

## Today's Sermon

# Great is God's Faithfulness

## Romans 3:3-4

Pastor Phil Layton, GCBC, February 6, 2022

Please turn to Romans 3 and we'll continue our **series on God's attributes** in the book of Romans, those qualities or **characteristics of God's character**:

1:17 – God's Righteousness

1:18 – God's Wrath

1:20 – God's Power

2:4 – God's Kindness

**3:3-4 – God's Faithfulness**

In Rom 3 Paul starts with the advantages of the Jews as they were given the very words of God in the Hebrew scriptures. Rom 3:3: *What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God? <sup>4</sup> By no means! Let God be true though every one were a liar, as it is written, "That you may be justified in your words, and prevail when you are judged."*

**Unfaithful Israelites didn't nullify the faithfulness of God** and His promises to Israel. Some were faithless, but the unchanging God is forever faithful. That's good news for us as Christians, too, as Paul wrote to another church in 2 Tim 2:13, listen to this: *'If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself'* (NAS). God is faithful and true in a world that isn't.

Everyday there's people unfaithful to promises, unfaithful to wedding vows. In society especially lately it's hard to know who or what we can trust and what's true. There's heightened distrust of media, even medical information where there's big money involved and so much is about politics and power. Promises that this or that will be faithful to stop a virus, they've all failed. It shows 'you don't know, you're not in control, God is, you need His truth.'

A Roman governor asked Jesus 'what is truth?' Government doesn't have it. From false narratives to fake news, conspiracy theories, critical theory that distorts history, misinformation on the highest levels of our society and once respected agencies, misleading statistics, and the deception is unmasked in politicians who don't believe their own words. But God is true though every one is a liar! In our unfaithful world we have a God faithful to His Word. A faithless people can't nullify His faithful promises, to Israel or to His church

### OUTLINE:

1. **God's faithfulness in the past**
2. **God's faithfulness to future Israel**
3. **God's faithfulness for us now and forever**

## 1. God's faithfulness in the past

When v. 3 uses the phrase '*the faithfulness of God,*' **what does that mean?**

Brian Russell's book on God's attributes defines faithfulness as His **loyalty to His people and reliability to His promises**. Or He's truthful, dependable.

In the context, Rom 3:2 talks about how God entrusted His oracles, that's His spoken word in the scriptures that He gave to and through the Jews. In the past God showed His faithfulness to them and spoke it to them for us.

Those scriptures call Him '*the faithful God who keeps covenant*' (Dt 7:9).

One translation uses the phrase '**His faithful love**' 140x, we '*depend on His faithful love...trust in **God's faithful love**...God's faithful love is constant.*'<sup>1</sup>

The OT says several times God is '**abounding in ... faithfulness**'.<sup>2</sup> 3x the Psalms say His faithfulness **reaches to the clouds**. Other Psalms say God has **faithfulness all around Him**, and as His people '**his faithfulness is a shield**'.<sup>3</sup>

A more **modern song by Shai Linne** fills out the **definition of faithfulness**:

You are faithful, never changing, From age to age, you remain the same and ...  
 When we believed, You were faithful to save us  
 And that means You'll be faithful to change us...  
 From the things You say, You don't budge,  
 You're faithful to save and You're faithful to judge

The God who is just became one of us, The faithful God is the God we can trust  
 We can't trust us- on You we rely, Everything we need, Lord, You will supply  
 Even when we're faithless, You remain faithful  
 You cannot deny Yourself... We're so thankful...<sup>4</sup>

Ps 107 is all about His faithfulness in the past that we're to thank Him for. It says 4x '**give thanks to the LORD for His faithful love...**' (v. 8, 15, 21, 31, HCSB), and it ends with '*pay attention to these things and consider the LORD's acts of faithful love.*' This demands our consideration and attention, God's acts of faithful love in the past, and His faithfulness to all generations

**Think about His faithfulness in your past, tell others about it today**

Genesis talks about God as faithful and that attribute is highlighted literally from Genesis to Revelation. Rev 19:11 "*Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True...*"

Jesus is the Truth and the life, and all God's promises find their Yes in Him.

