

“GOD IS FAITHFUL”

1 Corinthians 1:3-9

THE MONTH of January was named for the Roman ‘god’ Janus, the god of doors, gates, and bridges; and by extension, the god of openings and closings, beginnings and endings, the transition between the Old Year and the New.

In Roman mythology, Janus was depicted with two opposing faces; one face looking back, and the other face looking forward. The month named for Janus, January, has the same two faces. In January we look back on the Old Year, while looking forward to the New Year. We review and anticipate, analyze and predict. We compose endless year-end lists and comparisons: “The Ten Worst Movies of 2018;” or “The Ten Best Investments in 2019.”

Of course, two opposing faces can also suggest indecision and uncertainty; a reluctance to leave the past and embrace the future; being torn in two directions and not knowing which way to turn. Significantly, the New Testament word for worry, *MERIMNAO* in Greek, literally means *to have a divided mind* or *to be of two minds*. That isn’t far removed from the two opposing faces of Janus, is it? Jesus used this same word when He said to Martha, **“You are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed,”** Luke 10:41-42.

As this New Year approaches, we may find ourselves worried and upset about many things, too. World things. Personal things. Health things. Relationship things. Church things. Despite the fireworks and fanfare, the champagne toasts and choruses of Auld Lang Sein, there were many grim news stories in 2018. Global terrorism. Natural disasters. Mass shootings. Political corruption. Crime. Election meddling. ‘Superbugs’ resistant to all known antibiotics. Wars. Massacres. Increasing opposition to Christianity. And much more. What will the world be like in 2019?

And with the New Year come the same Old Questions, the *personal* questions: “What will happen to me in 2019? Will I stay healthy or grow sick? Will I succeed or fail? Will I experience financial gain or loss? Will my marriage improve? Will my car need an expensive repair? Will my job or health insurance last?”

Amid such unknowns and uncertainties, a phrase like “have a happy New Year” may have a hollow ring. Yet, there is an infinitely better phrase with which to welcome the New Year. Not my phrase, but God’s. Not five words: “have a happy New Year;” but three of the most important words you will ever know or teach to your children: **“God is faithful,”** 1 Corinthians 1:9.

The Greek is more literally, **“Faithful is God.”** In fact, FAITHFUL is the first word in the Greek sentence, and therefore the word of first importance—so that the entire emphasis of this phrase is on the word faithful. **“God is faithful.”** Faithful is

God. And you may be thinking, “Yes, well, I know that. I know God is faithful.” As Christians, we all know this principle. And yet, when faced with troubles or suffering or illness or heartbreaking loss, which attribute of God are we most likely to question? Isn’t it God’s faithfulness? “Oh, I’ve prayed and prayed about this problem, but God hasn’t answered me. Is that faithfulness?” Or, “God is the one who allowed this terrible burden into my life—this disease, this debt, this difficult relationship. At the least, He did nothing to prevent it. Is that faithfulness?” What if I told you that God permitted that disease, debt, or difficulty because He is faithful? Would you believe me?

These questions about God’s faithfulness are very important. Why? Ultimately, the faithfulness of God impacts every element, every detail, every circumstance, in our Christian lives: our salvation, our forgiveness, our eternal life; our hopes, expectations, marriages, ministries, deliverance from our problems and providing for our daily needs. Everything we are, have, and anticipate as Christians depends on God’s faithfulness. For if we can’t count on God, we can’t count on anything. So then, is God faithful or not? Consider the following.

First, God’s faithfulness is declared repeatedly throughout His Word.

Where then should you turn when you doubt God’s faithfulness? To His Word. And not just turn to God’s Word, but run to it, embrace it, envelope yourself in it, and live in it great truths and promises. For in His Word the Lord God Himself declares that He is undeniably, unequivocally, unconditionally, and eternally faithful to you.

This is precisely why the risen Jesus told the two hapless, hopeless disciples from Emmaus: “**How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken,**” Luke 24:25. Or to quote the hymnist: “How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord, is laid for your faith in His excellent Word. What more can He say than to you He hath said, who unto the Savior for refuge have fled?” LH 427:1.

