

The Faithfulness of God

Joel Stephen Williams

What do you think of when you hear the word “faithful”? Do you think of a faithful dog that was loyal to its master, such as Greyfriars Bobby, a Skye terrier who gained fame in Edinburgh, Scotland, about whom several movies were made and many books were written, because he supposedly guarded his master’s grave for years? Maybe the word “faithful” brings to mind “Old Faithful Geyser” in Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming, which has been very predictable in the timing of its eruptions over the years? When I think of “faithful” or “faithfulness,” I think of married couples that have been together for 50 years, 60 years, or more, faithful and devoted to one another.

The “faithfulness” of God is sometimes considered together with God’s “genuineness” and his “veracity.” Millard Erickson places these three attributes together under the umbrella of God’s “integrity” (Christian Theology, 2nd ed., Baker Books, 1988, 317–18). God’s genuineness means that he is a real God. He is not “false or spurious.” The veracity of God means that he “represents things as they really are.” We can trust whatever he tells us. The faithfulness of God means that God is dependable.

Trusting God and taking him at his word is a big part of what faith is. We can trust God, because

he is faithful and dependable. If someone makes a promise, will the promise be kept? How many times have we heard someone say, “But you promised?” By the standard of keeping his word, the God of the Bible is faithful. Notice the rhetorical questions that Balaam asked Balak: “God is not a human being, that he should lie, or a mortal, that he should change his mind. Has he promised, and will he not do it? Has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?” (Num. 23:19). What this means is that you can depend on God. You can rely upon him. You can trust what he says. God will not do like some of us did when we were children. He will not break a promise and say, “I had my fingers crossed.”

Most of us know and sing a beautiful song that speaks of God’s faithfulness. The words to this song are taken directly from Scripture. “The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness” (Lam. 3:22–23). He is the “God of faithfulness” (Isa. 65:16). He is the one who is “faithful” (Isa. 49:7; 1 Cor. 1:9; 2 Cor. 1:18; 2 Tim. 2:13; 1 Pet. 4:19; cf. Ps. 36:5; 40:10–11; 57:3, 10; 71:22; 86:15; 91:4; 92:2; 100:5; 108:4; 115:1; 117:2; 119:75, 90, 138; 138:2). Another key biblical text on the faithfulness of God is Psalm 89, which

uses the word “faithfulness” repeatedly to describe God.

I will sing of your steadfast love, O LORD, forever;
with my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations.

I declare that your steadfast love is established forever;
your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens....

Let the heavens praise your wonders, O LORD,
your faithfulness in the assembly of the holy ones....

O LORD God of hosts,
who is as mighty as you, O LORD?

Your faithfulness surrounds you....

Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne;
steadfast love and faithfulness go before you (Psa. 89:1–2, 5, 8, 14; cf. 24, 33).

As God is faithful to us, we are to be faithful to God. Therefore, we should not be surprised to find that faithfulness is a virtue. It is a part of the fruit of the Spirit. Paul wrote, “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Gal. 5:22–23). To be faithful to God, whom we cannot see, we must show faithfulness to our neighbors, whom we can see. In what ways do we need to do that? We need to be faithful in our mar-

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riages to our spouses. We need to be faithful in honest relationships with other people. If we make promises, we need to keep them to the best of our ability. Others need to be able to depend on us. We need to be trustworthy and reliable. We need to be true friends to others. Jesus once asked: "When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" (Luke 18:8). Let him find us faithful when he comes.

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