**Steven Curtis Chapman** wrote a song on **Jesus as Faithful and True**. It was after his 5-year-old daughter Maria had been accidentally hit by a truck in their driveway by her brother. He tried CPR and the paramedics couldn't save her life. But in that tragedy this truth sustained him in his faithful Lord

He wrote: in every situation He has proved His love to me;  
 When I lack the understanding, He gives more grace to me ...  
 When I look back on the road I've travelled,  
 I see so many times He carried me through;  
 And if there's one thing that I've learned in my life,  
 My Redeemer is Faithful and True. Everything He has said He will do,  
 And every morning His mercies are new. My Redeemer is Faithful and True.<sup>5</sup>

That's from Lamentations 3: *Because of the **LORD's faithful love ... His mercies never end. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness! ... Even if He causes suffering, He will show compassion according to His abundant, faithful love*** (v. 22-23, 32 HCSB). The prophet could look back and see God's faithfulness in the past which gave comfort in the present.

And that takes us to the

### **2<sup>nd</sup> point: God's faithfulness to future Israel**

The OT said '***His faithful love to Israel endures forever.***'<sup>6</sup> Not for awhile ... forever. Rom 3:3 asks is God's faithful love still true despite faithless Jews? Some of them are unfaithful, will God be faithful to His promises to Israel? v. 2 mentions the oracles of God, what about God's prophecies for Israel? Turn to ch 9 because Paul comes back to this question he brings up in ch 3.

Rom 9 says **not all physical Israel is spiritual Israel** (saving faith makes one a true full Israelite), v. 6 *but it's not as though God's word has failed*. Look at Rom 9:4: *They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises*. Then v. 5 talks about the Jewish patriarchs, their race or ethnicity, according to the flesh. Jesus was a Jew, but did God un-adopt Israel for rejecting Him as the Messiah? **Does the church replace Israel's national covenants and promises?**

**Paul says no, His Word hasn't failed though not all Israel is spiritual**

Look at v. 4, Paul says of the Israelites '*to them belong [present tense] the adoption, the glory, the covenants [they're not un-adopted, the covenants are still theirs, and the end of v. 4 says to them still belong]...the promises*.

Not all believe or receive them, but God is faithful to His covenant promises

**All within Israel who have faith will have the fulness of those blessings**

Now to go ch 11. Has God rejected His people Israel and replaced them with the Gentile church? Say it another way, is God through with the Jews?

**11:1** *I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin.* <sup>2</sup> *God has not rejected his people...* Paul says I'm Exhibit A of God's promises to the 12 tribes and the descendants of Abraham. God is not through with the Jews. God hasn't rejected or replaced Israel by the church.

True the 1<sup>st</sup> century nation of Israel sinfully rejected and failed to see their Messiah, so Paul went to other nations to preach the riches of Christ, but look at v. 12, it says: *if their [Israel's] trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their **full inclusion** mean!* Another translation has '*much more will [Israel's] **full restoration**...*'<sup>7</sup> In Acts 1:6 the apostles asked "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"<sup>7</sup> He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority." The Lord doesn't correct them or say He won't restore Israel, He says it's not for you to know when. But God has fixed a time of full restoration, a full inclusion.

In Paul's day, Israel rejected the gospel of reconciliation, so Paul brought that message to the world, but Paul saw a day coming when their rejection would turn to acceptance. <sup>15</sup> *For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, **what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?***

Sounds to me like Ezekiel 37, a prophecy of Israel's valley of dead bones:<sup>8</sup>  
*This is what the Sovereign LORD says...I will put breath in you, and **you will come to life**. Then you will know that I am the LORD...these bones are **the whole house of Israel**...I will put my Spirit in you and you will live...I will take the Israelites out of the nations where they have gone. I will gather them from all around and bring them back into their own land. I will make them **one nation in the land**... I will **save them from all their sin**...I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be **an everlasting covenant**... I will be their God, and they will be my people. Then **the nations will know**...*

**Charles Spurgeon:** 'if words mean anything... *in their own land ...**there shall be a spiritual restoration**, a conversion in fact, of the tribes of Israel.*'<sup>9</sup>

[Spurgeon said Israel said] 'with the prophet Ezekiel, "Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off..." We have no instance in history of a nation dying and coming to life again. Assyria, Babylon...Persia...these had their day, and they failed and passed away. Where are they now? Can these empires live again? ... these vast dominions died ... ceased to be a living power. Can they ever be restored? Impossible. But because her God liveth, Israel can never die. Israel will be a nation yet again...rejoicing in her own Messiah...Shall not [Israel's] restoration be as life from the dead? It shall'<sup>10</sup>

**A member of our church** years ago said what **convinced him the Bible was true** was Rom 1 and **God's faithfulness to Israel** when so many have tried to wipe them out. OT Hittites, Amorites, etc., are gone, but not the Israelites. **Israel exists** because God is faithful and will still fulfill promises to them.