In some ways, it seems incredulous that Christians should need to be reminded of the importance of God’s Word in their lives, relationships, and problems. But friends, we do need such reminders. All of us do, myself included. We look at our Bibles, the worn covers and crinkled pages, perhaps thinking, “How can the little words in this one Book compete against the big problems in my life.”

This is where the loving rebuke of Jesus applies so appropriately to us: “**How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken.**” We forget: “**By the word of the LORD were the heavens made,**” Psalm 33:6. God spoke the universe into existence, and even now sustains “**all things by His powerful word,**” Hebrews 1:3. “Let there be!” God declared, and so created something out of nothing. Do we somehow think God can’t do the same in our lives, problems, marriages—create something out of nothing—through the power of the Scriptures?

In what way did Jesus calm the storms on Lake Galilee? Through His Word.

How did Jesus often heal the sick, cast out demons, and even raise the dead? Through His Word. “Lazarus, come forth!” Jesus said. And at the power of Christ’s words, a man dead, buried, and decaying for four days, left his grave and stood living, breathing, and blinking in the bright Bethany sunshine. Life, breath, comfort, hope, contentment, forgiveness, salvation, and every other good and perfect blessing come to us through the same Word of God.

And in this Word we learn how committed and faithful God is to us. This is important, because you and I are emotional beings, and our emotions can easily distort our view of God’s faithfulness. But this is why the Bible is filled with so many comforting assurances of God’s faithfulness to His beloved people—assurances that you and I need to hear, especially when experiencing times of uncertainty, loss, or suffering.

So then, today, if you’re questioning the faithfulness of God in your life, listen carefully to what your God is telling you. Deuteronomy 7:9, “**Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; He is the FAITHFUL God, keeping His covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love Him and keep His commands.**” Or Psalm 33:5, “**The LORD loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of His UNFAILING love.**” Or Psalm 119:89-90, “**Your word, O LORD, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens. Your FAITHFULNESS continues through all generations.**”

And we find the same comforting assurances of God absolute faithfulness in the New Testament. 1 Thessalonians 5:24, “**The One who calls you is FAITHFUL and He will do it.**” Or 1 Peter 4:19, “**So then, those who suffer according to God’s will should commit themselves to their FAITHFUL Creator and continue to do good.**” Or as Paul stated simply in 1 Corinthians 1:9, “**God is faithful.**” Period. And he used identical language in 1 Corinthians 10:13, saying, “**No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is FAITHFUL; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.**”

“God is faithful.” This is the loud and clear testimony of Scripture. Is, not might be. Always, not sometimes. Which means that God never stops being faithful; and furthermore, that God is still being faithful even when we think He is not—even when the world, the physical evidence, and our own sinful nature cry out to the contrary. How do we know? We have God’s own Word on it. Literally.

Second, the reason for God’s faithfulness lies in Him and not in us. And that, dear friends, is truly good news. Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 2:11-13, speaking of Christ: “**If we died with Him, we will also live with Him; if we endure, we will also reign with Him. If we disown Him, He will also disown us; if we are faithless, He will remain faithful, for He cannot disown Himself.**” Think about these words. For God

to be faithless, He would have to deny who He is—deny all those passages in His own word that declare His faithfulness. But this God will never do, because faithfulness is a part of God’s divine nature: absolute faithfulness to His Word and absolute faithfulness to us.

Don’t let this attribute of God’s faithfulness be no more than a question circled on a certain page of a small catechism. Consider what God’s attribute of faithfulness means for your life, hope, happiness, success, and peace of mind in 2019 and every minute of every year beyond it. **“Because God is faithful.”** This is the foundation. This is where we should start each day.

Because God is faithful, His faithfulness depends entirely on Him and not on you; that is, your mood, your worthiness, your works, your thankfulness. **Because God is faithful**, His every thought and every action toward you is guided by that faithfulness. **Because God is faithful**, even the difficulties He allows in your life are the result of His faithfulness. **Because God is faithful**, He will never stop loving you, never stop protecting and providing for you, never stop correcting you, and never stop purposing the best for you.

