

Free Grace Broadcaster

ISSUE 260

THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD

*Know therefore that the
LORD thy God, he is God,
the faithful God.*

Deuteronomy 7:9

Our Purpose

*“To humble the pride of man,
to exalt the grace of God in salvation,
and to promote real holiness in heart and life.”*

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260

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THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD

Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

UNAITHFULNESS is one of the most outstanding sins of these evil days. In the business world, a man's word is, with exceedingly rare exceptions, no longer his bond. In the social world, marital infidelity abounds on every hand, the sacred bonds of wedlock being broken with as little regard as the discarding of an old garment. In the ecclesiastical realm, thousands who have solemnly covenanted to preach the truth make no scruple to attack and deny it. Nor can reader or writer claim complete immunity from this fearful sin. In how many ways have we been unfaithful to Christ and to the light and privileges which God has entrusted to us! How refreshing, then—how unspeakably blessed—to lift our eyes above this scene of ruin and behold One Who is faithful—faithful in all things, faithful at all times!

“Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God” (Deu 7:9). **This quality is essential to His being; without it He would not be God.** For God to be unfaithful would be to act contrary to His nature, which were impossible. “If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself” (2Ti 2:13). Faithfulness is one of the glorious perfections of His being. He is, as it were, clothed with it: “O LORD God of hosts, who is a strong LORD like unto thee? or to thy faithfulness round about thee?” (Psa 89:8). So too when God became incarnate it was said, “Righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins” (Isa 11:5).

What a word is that in Psalm 36:5: “Thy mercy, O LORD, is in the heavens; and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds.” Far above all finite comprehension is the unchanging faithfulness of God. Everything about God is great, vast, incomparable. He never forgets, never fails, never falters, never forfeits His Word. To every declaration of promise or prophecy the Lord has exactly adhered. Every engagement of covenant or threatening He will make good, for “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?” (Num 23:19). Therefore does the believer exclaim, “His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness” (Lam 3:22-23).

Scripture abounds in illustrations of God's faithfulness. More than four thousand years ago, He said, “While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day

and night shall not cease” (Gen 8:22). Every year that comes furnishes a fresh witness to God’s fulfillment of this promise. In Genesis 15 we find that Jehovah declared unto Abraham, “Thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them...But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again” (Gen 15:13-16). Centuries ran their weary course. Abraham’s descendants groaned amid the brickkilns of Egypt. Had God forgotten His promise? No, indeed! Read Exodus 12:41: “And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt.” Through Isaiah the Lord declared, “Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isa 7:14). Again, centuries passed; but “when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman” (Gal 4:4).

God is true; His Word of promise is sure. In all His relations with His people, God is faithful. He may be safely relied upon. No one ever yet really trusted Him in vain. We find this precious truth expressed almost everywhere in the Scriptures, for His people need to know that faithfulness is an essential part of the divine character. This is the basis of our confidence in Him. But it is one thing to accept the faithfulness of God as a divine truth; it is quite another to *act upon it*. God has given us many “exceeding great and precious promises” (2Pe 1:4), but are we really counting on His fulfillment of them? Are we actually *expecting* Him to do for us all that He has said? Are we resting with implicit assurance on these words, “He is faithful that promised” (Heb 10:23)?

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 are dimmed 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 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 Isaiah 50:10: “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.”

When you are tempted to doubt the faithfulness of God, cry out, “Get thee hence, Satan” (Mat 4:10). Though you cannot now harmonize God’s mysterious dealings with the avowals¹ of His love, wait on Him for more light. In His own good time, He will make it plain to you. “What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter” (Joh 13:7). The sequel will yet demonstrate that God has neither forsaken nor deceived His child. “And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the LORD is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him” (Isa 30:18).

*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 big² with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.*

“Thy testimonies that thou hast commanded are righteous and very faithful” (Psa 119:138). God has not only told us the best, but He has not withheld the worst. He has faithfully described the ruin which the Fall has effected. He has faithfully diagnosed the terrible state which sin has produced. He has faithfully made known His inveterate³ hatred of evil, and that He must punish the same. He has faithfully warned us that He is “a consuming fire” (Heb 12:29). Not only does His Word abound in illustrations of His fidelity in fulfilling His promises, but it also records numerous examples of His faithfulness in making good His threatenings. Every stage of Israel’s history exemplifies that solemn fact. So it was with individuals: Pharaoh, Korah, Achan, and a host of others are so many proofs. And thus it will be with *you*, my reader. Unless you have fled or do flee to Christ for refuge, the everlasting burning of the Lake of Fire will be your sure and certain portion. God *is* faithful.

God is faithful in *preserving* His people. “God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son” (1Co 1:9). In the previous verse, promise was made that God would confirm unto the end His own people. The apostle’s confidence in the absolute security of believers was founded not on the strength of their resolutions or ability to

¹ **avowals** – pledges.

² **big** – *archaic*: pregnant; here, full of God’s intended mercy.

³ **inveterate** – unchanging.

persevere, but on the veracity⁴ of Him that cannot lie. Since God has promised to His Son a certain people for His inheritance, to deliver them from sin and condemnation, and to make them participants of eternal life in glory, it is certain that He will not allow any of them to perish.

God is faithful in disciplining His people. He is faithful in what He withholds, no less than in what He gives. He is faithful in sending sorrow as well as in giving joy. The faithfulness of God is a truth to be confessed by us not only when we are at ease, but also when we are smarting under the sharpest rebuke. Nor must this confession be merely of our mouths, but of our hearts, too. 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 a reason. “For this cause many are weak and sickly among you” (1Co 11:30), says Paul, illustrating this principle. When His rod falls upon us, let us say with Daniel, “O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces” (Dan 9:7).

“I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me” (Psa 119:75). Trouble and affliction are not only consistent with God’s love pledged in the everlasting covenant, but they are parts of the administration of the same. God is not only faithful notwithstanding afflictions, but faithful in sending them. “Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail” (Psa 89:32-33). Chastening is not only reconcilable with God’s lovingkindness, but it is the effect and expression of it. It would much quiet the minds of God’s people if they would remember that His covenant love binds Him to lay on them seasonable correction. Afflictions are necessary for us. “In their affliction they will seek me early” (Hos 5:15).

God is faithful in glorifying His people. “Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it” (1Th 5:24). The immediate reference here is to the saints being “preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (v. 23). God deals with us not on the ground of our merits (for we have none), but for His own great name’s sake. God is constant⁵ to Himself and to His own purpose of grace. “Whom he called...them he also glorified” (Rom 8:30). God gives a full demonstration of the constancy of His everlasting goodness toward His elect by effectually

⁴ **veracity** – truthfulness.

⁵ **constant** – faithful.

calling them out of darkness into His marvelous light, and this should fully assure them of the certain continuance of it. “The foundation of God standeth sure” (2Ti 2:19). Paul was resting on the faithfulness of God when he said, “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” (2Ti 1:12).

The apprehension of this blessed truth will *preserve us from worry.* To be full of care, to view our situation with dark forebodings, to anticipate the morrow with sad anxiety, is to reflect poorly upon the faithfulness of God. He Who has cared for His child through all the years will not forsake him in old age. He Who has heard your prayers in the past will not refuse to supply your need in the present emergency. Rest on Job 5:19, “He shall deliver thee in six troubles: yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee.”

The apprehension of this blessed truth will *check our murmurings.* The Lord knows what is best for each one of us, and one effect of resting on this truth will be the silencing of our petulant⁶ complainings. God is greatly honored when, under trial and chastening, we have good thoughts of Him, vindicate His wisdom and justice, and recognize His love in His very rebukes.

The apprehension of this blessed truth will *beget increasing confidence in God.* “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” (1Pe 4:19). When we trustfully resign ourselves and all our affairs into God’s hands, fully persuaded of His love and faithfulness, the sooner shall we be satisfied with His providences and realize that He doeth all things well.

From *The Attributes of God*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952): Pastor, itinerate Bible teacher, author; born in Nottingham, England, UK.



[The] 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.—*Louis Berkhof*

⁶ **petulant** – manifesting childish or rude annoyance.

GOD IS FAITHFUL BECAUSE HE IS UNCHANGEABLE

Edward Pearse (c. 1633-1673)

*For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore
ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.—Malachi 3:6*

GOD'S unchangeableness...ministers much sweet comfort to His poor church and people. The truth is, there is scarcely any such spring and treasury of comfort as this is. "God's immutability," said one, "is the best cordial¹ to refresh a fainting soul." The great cordial God sent Israel in their distress was this: "I AM THAT I AM" (Exo 3:14), or, "I am an unchangeable God"; and indeed that was enough for them. But more particularly there are several consolatory conclusions which flow from God's unchangeableness, conclusions which carry strong consolation in them.

1. God being unchangeable, His glory shall live and in due time shine forth conspicuously before all. See this in these words: "I am the LORD [I am Jehovah]" (Isa 42:8); that is, "I am He Who 'was, and is, and is to come'" (Rev 4:8). He is the unchangeable God; and what then? Why, "My glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images" (Isa 42:8). In other words, "My glory shall not die but live. My glory shall not be always veiled and eclipsed; but it shall shine forth in perfect luster and splendor."

One of the great burdens that lie upon the people of God is the sufferings of His name and glory. "The reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me," said David in Psalm 69:9. God's glory is veiled. His name is blasphemed. His worship is interrupted. His providence is denied. All His attributes are obscured. And His honor is in every way thrown in the dust, which makes holy souls go mourning from day to day. But, my beloved, here is that which may comfort the soul: God is unchangeable, and therefore His glory shall live and shine forth again. The veil shall in due time be taken away, and His glory shall appear. Yes, it shall be as eminently illustrated and displayed as ever it has been veiled and eclipsed.

You know how God speaks in reference to the glory of His name in answer to Christ's prayer: "Father, glorify thy name" (Joh 12:28). What

¹ **cordial** – medicinal drink for invigorating the heart.

answer does the Father give Him? “I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.” That is, “I have hitherto taken care of My glory, and I will take care of it still.” O my beloved, God’s glory has hitherto been dear to Him, and He has hitherto maintained it in the world, and He is unchangeable, and therefore His glory is as dear to Him as ever it was. He is as jealous for it as ever. He is also every bit as able to vindicate and maintain it as ever He was. Assure yourselves, were it not that He knows how to make it shine forth so much the more illustriously and conspicuously afterwards, He would not suffer it to be so veiled and eclipsed as sometimes He does. Yes, let me say that He is always carrying on,² as the interest of His people’s happiness, so the concerns of His own glory.

2. God being unchangeable, *His church shall be preserved and delivered*—preserved under, and in due time delivered out of, all her troubles and afflictions. And what a sweet thing is that! The poor church of God is oftentimes plunged into very deep and sore distress, such as are ready to sink and overwhelm her. She is oftentimes “afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted” (Isa 54:11). Such indeed is her condition at this day; and as good old Eli sat trembling for the ark of God (1Sa 4:13), a type of the church, so it may be that some may now sit trembling for the church of God, fearing how it will go with her. And indeed, he is not one of Zion’s children that is not concerned for Zion’s afflictions. But lo, my beloved, in the midst of all such fears and tremblings of heart, there is strong consolation! God is unchangeable; and being unchangeable, He will certainly support and deliver His church, and that in the best way and fittest season.

God has never yet failed His church in her afflictions. Yes, it is admirable to consider how hitherto He has carried it³ towards her under all her distress. How sweetly He has supported her, and how seasonably He has delivered her! When they were in Egypt in the iron furnace; when they were in the wilderness; when they were in the Red Sea; when they were in Babylon; in Haman’s time and in Herod’s time; when the neck of the whole church of God was upon the block at once, as it were; and also all down through the times of antichristian tyranny and persecution to this very day—oh, how admirably has God wrought for them in supporting and delivering them! And, certainly, what He has done, that He can and will do for them again as the case shall require. God is unchangeable. His hand is not shortened that He cannot save, nor His ear grown heavy that He cannot hear (Isa 59:1).

