

THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

The Faithfulness of God

Lesson #15

It should be noted that the faithfulness of God is sometimes included or categorized under the attribute of God's veracity.¹ Erickson shows a distinction when he says, "If God's genuineness is a matter of his being true and veracity is his telling of the truth, then his faithfulness means that he proves to be true."² Since God is a single being, we should not try to divide Him up into the pieces defined by His attributes. We can all agree that God speaks the truth, because He is true, and He always acts in accordance with His holy, just, and righteous nature. Therefore, he speaks truth and is faithful.

I. DEFINITION OF THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD

A. Louis Berkhof defines God's faithfulness as,

"That perfection of His being by virtue of which He fully answers to the idea of the Godhead, is perfectly reliable in His revelation, and sees things as they really are."³

B. God's faithfulness is His perfect reliability. His Word is the track, His providence the engine, His faithfulness is the train which always arrives on time.

II. ILLUSTRATIONS OF GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

Millard Erickson illustrates God's faithfulness saying,

"His promise to Abraham of a son came when Abraham and Sarah were seventy-five and sixty-five years of age respectively. Sarah was already past the age of childbearing and had proved to be barren. The promise was repeated over a period of twenty-five years; but without sign of the expected heir, even Abraham despaired of the promise being fulfilled and took steps on his own to provide a son for himself (Ishmael). Yet God proved faithful- the son whom God had promised was born (Isaac). Years later, God commanded Abraham to put this son to death. Again God proved faithful by providing a substitute sacrifice."⁴

1 For an example of this, see Louis Berkhof's, *Systematic Theology*, pgs. 69-70. Berkhof includes the faithfulness of God within his discussion of God's veracity.

2 Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, pg. 291.

3 Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, pgs. 69.

4 Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, pg. 291.

III. LOGICAL ARGUMENTS FOR THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD

A. W. Tozer reasons,

“In studying any attribute, the essential oneness of all the attributes soon becomes apparent. We see, for instance, that if God is self-existent He must be also self-sufficient; and if He has power He, being infinite, must have all power. If He possesses knowledge, His infinitude assures us that He possesses all knowledge. Similarly, His immutability presupposes faithfulness. If He is unchanging, it follows that He could not be unfaithful since that would require Him to change. Any failure within the divine character would argue imperfection and since God is perfect, it could not occur. Thus the attributes explain each other and prove that they are but glimpses the mind enjoys of the absolute perfect Godhead.”⁵

IV. THOUGHTS TO PONDER ABOUT GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

Louis Berkhof provokes us to thought saying,

“It is generally called His *faithfulness*, in virtue of which He is ever mindful of His covenant and fulfills all the promises which He has made to His people. This faithfulness of God is of the utmost practical significance to the people of God. It is the ground of their confidence, the foundation of their hope, and the cause of their rejoicing. It saves them from the despair to which their own unfaithfulness might easily lead, gives them courage to carry on in spite of their failures, and fills their hearts with joyful anticipations, even when they are deeply conscious of the fact that they have forfeited all the blessings of God.”⁶

V. SCRIPTURAL SUPPORT FOR GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

- A. Numb. 23:19 -- “God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent; Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?”
- B. Deut. 7:9-10 -- “Know therefore that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments; 10 but repays those who hate Him to their faces, to destroy them; He will not delay with him who hates Him, He will repay him to his face.”
- C. Psa. 89:1-37 – “I will sing of the lovingkindness of the Lord forever; To all generations I will make known Your faithfulness with my mouth. 2 For I have said, “Lovingkindness will be built up forever; In the heavens You will establish Your faithfulness.” 3 “I have made a covenant with My chosen; I have sworn to

5 A. W. Tozer, *Knowledge of the Holy*, pgs. 78-79.

6 Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, pgs. 70.

David My servant, 4 I will establish your seed forever And build up your throne to all generations.” Selah.

5 The heavens will praise Your wonders, O Lord; Your faithfulness also in the assembly of the holy ones. 6 For who in the skies is comparable to the Lord? Who among the sons of the mighty is like the Lord, 7 A God greatly feared in the council of the holy ones, And awesome above all those who are around Him? 8 O Lord God of hosts, who is like You, O mighty Lord? Your faithfulness also surrounds You. 9 You rule the swelling of the sea; When its waves rise, You still them. 10 You Yourself crushed Rahab like one who is slain; You scattered Your enemies with Your mighty arm.

11 The heavens are Yours, the earth also is Yours; The world and all it contains, You have founded them. 12 The north and the south, You have created them; Tabor and Hermon shout for joy at Your name. 13 You have a strong arm; Your hand is mighty, Your right hand is exalted. 14 Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; Lovingkindness and truth go before You. 15 How blessed are the people who know the joyful sound! O Lord, they walk in the light of Your countenance. 16 In Your name they rejoice all the day, And by Your righteousness they are exalted. 17 For You are the glory of their strength, And by Your favor our horn is exalted. 18 For our shield belongs to the Lord, And our king to the Holy One of Israel.