Because God is faithful, His word is faithful, true, and reliable—the reason Jesus said in Luke 21:33, **“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away.”** And therefore you can depend on that word, and what it tells you about sin and salvation, marriage and family, forgiving and retaliating, mercy and judgment, grace and works, the origin of all things and the end of all things. And **because God is faithful**, He will faithfully keep every promise that He has ever made to you. And oh, dear friend, He has made you so many grand and glorious promises. Think about these promises as you enter the New Year.

God has promised that His compassion for you will never fail. Lamentations 3:22-23, **“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.”** He has promised to empower you to do that which He has called you to do—whether to be strong in the face of adversity or to forgive an injury or to repair a marriage or undertake a difficult ministry. 1 Thessalonians 5:24, **“The One who calls you is faithful and He will do it.”**

God has promised to give you rest and relief from all the headaches and heartbreaks of life. Matthew 11:28, **“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”** He has promised to be with you in every condition, every location, and every age of your life. Hebrews 13:5, **“Never will I leave you. Never will I forsake you.”** He has promised to save you eternally by grace, through faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior. Romans 5:1, **“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”**

God has promised to forgive all your sins each time you turn to Him in repentance and faith; each sin, each time. 1 John 1:9, **“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”** He has promised to keep you strong, safe, and saved until that time when you receive the glorious inheritance He has promised; as Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 1:8-9, **“He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God, who has called you into fellowship with His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.** These are merely some of the promises God has made to you. And He will keep each and every one, because God is faithful.

Third and finally, God’s faithfulness to you is also guaranteed by His other divine attributes. And this too is enormously comforting as we approach another New Year. For example, God is all-knowing. Because God knows all things—past, present, and future; and because God knows you completely, including your weaknesses and strengths; He will faithfully give you what you need, not necessarily what you may want. As Jesus said in Matthew 6:8, **“For your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.”** You may not need to win the Publishers Clearing House Sweepstakes. However, you may need a difficult circumstances to strengthen your faith and bring you closer to God. You can depend on the all-knowing God to know the difference.

Likewise, because God is all-powerful, He will faithfully accomplish everything that needs to be accomplished in your life, forcing even the worst of circumstances to serve your best interests. This means that you can approach the New Year, confidently saying: **“Is anything too hard for the LORD?”** Genesis 18:14.

Because God is always present and present everywhere, He will faithfully be with you in every endeavor, every condition, every stage of life, and every location; whether riding a horse on a ranch or riding in an ambulance to Bismarck, whether at home or at the office, whether in church or in the operating room. **“I am with you always,”** said Jesus in Matthew 28:20, **“even to the end of the age.”**

And because God is immutable, that is, unchanging, His faithfulness to you will never change. His word will never change. His love for you will never change. His will for you will never change. **“For I am the LORD,”** God said in Malachi 3:6. **“I do not change.”** Or as the writer of Hebrews stated: **“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever,”** Hebrews 13:8. The same. The same in love. The same in compassion. The same in forgiveness. The same in faithfulness. Should this reality not give us great confidence amid all the unknowns and uncertainties of our future?

And yet, after all this, if you find yourself still wondering if God will be faithful to you in all aspects of your life, let me refer you to the greatest proof of God’s faithfulness and unconditional commitment; namely, the sacrifice of His one and only Son, Jesus Christ.

Realize that everything in Scripture, and everything in redemptive history, from the first announcement of the Savior in the Garden of Eden; to the calling of Abraham; to Jacob and his twelve sons; to the twelve tribes of Israel; to the exodus from Egypt; to the birth of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem; to the death of Jesus Christ on the cross; to the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead; to the formation of the Christian Church and its call to proclaim the gospel of salvation to all nations—realize that everything Almighty God has done throughout redemptive history, every action and every detail, has been done to faithfully fulfill that first promise God made to fallen mankind in Eden.

Today, whether you are healthy or sick, rich or poor, young or old, male or female, a dignitary or a nobody; if you want to know exactly how faithful your God is to every aspect of your life, look at the cross of Jesus Christ. And remember these glorious words of Romans 8: **“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written, ‘For Your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.’ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”**

And the reason? You know the answer. “Because God is faithful.”