² **carrying on** – accomplishing.

³ **carried it** – behaved; conducted Himself.

God being unchangeable, He is as tender of and careful⁴ for His church and people as ever He was. Being unchangeable, He is in every way the same to His people now as He was formerly: the same in His love to them, His jealousy for them, His sympathy with them, and His interest in them. He stands in the same covenant relation to them as ever He did. He is their King, their Head, their Husband, their Friend, their Father, their Shepherd now, as well as heretofore. He is in every way as able to help them, and accordingly will support and, in due time, deliver them; and faith sees and rests assured of this. “Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon? Art thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over?” (Isa 51:9-10). So again, “But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us” (2Co 1:9-10).

Mark!⁵ Faith, you see, argues from what God has done to what He will do for His poor church and people. And what ground has it to do so but His unchangeableness? Let Zion, therefore, the church and people of God, take heed of that language which they spoke of old: “Zion said, The LORD hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me” (Isa 49:14). Or as Jacob elsewhere said, “My way is hid from the LORD, and my judgment is passed over from my God” (Isa 40:27). But God must change if this were to be. True, God may permit His church to be sorely afflicted, as at this day, but it is but to illustrate His own glory the more in her support and deliverance.

3. God being unchangeable, *His enemies shall be destroyed; they shall all die and perish.* I mean His incorrigible, implacable enemies who will not stoop to the scepter of His kingdom. God may, and sometimes does, permit His and His people’s enemies to practice and prosper, and for a long time together He lets them alone in their sins and oppositions against both Himself and them. Yes, He even fills their belly with His hid treasure (as you have it in Psalm 17:14). He lets them enjoy some of the best of outward comforts and contentments, and that in great fullness, which oftentimes proves a great burden and temptation to His poor, afflicted people, such as are ready to sink and bear them down.

So it was with the psalmist in Psalm 73, and it is so many times with us. But remember that God is unchangeable; and being unchangeable, though He may permit His and His people’s enemies to practice and

⁴ careful – concerned.

⁵ mark – notice.

prosper for a time, yet not always. No, they shall be destroyed, and that with a great destruction. Pray⁶ observe how things issued at last in that very psalm: “Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors” (Psa 73:18-19). Pray observe: he was not more offended at, nor was he more ready to envy their prosperity before, than now he wonders at their ruin and destruction. “I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found...The transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off” (Psa 37:35-36, 38). God says, in reference to His and His people’s enemies, “To me belongeth vengeance, and recompence; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste. For the LORD shall judge his people” (Deu 32:35-36)...

O sirs, though God permits His and His people’s enemies to prosper for a time, yet He always certainly destroys them in the conclusion. And He will do so still because He is unchangeable. God is in every way the same as ever He was—the same in holiness, jealousy, justice, power, that ever He was. He is as holy now as ever He was, and so hates sin as much as ever He did. He is as just now as ever He was, and so as ready and disposed to take vengeance as ever. He is as jealous now, as jealous for His name, worship, gospel, and people, as ever He was, and so will as little bear with the opposers and abusers of them. He is as wise and powerful now as ever, and so as able to deal with His enemies. It is a great Scripture that says, “He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered?” (Job 9:4). Oh, never any yet did, and never any shall. No, but He will “wound the head of his enemies, and the hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still in his trespasses” (Psa 68:21). Oh, that all the enemies of God and His people, and all rebellious, impenitent ones would lay this to heart.

4. God being unchangeable, *the purposes and promises of His grace to His church and people shall certainly be accomplished.* God’s heart, my beloved, has been full of counsels and purposes of love toward His people from all eternity, and He has also made many blessed promises to them, promises that are “exceeding great and precious” (2Pe 1:4), because they are full of exceedingly great and precious things. Greatness and preciousness do not often meet together. Many things are great, but then they are not precious. And many things are precious, but then

⁶ pray – please.

they are not great. But in the promises of God to His church and people, greatness and preciousness meet.

Now, whatever purposes God has had in His heart, and whatever promises He has made in this world to His people, they shall all be accomplished because He is an unchangeable God. He is the same now as He was when He took up those purposes and made those promises, and therefore will assuredly make them all good in due season. And so much He tells us: “I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure...I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it” (Isa 46:9-11).

Mark, first *He asserts His Godhead and unchangeableness*, and then He tells you all His pleasure shall stand and be accomplished. God being unchangeable, first, none can turn Him or make Him alter His mind. “He is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth. For he performeth the thing that is appointed for me” (Job 23:13-14). The wisest and most resolved among men may possibly be wrought upon⁷ and brought over from what they purposed; but it is not so with God.

Second, *none can hinder Him from or in His making good His purposes and promises*. “Before the day was I am he; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand: I will work, and who shall let it?” (Isa 43:13). Poor soul, whoever you are, who are one of the Lord’s people, look back to the eternal counsels and purposes of His love towards you, and you will find them a great deep, a fountain of infinite sweetness. In them you will see heaps of love and treasures of grace. And then turn your eye to the promises of His covenant, which you will find inexpressibly sweet and exactly suitable to your condition, to all your wants. And then know assuredly that the whole, both of the one and the other, shall be accomplished to you in due season. It is true indeed, His counsels may seem to us to be frustrated, and His promises may for a time be deferred and delayed, insomuch that our hasty, unbelieving hearts may be ready to conclude that they will never be accomplished, saying with the psalmist, “Doth his promise fail for evermore?” (Psa 77:8). But, soul, wait a while, and they shall all be made good to a tittle.

Has He promised to pardon you, to cleanse you, to give you a new heart and a new spirit, and to write His Law in your heart? Has He promised to save you and lodge you at last in His own bosom? Then know it shall all be accomplished. Oh, how sweet is this! Oh, to fasten upon a promise and see it surely to be made good, as in God’s un-

⁷ wrought upon – manipulated; prevailed on.

changeableness we may. There we may see all as sure as if it were already accomplished. Oh, what strong consolation does this afford! What inexpressible sweetness will this give unto a soul!

5. God being unchangeable, the saints are unchangeably happy and have a blessed asylum⁸ to flee unto under all those changes and emergencies that may at any time come upon them. Pray mark, my beloved, God is the saints' God and portion. And in Him their happiness lies. He therefore being unchangeable, they have an unchangeable happiness; they are a happy people, and they will be unchangeably so. "The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations." And what then? "Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance" (Psa 33:11-12).

The saints (as one well observed) are in all respects a blessed people. They are blessed *in the pardon of their sins*: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven" (Psa 32:1). They are blessed *in regard to the disposition of their souls*: "Blessed are the poor in spirit...Blessed are the meek...Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness" (Mat 5:3, 5, 6). They are blessed *in their obedience and walking with God*: "Blessed are the undefiled in the way" (Psa 119:1). They are blessed *in their hopes and expectations*: "Blessed are all they that wait for [God]" (Isa 30:18). Thus, they are *in every way and in all respects* a blessed people. But here lies the perfection and crowning glory of their blessedness, and what indeed comprehends all the rest in it, namely, that *the unchangeable God is their God and portion*. "Happy is that people, whose God is the LORD" (Psa 144:15). Oh, this speaks them to be infinitely and unchangeably happy, and accordingly they should live upon Him, and that under all their strains and difficulties.

Oh, sirs, what is there that this will not support and comfort you under? Do your friends and comforts here change? However, God, your best friend and comfort, changes not, and that is enough. Do times and seasons change, and that for the worse, from sunshine to storms? Well, however, soul, your God changes not, and that is enough to sweeten all. Do you yourself change? Changes and war are upon you; and which is the worst of it, your spirit changes. It will not keep even with God one hour. Well, still your God changes not, and that is enough. Do new temptations arise, and old corruptions break out anew? Does guilt revive and recur upon you? Be it so, yet your God is unchangeable, and so can and will relieve and succor you now as well as formerly, and that is enough.

Yes, do God's dispensations change towards you? He did smile, now He frowns. He did lift up, now He casts down. The light of His counte-

⁸ **asylum** – safe place of refuge.

nance did shine brightly upon you; now it is veiled and clouded. However, your God Himself changes not! His heart, His counsel, His covenant, and His love are still the same towards you as ever they were, howbeit the dispensation is changed. Oh, this one word, “God is mine, and He is unchangeable,” has infinite sweetness in it, and it speaks me to be infinitely and unchangeably happy. Oh, you who are the people of God, labor to see and rejoice in this happiness of yours.

That you may the better do this, let me add only two short words to this, and I will close the whole discourse:

First, consider that as your God is unchangeable, so you are unchangeably interested⁹ in Him. This unchangeable God is unchangeably your God.

However, though God is unchangeable, some poor soul may say, “What will that avail me? My interest in Him, I fear, will change and fail; there will be shortly an end of that.” No, soul, the unchangeable God being indeed yours, He is yours forever. So the church said, “This God is our God for ever and ever” (Psa 48:14). O soul, you, through infinite, free, and rich grace, have a covenant interest in and relation to the unchangeable God, and this interest and relation of yours is a firm, lasting, and unchangeable interest and relation. Nothing that either men, devils, or lusts can do can possibly break or crack it.

I shall here only add a saying or two of Augustine.¹⁰ “The chief good, which is God, is neither given to such as are unwilling to have Him, nor taken away from such as are unwilling to part with Him.” And elsewhere, “No man does or can lose Thee, O God, unless he is willing to lose Thee and go without Thee. And he that willingly parts with Thee, whither does he go? Whither does he flee, but from Thee smiling to Thee frowning; from Thee a reconciled Father to Thee an angry judge?”

Oh, soul, as long as you are willing to have God as yours, so long He shall be yours. Yes, more, your interest in Him depends not upon your willingness for it, but upon His unchangeable love and covenant; and His love and covenant both must change before your interest in Him can fade and change.

Second, consider, as your God is unchangeable, so after a while you shall unchangeably enjoy Him and be with Him. Your vision and fruition of Him shall be unchangeable. “Our happiness,” said Augustine, “is begun here in election, but it is perfected hereafter in fruition.” You who have chosen the unchangeable God, you shall, after a few days, enjoy the God Whom you have chosen. Your happiness is great in your choosing of Him, but how much more great will it be in your enjoying

⁹ **interested** – having a claim to or a part in.

¹⁰ **Augustine of Hippo** (354-430) – early Latin church theologian and bishop of Hippo.

of Him! “Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee” (Psa 73:24-25). “I have chosen, and I do again choose Thee for my God and portion. Some enjoyment I have of Thee here, and more I shall have hereafter in heaven. I shall ere long be taken to enjoy Thee in Thy glory, fully, immediately, and forever, for Thou art mine, and I have made a solemn choice of Thee.”

O saints! The unchangeable God is yours, and some communion you have with Him here in the ways of His grace, which is sweet and happy. But after you have enjoyed Him in the ways of His grace a while here, you shall be taken to the unchangeable enjoyment of Him in His glory above, which will be infinitely more sweet and happy. Your enjoyment of Him here is low and remote, as well as changeable and inconstant; but your enjoyment of Him above will be full, close, and unchangeable.

Here you have, now and then, a gracious visit from Him. He visits you in this duty and that ordinance, in this mercy and in that affliction. But, oh, how short many times are those visits of His! Alas! He is gone again in a moment. But after a while you shall enjoy Him in His glory, and there you shall not have a short visit now and then only, but His constant presence forever. “So shall we ever be with the Lord” (1Th 4:17).

O blessed souls! There He will unchangeably delight in you, unchangeably shine upon you, unchangeably communicate Himself in His grace and glory to you. Oh, how sweet and blessed will this be!

