

December 30th, 2018

1 - VIDEO: FAITHFULNESS OF GOD

2 – TITLE SLIDE

WELCOME

Good Morning! Welcome to Fox Valley Christian Church!

OUR LIVES ARE A PICTURE OF GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

Last week we talked about the faithfulness of God.

We said that God is faithful, He is steadfast in affection, and He is able to be this way because of who He is. It is in His very nature. Being all knowing, all powerful, holy, eternal, omnipresent, and unchanging.

He cannot be caught off guard, He can not be thwarted, He does not react to situations in the heat of the moment. This allows God to do what we cannot. He is able to be faithful, steadfast in affection.

This is so hard for us to understand because we are not faithful. There is not one person that we have been 100% faithful to and there is not one person that has been 100% faithful to us. We all fall short.

So maybe with our minds we intellectually say, "God is faithful." But with our hearts, we have a hard time really comprehending what it looks like to have a God that is faithful.

So because of this, we live our lives not fully trusting that God in fact is faithful. We live just waiting for the moment that He fails us, just like everyone else has.

Last week we identified 4 ways that God reveals His faithfulness to us.

Through His creation, through His people, through His character, and through His Word.

That is the intellectual and biblical basis for trusting God's faithfulness.

What we are going to do today is we are going to look at trusting in God's faithfulness when it really matters. We have to have the logical foundation because we have no desire to just throw our brains out, but the fact of the matter is the final way that we see God reveal His faithfulness to us ... it is the most important for us to digest and apply.

THROUGH HIS SHAPING OF OUR LIVES

God shows us His faithfulness in the way that He shapes our life. The way He intervenes in our lives when we are weak, when we are tempted, when we sin, and when we utterly, utterly fail. It's when you feel like you don't deserve it.

God shows us His faithfulness in the way He shapes our lives. When we feel like things are never going to work, when we feel like throwing in the towel, giving up, quitting ... we see God, in His faithfulness, working in our lives.

WE ARE WEAK

The first way we see God working in our lives is He is working when we are weak.

The apostle Paul is a great example of this. We see the apostle Paul having a conversation with God in a weak moment. He had some physical issue that God allowed Him to have, a thorn in his flesh he called it. Some people think malaria or epilepsy, some people think an eye disease. Some people think he might have had a bad back. Constant pain.

Whatever it was, there was something that made him weak.

2 CORINTHIANS 12:7-10

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⁷So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. ⁸Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me.

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⁹But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

5 – SCRIPTURE SLIDE

¹⁰For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Three times Paul speaks to God and asks for it to be taken away, but God's response is ..

“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”

And what is Paul's response? Paul says then I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. (ALL PLURAL) why? For the sake of Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

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OUR STORIES ARE POWERFUL. That is why God says to testify, to give our testimony, to tell people our story.

The reality of it is, we all experience weakness. And do you know what happens? **GOD MEETS US IN OUR WEAKNESS.**

Maybe in your weakness you want to bail out of your marriage, or you want to knock one of your kids across the head because they make you so crazy. Maybe in your weakness you struggle with lust or anger or envy or resentment.

That's where God meets us.

See, when we are weak, we tend to run and we want a silver bullet or we will find that person or we go eat or we open the

refrigerator and put something into us that we know is not good for us. **In our weakness we try and fill the holes.**

And here's the deal: God is faithful. If, in your weakness, rather than running to shopping or to work or to prescription drugs or to focusing on your kids or focusing on your work defining who you are going to be – in your weakness say:

God, I know your promise ... you said that you will sustain me. You said that your power is perfected in weakness. God, I can't do this without you.

God wants to meet you in your weakness. He wants to shape you. He wants to change you. Your character gets changed in weakness.

WEAKNESS IS HOW WE LEARN TO RELY ON GOD

God doesn't just meet us in our weakness, but our weakness is how we learn to rely on Him.

Joni Eareckson Tada, some of you may know of her. When she was young she dove into a lake she thought was very deep and it was only about two feet deep. She is a quadriplegic. She paints with her mouth, amazing pictures. She has a beautiful voice. She has written a number of books. She gives wheelchairs and helps people with special needs.

Backstage, in a green room, Chip Ingram had an opportunity to speak with her and this is what she said:

“You would think it would get easier by now. Every morning I wake up and someone has to put on my makeup, someone has to bathe me, someone has to put my clothes on me. And I just want to be discouraged and want to have a pity party and I want to say, God, why me? And all the rest. But then I realize that power is perfected in weakness. And I say, Oh God, if You would give me just grace for today to walk with You, and I do that every, single day and it doesn’t get any easier and I thank God that there is a heaven and I will walk and I will play. But until that day comes, I am going to ask Him to take my weakness and cause His power to be displayed.”

God wants you in your weakness to know, I will be faithful. Don’t bail out. Don’t take a cheap substitute. In your weakness, that’s when I will draw you nearer.

WE ARE TEMPTED

First, when we are weak. Second is when you are tempted.

1 CORINTHIANS 10:13

7 – SCRIPTURE SLIDE

¹³No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man.

