

QUESTIONS WE WANT ANSWERED

12.4 What is God like?

Part IV

The Faithfulness Of God

*Scripture: Deuteronomy 7:9; Psalm 119:86, 138; Isaiah 11:5, 25:1, 49:7;
Lamentations 3:22-23; I Corinthians 1:9; I Thessalonians 5:24;
II Thessalonians 3:3; II Timothy 2:13; Hebrews 2:17, 10:23;
Revelation 19:11*

INTRODUCTION:

Unfaithfulness has become one of the unfortunate marks of our society. In the world of business it has become the experience of many that a man's word is no longer his bond. In the domestic world, marital infidelity becomes more and more common. Even the ecclesiastical world witnesses a great lapse on the part of those who have solemnly covenanted to be faithful to the Word of God and its declaration. I make bold to suggest that neither this writer nor the reader is able to boast of immunity from being unfaithful to the Lord in some way. With these things in mind how exhilarating it is to stand at the beginning of a new year knowing the possibility of looking above these failures to the One who is faithful, faithful in all things and at all times. We would do well to fill our minds on this first day of the new year with the understanding that on every day of the new year God will be faithful.

What exactly do we mean when we say that our experience of God can be that He will show Himself faithful to us? Simply stated, the truth is that God will at all times be true to His Word. He will fulfill all His pledges to His people, whether expressed or implied. What His love has led Him to promise, that He will perform. Such understanding has to have great practical value in our lives as we face the unknown future. It can become our sure ground of confidence for the year 1978. It is the purpose of this study to realize the ways in which God has declared His faithfulness and to be inspired to take Him at his word.

I. DAILY GOD WILL BE FAITHFUL TO THIS PERFECTION OF HIS BEING:

The quality of faithfulness is essential to the nature of God. Without it He would not be God. Centuries ago it was His stated desire to be known in this way,

according to Deuteronomy 7:9, *“Know therefore that the Lord Thy God, He is God, the faithful God.”* For God to be unfaithful would be for Him to act out of line with His nature. This is impossible for God to do. I believe this is the significance of II Timothy 2:13, *“If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful; He cannot deny Himself.”* There may be times when we are bold to question the faithfulness of God. No matter, if the whole story were known God would prove Himself to have been faithful in every instance.

Oh, my dear friends, if only this truth could grip our lives at the start of this new year. Faithfulness is one of the glorious perfections of our God. He is clothed, as it were, with such. Hear the Psalmist, *“O Lord God of hosts, who is strong like unto thee? or to Thy faithfulness round about thee?”* (89:8) Even as God expressed Himself in flesh form it could be said; *“Righteousness shall be the girdle of His loins, and faithfulness the girdle of His reins.”* (Isaiah 11:5)

II. DAILY GOD WILL BE FAITHFUL TO HIS EVERY DECLARATION:

I have already mentioned a man's word as his bond. We try to get on in this world trusting that such will be the case and regardless of the violations. Inviolable is God. He is pure and unprofaned on the issue of His word. He will not forget, falter, fail, or neglect to be true to every promise or prophecy, covenant or verbal engagement. How can we be certain? By realizing that God is not as we are. *“God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it; or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?”* (Numbers 23:19) If this is too lofty a thought for us and above our finite comprehension, God is not surprised, for He has said, *“Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens; and Thy faithfulness unto the clouds.”* (Psalm 36:5) May God grant in the coming new year, though our eyes may be at times swollen with tears, our ears distracted with the whisperings of doubt, and our circumstances such that we cannot trace the workings of His love, that we may say as the prophet of old, *“Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of His servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.”* (Isaiah 50:10) Daily God will be faithful to His declarations. *“Thy testimonies which Thou hast commanded are righteous and very faithful.”* (Psalm 119:138)

III. DAILY GOD WILL BE FAITHFUL IN HIS PROVIDENCE:

Theologians define providence as that agency of God by which He maintains in existence what He has created by His design and power. Ephesians 1:11 states,