Well, to close all: Saints, the unchangeable God is unchangeably your God, and howbeit your visions of Him are yet but dark, and your communion with Him but low, yet wait a while and the day will break, and all your shadows shall flee away! You shall exchange your ebbing waters for a full tide, your glimmerings and dawnings for a noonday, your imperfect beginnings for a full and perfect consummation of communion with Him. Howbeit there is now a veil upon His face so that you cannot behold Him, yet wait a while and the veil shall be taken away, and you shall behold His face, His glory, forever—and that so as to be fully changed into the image thereof, and eternally solaced and satisfied therein.

From *A Beam of Divine Glory*, Soli Deo Gloria, a division of
Reformation Heritage Books, www.heritagebooks.org.

Edward Pearse (c. 1633-1674): Puritan, ejected by the Act of Uniformity from St. Margaret’s parish, Westminster; known as a “most affectionate and useful preacher.”



GOD'S FAITHFULNESS IN AFFLICTING HIS PEOPLE

Charles Bridges (1794-1869)

*I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right, and
that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.—Psalm 119:75*

THIS is the Christian's acknowledgment: *fully satisfied with the dispensation of God*. This is his confidence, so invigorating to his own soul, so cheering to the church. The Lord's dealings are called His "judgments," not as having judicial curses, but as the acts of His justice in the chastening of sin. "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" (1Pe 4:17). Perhaps, also, [the Lord's dealings are called judgments] as the administration of His wise judgments in their measure and application. "O LORD, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing" (Jer 10:24). But here is not only the confession of the Lord's general judgment, but of His especial faithfulness to [the psalmist]. And this he knew, not from the dictates of the flesh (which would have given a contrary verdict), but from the testimony of the Word, and the witness of his own experience. "He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he" (Deu 32:4). "Righteous art thou, O LORD, and upright are thy judgments" (Psa 119:137). "The LORD is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works" (Psa 145:17). It could not be doubted, much less denied.

The Christian says again, "I know, O Lord, that Thy rules of proceeding are agreeable to Thy perfect justice and wisdom; and I am equally satisfied that the afflictions that Thou hast laid upon me from time to time are only to fulfil Thy gracious and faithful promise of making me eternally happy in Thyself." Blessed fruit of affliction, when we can thus see "the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy," that His thoughts towards us are "thoughts of peace, and not of evil" (Jam 5:11; Jer 29:11). "The patience and the faith of the saints" (Rev 13:10) teach this difficult but most consoling lesson in deciphering the mysterious lines in God's providence and faithfulness.

The child of God under the severest chastisement must acknowledge justice. Our gracious reward is always more, our punishment always

less, than our iniquities deserve (Ezr 9:13; compare Job 11:6). "Wherefore doth a living man complain?" (Lam 3:39). In trouble he is indeed. But not in hell! If he complain, let it be of none but himself and his own wayward choice. "I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right," and who can doubt the wisdom? Who would charge the operator with cruelty in cutting out the proud flesh that was bringing death upon the man? Who would not acknowledge the right judgment of his piercing work? Thus, when the Lord's painful work separates us from our sin, weans us from the world, and brings us nearer to Himself, what remains for us but thankfully to acknowledge His righteousness and truth? Unbelief is put to rebuke; and we, if we have indulged suspicion that God hath "forgotten to be gracious," must confess, "This is my infirmity" (Psa 77:7-10).

This assurance of the Lord's perfect justice, wisdom, and intimate knowledge of our respective cases leads us to yield to His appointments in dutiful silence. Thus Aaron, under his most afflictive domestic calamity, "held his peace" (Lev 10:3). Job, under a similar dispensation, was enabled to say, "The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD" (Job 1:21; compare 2:10). Eli's language in the same trial was, "It is the LORD: let him do what seemeth him good" (1Sa 3:18). David hushed his impatient spirit: "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it" (Psa 39:9). And when Shimei cursed him, he said, "Let him alone, and let him curse; for the LORD hath bidden him" (2Sa 16:11). The Shunammite, in the meek resignation of faith, acknowledged, "It is well" (2Ki 4:26). Hezekiah kissed the rod while it was smiting him to the dust: "Good is the word of the LORD which thou hast spoken" (Isa 39:8). Thus uniform is the language of the Lord's people under chastisement: "I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right."

But the confession of justice may be mere natural conviction. "And Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, I have sinned this time: the LORD is righteous, and I and my people are wicked" (Exo 9:27; compare Jdg 1:7; 2Ch 12:6). Faith goes further and speaks of faithfulness. David not only acknowledges God's right to deal with him as He saw fit, and even His wisdom in dealing with him as He actually had done, but His *faithfulness in afflicting*—not His faithfulness *though* He afflicted, but *in* afflicting him; not as if it were inconsistent with His love, but as the very fruit of His love. It is not enough to justify God. What abundant cause is there to *praise* Him! It is not enough to forbear to murmur. How exciting is the display of God's faithfulness and love! Yes, the trials appointed for us are none else than the faithful performance of His everlasting engagements. And to this cause we may always trace (and it is

our privilege to believe it, where we cannot visibly trace it) the reason of much that is painful to the flesh. “Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end” (Deu 8:16). Let us only mark its gracious effects in our restoration (Psa 119:67), instruction (Psa 119:71), healing of our backslidings (Hos 2:6-7, 14), and the continual purging of sins (Isa 27:9; 48:10; Zec 13:9; Joh 15:2)—and then say, “Is not the faithfulness of God gloriously displayed?”

The Philistines could not understand Samson’s riddle, how meat could come out of the eater, and sweetness out of the strong (Jdg 14:14). As little can the world comprehend the fruitfulness of the Christian’s trials—how his gracious Lord sweetens to him the bitter waters of Marah (Exo 15:23-25) and makes the cross not so much the punishment as the remedy of sin. He finds therefore no inclination, and he feels that he has no interest in having any change made in the Lord’s appointments, revolting as they may be to the flesh. He readily acknowledges that His merciful designs could not have been accomplished in any other way. While under trials many sweet tokens of love are vouchsafed,¹ which, under circumstances of outward prosperity, could not have been received with the same gratitude and delight.

You that are living at ease in the indulgence of what this poor world can afford, how little does the Christian envy your portion! How surely in some future day will you be taught by experience to envy his! The world’s riches are daily becoming poorer and its pleasures more tasteless; and what will they be, and how will they appear, when eternity is at hand! [But] affliction is the special token of our Father’s love (Heb 12:6; Rev 3:19), conformity to the image of Jesus, and preparation for His service and kingdom. It is the only blessing that the Lord gives without requiring us to ask for it. We receive it, therefore, as promised, not as threatened; and when the peaceable fruits of righteousness, which it worketh in God’s time and way, spring up in our hearts, humbly and gratefully will we acknowledge the righteousness of His judgments and the faithfulness of His corrections.

From *Works of the Rev. Charles Bridges: Exposition of Psalm 119*, Vol. 3 (New York: Robert Carter & Bros, 1849), 122-124; in the public domain.

Charles Bridges (1794-1869): evangelical leader in the Church of England; his works include *The Christian Ministry* and expositions of Proverbs and Psalm 119.



¹ **vouchsafed** – given or granted in a gracious manner.

THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD: THE SAINT'S REFUGE

John Flavel (c. 1627-1691)

IN this attribute is our safety and rest amidst the confusions of the world and daily disappointments we are vexed with through the vanity and falseness of the creature. As to creatures, the very best of them are but vanity, yea, vanity of vanity, the vainest vanity (Ecc 1:2). “Every man at his best state is altogether vanity” (Psa 39:5). Yea, those that we expect most from give us most trouble (Mic 7:5). Nearest relations bring up the rear of sorrows. “My brethren have dealt deceitfully as a brook” (Job 6:15). Especially their deceit appears most when we have most need of their help. How great a mercy is it then to have a refuge in the faithfulness of God as David had: “I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul” (Psa 142:4). And likewise the church: “I will look unto the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me” (Mic 7:7). A time may come when you shall not know where to trust in all this world. Let me therefore open to you this chamber of rest in the faithfulness of God against such a day, and this I shall do in a twofold consideration of it: absolutely in its own nature; relatively in the promises and providences of God.

Absolutely. The faithfulness of God is His sincerity, firmness, and constancy in performing His Word to His people in all times and cases. So Moses describes Him to Israel. “Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God” (Deu 7:9). And Joshua appeals to their experience for the vindication of it. “Ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof” (Jos 23:14). And it is also fully asserted (Jer 31:35-37) and greatly admired even in the darkest day: “Great is thy faithfulness” (Lam 3:23). And it is well for us that His faithfulness is great, for great is that weight that leans upon it, even all our hopes for both worlds, for this world and for that to come. “In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began” (Ti 1:2).

Relatively, in the promises and providences of God. God is faithful, and that will appear by these following evidences of it.

1. *By His exact fulfilling of His promises of the longest date.* So, four hundred and thirty years were run out before the promise of Israel's deliverance out of Egypt was accomplished (Act 7:6). Yet when "the time of the promise" was come (Act 7:17), God was punctual to a day. Seventy years in Babylon, and at the expiration of that time, they returned (2Ch 36:21). Men may forget, but God cannot (Isa 49:15-16).

2. *By making way for His promises through the greatest difficulties and seeming impossibilities.* So, to Abraham when old, "Is any thing too hard for the LORD? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son" (Gen 18:14). And likewise to the Israelites, "Can these [dry] bones live?" (Eze 37:3). Difficulties are for men, not God (Gen 18:14). "Who art thou, O great mountain?" (Zec 4:7). "If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people...should it also be marvellous in mine eyes? saith the LORD of hosts" (Zec 8:6).

3. *By fulfilling promises to His people when their hopes and expectations have been given up.* So, "Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts" (Eze 37:11). And, "Zion said, The LORD hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me" (Isa 49:14). There may be much unbelief in good men; their faith may be sorely staggered; yet God is faithful. Men may question His promises, yet God "cannot deny himself" (2Ti 2:13).

4. *By God's appealing to His people and referring the matter to their own judgment.* "O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me. For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal; that ye may know the righteousness of the LORD" (Mic 6:3-5). If I have failed in any way of My promise, show it. Did not Balak and Balaam court Me, and try all ways to win Me over to them by multitudes of sacrifices? Yet I did not desert you. So, "O generation, see ye the word of the LORD. Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness? wherefore say my people, We are lords; we will come no more unto thee?" (Jer 2:31). Also, "Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God: Which made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that therein is: which keepeth truth for ever" (Psa 146:5-6).

5. *The faithfulness of God is abundantly cleared by the constant testimonies given unto it in all ages by them that have tried it.* They have all witnessed for God and attested His unspotted faithfulness to the generations that were to come. So did Joshua: "Not one thing hath failed of all the good

things which the LORD your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof" (Jos 23:14). And so did Daniel: "O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him" (Dan 9:4). David's testimony concurs: "[God,] which made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that therein is: which keepeth truth for ever" (Psa 146:6). Thus His people have been witnesses in all generations unto the faithfulness of God in His promises; the consideration whereof leaves no doubt or objection behind it.

And if we enquire into the grounds and reasons why God is and ever must be most faithful in performing His promises, we shall find it is built upon stable and unshaken pillars:

1. The holiness of His nature.
2. The all-sufficiency of His power.
3. The honor of His name.
4. The unchangeableness of His nature.

1. *The faithfulness of God is built upon the perfect holiness of His nature*, by reason whereof it is "impossible for God to lie" (Heb 6:18; Ti 1:2). The deceitfulness of a man flows from the corruption of the human nature, but "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?" (Num 23:19). If there be no defect in His being, there can be none in His working. If His nature be pure holiness, all His ways must be perfect faithfulness.