19 Once You spoke in vision to Your godly ones, And said, “I have given help to one who is mighty; I have exalted one chosen from the people. 20 “I have found David My servant; With My holy oil I have anointed him, 21 With whom My hand will be established; My arm also will strengthen him. 22 “The enemy will not deceive him, Nor the son of wickedness afflict him. 23 “But I shall crush his adversaries before him, And strike those who hate him. 24 “My faithfulness and My lovingkindness will be with him, And in My name his horn will be exalted. 25 “I shall also set his hand on the sea And his right hand on the rivers. 26 “He will cry to Me, ‘You are my Father, My God, and the rock of my salvation.’ 27 “I also shall make him My firstborn, The highest of the kings of the earth. 28 “My lovingkindness I will keep for him forever, And My covenant shall be confirmed to him. 29 “So I will establish his descendants forever And his throne as the days of heaven.

30 “If his sons forsake My law And do not walk in My judgments, 31 If they violate My statutes And do not keep My commandments, 32 Then I will punish their transgression with the rod And their iniquity with stripes. 33 “But I will not break off My lovingkindness from him, Nor deal falsely in My faithfulness. 34 “My covenant I will not violate, Nor will I alter the utterance of My lips. 35 “Once I have sworn by My holiness; I will not lie to David. 36 “His descendants shall endure forever And his throne as the sun before Me. 37 “It shall be established forever like the moon, And the witness in the sky is faithful.” Selah.

- D. Psa. 36:5 – “Your lovingkindness, O Lord, extends to the heavens, Your faithfulness reaches to the skies.”

- E. Isa. 11:1-5 – “Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, And a branch from his roots will bear fruit. 2 The Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him, The spirit of wisdom and understanding, The spirit of counsel and strength, The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. 3 And He will delight in the fear of the Lord, And He will not judge by what His eyes see, Nor make a decision by what His ears hear; 4 But with righteousness He will judge the poor, And decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth; And He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked. 5 Also righteousness will be the belt about His loins, And faithfulness the belt about His waist.”
- F. Lam. 3:22-23 – “The Lord’s lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, For His compassions never fail. 23 They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.”
- G. I Cor. 1:9 – “God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”
- H. II Tim. 2:13 – “If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.”
- I. Heb. 6:17-20 – “In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath, 18 so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us. 19 This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil, 20 where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.”
- J. Heb. 10:23 – “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.”
- K. I Pet. 4:19 – “Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.”

VI. ERRORS CONCERNING GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

- A. Error -- God is not faithful because I don't see Him fulfilling the promises He has made in the Bible in the time and way I expect.
- B. Error -- God is not faithful because my life or the lives of others I know are miserable.
- C. Error -- God is not faithful because certain people who call themselves Christians seem to have been let down by God.
- D. Error -- God is not faithful because I tried to do what He said and here I am suffering for it.

VII. APPLICATION OF THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD

A. God will be faithful in preserving us unto salvation. (Rom. 8:28-30; I Cor. 1:8-9; I Thess. 5:23-24)

B. God will be faithful to discipline believers for their good and His glory. (Heb. 12:5-11)

C. God will never remove His lovingkindness from the elect.

D. God's faithfulness helps keep those who are His from falling into the sins of worry, anxiety, and fretting.

E. God's past faithfulness as described in the Bible and as experienced in our lives and the lives of others helps us to trust Him in the present.

F. A. W. Tozer addresses God's faithfulness as the foundation of our hope saying,

"Upon God's faithfulness rests our whole hope of future blessedness. Only as He is faithful will His covenants stand, and His promises be honored. Only as we have complete assurance that He is faithful may we live in peace and look forward with assurance to the life to come."⁷

G. Because God is faithful, we too are to be faithful in what we do.

H. A. W. Pink points out the obstacles to believing that God is faithful when he says:

"There are seasons in the lives of all when it is not easy, no not even for Christians, to believe that God *is* faithful. Our faith is sorely tried, our eyes bedimmed with tears, and we can no longer trace the outworkings of His love. Our ears are distracted with the noises of the world, harassed by the atheistic

When God smites us with the rod of chastisement, it is *faithfulness* which wields it. To acknowledge this means that we humble ourselves before Him, own that we fully deserve His correction, and instead of murmuring, thank Him for it. God never afflicts without reason. . . . God is not only faithful not withstanding afflictions, but faithful in sending them.
A. W. Pink, *The Attributes of God*, pg. 55.

"The faithfulness of God is a datum of sound theology but to the believer it becomes far more than that: it passes through the processes of the understanding and goes on to become nourishing food for the soul."
A. W. Tozer, *Knowledge of the Holy*, pg. 80.

⁷ A. W. Tozer, *Knowledge of the Holy*, pg. 81.

whisperings of Satan, and we can no longer hear the sweet accents of His still small voice. Cherished plans have been thwarted, friends on whom we relied have failed us, a professed brother or sister in Christ has betrayed us. We are staggered. We sought to be faithful to God, and now a dark cloud hides Him from us. We find it difficult, yea, impossible, for carnal reason to harmonize His frowning providence with His gracious promises. Ah, faltering soul, severely tried fellow pilgrim, seek grace to heed Isa. 50:10, "Who is among you that fears the Lord, that obeys 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.*"⁸

*"Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace,
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.*

*Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take,
The clouds ye so much dread,
Are rich with mercy, and shall break
In blessing o'er your head."*⁹

*Happy the man whose hopes rely
On Israel's God: He made the sky,
And earth, and seas, with all their train;
His truth forever stands secure.
He saves the oppressed, He feeds the poor,
And none shall find His promise vain.
Isaac Watts*

8 A. W. Pink, *The Attributes of God*, pgs. 53-54.

9 Ibid.