaven for every lost person who throws himself or herself upon God's mercy and grace. Do you remember the story Jesus told about the young man who rejected his father's love and squandered his inheritance? The prodigal or lost son. He finally came to his senses, left the pigpen he was living in, and returned to his father. Do you remember the father's great love and grace? That's the kind of reception God promises to any and every spiritually lost person who comes to Him with a fully surrendered heart. God keeps His promises.

Second, we can trust God's promises to saved people, His children. He promises to forgive our sins past, present, and future. 1 Jo. 1:9 (NLT) says, "But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness." He promises to keep working in our lives so we resemble Jesus and His character increasingly. We read in 1 Th. 5:23-24 (NLT), "Now may the God of peace make you holy in every way.... God will make this happen, for he who calls you is faithful." There are so many promises God makes to us His children, but one verse in Heb. 10:23 (NLT) sort of sums up the implication. It says, "Let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm, for God can be trusted to keep his promise." If God can be trusted to keep His promises – and He can – we can live with vibrant, confident hope. God keeps His promises.

Third, we can trust God's promises to tempted people. The Bible uses that word "temptation" in two distinct ways. Yes, it can mean being drawn or encouraged to commit some kind of sin. But it can also refer to life's troubles and difficulties that have a way of discouraging us and enticing us to pull away from God. Like what? Like a troubled marriage, a problem child, the loss of a job, a serious health condition, or the untimely death of someone you love dearly. There's a wonderful, powerful promise in

God's Word that covers both kinds of temptation. It's found in 1 Cor. 10:13 (NLT), "The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure." God keeps His promises.

Fourth, we can trust God to keep His promises to discouraged people. There's so much out there that can fill our hearts with discouragement, disillusionment, and despair. Maybe you feel beaten down by the effects of the pandemic on you personally or on people you love. In the last few weeks, we've been reminded we live in an evil, unjust world. It can seem a whole lot more goes wrong than ever goes right. We're painfully aware of our littleness, our smallness, our powerlessness. When discouragement for any reason threatens to overwhelm our lives, we need to pick up God's Word again and remind ourselves of God's promises. Here's one from Is. 41:9-10 (NLT) that has encouraged me often. God is speaking and He says, "I have chosen you and will not throw you away. Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Don't be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand." God keeps His promises. Every last one of them.

A man by the name of Vic Pentz bought a new navy blazer at Nordstrom's department store. Have you ever bought something to wear only to find out the more you wear it, the more you don't like it? Vic's blazer wasn't the right color and it attracted lint for some odd reason. He wore it regularly for six months or so, but then he stuck it in the back of his closet and didn't wear it for a long time. I understand Nordstrom's has a famous, unconditional return policy. Vic was aware of the policy. But he thought to himself, "I've had this blazer for a year a half. I've worn it lots of times. There's no way they're going to take it back." But he decided to put this return policy to the test. Vic walked right up to the first salesman he saw and gave his little prepared speech. "Here's this blazer. I've worn it a lot, but I don't like it. It's the wrong color. It attracts lint. I'd like to return it for another blazer I do like." Much to Vic's surprise, the salesman looked at Vic, shook his head, and said, "For heaven's sake, what took you so long? Let's go find you a blazer!" Ten minutes later Vic walked out with another blazer. It was perfect. It didn't cost Vic a penny. Maybe God is like Nordstrom. God makes all sorts of great, big, grand promises that we just can't bring ourselves to believe most of the time. But sometimes we work up enough courage or we get desperate enough and we take God at His word. God looks at us, shakes His head and says, "For heaven's sake, what took you so long?" God keeps His promises because He is faithful and true. Here's something else we should know because God is faithful and true...

### **I CAN TRUST HIM TO HELP ME LIVE AUTHENTICALLY.**

A few weeks ago I spoke about communicable and incommunicable attributes of God. Communicable simply means transferable. God can't transfer His omnipotence, omniscience, or omnipresence to us. Those are incommunicable attributes. But He can transfer something of His goodness, His love, His mercy, or His grace to us. Those are communicable attributes. God's faithfulness and truthfulness are communicable, also. What does that look like for you and me? To be faithful and true? It doesn't

mean God expects perfection from us. It doesn't even mean that we ever get to a place of 100% integrity this side of Heaven. Instead, I believe what God is after when it comes to being truthful is being authentic, real, and genuine before Him at all times.

King David was described as a man after God's own heart even though he committed some terrible sins like murder and adultery. When he finally confessed his sin to God and asked forgiveness, he said in Ps. 51:6 (ESV), "You delight in truth in the inward being." David wasn't talking about having right or good beliefs about God. He wasn't referring to perfection. Instead, he had authenticity before God on his mind. Being honest, real, transparent, and genuine before God. You and I need to get to a place where we live like this before God each and every day. We can come into His presence saying, "Father, here I am. I'm a mess. I'm sinful, or discouraged, or defeated, or broken, (or whatever else best describes us at that moment). I love You, God, and I want You to be in my life even though there's still a lot in me that doesn't love You and wants nothing to do with You. Have mercy on me through Your Son, Jesus."