2. *It is built upon the all-sufficiency of His power*. Whatsoever He hath promised to His people, He is able to perform it. Men sometimes falsify their promises through the defects of ability to perform them. But God never out-promised Himself. If He will work, none can let¹ (Isa 43:13). He can do whatsoever He pleaseth to do (Psa 135:6). The holiness of His nature engages, and the Almightyness of His power enables Him to be faithful.

3. *The glory and honor of His name may assure us of His faithfulness* in making good the promises and all that good which is in the promises to a tittle.² For wherever you find a promise of God, you also find the name and honor of God given as a security for the performance of it. And so His name hath ever been pleaded with Him by His people as a mighty argument to work for them. "What wilt thou do unto thy great name?" (Jos 7:9). Lord, Thine honor is a thousand times more than our lives. It is no such great matter what becomes of us; but, ah, Lord, it is

¹ let – hinder.

² tittle – the smallest mark used in making Hebrew letters (Luk 16:17).

of infinite concernment that the glory of Thy name be secured, and Thy faithfulness kept pure and unspotted in the world. So again, “And Moses besought the LORD his God, and said, LORD, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people” (Exo 32:11-12). It will be sad enough for the hands of the Egyptians to fall upon Thy people, but infinitely worse for the tongues of the Egyptians to fall upon Thy name.

4. *The unchangeableness of His nature gives us the fullest assurance of His faithfulness in the promises.* “I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed” (Mal 3:6). God’s unchangeableness is His people’s indemnity³ and best security in the midst of dangers. As there is not yea and nay with God, neither should it be so with our faith. That which gives steadiness to the promises should give steadiness also to our expectations for the performance of them.

[That is] briefly the faithfulness of God, absolutely considered in the nature and grounds of it.

Next let us view the faithfulness of God, as it relates to the many great and precious promises made unto His people for their security, both in their temporal concernments⁴ and spiritual concernments.

We find the faithfulness of God pledged for the security of His people, their spiritual and eternal concernments, against all their dangers and fears threatening them on that account, and that more especially in these three respects.

1. *It is given them as their great and best security for the pardon of their sins.* “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1Jo 1:9). Our greatest danger comes from sin. Guilt is a fountain of tears. Only a pardoned soul can look other troubles in the face boldly. As guilt begets fear, so pardon produces courage, and God’s faithfulness in the covenant is, as it were, that pardon-office from whence we fetch our discharges and acquittances.⁵ “I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake” (Isa 43:25). The promises of remission are made for Christ’s sake, and when made, they must be fulfilled for His own [sake], that is, His faithfulness’s sake.

³ **indemnity** – security; protection.

⁴ **concernments** – concerns; needs.

⁵ **discharges and acquittances** – documents stating the legal satisfaction and forgiveness of debts or crimes.

2. *It is engaged for the perseverance of the saints and their continuance in the ways of God in the most hazardous and difficult times.* This was the encouragement given them: “Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord” (1Co 1:8-9). Ah, Lord, might those Corinthians say, the powers of the world are against us; suffering and death are before us; a treacherous and fearful heart within us. Ay,⁶ but yet, fear not, Christ shall confirm you, whosoever opposes you. Though the world and your own hearts be deceitful, yet comfort yourselves with this: your God is faithful.

3. *The faithfulness of God is given by promise for His people's security in, and encouragement against, all their sufferings and afflictions in this world.* “That we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith. But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil” (2Th 3:2-3). He prays they may be delivered from absurd, treacherous, and unfaithful men, who would crush and betray them to ruin. But this is proposed as their relief, that when the treachery of men shall bring them into troubles, the faithfulness of God shall support them under and deliver them out of those troubles. They shall have spiritual supports from God under their deepest sufferings from men (1Pe 4:19).

God's faithfulness is engaged for His people's indemnity and security amidst the temporal and outward evils whereunto they are liable in this world; and that, either to preserve them from troubles (Psa 91:1-4) or to open a seasonable door of deliverance out of trouble (1Co 10:13). In both, or either of which, the hearts of Christians may be at rest in this troublesome world; for what need those troubles fright us, which either shall never touch us, or if they do, shall never hurt, much less ruin us?

Having taken a short view of God's faithfulness in the promises, it will be a lovely sight to take one view of it more, as it is actuated and exerted in His providences over His people. Believe it, Christians, the faithfulness of God runs through all His works of providence whenever He goes forth to work in the world. “Faithfulness [is] the girdle of his reins” (Isa 11:5). It is an allusion to workmen who, going forth in the morning to their labor, gird their loins or reins with a girdle. Now, there is no work wrought by God in this world but His faithfulness is as the girdle of His loins. The consideration whereof should make the most despondent believer gird up the loins of his mind—that is, encourage and strengthen his drooping and discouraged heart. Those

⁶ ay – yes.

works of God, which are wrought in faithfulness and in pursuit of His eternal purposes and gracious promises, should rather delight than affright us in beholding them. It plucks out the sting of David's affliction when he considered it was in very faithfulness that God had afflicted him (Psa 119:75, 89-90). But more particularly, let us behold with delight the faithfulness of God, making good six sorts of promises to His people in the days of their affliction and trouble:

1. The promises of preservation.
2. The promises of support.
3. The promises of direction.
4. The promises of provision.
5. The promises of deliverance.
6. The promises of ordering and directing the event to their advantage.

1. *There are promises in the Word for your preservation from ruin*; and what you read in those promises, you daily see the same fulfilled in your own experiences. You have a promise in Psalm 57:3: "He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up. Selah. God shall send forth his mercy and his truth." Say now, have you not found it so? When hell hath sent forth its temptations to defile you, the world its persecutions to destroy you, your own heart its unbelieving fears to distract and sink you, hath not your God sent forth all His mercy and His truth to save you? Hath not His truth been your "shield and buckler" (Psa 91:4)? May you not say with the church, "It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness" (Lam 3:22-23)?

2. As you have seen it actually fulfilling the promises for your preservation, *so you may see it making good all the promises in His Word for your support in troubles*. That is a sweet promise: "I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him" (Psa 91:15). You have also a very supporting promise: "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness" (Isa 41:10). Oh, how evidently hath the faithfulness of God shone forth in the performance of His Word to you in this respect! You are His witnesses; you would have sunk in the deep waters of trouble if it had not been so. So speaks David, "My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever" (Psa 73:26). Have you not found it so with you as it is in 2 Corinthians 12:10? "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong." God's

strength hath been made perfect in your weakness. By this you have been carried through all your troubles; hitherto hath He helped you.

3. As you have seen it faithfully fulfilling the promises for your preservation and support, *so you have seen it in the direction of your ways*. So runs that promise: "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye" (Psa 32:8). Certain it is "that the way of man is not in himself" (Jer 10:23). Oh, how faithfully hath your God guided you and stood by you in all the difficult cases of your life! Is not that promise faithfully fulfilled to a tittle, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Heb 13:5)? Surely you can set your seal to that in John 17:17, "Thy word is truth." Had you been left to your own counsels, you had certainly perished, as it is said of them in Psalm 81:12: "I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels."

4. As there are promises in the Word for your preservation, support, and direction, so, *in the fourth place, there are promises for your provision*, as in Psalm 34:9 the Lord hath promised that they that fear Him shall not want. When they are driven to extremity, He will provide. "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the LORD will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them" (Isa 41:17). And is not this faithfully performed? "He hath given meat unto them that fear him: he will ever be mindful of his covenant" (Psa 111:5). In all the exigencies⁷ of your lives, you have found Him faithful to this day. You are His witnesses that His providences never failed you. His care hath been renewed every morning for you. How great is His faithfulness!

5. *You also find in the Word some reviving promises for your deliverances*. You have a very sweet promise in Psalm 91:14: "Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him." And again, Psalm 50:15: "Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee." You have done so, and He hath made a way to escape. Our lives are so many monuments of mercy. We have lived among lions, yet [have been] preserved (Psa 57:4). The burning bush was an emblem of the church miraculously preserved.

6. *There are promises in the Word for the ordering and directing all the occurrences of providence to your great advantage*; so it is promised that all things shall "work together for good to them that love God" (Rom 8:28). Fear not, Christians, however you find it now whilst you are tossing to and fro upon the unstable waves of this world, you shall find, to be sure, when you come to heaven, that all the troubles of your lives

⁷ exigencies – urgent needs.

were guided as steadily by this promise as ever any ship at sea was directed to its port by the compass or north star.

Application: And now what remains but that I press you...to enter into this chamber of divine faithfulness, to shut the door after you, and then to live comfortably on it in evil days?

Enter into this chamber of God's faithfulness by faith and hide yourselves there. Every man is a lie, but God is true, eternally and unchangeably faithful. Oh! Exercise your faith upon it; be at rest in it.

Now, there are two great and weighty arguments to press you to enter into this chamber of divine faithfulness:

1. *The first is based upon the nature of God Who "cannot lie"* (Ti 1:2). "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?" (Num 23:19). Remember upon what everlasting, steady grounds the faithfulness of God is built. These are immutable things (Heb 6:18). Abraham built upon this, "being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform" (Rom 4:21). He accounted Him faithful that promised. What [else] would you expect or require in the person that you are to trust?

You would expect a *clear promise*; and, lo, you have a thousand all the Scripture over, fitted to all the cases of your souls and bodies! Thus, you may plead with God as [did] David: "Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope" (Psa 119:49). So Jacob pleaded, "Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good" (Gen 32:12). These are God's bonds and obligations.

You would expect *sufficient power* to make good what He promiseth. This is in God as a fair foundation of faith: "Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength" (Isa 26:4). Because of Thy strength, we will wait upon Thee. Creatures cannot, but God can do what He will.

You would expect *infinite goodness and mercy* inclining Him to help and save you. Why, so it is here! "Let Israel hope in the LORD: for with the LORD there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption" (Psa 130:7). So Moses: "I beseech thee, shew me thy glory" (Exo 33:18). The request was [for] a view of God's glory. The answer is, "I will make all my goodness pass before thee" (v. 19). This hints to us that, though all God's attributes be glorious, yet that which He most glories in is His goodness.

You would expect that *none of His promises were ever blotted or stained by His unfaithfulness at any time*; and so it is here. "Not one thing hath failed" (Jos 23:14). All are come to pass. All ages have sealed this conclusion: "Thy word is truth" (Joh 17:17)!

2. *The second is grounded in the encouragement of all former experiences*, both of others and of your own, as an argument to press you to enter into this chamber of safety, the faithfulness of God.

You have *the experiences of others*. Saints have reckoned the experiences of others that lived a thousand years before them as excellent arguments to quicken their faith. "He had power over the angel, and prevailed...he found him in Bethel, and there he spake with us" (Hos 12:4). Remember there was a Joseph with us in prison, a Jeremiah in the dungeon, a Daniel in the den, a Peter in chains, a Hezekiah upon the brink of the grave—and they all found the help of God most faithfully protecting them and saving them in all their troubles. Suitable to this is that in Psalm 22:4-5: "Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded."

Your own experiences may encourage your faith. So David's did: "The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine" (1Sa 17:37). So did Paul's experience encourage his faith in 2 Corinthians 1:10: "Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us." Thus, enter into the faithfulness of God by faith.

Let me beg you to be sure to shut the doors after you against all unbelieving doubts, jealousies, and suspicions of the faithfulness of God. The best men may find temptations of that nature. So did good Asaph, though an eminent saint. "Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promise fail for evermore?" (Psa 77:7-8). These jealousies are apt to creep in upon the minds of men, especially when God delays to answer our prayers as soon as we expect the return of them. We are all in haste for a speedy answer, forgetting that seasons of prayer are our seedtimes, and when we have sown that precious seed, we must wait for the harvest as the husbandman doth. Even a precious Heman may find a faint qualm of unbelief and despondency seizing him by the long suspension of God's answers (Psa 88:9-11).