You are not being tempted in a unique way that no one else has ever had to face.

God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

Two little points I want to make. You must understand the difference between temptation and sin. I meet people who don't understand that and they live with shame and guilt over things that are just normal.

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Let's pretend here. Let's pretend that God said that you are not allowed to eat Chocolate anymore.

And here's a piece of chocolate cake. It's like unbelievable, decadent, wicked chocolate. **Temptation:** Oh, I want that chocolate. I want that chocolate. Maybe you are at Sam's Club and they are giving out free samples of it. "Would you like one?" You're just tempted. You love chocolate. You can't live without chocolate. But you say, no. No, I'll pass.

You walk away. You were tempted. You haven't sinned. It just means there is something that attracts you to make you want to do something that, in this particular case, you know for sure is not God's will, it won't be good for you. You have been tempted to sin, but you said no.

See when we are tempted, God has given us the ability to say no. He has given us the ability to overcome temptation. How many temptations can we overcome? Every single one. What?!

Really?! I have had some pretty serious temptation. I have hit the breaking point.

Maybe you have come close, **but God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability.**

He is faithful ... because not only does He limit the extent to which you can be tempted, but **He also provides a way of escape so that you may be able to endure it.**

The next time you are tempted I want you to go to God in prayer and say God, I know that you are faithful and that you will provide a way of escape. God let me see it, let me use it. Thank you God.

WHEN WE SIN

But what about when we sin? Is God faithful when we sin?

I used chocolate cake as an example of temptation, but we know that we are tempted by far more destructive things than cake. For some it is prescription drugs, or alcohol, or pornography, or shopping our blues away, or overworking ... And the reality of it is, almost every time we give in and we fall to our temptations and sin ... we almost always immediately step right into another sin. We lie.

We try to cover our sin up. This is exactly what we saw from Adam and Eve and it is the pattern through all of scripture. All of us in here have sinned and then immediately sinned again by trying to cover it up with a lie.

It makes sense though that we would do that. Because isn't it the Father of Lies that gets us to fail in the first place. That gets us to not only fail to temptation, but to then begin to dig ourselves into this cycle of sin. He speaks these lies to us.

He says, "you can try, but you will fail. Willpower won't work. Your sin is unique, it's different. It is like no one else's sin. No one will understand. It's is who you are. It is engrained in you. Your family has struggled with it and you will to. It is inevitable that you will get stuck in this sin. That's how you are wired. You can't help yourself."

My prayer is that God will let us really see ourselves for who we are. Peel away the excuses and the denial and lies we tell ourselves that keep us trapped in sin.

Because if you don't get real and if you don't own it, if you don't say, "That's my chocolate, that's my sin, that's my struggle," then you don't change.

And then you receive the consequences of your behavior and it breaks your heavenly Father's heart. **But even when you blow it, when you sin, here's God's faithfulness:**

1 JOHN 1:9

9 – SCRIPTURE SLIDE

⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

See, once you take the chocolate and you have logged on one more time and you have spent money that you don't have and you took the vacation because it made you feel better and then, Ahh!

When you have gossiped about someone else because somehow saying untrue things or shaded things about someone else puts them down and makes you feel better out of the envy in your heart. We all do these things! Then you feel such shame, especially if it comes to light.

And God says, I am faithful. I will help you in your weakness. I will help you when you are tempted. When you are biting the chocolate like this, if you'll come clean and say, "Oh God. I agree with You." That's what the word confess means. **I agree with You.** This is wrong. Would You forgive me?

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Jesus said, Well, that's why I died. And I want to forgive you and I want to cleanse you and I want to put you on a new path.

I think most Christians are living with sort of a healthy dose of sin management. I don't think I'm sinning quite as bad or as much as other people. And I'm doing this and I'm doing this and of course the Scripture says this and I know it's a violation but everyone else is doing it and I think if I only do it at these times and these certain ways...

And you live with this God-consciousness over here and these blatant things that you know are wrong over here. And it's just

duplicity. And it tears at your soul. And it embarrasses the reputation of God.

WHEN WE UTTERLY FAIL

But what if you go beyond weakness and temptation and sin to, I mean, just failure like, I'm done!

Notice what the Scripture says about this wonderful, great God that takes messed up people like this and is faithful to change them from the inside out.

2 TIMOTHY 2:11-13

11 – SCRIPTURE SLIDE

¹¹The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with him, we will also live with him; ¹² if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us;

Did you get the parallelism? We have died with Christ, as in baptism, we are going to live with Him. We endure, even if we are persecuted, we are going to reign. There is reward.

If we deny Him by our behavior, by our actions, He will deny us. When you're not walking with God, He doesn't give you peace. His blessing is not on your life. He keeps wooing you but if we deny Him, He will deny us.

When you are faithless — when your whole spiritual engine breaks down and you have messed up beyond just sin, you are running away from God and you think there is no hope, you're in a black hole and you think God could never, ever, ever. . .

And your heart is getting so hard you don't even care and you're running away — when you are faithless, are you ready for this?