“that God works all things after the counsel of His will.” Weymouth translates it, “whose might carries out in everything.” The Knox version is, “for it is He who is at work everywhere.” In I Peter 4:19 we are admonished to commit our souls to God *“as a faithful creator.”* In Psalm 119:90 we read, *“Thy faithfulness is to all generations, Thou has established the earth and it remaineth.”* Colossians 1:17 teaches, *“He is before all things and by Him all things hold together.”* The Scriptures teach that it is God who gives stability to human life. Many have questioned this. There were the deists who flourished in the 18th century in England; Shaftesbury, Hobbes, Francis Newport, whose teaching later culminated in the broader skepticism of Hume and Gibbon. These men were convinced that the best we have is an absentee God who following creation has turned the maintenance over to secondary law. The true Christian teaching is that God has not withdrawn Himself from His creation, but He is ever working to sustain life. It is God who shall supply all our needs. (Philippians 4:19) The words of a faithful God in creation are, *“As long as the earth remaineth there shall be seed time and harvest and cold and heat and summer and winter.”* (Genesis 8:22)

IV. DAILY GOD WILL BE FAITHFUL IN THE OFFER OF HIS SALVATION:

We may be certain that God is favorably disposed to us because He has given us His Word, sent us His Son, and provided us with His Spirit. I Corinthians 1:9 describes a quality of life which is impossible and unthinkable apart from God's faithfulness in these ways. *“God is faithful, by whom ye are called unto the fellowship of His Son.”* I Thessalonians 5:24 gathers up the same thought, *“Faithful is He which calleth you, who will do it.”* By virtue of what God has done we understand that the initiative is His. No human merit, worth, deservedness, or ability can account for our redemption. Salvation is rooted and grounded in the faithfulness of God. In the words Of Jesus, *“Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.”* Our salvation, further, does not depend upon our faithfulness, but upon God's. *“He who has begun a good work in our lives will persist in it.”* (Philippians 1:6) The fact that we are able to believe is by God's faithfulness in the work of redemption in the first place. (Romans 8:38-39)

We may discern the reason God will be faithful in the offer of His salvation. You see, God has not created the world, nor does He sustain life in order that both will ultimately be taken from Him. Rather, we have been created by a faithful God to be called to Him, to glorify Him and to enjoy Him forever. The Christian gospel will be sounded throughout the coming new year having substance in a faithful God continuing to offer new and eternal life in Christ.

V. DAILY GOD WILL BE FAITHFUL IN TIMES OF TEMPTATION:

Is there a believer who has been around the Bible for any length of time who is not familiar with I Corinthians 10:13? *“There is no temptation taken you but such is as common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation make a way of escape that ye may be able to bear it.”* Note those words, *“But God is faithful.”* It goes without saying that if there is a time in our lives when we need the faithfulness of God it is when temptation and trial come. The text reassures us that is the case and the thought of endurance literally means a way out, There is a deliverance designed and specifically tailored to every temptation and trial. As the temptation or trial takes place within His sovereignty so has the relief and deliverance. We have not been ambushed. God will not allow a solicitation to evil nor a trial to be so intense except that it is regulated by Him to not exceed our endurance as we trust Him completely. May God grant that we shall be able to declare His faithfulness of our God in these dark and uninvited times in our lives. We should never think of temptation or trial without relating them to God's faithfulness. The text serves to impress upon our minds the permissive and protective faithfulness of God. It is also well to examine the context of this remarkable promise. Paul recounts the temptations that faced the Children of Israel in the past and the children of God in every age. Then he gives the word of caution, *“Wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.”* The application is clear, we are not to be so naive as to think acceptance of Christ negates dependence on Christ. Those whom God calls, He enables.

VI. DAILY GOD WILL BE FAITHFUL IN TIMES OF AFFLICTION:

Psalm 119:75 reads, *“Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.”* It is very difficult for us to accept the fact that God sends affliction. The point is that when God does smite us with the rod of affliction, He does so in faithfulness. He never does so without a reason. When His rod falls upon us He would want us to say with Daniel, *“O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto Thee, but unto us confusion of faces.”* (9:7) Undoubtedly it is part of God's purpose in affliction that we seek Him as expressed by Hosea 5:15, *“In their affliction they will seek me early.”* Psalm 89:32-33 is also helpful.