It will be hard to shut the door upon unbelief when all things in the eye of our sense and reason seem to work against the promise. It will require an Abraham's faith at such a time to glorify God by believing in hope against hope (Rom 4:18). If ever thou hopest to enjoy the sweet repose and rest of a Christian in evil times, thou must resolve, whatever thine eyes do see or thy senses report, to hold this fast as a most sure conclusion: God is faithful and His Word is sure, and that although

“clouds and darkness are round about him: [yet] righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne” (Psa 97:2).

Oh! That you would once learn to firmly depend on God’s faithful-ness, and fetch your daily reliefs and supports thence,⁸ whensoever you are oppressed and assaulted! By spiritual troubles: when you walk in darkness and have no light, then you are to live by acts of trust and complete dependence upon the Most Faithful One (Isa 50:10). By temporal distresses: so did the people of God of old (Heb 11:17-19). [Abraham] lived by faith on this attribute when all visible comforts and supplies were out of sight.

But especially, let me warn and caution you against five principal enemies to your repose upon the faithfulness of God!

1. *Distracting cares*, which divide the mind and eat out the peace and comfort of the heart, and, which is worst of all, they reflect very dishonorably upon God Who hath pledged His faithfulness and truth for our security. Against [these], I pray you, bar the door by those two Scriptures: “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God” (Phi 4:6), and that in 1 Peter 5:7, “Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.”

2. Bar the door against *unchristian dependency*, another enemy to the sweet repose of your souls in this comfortable and quiet chamber of divine faithfulness. You will find this unbecoming and uncomfortable distemper of mind insinuating and creeping in upon you, except you believe and reason it out, as David did. “Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him” (Psa 42:11).

3. Bar the door of your heart against *carnal policies and sinful shifts*, which war against your own faith and God’s faithfulness as much as any other enemy whatsoever. This was the fault of good David in a day of trouble. “And David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul: there is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines” (1Sa 27:1). Alas, poor David! Nothing better than this? Time was when thou couldst think on a better way, when thou couldst say, “What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee” (Psa 56:3). How dost thou forget thyself in this strait? Doth thy old refuge in God fail thee now? Can the Philistines secure thee better than the promises? Wilt thou fly from thy best friend to thy worst enemies? But what need we wonder at David, who find the same distemper⁹ almost unavoidable to ourselves in like cases.

⁸ **thence** – from there.

⁹ **distemper** – unhealthy condition.

4. Shut the door against *discontents at and murmurings against the dispositions of providence*, whatever you feel or fear. I persuade you not to a stoical apathy¹⁰ and senselessness of the evils of the times. That would preclude the exercise of patience. If the martyrs had all had the dead palsy before they came to the fire, their faith and patience had not triumphed so gloriously as they did. But, on the contrary, beware of grudgings against the ways and will of God. Nothing militates more than [this] against your faith and the peace and quietness of your hearts.

5. To conclude, shut the door against all *suspicious and jealousies of the firmness and stability of the promises*, when you find all sensible comforts shaking and trembling under your feet. Have a care of such dangerous questions as this: “Doth his promise fail?” (Psa 77:8). These are the things which undermine the foundation both of your faith and comfort.

In a word, having sheltered your souls in this chamber of rest and thus shut the doors behind you, all that you have to do is to take your rest in God and enjoy the pleasure of a soul resigned into the hands of a faithful Creator, by opposing the faithfulness of God to all the fickleness and unfaithfulness you will daily find in men (Mic 7:6-7), yea, to the weakness and fading of your own natural strength and ability. “My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever” (Psa 73:26).

From *The Whole Works of the Rev. Mr. John Flavel*, Vol. 3 (Newcastle: M. Angus, 1797), 363-373; in the public domain.

John Flavel (c. 1627-1691): English Presbyterian minister; born at Bromsgrove, Worcestershire, England, UK.



Here is a safe anchor-hold: He will not alter the thing which is gone forth of His lips. The public faith of heaven is engaged for believers. Can we have better security? The whole earth hangs upon the word of God's power, and shall not our faith hang upon the word of God's truth? Where can we rest our faith but upon God's faithfulness? There is nothing else we can believe in, but the truth of God. We cannot trust in an arm of flesh. We cannot trust in our own hearts; this is to build upon the quicksands. But the truth of God is a golden pillar for faith to stay upon. God cannot deny Himself (2Ti 2:13).—*Thomas Watson*

¹⁰ **stoical apathy** – unrealistic indifference to prosperity or suffering in this life; advocated by Stoicism, a philosophical movement in Greece in the 3rd century BC.

THE SAINT'S HIDING PLACE IN THE EVIL DAY

Richard Sibbes (1577-1635)

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.—1 Peter 4:19

I am now to treat of that attribute of God, which should move us to trust in Him, namely, as *He is a faithful Creator*. Now God is faithful, 1) In His nature. He is I AM, always like Himself, immutable and unchangeable. 2) In His Word. He expresseth Himself as He is. The Word that comes from God is an expression of the faithfulness of His nature. 3) In His works. "Thou art good, and doest good," as the psalmist saith (Psa 119:68). God being faithful in Himself, all must needs be so that proceeds from Him.

Whatsoever relation God takes upon Him, He is faithful therein. As He is a Creator, so He preserves and maintains His own work. As He is a Father, He is faithful in discharging that duty to the full for His children's good. As He is our Friend, He likewise performs all the duties of that relation. And why doth God stoop so low to take these relations upon Him, but only to show that He will certainly accomplish the same to the utmost? Whence is it that men are faithful in their relations one towards another, that the father is faithful to his child? Is it not from God, the chief Father? That a friend should be faithful to his friend, is it not from God, the great Friend?

All His ways are mercy and truth. They are not only merciful and good and gracious, but mercy and truth itself. If He shows Himself to be a Father, He is a true Father, a true Friend, a true Creator and Protector...All other faithfulness is but a beam of that which is in God. Shall not He be most faithful that makes other things faithful?

Now, this faithfulness of God is here a ground of this duty of committing ourselves to Him. And we may well trust Him Whose Word hath been seven times tried in the fire (Psa 12:6). There is no dross in it. Every word of God is a sure word; His truth is a shield and buckler. We may well trust in it. Therefore, when you read of any singular promise in the New Testament, it is said, "This is a faithful saying," etc. (1Ti 1:15). That is, this is such a speech as we may trust to; it is the speech of a *faithful Creator*. Considering, therefore, that God is so faithful every way in His promises and in His deeds, let us make special use

of it. Treasure up all the promises we can of the forgiveness of sins, of protection and preservation, that He will never leave us, but be our God to death, etc., and then consider withal that He is faithful in performing the same. When we are affrighted by His majesty and His justice and other attributes, then think of His mercy and truth. He hath clothed Himself with faithfulness, as the psalmist saith. In all the unfaithfulness of men whom thou trustest, depend upon this, that God is still the same and will not deceive thee.

When we have man's word, we have his sufficiency in mind, for men's words are as themselves are. What will not the word of a king do? If a man be mighty and great, his word is answerable. This is the reason why we should make so much of the Word of God, because it is the Word of Jehovah, a mighty Creator, Who gives a being to all things, and can only be Lord and Master of His Word. We know God's meaning in no other way than by His Word. Till we come to the knowledge of vision in heaven, we must be content with the knowledge of revelation in the Word.

And in every promise, single out that which [is most suitable to] thy present condition. If thou art in any great distress, think upon the almighty power of God. "Lord, Thou hast made me of nothing, and canst deliver me out of this estate.¹ Behold, I fly unto Thee for succor."² If thou art in perplexity for want of direction and knowest not what to do, single out the attribute of God's wisdom and desire Him to teach thee the way that thou shouldest go. If thou art wronged, fly to His justice and say, "O God, to Whom vengeance belongeth, hear and help Thy servant." If thou be surprised with distrust and staggering, then go to His truth and faithfulness. Thou shalt always find in God something to support thy soul in the greatest extremity that can befall thee; for if there were not in God a fulness to supply every pressing need that we are in, He were not to be worshipped, He were not to be trusted.

Man is lighter than vanity in the balance (Psa 62:9). Every man is a liar; that is, he is false. We may be so, and yet be men too, but God is essentially true. He cannot deceive and be God too. Therefore ever,³ when thou art disappointed with men, retire to God and to His promises, and build upon this, that the Lord will not be wanting⁴ in anything that may do thee good. With men there is breach of covenant, nation with nation, and man with man. There is little trust to be had in any. But in all confusions here is comfort: a religious⁵ person may cast

¹ **estate** – condition.

² **succor** – assistance.

³ **ever** – always.

⁴ **wanting** – lacking.

⁵ **religious** – truly converted.

himself boldly into the arms of the Almighty, and go to Him in any distress, as to a *faithful Creator* that will not forsake him.

Oh, let us be ashamed that we should dishonor Him Who is ready to pawn⁶ His faithfulness and truth for us. If we confess our sins, God is faithful to forgive them (1Jo 1:9). He will not suffer us to be tempted above that which we are able (1Co 10:13). When we perplex ourselves with doubts and fears whether He will make good His promise or not, we disable⁷ His Majesty. Do we not think God stands upon His truth and faithfulness? Undoubtedly He doth, and we cannot dishonor Him more than to distrust Him, especially in His evangelical⁸ promises. We make Him a liar and rob Him of that which He most glories in—His mercy and faithfulness—if we rest not securely upon Him.

See the baseness of man's nature. God hath made all other things faithful that are so, and we can trust them, but are ever and anon⁹ questioning the truth of His promise...

Yea, let Satan, by his wicked instruments, draw a man to some cursed politic¹⁰ reasons—for the devil doth not immediately¹¹ converse with the world, but in his instruments—and [a man] will sooner trust him than God Himself. So prone are our hearts to distrust the Almighty, to call His truth in question, and to trust the lies of our own hearts and other men's before Him. Let us, therefore, lament our infidelity, that having such an *omnipotent and faithful Creator* to rely upon, yet we cannot bring our hearts to trust in Him.

There are two main pillars of a Christian's faith: the power of God and the goodness of God. These two, like Aaron and Hur, hold up the arms of our prayers (Exo 17:12). Let our state be never so desperate, yet God is a Creator still. Let our sins and infirmities be never so great, yet He hath power to heal them. Oh, how should this cheer up our souls and support our drooping spirits in all our strivings and conflicts with sin and Satan, that we yield not to the least temptation, having such an almighty God to fly unto for succor.

From *The Complete Works of Richard Sibbes*, Vol. 1 (Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1862), 411-413; in the public domain.

Richard Sibbes (1577-1635): Early English Puritan preacher.



⁶ **pawn** – lay down as a pledge or security.

⁷ **disable** – *archaic*: depreciate; belittle.

⁸ **evangelical** – pertaining to the gospel.

⁹ **ever and anon** – sometimes; now and then.

¹⁰ **politic** – *archaic*: shrewd; crafty.

¹¹ **immediately** – directly.

GOD'S FAITHFULNESS FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION

Thomas Manton (1620-1677)

*Thy faithfulness is unto all generations: thou hast established
the earth, and it abideth.—Psalms 119:90*

THESSE words contain a truth which is 1) asserted; and 2) represented by a fit and lively emblem: “Thou hast established the earth, and it abideth.” He had before said, “Thy word is settled in heaven” (Psa 119:89). Now He speaks of it as manifested in the earth. There the constancy of God’s promises was set forth by the duration and equal motion of the heavenly bodies, now by the firmness and immovableness of the earth. God’s powerful Word and providence reaches to the whole world, this lower part here upon earth, as well as the upper part in heaven.¹

The doctrine: That in all ages God always showed Himself a true God, and faithful in all His promises. It is here confirmed by experience and represented by an emblem.