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¹³ if we are faithless, he remains faithful— for he cannot deny himself.

He remains faithful. Why? Because He can't deny Himself. It's His character.

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GOD IS FAITHFUL TO FORGIVE

From the age of 5 I grew up in a Christian home. When I was in High School I was the kid always wearing Christian shirts and leading Bible studies. I went off to college, going for my degree in business, and still tried to find a Church to plug into and a group on campus to worship with.

But I was tempted and I was tempted and I was tempted. I started pulling away from the different groups, I began to put my Bible down, and I started to buy into the lies. As I sinned, I felt this conviction. I felt this guilt and this shame.

I am assuming that all of you have sinned and felt the guilt that comes with it. If you have accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior, than I am assuming you have felt the conviction that sets in after you sin. God, I know that was wrong. God, I know that I shouldn't do that. God, I don't know why I did that.

The more I sinned, the more this started eating away at me and the more I began to take step after step away from God. It's like I thought that I could just push Him to the side and I wouldn't have to deal with the guilt. I know a lot of people that don't know God and they seem pretty happy in their sins.

Now my sins were causing me heartache on top of heartache and I know if I continued in my sin, I would be miserable, but I couldn't stand failing – so I just pushed God away thinking I wouldn't notice the failure if I didn't acknowledge God.

Do you know what God did?

He pursued me. I cannot tell you how many people came to me to ask me about God. To ask me about my relationship with God. It was like I couldn't avoid the topic. Then He put me in situations that were horrible. I was kicked out of college twice. That is one of the most embarrassing things that I can say because I pride myself in my mind. But the reality of it is, God was saving me. He was driving me home. He was pushing me back to Him.

He was breaking me down so that I was helpless without Him. Why?!

Because when I am faithless, He remains faithful ... He can't do anything other than remain faithful. It is who He is.

Wouldn't you like to go through life with a friend like that? Wouldn't you want to go through life with someone that, when you are tempted and when you are weak and when you sin and

when you just fail that would say, “Come to Me. Let Me love you. Let Me restore you.”

I’d like you to think about what you are going to do with your life as we close this series. I’d like you to really think about what it is going to look like for you to say to God, I am going to own my stuff, no more double life, it’s going to be a little bit scary. But I am going to pursue making Christ and knowing Him the number-one priority. And family and work and hobbies and money and plans will revolve around, I want to do life the way that would honor and please You.

HOW CAN WE RESPOND TO GOD’S FAITHFULNESS?

PUT YOUR PAST BEHIND YOU TODAY

How can we respond to God’s faithfulness?

Number one, put your past behind you today. Take out your chocolate cake issue, bring it before God, confess it, and tell Him, I’m done with this. I am going to ask You to forgive it. I’m going to own it. I’m putting it behind me. And His promise is: I am your friend.

What are friends like? When I have been with a friend who is really hurting and they start to cry, I don’t cross my arms and say, “Be a big boy! Stop crying!” What do we do? What do you do with people that you really love? You cry with them. And then you say something like, “Hey, I get it. I know your wife left you.” Or, “I get it. It has been twelve years you have been off

meth. And you lapsed. We are going to make it through this.”
Isn’t that what friends do?

You have got one that will never leave you.

BRING YOUR PRESENT PROBLEMS, PAINS, AND FAILURES TO JESUS TODAY

Second, bring your present problems, pains, and failures to Jesus today.

I think there are some of us who think that it’s by grace we have been saved but by our effort we are going to mature. Wrong. You need to bring the troubled marriage, the struggle, the attitude, the resentment, anything in your life, one of your kids, your frustration with being single ... whatever that is ... bring it to Jesus.

He would say, today, Let’s start new.

MATTHEW 11:28-30

14 – SCRIPTURE SLIDE

²⁸Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

He is not down on you.

It’s a picture of two oxen, and the yoke is the thing that connects them. Jesus says, We have to do life together. It’s not about: read the Bible and pray to earn any of God’s favor.

It's: Listen to Me, let Me help you, let Me bring people into your life. But you have to take your neck and say, "I want to get hooked up and do life with You, Jesus."

PUT YOUR HOPE FOR THE FUTURE IN THE ONE WHO WILL NEVER LET YOU DOWN

And then, finally, you place your hope for the future in the One who will never let you down.

JEREMIAH 17:5-8

15 – SCRIPTURE SLIDE

⁵ Thus says the Lord: "Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the Lord. ⁶ He is like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see any good come. He shall dwell in the parched places of the wilderness, in an uninhabited salt land.

When you are weak, when you are tempted, when you sin, and when you fail – we all do this – we think somebody, or something is out there for us to put our trust in. Something other than God.

Notice he goes on to say,

16 – SCRIPTURE SLIDE

⁷ "Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord.

17 – SCRIPTURE SLIDE

⁸ He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit."

In other words, circumstances don't have the power to make your life or break your life.

Put your hope in Christ and the only way to do that is you have got to get to know His Word and you have to connect with people and you have to recognize you can't live this life on your own, but Christ can live it through you.

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