**Jonathan Edwards** wrote (quote) '**Nothing is more certainly foretold than this national conversion of the Jews** is in the eleventh chapter of Romans.'<sup>11</sup>

The author of amazing grace saw future grace to Israel the most amazing<sup>12</sup>

**11:25** Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: **a partial hardening has come upon Israel**, until the fullness of the **Gentiles** has come in. <sup>26</sup> And in this way **all Israel will be saved**, as it is written, “The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob” [Israel]; <sup>27</sup> “and this will be **my covenant** with them when **I take away their sins**.” <sup>28</sup> As regards the gospel, they [Israel] are enemies for your sake. But as regards election, they **are beloved** for the sake of their forefathers. <sup>29</sup> For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

**God will be faithful to future Israel by sovereign grace**

**God is faithful to His irrevocable covenant** and will save Israel in the end.

Paul quotes promises that still belong to Israel and the covenant with Israel where He will take away their sins one day. **Israel is not un-adopted or un-elected**. God is faithful, many Israelites are enemies of the gospel now, but Israel is still beloved because of God’s promises to their forefathers (David and Abraham). And **Paul uses the future tense** for a day coming when **all Israel** [that’s alive at the end] **will be saved**, as it is written [in the prophets]. He’s quoting the OT to prove **Israel’s hardening is partial and not permanent**

**Charles Hodge said Israel rejecting Jesus isn’t total or final<sup>13</sup>**

**Sproul**: ‘I do think that what is happening in Palestine today is significant ...before the end of the age...as there was a national judgment, so **there will be a national restoration**...the nation as a nation will be restored to God.’<sup>14</sup>

That phrase ‘**all Israel**’ is used in Zech 12 in some translations for **His future grace**,<sup>15</sup> God says: **I will pour out a spirit of grace and prayer on the family of David and on the people of Jerusalem**. They will look on me whom they have pierced and mourn for him...**All Israel will mourn, each clan by itself ...On that day a fountain will be opened...to cleanse them from all their sins**

That’s a **mourning over sin**, as by grace the people of Jerusalem see Jesus was who they pierced on the cross and pray by grace for cleansing from sin.

**Martyn Lloyd-Jones** in his sermons on Rom 11 quotes that text (Zech 12:10) for Paul’s point ‘that the future restoration of Israel as a nation is certain.’<sup>16</sup>

Zech 8:7 connects it to God’s faithfulness: *the LORD Almighty says: “I will save [Israel] from the countries of the east and the west. <sup>8</sup> I will bring them back to live in Jerusalem; they will be my people, and I will be faithful ...*

Jer 31 *At that time...I will be the God of all the clans of Israel...I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you... Thus says the LORD, who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars...If this fixed order departs from before me ... then shall the offspring of Israel cease from being a nation before me forever...then I will cast off all...Israel for all that they have done...’<sup>17</sup>*

But until then – **as long as days and seasons don't end – neither will Israel.** Sun, moon, and stars in their courses above, join with all nature in manifold witness to His great faithfulness, mercy and love--to future Israel and for us!

**That takes us to**

### #3 and finally: His faithfulness for us now and forever

How should this impact us as Gentiles? **3 applications: first, Our praise**

In Rom 11:33 Paul launches into praise for the depth of the riches of the attributes of God. His faithfulness to Israel and the fullness of the Gentiles is all to v. 36, from God, through God, and to God be the glory forever. Amen!

See God's faithfulness and sing like Rom 8 '**no condemnation now I dread**'!

Israel's sin didn't separate them from God's love and should make us praise God for His promise at the end of ch 8, past, present or things to come, life or death, nothing in creation can separate us from the love of God in Christ!

Look at Rom 15, where Paul talks more about how Christ's ministry to the Jews should impact our worship as Gentiles. **15:8** *For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised [Jews] to show God's truthfulness [or faithfulness], in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs,<sup>9</sup> and **in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy.** As it is written, "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name."*

That's from a Psalm, another Psalm says, '*with my mouth will I make known your faithfulness to all generations*' (89:1), and '*sing praise to Your name... declare your faithful love in the morning and your faithfulness at night.*'<sup>18</sup>

We need to sing and speak of His faithfulness to all generations all the time.