I. Confirmed by Experience

1. *God’s faithfulness relateth to some promise wherein He hath engaged Himself to His people:* “She judged him faithful who had promised” (Heb 11:11). It is His mercy to make promises, but it is His faithfulness and truth to fulfil them. His truth is pawned with the creature till He discharges it. “Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old” (Mic 7:20).

2. *His truth dependeth upon His unchangeable nature, but it is confirmed to us by experience.* God is unchangeable in His nature (Heb 6:18). If a promise can be made out to be of God, we have no more reason to doubt of it than of the nature and being of God. Yet, as to us, it is confirmed by experience: “The word of the LORD is tried” (Psa 18:30). We are led by sensory things, and what hath been done doth assure us of what shall be done or may be expected from God.

3. *God hath been always careful to fulfil His truth, that the event may answer the promise, and we might know that God, Who hath been faithful and*

¹ EDITOR’S NOTE: This article has been edited more than usual for readability.

kept touch² with the world hitherto, will not fail at last... The true God is known by His mercy and His fidelity; He never failed to perform His part of the covenant with any. “I will...praise thy name for thy loving-kindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name” (Psa 138:2). As He hath made us admirable and great promises of giving His Son, and with Him all things, so He will certainly perform all to the utmost importance of them. The matter of His Word is mercy and lovingkindness, and in the performance thereof there is great truth and fidelity. As He hath made great and excellent promises, so He performeth them most punctually. So that in fulfilling His Word, God will be known above all that is named or famed or believed or apprehended and spoken of them. Here is His great glory and excellency.

4. *The experience of all generations doth confirm God’s faithfulness in His promises;* for it is said in the text, “Thy faithfulness is unto all generations.” In the Hebrew it is, “From generation to generation.”

This point may be amplified by two considerations: First, that some promises have been received by one generation and fulfilled in another. Secondly, that the same common promises have been fulfilled to the faithful in all ages.

First, *that some promises have been received by one generation and fulfilled in another,* when the matter so required—as, for instance, Israel’s going out of Egypt. “And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance” (Gen 15:13-14). Compare now Exodus 12:41, “And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt.” Thirty years were added because of their fathers dwelling in Canaan, but God kept touch to a day. So [also] for the promise of the Messiah and calling the Gentiles, God fulfilled His promise in due time and sent a Savior into the world. “When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son” (Gal 4:4)—when the scepter was gone from Judah (Gen 49:10); when the crown was possessed by Herod, a tributary and foreigner, during the Roman monarchy, which at length Christ should utterly destroy. Nebuchadnezzar had a vision of an image of four different metals, the head of gold, arms and breasts silver, belly and thighs brass, and the feet part iron and clay (Dan 2:35). While he beheld the image and surveyed it from head to foot, he saw a stone hewn out of the mountain without

² **kept touch** – exactly performed His promise.

hands, which stone smote the image, not upon the head, breast, or belly, but upon the feet of iron and clay, upon which it vanished away; and the stone became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. This vision Daniel expounded of four Gentile kingdoms, which should succeed one another with great extent of dominion: the first of the Babylonians, which then was; the second of the Medes and Persians; the third of the Grecians; the fourth of the Romans, which subdued all the others, and possessed the riches and glory of the former. During this last kingdom was the stone hewn out of the mountain and smote the iron feet. This stone was the kingdom of the God of heaven, which Christ set up...

The apostle telleth us, "Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers: And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name. And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people" (Rom 15:8-10). The outcome in all these cases afterwards did speak for itself. So in all that is yet to come we should depend upon the veracity of God: as the calling of the Jews, the destruction of Antichrist, a more ample effusion of gifts on the church, together with an expansion of its borders; as the patriarchs "all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them" (Heb 11:13).

Secondly, *that the same common promises have been fulfilled to the faithful in all ages.* There is but one and the same way to eternal life in necessary things, and the dispensations of God to every age are still the same. And so in every generation the promises of God are still fulfilled as if they were directed to that time only. God's faithfulness hath been tried many ways and at many times, but every age furnisheth examples of the truth of His promises. From the beginning of the world to the end, God is ever fulfilling the Scripture in His providential government, which is double—*external* or *internal*.

External, in the deliverance of His people, the answers of prayer, and manifold blessings vouchsafed to believers and their seed. "Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded" (Psa 22:4-5). The godly in former times trusted God and trusted constantly in their troubles; and in their trusting they cried and did never seek God in vain. This should support us in waiting upon God and encourage us to depend on His mercy and fidelity, for they that place their full faith in God and seek His help by constant and importunate addresses shall never be put to shame.

Internal, in conversion to God, the comforts of His Spirit, establishment of the soul in the hopes of the gospel, as to the pardon of sins and eternal life. Certainly God, that hath blessed the Word throughout many successions of ages to the converting and comforting of many souls, showeth that we may depend upon the covenant for pardon and eternal life. How many have found comfort by the promises! Now, as the apostle speaketh of Abraham, “Now it was not written for his sake alone...but for us also” (Rom 4:23-24), so these comforts were not dispensed for their sake alone, but for our benefit, that we might be comforted of God—having the same God, the same Redeemer, the same covenant and promises, and the same Spirit to apply all unto us. If they looked to God and were comforted, why should not we? His faithfulness is to all generations. He is alike to believers, as they be alike to Him; “for there is no difference” (Rom 3:22).

5. *The experience of God’s faithfulness in former ages is of use to those that follow and succeed to assure them of God’s faithfulness*; for God’s wonderful and gracious works were never intended merely for the benefit of that age in which they were done, but for the benefit also of those that should hear of them by any creditable means whatsoever. It is a scorn and vile contempt put upon those wonderful works, which God made to be had in remembrance, if they should be buried in oblivion or not observed and improved by those who live in after ages. Yea, it is contrary to the Scriptures. “One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts” (Psa 145:4). “Tell ye your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation” (Joe 1:3). “That this may be a sign among you, that when your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean ye by these stones? Then ye shall answer them, That the waters of Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD” (Jos 4:6-7). “Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done. For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments” (Psa 78:3-7).

From all which I observe the following:

We should tell generations to come what we have found of God in our time, and more especially parents should tell their children. They are bound

to transmit this knowledge to their children, and they are bound to improve³ it, either by word or deed. By word, by remembering the passages⁴ of providences, and publishing His mercies to posterity: "I will sing of the mercies of the LORD for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations" (Psa 89:1). Or by deed, putting them in possession of a pure religion, confirmed to us by so many providences and instances of God's goodness and truth.

This report of God's gracious works and owning His covenant is a special means of edification. Why else should God enjoin it, but that the ages following should receive benefit thereby? Surely it is an advantage to them to hear how God hath demonstrated His faithfulness in ordinances and providences.

And more particularly, I observe that *this tradition of repeating God's works is a great means and help to faith*; for it is said, "That they might set their hope in God" (Psa 78:7).

6. *To be satisfied in point of God's faithfulness is of great importance to believers for several reasons:*

a. *Because their fidelity to God is much encouraged by His fidelity to us.* They that do not trust God cannot be long true to Him. "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God" (Heb 3:12). And, "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways" (Jam 1:8)—one that doth not stick fast to God and is ever unresolved, being divided between hopes and fears concerning his acceptance with God. A wavering Christian is divided between God and some unlawful course for his safety, divided between God's ways and his own, and cannot quietly depend upon His promises, but is tossed to and fro. A wavering Christian doth not entirely trust himself in God's hands, but doth wholly lean upon his own carnal confidence.

b. *Because God is invisible and dealeth with us by proxy, by messengers, who bring the Word to us.* We see not God in person: "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation" (Heb 13:7)—their manner of living, their perseverance till death in this faith and hope.

c. *Because the promises are future, and the primary fulfilment of them is to be accomplished in another world.* Now, nothing will support us but the faithfulness of God. "The wicked worketh a deceitful work: but to him that soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward" (Pro 11:18). Men think to be happy by their sin but find themselves deceived at last. But none can be deceived that trust in the living and true God.

³ improve – use to good purpose.

⁴ passages – events.

d. *Because many of the promises contradict sense.* When the soul is filled with anguish because of the guilt of sin, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1Jo 1:9). When the soul is filled with anguish from the power of sin, “Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it” (1Th 5:24). When the believer needs support in great distress, “God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able” (1Co 10:13). When we wonder how we will be able to stand in the judgment, “God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ” (1Co 1:9). Here is a Christian’s great security and support: God’s faithfulness, testified by Christians now and in all ages, confessing they have found by their experience the Word of God to be true; for they have transmitted religion to us by their constant consent, and left it to us under seal of God’s faithfulness; and therefore we should persevere in our duty to God.

II. As Represented by an Emblem

We should consider the earth, the emblem of God’s faithfulness; for it is a help to frequent meditation, as being always before our eyes. They are without excuse who see not God in this thing. Every time we set foot on the ground, we may remember the stability of God’s promises. And it is also a confirmation of faith.

1. *The stability of the earth is the effect of God’s word.* This is the true pillar upon which the earth standeth, for He upholdeth “all things by the word of his power” (Heb 1:3). “For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast” (Psa 33:9). Now, His word of power helpeth us to depend upon His word of promise. God that doth what He pleaseth never faileth in what He promiseth. We see plainly that whatever standeth by God’s will and word cannot be brought to nought. Whence is it? How came this world to have a being? It is the work and product of that God Whose word and promise we have in Scripture. Certainly the power of this God cannot fail; it is as easy for Him to do as to say.

2. *Nothing appeareth whereon the globe of the earth and water should lean and rest.* “He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing” (Job 26:7). Now, that this vast and ponderous body should lean upon the fluid air as upon a firm foundation is matter of wonder. The question is put in Job 38:6, “Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof?” Yet firm it is, though it hangs as a ball in the air. The globe of the earth is encompassed with the regions of the air and the celestial spheres, and hath no visible support to sustain so heavy a body hanging in the midst of so vast an expansion; yet God had settled and established it so firm as if it rest-

ed on the most solid basis and foundation...Now, since His word beareth up such a weight, all the church's weight and our own burden leaneth on the promise of God. He can, by the power of His word, do the greatest things without visible means. "But say in a word, and my servant shall be healed" (Luk 7:7). Therefore, His people may trust His providence; He is able to support them in any distresses when no way of help and relief appeareth.

3. *The firmness and stability offereth itself to our thoughts.* The earth abideth in the same seat and condition wherein God left it, as long as the present course and order of nature is to continue. He hath "laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be removed for ever" (Psa 104:5). God's truth is as immovable as the earth: "The truth of the LORD endureth for ever" (Psa 117:2). Surely, if the foundation of the earth abideth sure, the foundation of our salvation laid by Jesus Christ is much more sure. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one tittle of the Word and Law of God till all be fulfilled (Mat 5:18; 24:35). If the Law given by Moses be so sure, much more the promises of salvation by Christ. "For all the promises of God in [Christ] are yea, and in him Amen" (2Co 1:20).

4. *The stability in the midst of changes:* "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever" (Ecc 1:4). When man passeth away, the earth stayeth behind him, as a habitation for other comers, and abideth where it was, when the inhabitants go to and fro, and can enjoy it no more. All things in the world are subject to many revolutions, but God's truth is one and the same. The changes in the world do not detract from His fidelity in the promises. He changeth all things and is not changed. Though there be a new face of things in the world, yet we have a sure rule to walk by and sure promises to build upon. And therefore, in all conditions, we should be the same to God, and there is no doubt but He will be the same to us.