VII. DAILY GOD WILL BE FAITHFUL IN FORGIVENESS:

Prayer is the Christian's stock in trade and no prayer more sincerely offered than the one in which we agree with God that we have disobeyed and failed Him. This

is the significance in I 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.”* There are many burdens which believers carry through life which are calculated to rob them of their joy in the Lord and to eliminate them from His service. Confidence in the Lord can do much to sustain them. This confidence may be defined as a state of mind free from doubt or misgiving. We can be confident that God forgives us when we exercise a regret and resolve toward **Him** in times of failure. We have His word on the matter. There is no need to carry the burden of guilt born of unconfessed sin in our lives in the new year.

VIII. DAILY GOD WILL BE FAITHFUL IN PRAYER:

The opportunity for God to display His faithfulness may be one of the reasons why there are so many places in Scripture where believers are directed to pray. Sample readings may be taken from Luke 18:1; I Thessalonians 5:17; Philippians 4:6; I Timothy 2:1 and Ephesians 6:18-19. We are aware that it is correct to say that God always answers prayer and that such answers may be in the form of yes, no, wait, or in a different way. I cannot help thinking sometimes that these answers beg the question and that when most of us pray and talk about answers in prayer, we mean yes answers. Could this be suggested in II Corinthians 1:20, *“All the promises of God find their yes in Christ?”* There is no question about the fact that God wills that we obtain from Him by means of prayer. We are told many times over that the reason we have not is because we ask not. (Matthew 7:7, 21:22; John 16:24; James 4:2) Any study of the faithfulness of God will have to include His promised responses in prayer. The Bible declares that God in faithfulness will hear and will answer our prayers. Little wonder the Psalmist cried, *“Hear my prayer, O Lord, give ear to my supplications; in Thy faithfulness answer me, and in Thy righteousness.”* (Psalm 143:1)

IX. DAILY GOD WILL BE FAITHFUL IN THE OUTWORKING OF HIS PLAN TO HONOR HIS OWN:

The sequel of life’s hardships will reveal that God has neither deceived or forsaken His own. We may find it impossible to harmonize what appear to be providential lapses in God’s watch over our lives, but we may rest assured that God will prove Himself in the glorifying of His people.

Paul was resting in this confidence when he wrote, *“I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.”* (II Timothy 1:12) Other helpful references are Romans 8:30,

"whom He called.,them He also glorified," I Thessalonians 5:24, *"Faithful is He which calleth you, who also will do it."* We might also make use of the Peter reference here, *"Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator."* (I Peter 4:19) The sooner we are fully persuaded that God will never act out of character toward us, so that we trustfully resign ourselves to Him, the sooner we will realize that He does all things well.

CONCLUSION:

New Year's affords an excellent time to review the doctrine of God's faithfulness. The truth prevails in Scripture. From the statement in Deuteronomy which states that *"God is the Lord, the faithful God,"* to almost the closing verse in the Book of Revelation, where Heaven is opened and one riding a white horse, who bears the name Faithful and True, throughout the entire Bible, the faithfulness of God is declared.

A realization of this truth can change our lives. One Hudson Taylor came to a new experience of God in his life upon reading the words of Mark 11:22, *"Have faith in God."* After studying the original language Taylor concluded that the verse could be rendered, *"Hold fast the faithfulness of God."* This brought about what he later described as "the exchanged life." The emphasis had to do with the understanding of the Christian life in terms of exchanging what we are for what Christ is.

God is faithful! Do we know it? Are we convinced of it? Here are three words which spell out comfort, confidence and courage as we face the new year. Is it possible to live like that in a world marked by faithlessness and fearfulness? May God enable us to say with utter sincerity and certainty, God is faithful! This truth was exclaimed in Corinth centuries ago. Has it stood the test of time? Will it stand the test of 1978?

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January 1, 1978