Jesus was addressing the same issue when He said to a Samaritan woman in Jo. 4:24 (NLT), "God is Spirit, so those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth." Jesus wasn't talking about being doctrinally correct. He didn't have moral perfection in mind either. He was saying if you really want to worship God and have a personal relationship with Him, authenticity, transparency, and being genuine are necessary. No playing games. No excuses. No trying to impress God with how good or how worthy you are. No effort to hide where you're struggling with Him or with some aspect of your life. You just come to Him as you are each day and place all that you are in His hands. Like the great old hymn says, just as I am, without one plea, but that Thy blood was shed for me. And that Thou bid'st me come to Thee, O Lamb of God, I come! I come. Just as I am, though tossed about, with many a conflict, many a doubt, fighting and fears within without, O Lamb of God, I come, I come. That's the best way to live in light of God being faithful and true. And then, finally, because God is faithful and true...

### **I CAN TRUST HIM TO HELP ME LIVE STEADILY.**

God doesn't expect us to live perfectly, but instead to live steadily. That's another way His faithfulness and truthfulness ought to show up in our lives. Do you remember the story of Zechariah and Elizabeth in the Bible? They were the parents of John the Baptist. They'd lived all their married lives with a deep wound. They had no children. In that day and time, infertility was a great stigma. Many people considered it God's judgment on you for some sin you'd supposedly committed. But Zechariah and Elizabeth were humble people who loved and obeyed God. God did a miracle in and for them. He enabled Elizabeth to become pregnant at an age when it would have been humanly impossible to do so. The son born to her and Zechariah – John the Baptist – grew up to become a mighty man of God – a prophet who had an all important role in the life and ministry of Jesus.

God was faithful to those two humble, godly people. Their story is a powerful reminder God doesn't forget those who belong to Him, although He can certainly make us wait!

Painful experiences in our lives are not a sign God has abandoned us or is punishing us. Another wonderful part of Zechariah and Elizabeth's story is how they responded to the heartache of infertility. Surely they must have wondered why God allowed them to endure this trial. Surely they must have wept and cried out to God in prayer to give them children. But despite all their unanswered questions, they never became bitter against God. They never gave up on Him or walked away from their faith. They just kept on living for and serving the Lord steadily the best way they knew how.

In the song accredited to Zechariah after the birth of his son, John, in Lk. 1:74-75 (NLT), he says, "We have been rescued from our enemies so we can serve God without fear, in holiness and righteousness for as long as we live." Zechariah and Elizabeth believed God was faithful despite carrying around a huge ache in their hearts and feeling disgraced for many years. At the end of the day, their trust in God was vindicated. God blest them in a miraculous way and made them the envy of all who knew them. Hear what the Bible says about God in 1 Cor. 1:8-9 (NLT), "He will keep you strong to the end so that you will be free from all blame on the day when our Lord Jesus Christ returns. God will do this, for he is faithful to do what he says." Because God is faithful, we can be faithful, too. So, keep trusting. Keep on living authentically and steadily.

Have you seen the movie, *The Monuments Men*? It's a good one. One of the characters was a woman named Claire Simone. She lived a very ordinary life in Paris under the oppressive Nazi regime. She was an art enthusiast who was forced to facilitate the Nazi theft of great works of art in Paris and beyond. But despite the seeming hopelessness of her situation, Claire carefully cataloged each piece of art by marking each one with a small colored sticker. She kept a secret catalog of stolen art works without knowing whether it would ever be useful, or end up just being confiscated and destroyed. She kept meticulous records of all this stolen art without any hope that her efforts would amount to anything. She had no idea the "monuments men" would ever come along – Allied soldiers tasked with recovering all this stolen art after the war. She had no idea anyone else even cared. She was just one woman in a city occupied by one of the most powerful militaries on the planet. But all that time before the monuments men arrived, she kept working subversively, systematically, and steadily, without any assurance that her work would ever be put to use. But it was.

In a similar way, we followers of Jesus live in territory occupied by a spiritual enemy. It's tempting to give up hope that our work for Jesus - our small deeds of compassion and kindness, our faithfulness to our families, our jobs, and our church, our little efforts to help build God's Kingdom - will amount to anything. But it will. Jesus' resurrection guarantees our future. Our love for Jesus, our living for Jesus, our service for Jesus may feel insignificant living in this world of people who mostly reject Jesus. But because God is faithful and true, we're called to be faithful and true as well. So let's keep on living authentically and let's keep on living steadily.