5. *In upholding the frame of the world, all those attributes are seen which are a firm support to a believer's heart, such as wisdom, power, and goodness.* *Wisdom:* "The LORD by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens" (Pro 3:19). Look on it, it is the work of a wise agent. So for *power:* this great fabric is supported by His almighty power. His *goodness* is seen in that He hath made the earth to be firm and dry land, that it may be a fit habitation for men. This is a standing miracle of goodness. Luther saith we are always kept, as the Israelites were, in the midst of the Red Sea. The Psalmist tells us God founded the earth "upon the seas, and established it upon the floods" (Psa 24:2). The part of the world on which we dwell would suddenly be overwhelmed and covered with waters were it not for the

goodness of God. The order of nature shows that in the beginning of the creation, next under the air were the waters covering the whole surface of the earth (Gen 1:7). But God made such cavities in the earth as should receive the waters into them, and such banks as should bound and bridle the vast ocean that it might not break forth (Gen 1:9)...And though once, for the sins of the world, these waters were appointed to break out and overwhelm the earth, yet God hath firmly promised that they shall never do so again. In this promise, His *truth* is also verified and applied to the covenant of grace: “For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee” (Isa 54:9). The covenant of grace is as sure as the covenant made after the Flood; so that we cannot look upon this earth but as an emblem of those attributes which confirm our faith in waiting upon God till His promises be fulfilled to us.

III. Application

Let us be then more firmly persuaded of God’s faithfulness that we may depend upon it both for His preserving the church and ourselves in the way of our duty, till we enjoy our final reward.

1. *For the preservation of Christ’s kingdom.* God’s faithfulness chiefly appeareth in the government of His church or spiritual kingdom, and this is a kingdom that cannot be moved when all things else are shaken (Heb 12:28). Christ cannot be a head without members, a king without subjects. And we are told that “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Mat 16:18). Many disorders happen, but let us depend upon the faithful God. The world was well guided before we came into it; and other generations have had experience of God’s faithfulness, though we complain that we see not our signs, nor any tokens for good.

2. *For the preservation of our bodies to the heavenly kingdom.* We have many discouragements within and without, but while we persevere in our duty, God will not fail us; His word is as sure as the earth. “The Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil” (2Th 3:3). God hath promised not only to give us our final reward, but to secure and defend His people by the way.

From *The Complete Works of Thomas Manton*, Vol. 7 (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1872), 407-413; in the public domain.

Thomas Manton (1620-1677): Nonconformist Puritan preacher; born in Lawrence-Lydiat, county of Somerset, England.



GOD WILL FULFILL HIS WORD

Charles Simeon (1759-1836)

God is not a man, that he should lie.—Numbers 23:19

THERE is scarcely anything that more strongly manifests the depravity of our nature than that propensity to lying, which we perceive in children as soon as they begin to speak. Even when men are grown to the full exercise of their reason, they too often deviate from truth, sometimes through forgetfulness, sometimes from a change of sentiment or inclination, and sometimes from an inability to perform their word. Hence, it is characteristic of man to lie. And we are all so sensible of this that in matters of great importance, we require of men an oath to confirm their word, and enter into written covenants with them, which we take care to have properly attested.¹

Now, we are apt to think that God is even such an one as ourselves, and that He also may be prevailed upon to alter the word that is gone out of His lips. Balak evidently entertained this idea of Him and labored by many repeated sacrifices to divert Him from His purpose. But Balaam was inspired to declare the vanity of such a hope, and to assert in a most humiliating comparison the unchangeableness of Jehovah.

To unfold the full meaning of his words, we observe:

1. Some men think that God will lie. God has told us with strong and repeated statements that we “must be born again” (Joh 3:7), but this is totally disbelieved by:

The profane. They persuade themselves that such strictness in religion as is implied in the new birth is not necessary; and that they shall go to heaven in their own way.

The self-righteous. These consider regeneration as a dream of weak enthusiasts and are satisfied with the “form of godliness” without ever experiencing “the power thereof” (2Ti 3:5).

The hypocritical professors of religion. These, having changed their creed together with their outward conduct, fancy themselves Christians; notwithstanding, their faith neither “overcometh the world,” nor “worketh by love,” nor purifies their hearts (1Jo 5:4; Gal 5:6; Jam 4:8).

That all these persons think God will lie is evident beyond a doubt, for if they really believed that old things must pass away and become new before they can enter into the kingdom of heaven (2Co 5:17), they

¹ attested – confirmed by witnesses.

would feel concerned to know whether any such change had taken place in them. Nor would they ever be satisfied till they had a scriptural evidence that they were indeed new creatures in Christ Jesus. But as this is in no respect the case with them, it is manifest that they believe not “the record” of God (1Jo 5:10), and consequently, however harsh the expression may seem, they make God a liar.

While some do not hesitate to entertain these dishonorable thoughts of God,

2. Others fear He *may* lie. This is common with persons:

Under conviction of sin. When men are deeply convinced of sin, they find it exceeding difficult to rest simply on the promises of the gospel. God promises to cast out none who come to Him by Christ Jesus, to wash them from sins of deepest dye, and to bestow on them all the blessings of salvation freely “without money and without price” (Isa 55:1). Now, this appears too good to be true. They cannot conceive how God should justify the ungodly (Rom 4:5), and therefore they seek to become godly first, in order that they may be justified. And if they cannot bring some price in their hands, they keep back and give themselves over to desponding fears.

Under temptation or desertion. God has declared that He will not suffer His people “to be tempted above that ye are able...to bear” (1Co 10:13). But when they come into temptation, they are apt to say as David, “I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul” (1Sa 27:1). They see no way for their escape, and therefore they fear that the very next wave will overwhelm them utterly.

If God at these seasons hide His face from them, they conclude, “There is no hope” (Isa 57:10). They think His mercy is clean gone forever, and His lovingkindness [has] come utterly to an end for evermore (Psa 77:8). Notwithstanding, God has so frequently and so expressly declared, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Heb 13:5).

Now, these persons do not, like the ungodly, deliberately think that God will lie; but they have many misgiving fears lest He should. And that they do so is obvious, for if they did not, they would take God at His word and stay themselves on Him when they are in darkness and have “no light” (Isa 50:10).

Thus, generally the veracity of Him Who is truth itself is either questioned or denied!

3. But God neither will nor can lie. It is humiliating beyond expression that ministers should be forced to vindicate the veracity of God. But as He Himself has seen fit to do so in the sacred oracles, and as the unbelief of men is so deep-rooted in them, we submit to the necessity and proceed to show that *He will not lie*.

First, let us hear the testimonies of those who have tried Him. Had ever anyone more opportunities of proving His fidelity than Moses, Joshua, and Samuel? Yet they all attest in the most solemn manner that He neither had deceived them in anything, nor ever would (Deu 32:4; Jos 23:14; 1Sa 15:29).

Second, let us attend to God's own assertions and appeals. Would He ever venture to speak thus strongly on His own behalf if His creatures could make good their accusations against Him? He threatened to punish the angels if they should prove disobedient. He denounced a curse on Adam if he should eat of the forbidden tree. He threatened to destroy the whole world with a deluge, to overwhelm Sodom and Gomorrah with fire and brimstone, and to scatter His once chosen people over the face of the whole earth. See now whether He has forborne to execute any of these threatenings. He also promised to send His only dear Son to die for sinners and to make Him great among the Gentiles, while His own nation should almost universally reject Him. Have either of these promises been forgotten? Or, if such promises and such threatenings have received their accomplishment, is there any reason to doubt respecting any other that are yet unfulfilled? Are not His past actions so many types and pledges of what He will hereafter perform? (2Pe 2:4-9; Jude 1:7).

He cannot lie. Truth is as essential to the divine nature as goodness, wisdom, power, or any other attribute; so that He can as easily cease to be good or wise or powerful as He can suffer one jot or tittle of His word to fail. If for one moment He could divest Himself of truth, He would cease to be deserving of all confidence or affection. Let it only be said of any man, "He is great and wise and generous, but no dependence can be placed on his word." Would he not on the whole be deemed a contemptible character? How then would Jehovah be degraded if any such infirmity could be laid to His charge?

It should seem that St. Paul was peculiarly solicitous to guard us against entertaining the smallest possible doubt of the divine veracity, for he abounds in expressions declarative of this perfection. God, says he, cannot lie (Ti 1:2); and again, "he cannot deny himself" (2Ti 2:13); and again, in still stronger terms, it is "impossible for God to lie" (Heb 6:18). Nor let it be thought that this detracts from God's power: for to be able to lie would be a weakness rather than a perfection. And as it is man's disgrace that he is prone to violate his word, so it is God's honor that He neither will nor can lie.

How vain are the expectations of unconverted men! Men, whatever may be their state, persuade themselves that they shall be happy when they die. But how delusive must be that hope, which is built upon the

expectation that God will prove Himself a liar! Who are we, that God should (if we may so speak) undeify Himself for us? And what security should we have if He were even to admit us into heaven in direct opposition to His own word? Might He not change His word again, and cast us into hell at last? Surely heaven would be no heaven, if it were held on so precarious a tenure.² Let us then lay aside all such delusive hopes. Let us learn to tremble at God's word and seek to attain that entire change both of heart and life to which the promises of salvation are annexed.

How groundless are the fears of the converted! There is a holy fear or jealousy that is highly desirable for everyone, however eminent, however established. But there is a tormenting, slavish fear that arises from unbelief, and which greatly retards our progress in the divine life. Now we ask, Does this fear arise from an apprehension of our own unfaithfulness, or of God's? If it be God's faithfulness that we doubt, let us know that His gifts and calling are "without repentance" (Rom 11:29), and that where He "hath begun a good work" He "will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phi 1:6). If, on the other hand, we suspect our own faithfulness, let us recollect on Whom our faithfulness depends. If it depends wholly on ourselves, who amongst us will be saved? Thanks be to God, He Who has been the author of our faith has engaged to be the finisher of it (Heb 12:2), and has promised, not only that He will not depart from us, but that He will put His fear in our hearts, so that we shall not depart from Him (Jer 32:39-40). Let us then "set to [our] seal that God is true" (Joh 3:33). Let us commit ourselves to Him, knowing in Whom we have believed, and assured that, while we stand on the foundation of His Word, we are immovably secure (2Ti 2:19).

From *Horae Homileticae: Numbers to Joshua*, Vol. 2 (London: Holdsworth & Ball, 1832), 149-153; in the public domain.

Charles Simeon (1759-1836): Anglican clergyman; born in Reading, England.



I want, dear brethren, to leave this impression in your minds, that in the great business of life, whatever it is, while we do not sit still and fold our hands...yet God works in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure...If anything be done aright, successfully, it is God that performs it, and we give Him the glory. I want you to feel that, as the task is performed by Him in all its details, so to the very close of your life, all shall be performed of His grace through you by Himself, to His own honor and praise, world without end.—*Charles Spurgeon*

² **tenure** – condition of holding a status or position.

CHRIST: THE FAITHFUL AMEN

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

The Amen, the faithful and true witness.—Revelation 3:14

A MEN signifies “true,” “faithful,” “certain,” but its sense will be better seen by carefully noting its uses. It had at least three forms of practical meaning. First, it was used in the sense of asserting: when a person would give peculiar authority to his words, he either commenced or concluded with the word *amen*...The second sense of the word *amen* slightly varies from asserting and may be more properly described as consenting...A memorable instance is that of the people assembled upon Mount Ebal and Gerizim. When the threatenings and the blessings were both read in their hearing, the people said, “Amen, amen” (Deu 27)—so let it be...A third meaning of the word *amen* is what we may call petitionary. In this sense we use it at the close of our prayers. “Our Father who art in heaven” is not a complete model of public prayer till it concludes with “Amen”...

Our blessed and ever-to-be-adored Lord Jesus is...“the Amen” in reference to God [and] “the Amen” as viewed in Himself...