2<sup>nd</sup> area God's faithfulness should impact us in: **Our service and stewardship**

Turn to 1 Cor 4, just a few pages forward in the next letter that Paul writes.

4:1 *This is how one should regard us, **as servants of Christ and stewards** [that means one entrusted with the Master's resources to be wise with how to use]...<sup>2</sup> Moreover, it is required of stewards that **they be found faithful.***

God has been so faithful in financial provision for this church through you and your faithful giving. As elders we are so thankful for that and prayerful as we want to be good stewards of these resources and our church's debt.

As a **specific application** of wanting to be faithful stewards, **the elders** desire to **pay down our debt** to free up more of your faithful giving for ministry as we look to the future. At our annual meeting we mentioned our 2 loans and the smaller of those is at 311K (also has higher interest). We would love to pay that down or pay that off in the next couple years or so with an increase in giving to the principal. As God provides through faithful giving, paying off our loan of 311K will free up about 30K a

year that could go to ministry needs. It would also save over 130K in interest, which is a stewardship issue

So we'll share more about that in the future and begin giving more to that loan starting this month D.V. The elders wanted to share that prayer in the context of the teaching of God's Word on stewardship and faithfulness in giving. As God is faithful to meet all our needs, we're called to be faithful, sacrificial, and joyful givers to His kingdom work. Any extra giving that comes in beyond our needs we plan to pay down debt to be faithful stewards

Notice v. 1 also calls us servants. How are you giving of yourself in serving the church? Are you investing your time and talents, too? Jesus calls us to live so the Master will say one day 'well done good and faithful servant' (Mt 25). The Bible commands '*serve him faithfully with all your heart. For consider what great things he has done for you*' (1 Sam 12:24). Be faithful, humble. Gen 32:10 '*I am not worthy of the least of all...**the faithfulness that you have shown to your servant...***' Be humble that He's faithful to you

3<sup>rd</sup> final way God's faithfulness should impact us: Our hope in the gospel

Heb 10:23 "*Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for **he who promised is faithful.***" That's our hope in this world of sin.

Flip forward to 1 Cor 10, where Paul gives one more encouragement of God's faithfulness in sin or temptation. **10:13** *No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and **God is faithful**, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it*

**What if we give in to sin?** 1 Jn 1:9 *If we confess our sins, **He is faithful** and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

If you've been sinful, if you've been unfaithful, if you lack faith, **cry out to the Lord** to forgive you and to cleanse you. Jesus is faithful and merciful to forgive if you turn from sin to trust His faithful work on the cross for you.

Lam 3:20 *My soul continually remembers it and is bowed down within me. <sup>21</sup> But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: <sup>22</sup> **The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases**; his mercies never come to an end [KJV compassions fail not]; <sup>23</sup> they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. <sup>24</sup> "The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in him."*

## Footnotes:

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<sup>1</sup> Psalm 33:18, 52:1, 8 HCSB.

<sup>2</sup> Exodus 34:6, Psalm 86:15, etc.

<sup>3</sup> Psalm 36:6, 57:10, 108:4, 89:8, 91:4.

<sup>4</sup> Shai Linne, "Faithful God," Attributes of God album with Lampmode Records.

<sup>5</sup> Steven Curtis Chapman, "My Redeemer is Faithful and True."

<sup>6</sup> Ezra 3:11 HCSB.

<sup>7</sup> NET.

<sup>8</sup> v. 5, 6, 11, 14, 21-23, 26-28 NIV.

<sup>9</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, "The Restoration and Conversion of the Jews," in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 10 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1864), 428.

<sup>10</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, "Consolation from Resurrection," in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 34 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1888), 550.

<sup>11</sup> Barry Horner, *Future Israel*, Appendix A: Jonathan Edwards.

<sup>12</sup> SOURCE?

<sup>13</sup> SOURCE?

<sup>14</sup> ADD FOOTNOTES HERE

<sup>15</sup> Zechariah 12:10, 14, 13:1 NLT.

<sup>16</sup> Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: Exposition of Chapter 11 – To God's Glory* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2009) 194.

<sup>17</sup> Jeremiah 31:1-3, 35-37.

<sup>18</sup> Psalm 92:1-2 HCSB.