

Great is Thy Faithfulness!

Psalm 100:5

Pastor Jim Rademaker

"... to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and cherish, until death do us part ... and in these I promise to be faithful to you."

There once was a husband and wife who lived together in the bonds of marriage. And like most marriages, things started out quite well. The two lived together happily, enjoying one other's company. But as time went on, things began to change. The wife became bored with the relationship and began to look for something more. The relationship no longer satisfied her the way it once had.

She began to spend more and more time away from her husband and found more satisfaction with other men. Eventually, she abandoned her husband all-together. The marriage that looked so promising, was now over. The marriage covenant had been broken. Yet through it all, the husband remained faithful to his wife, continuing to love her as he had always done.

Some might call it stupidity. How could the husband be so foolish! God calls it faithfulness. You see, God is that husband. His chosen people, Israel, is His bride. In the Old Testament book of Hosea, marital love is the picture used to describe the relationship between God and His people. As time went on, God's people were no longer satisfied with Him alone. They wanted more. They wanted something else. Their focus was themselves, and getting what they wanted. Which is not what marital love is all about.

And so, thinking of themselves and what they could get out of the relationship, God's bride grew more and more unfaithful, and Israel eventually left Him for another; other (false) gods. God's who seemed more exciting. God's who would give them whatever they wanted. God's who would serve them. God's who they could use for the own purposes.

And so, the marriage between God and His people had been broken. Smashed to pieces. Yet through it all, God remained faithful to His promise. God remained faithful to His people. It's one of the great threads woven throughout Scripture. It's one of the great characteristics of God: His never-ending faithfulness. For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.

From childhood on, we're taught what it means to be faithful; what it means to be trustworthy; what it means to make our word count for something; what it means to think of others over and above ourselves. Faithfulness is something we learn. We're not born with it. Unlike humans, God didn't have to learn faithfulness. It's who He is; who He has always been. Who He will always be. It's one of the great threads woven throughout Scripture.

Where do we see God's faithfulness to us? We see it in the Garden (people unfaithful in disobedience) ... provide a Redeemer (to redeem and restore the marriage relationship) We see God's faithfulness in the Flood (in the midst of complete unfaithfulness - *The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on*

the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.) ... Noah (through whom would come the Messiah), the rainbow. We see God's faithfulness in His promise to Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob We see God's faithfulness at the Red Sea, in the midst of their grumbling and complaining We see God's faithfulness in all the prophets

Unlike humans, God doesn't have to learn to be faithful. It's who He is. It's who He has always been. It's who He will always be! *Your love, O LORD, reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the skies.* (Psalms 36:5) As Moses says when the leadership is being transferred to Joshua, *"The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged."* (Deuteronomy 31:8)

It's good to know, isn't it? In life, we face change every day. The weather's always changing. Our health is always changing. Our relationships are always changing - people come into and out of our lives. We change. In the midst of all the change and uncertainty of life, one thing remains unchanged: God's faithfulness. *"... if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself."* (2 Timothy 2:13)

When we change, when we grow fickle in our faith, when we give in to temptation and sin, when we let down others, let down ourselves, and let down God - when we are not as faithful as we should be - God always remains faithful. While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Jesus was faithful to the end - faithful to His Father, faithful to fulfilling His Promise, faithful in being our Savior.

For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering ... in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us." (Romans 8:3-4)

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth! Serve the Lord with gladness! Come into his presence with singing! Know that the Lord, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name! For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations. (Psalm 100)

But what about when it feels like God hasn't been faithful; when it feels like He's forgotten all about us? Even in our afflictions, He remains faithful! *It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees. ... I know, O Lord, that your laws are righteous, and in faithfulness you have afflicted me. May your unfailing love be my comfort, according to your promise to your servant.* (Psalms 119:71 ...)

Lamentations 3:18-23 *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: 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.*

There once was a husband and wife who lived together in the bonds of marriage. But as time went on, the wife became bored and began to look for something more; something better; someone more her liking. Eventually, she abandoned her husband all-together, breaking the marriage covenant. You and I are the unfaithful bride. In our actions, in our words, in our thoughts, we've been unfaithful to God, looking to other gods to satisfy ourselves.

Yet in our unfaithfulness, God remains faithful. He hasn't abandoned us. He hasn't left us, but has continued to love us as in the beginning. And in time, He showed us the full extent of His love ... *"But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons."* (Galatians 4:4-5)

The symbol of His faithfulness? Not a wedding ring, but a cross ...

And all of this God had promised from the very beginning. Faithful in the garden. Faithful in the flood. Faithful in the rainbow. Faithful in the Promise. Faithful at the Red Sea. Faithful through the prophets. Faithful in the manger. Faithful at the cross. Faithful in the opened tomb. Faithful in His return one day.

Ever feel abandoned; all alone in the world? God has never left you, but remains at your side. If you look at the circumstances of your life, it might appear that God has abandoned you long ago. You won't necessarily see God's faithfulness when you look at your life. Your circumstances might be sending mixed messages.

But in Christ, there are no mixed messages. At the cross, you'll find nothing but faithfulness and love. In the midst of your sin, in the midst of your darkest hour - even as life continues to change all around you, and it seems there's nothing you can depend on - one thing will never change. The Psalmist says it well:

I will sing of the Lord's great love forever; with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known through all generations. I will declare that your love stands firm forever, that you established your faithfulness in heaven itself. You said, "I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to David my servant, 'I will establish your line forever and make your throne firm through all generations.'"

The heavens praise your wonders, O LORD, your faithfulness too, in the assembly of the holy ones. For who in the skies above can compare with the LORD? Who is like the LORD among the heavenly beings? In the council of the holy ones God is greatly feared; he is more awesome than all who surround him. O LORD God Almighty, who is like you? You are mighty, O LORD, and your faithfulness surrounds you.
(Psalms 89:1-8)