1. Refresh your memories upon the great truth: Our Lord is superlatively God’s Amen...

Jesus is “the Amen” *of the divine purposes*. There was a day before all days when there was no day but the Ancient of Days; a time before all times when He Who made all time dwelt alone. Then in His august mind He conceived the plan of redemption. He foresaw the world ruined by sin. He determined that a number whom no man could number should be redeemed unto Himself to be forever His children, the beloved of His soul. These purposes He made and fixed them fast...These purposes were but purposes until God said “Amen” to them and made them valid and sure decrees by determining to give His own dear Son...That gift of Christ to us in the eternal covenant was the mighty Father’s virtually stamping His decree and making it valid and good. Long ere you and I had a being, before this great world started out of nothingness, God had made every purpose of His eternal counsel to stand fast and firm by the gift of His dear Son to us. He was then God’s Amen to His eternal purpose.

When our Lord actually came upon the earth, He was then God’s Amen *to the long line of prophecies*. One by one, the servants of God had testified concerning the coming Messiah. Some had spoken evangelically

with Isaiah; others with a more legal savor as Moses; but their testimony was to the same effect, that in due time a prophet should be raised up, and that there should be born of a virgin a Man Who should at the same time be the “Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father” (Isa 9:6). These promises followed thick and fast, all of them cohering, each one manifesting the self-same coming One. But there was no Amen to them. They were things hoped for, but not the substance thereof, till at last, in the silence of midnight, angels sweetly sang His advent, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men!” “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord” (Luk 2:14, 11). That babe among the horned oxen, that carpenter’s Son, was God’s declaration that prophecy was the voice of heaven. Now, ye prophets, sleeping in your tombs, it is witnessed that ye lied not. Now hath God Himself come forth and set to His seal that ye are true. In the blessed form of Mary’s child, God’s Amen appears both to shepherds and to wise men.

In the same sense also, Christ was God’s Amen *to all the Levitical types*. The morning and the evening lamb, the red heifer, the turtle doves, and the two young pigeons whose blood stained the altar, the sacrificial bullock, the scapegoat, the plentiful sprinklings of blood—all these were man’s avowal that he believed in God, and at the same time God declaring to man that He had provided a sacrifice. Yonder smoking bullock offered by Aaron and his sons is nothing yet. It is but a figure; it lacks the Amen to give it body, force, substance. That uplifted knife, that priest clad in fair white linen, that blood spilt upon the altar—all these are nothing. They want a soul put into them. When Jesus Christ came, and especially when up to the cross as to the altar He went as a victim and was laid thereon, then it was that God solemnly put an Amen into what otherwise was but typical and shadowy...

It is exceedingly worthy of your regard that Christ is God’s Amen *to the majesty of His Law*. That was a very solemn Amen which God gave on the top of Sinai, when He came with ten thousand of His holy ones, and the mountain smoked beneath His feet. As I hear those words, “Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might” (Deu 6:5), that blast of the trumpet waxing exceeding loud and long, that crack of thunder, and yon mighty flashes of great lightnings were God’s Amen...

But, dear friends, I can point you to *a more solemn Amen than that*, more terrible than Sinai, although ye can better bear the sight. God has said, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Eze 18:4); “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them” (Gal 3:10). There stands the Son of God. He has not sinned

Himself, but He has the sins of all His people imputed to Him. He has never broken the Law, but all our breaches thereof were laid on Him. Now what will God say to Him? God meets Him as He once met Adam in the garden, but Jesus did not hide Himself as Adam did. He met stern Justice face to face. There He is, the sinner's substitute. What will the infinitely just Jehovah say now? The Law says He is accursed, for He has sin upon Him. Will the Father consent that His own Beloved shall be made a curse for us? Hearken and hear the Lord's Amen. "Awake, O sword, against...the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD" (Zec 13:7). What, does God the Father say Amen? Can it be? It is even so. He says Amen. And what an awful Amen too, when the streaming sweat of blood started from every pore of His most blessed and immaculate body and fell in terrible clots upon the frosty ground. O God, Thou didst say Amen indeed to all the terror of Thy Law when Christ had to cry, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death" (Mat 26:38).

Yet louder still is that Amen *at Golgotha* where stands the Savior, mocked, despised, rejected; at the Roman column, torn with scourges, and in the seat of mockery crowned with thorns. There the Law seemed to say, "The sinner is to be despised and rejected; the sinner is a shameful thing, worthy to be spit upon; the sinner deserves to be crowned with thorns," and God says Amen, and His own dear Son Who stood in the sinner's place was made to set forth God's awful assent to the demands of justice. Yonder along the streets of Jerusalem, over stones as hard as the hearts of Jerusalem's sons and daughters—harder they could not be—He goes, leaving a blood-track up to Calvary's mound. And there—when hands and feet are pierced, and His soul pierced with something worse than nails, and His heart made to drink of draughts more bitter than wormwood mixed with gall, and His soul the subject of worse temptations than the mere thrusting out of the tongue or the jeer and the jibe of the multitude; there where His soul died within Him because God forsook Him, and He shrieked, "Eloi! Eloi! lama sabachthani?"—there it was that God said sternly and dreadfully, Amen, to that sentence, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Gal 3:13)...

We have not, however, exhausted this topic. Jesus Christ is, as you know, very blessedly God's Amen *to all His covenant promises*, for is it not written that "all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen"? (2Co 1:20). The Apostle Paul seems to have hit upon the very spirit of Christ's name, Amen, when he says, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Rom 8:32). When God gave His Son, He did virtually give all covenant blessings to His people. The gift of Jesus Christ was God's making every promise which had ever gone before the coming of

Christ sure and certain. Christ was the wax melted in the fire, upon which God set the stamp of His own honor that He would be true to the covenant engagements which He had made. Brethren, if the saying of Amen upon Mount Gerizim to the blessing of the Law had something delightfully cheering and comfortable about it, how much more divinely sweet was Jehovah's Amen when Jesus Christ rose from the dead triumphant, how much more when up the everlasting hills He rode in glorious triumph, leading captivity captive...The enthronization of Christ is God's solemn declaration and Amen that He will bless all His people, and make them kings and priests to reign for ever and ever.

Once more, Jesus Christ will be God's Amen *at the conclusion of this dispensation in the fulness of time*...When God shall put into His dear Son's mouth those words, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Mat 25:34), that will be a most solemn Amen to God's purpose made concerning those saints. Indeed, it will be the Amen to the covenant in the whole of its range, and to the entire work of grace from the first to the last. Then, as they come streaming up the sky in glorious pomp to reign with Jesus Christ forever, death and hell and the assembled world shall mark with shame and dismay God's Amen to His own eternal purposes and to the work of His glorified Son.

When, turning to the left, the Judge shall say, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire in hell" (see Mat 25:41), before the word is spoken, the ungodly will recognize Christ as being the Amen *to all that God had threatened*. In their cries to the rocks to hide them, in their shrieks to the mountains to fall upon them, they will at once discover to assembled multitudes that they perceive Jesus to be the Amen, making God's threatenings true. And when His voice shall have cursed them forever, it will be the weighty Amen throughout eternity, the emphatic reasserting at once of their guilt and of their punishment, that their sentence came from Jesus, that same Jesus Who died for sinners, and Whom sinners crucified and rejected...Oh sinner! May Christ never be God's Amen to you in that sense; but, on the contrary, may you hide in the wounds of Jesus, and find all the blessings in Him yea and in Him Amen to you!...

2. Our Redeemer took this as a personal title to Himself. He called Himself "the Amen"; and so He is. Our second point, then, is that He is our Amen *in Himself*. He proved Himself to be Amen—the God of truth, sincerity, and faithfulness in His fulfilment of covenant engagements. The Lord Jesus Christ undertook to bring many saints to glory. His Father gave Him a people to be His forever; and He undertook, in suretyship engagements, that every one of these should be delivered perfect and complete when they should be required at His hands. He undertook, in order

to this, that He would suffer, bleed, and die for His church; that all her debts should be discharged from His own veins; that a perfect righteousness should be wrought out for her, in which she should stand all beautiful in the sight of God. Brethren, I leave it to your own judgment, you who know the Lord Jesus, whether He has not faithfully kept His engagements. He has been the Amen to the full in this respect. "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God" (Psa 40:7-8)...Let us praise and bless His name as we see Him in covenant engagements faithful and true, the Amen.

He was also the Amen *in all His teachings*...You find Him beginning, "Verily, verily, I say unto you" (Joh 5:24). Christ as teacher does not appeal to tradition, or even to reasoning, but gives Himself as His authority. He quotes indeed the authority of, "It is written," and speaks of the things which He had seen and heard of His Father, but this He states upon the authority of His own oneness with the Father. He comes clad with divine authority, and He does not deign to dispute or to argue, but He claims for His words that they are Amen. We have accepted His teachings, I hope, in that same spirit. I do not open the evangelists¹ to find Christ's words to cavil² over them. I do not turn to the epistles to criticize the teachings of my Lord, nor to raise difficult questions wherewith to wrangle with the great Teacher. The position of a Christian is at his Master's feet, not disputing, but receiving; not questioning, but believing. And in this sense, Christ claims as a prophet and teacher to be the Amen.

He is also the Amen *in all His promises*. Sinner, I would comfort thee with this reflection. Jesus Christ said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Mat 11:28). If you come to Him, you will not find that He has revoked that promise, but He will say "Amen" in your soul. That promise shall be true to you. He said in the days of His flesh, "The bruised reed I will not break, and the smoking flax I will not quench" (see Isa 42:3; Mat 12:20). Oh, thou poor, broken, bruised heart, if thou comest to Him He will say Amen to thee, and that shall be true in thy soul as in hundreds of cases in bygone years. These are His own words, which He spake to His servant John: "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come...And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev 22:17). He says Amen to all those *Comes*, and when thou comest and art anxious to drink, He will say Amen to thy coming and to thy drinking, for He declares to thee, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (Joh 6:37)...

I must not, however, tarry here. Jesus Christ is yea and Amen *in all His offices*. He was a priest to pardon and cleanse once; He is Amen as priest

¹ **evangelists** – the gospel writers: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

² **cavil** – find fault without good reason.

still. He was a King to rule and reign for His people, and to defend them with His mighty arm; He is an Amen King, the same still. He was a prophet of old to foretell good things to come; His lips are most sweet and drop with honey still; He is an Amen Prophet. He is Amen as to the merit of His blood—

Dear dying Lamb, thy precious blood Shall never lose its power.

He is Amen as to His righteousness. That sacred robe shall remain most fair and glorious when nature shall decay. He is Amen in every single title which He bears: your Husband, never seeking a divorce; your Head, the neck never being dislocated; your Friend, sticking closer than a brother; your Shepherd, with you in death's dark vale; your help and your Deliverer; your castle and your high tower; the horn of your strength, your confidence, your joy, your all in all, and Amen in all.

I must close all this by reminding you that He is Amen *with regard to His person*. He is still faithful and true, immutably the same. Not less than God! No furrows on that eternal brow, no palsy in that mighty arm, no faintness in that Almighty heart, no lack of fulness in His all-sufficiency, no diminution in the keenness of His eye, no defalcation³ in the purpose of His heart. Omnipotent, immutable, eternal, omnipresent still! God over all, blessed forever. O Jesus, we adore Thee, Thou great Amen!

He is the same, too, *as to His manhood*. Bone of our bone still; in all our afflictions still afflicted. Our brother in ties of blood as much today as when He wore a peasant's garb, and said, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head" (Mat 8:20). The same heart of sympathy, the same bowels of compassion still; remembering us and bidding us remember Him. Not for a moment changed because of the change of His condition. Not for an instant unmindful of us because of the harps of angels and the songs of the redeemed. As quick to hear a sigh or catch a tear today as when in the days of His flesh He comforted His people and carried the lambs in His bosom. The Amen Savior! Oh! Blessed be His name. Let us worship Him as the great Mediator between God and our souls, feeling joy to think that in all this He suffers no shadow of a change!

From a sermon delivered on Lord's Day morning, March 4, 1866,
at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892): Influential English Baptist preacher; born at Kelvedon, Essex, England, UK.



³ **defalcation** – breach of trust.