

THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD

I Corinthians 1:1-9

The whole Bible is a testimony of the faithfulness of God. In fact we could expand it and say all of human history witnesses to His faithfulness. Because the faithfulness of God has its application to those who do not know the Lord as it does to those of us who do know Him. I took the time to look up the word faithful in the dictionary and I discovered that it means one who is loyal, one who is reliable, one who is true, one who is worthy of our trust, one who is true to his word, his promises, his vows. So when we find this word in the Scriptures used of God what does it mean. Well in defining the faithfulness of God one writer has expressed it this way. "The faithfulness of God chiefly lies in the performance of His Word which is certain with respect to all that is spoken by Him." Now that means God is faithful in connection with the promises that He has given, in connection with the word that we have. So this is an attribute of God which has to do especially with God's relationship to His Word. Another writer has said essentially the same thing but he has expressed it this way. "The faithfulness of God is His sincerity, firmness and constancy in performing His Word to His people in all times and cases." Now what is even more important this is the way that faithfulness is defined in the Word of God and for our definition I want you to turn to the book of Deuteronomy if you will the seventh chapter of the book of Deuteronomy because here we have the divine definition of faithfulness and it's not the only place that we have it but it certainly is very clear in this passage. Now I want to begin reading with verse 6 of Deuteronomy 7 but before I read verse 6 I want you to see what we are coming to in verse 9 because in verse 9 we read, "Know ye therefore that the Lord thy God he is God the faithful God." So He is talking about the faithfulness of God in this passage in connection with His people. Verse 6, "But thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God. The Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The Lord did not set his love upon you nor chose you because you were more in number than any people for ye were the fewest of all." Now notice, "But because the Lord loved you and because," this is the expression that I

want you to note, "because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you out of the house of bondman from the hand of Pharoah king of Egypt." Now what he is saying here is that the whole exodus from the land of Egypt which is given to us in the book of Exodus is a testimony of the faithfulness of God. Now the same thing is said in verse 9, "Know therefore that the Lord thy God he is God thee faithful God," why "which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations." That's the good side of it, the bad side is in verse 10. "And repayeth them that hate him to their face to destroy them, he will not be slack to them that hate him he will repay him to his face." So God is not only faithful to the good promises that He has given to His people. But God is also faithful to the warnings and the predictions of judgement and both of these are evidences of the faithfulness of God. Actually when you stop to think about the subject of God's faithfulness we as the Lord's people ought to recognize that we really don't have any assurance of anything at all unless we can count on the faithfulness of God. God would just then keep His promises if He wanted to but we could not have any real faith that He has bound Himself to His Word. The reason that Sarah for example could believe that she would have a child when as the Bible says she was past age was because she judged him faithful that promised. Paul as he begins his letter to Titus speaking of salvation writes in hope of eternal life which God that cannot lie promised before the world began but hath in these due times manifested his word through preaching which is committed unto me according to the commandment of our Savior. And then in his last letter to Timothy we have those words that you and I have all had to hang on to at one time or another where he not only says what he said to Titus but he says if we believe not yet he abideth faithful he cannot deny himself. So God cannot lie and cannot deny Himself so that He will not do the things that would result in unfaithfulness to you and to me. So what tremendous assurance we have when we understand what it means that God is faithful and that it is His very nature to be faithful and that He cannot under any circumstances

be otherwise than faithful to His Word and faithful to the promises that He has given. It is often interesting to see some of the statements of Scripture in the light of the circumstances that people were facing at the time and remember Jeremiah was one who prophesied at a very difficult time in Israel's history. He was never promised that he was going to be successful in turning the people back to the Lord. He faced overwhelming discouragements and difficulties but he found comfort rather in the faithfulness of God. And those words which you and I, most of us I am sure know and love where he said it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning. And as we have been singing this morning the words of Jeremiah, great is thy faithfulness. Now in dealing with the subject of God's faithfulness there are many ways in which we could approach it. Again I have to confess that I have a subject that is far beyond the time that I have and really far beyond the wisdom that I have. But there are four ways at least in which we can approach the faithfulness of God and I want to mention these and deal with them just briefly in the time that we have this morning. Perhaps I could say before I point out these four ways that it is possible for us to deal with the faithfulness in other ways for example I could just deal with the faithfulness of God from the standpoint of what God is in Himself. But this probably wouldn't be very profitable for us other than giving us possibly a greater idea of what God is actually like. This is not the main emphasis in the Word although you have many statements in Scripture simply to the fact that God in Himself is faithful. But as I have sought to bring out, it's an attribute of God which is used in the Scripture with reference to God's relationship to His Word and God's relationship to His people so we won't deal with that as such this morning. I could also deal with the subject from the standpoint of God's relationship to all people. I said to begin with this morning this is an attribute of God which does include His dealings with the unregenerate as well as the regenerate. I could point out to you in this connection how God gives to all men the seasons of the year:

He give to every person on the face of the earth, day and night every 24 hours. He told Noah while the earth remaineth seed time and harvest and cold and heat and summer and winter and day and night shall not cease. So that for approximately 5 thousand years every 24 hours and every year God has been faithful to what he told Noah. Or I could refer to the rainbow which also was given as a promise to Noah with the promise that as you and I look upon the rainbow we have God's promise that there shall never again be a flood to destroy the whole earth. And to this very hour God has been faithful to all men in keeping that promise. When the Lord Jesus was here on earth in His sermon on the mount He mentioned an evidence of God's faithfulness to all men when He said He maketh the sun to rise on the evil and on the good and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. So when you look at these verses and there are other verses that could be mentioned it is clear that life on earth would be absolutely impossible for any one if it were not for the fact that God is faithful to the promises that He has made to everybody. We could also think about God's promises of judgement because He is faithful to those. When Paul was preaching in the city of Athens in Acts 17 he said this about God, "He hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained whereof he hath given assurance unto all men in that he hath raised him from the dead." Now we don't know when that day will be but we know from what we learned in the Scriptures that wherever God has predicted judgement in the time that is included in Scripture that judgement has come and we know that the judgement has always been as bad as God said it would be even though men were inclined not to believe it at the time. So we could talk about the faithfulness of God in connection with judgement but before I finish this series I want to spend a Sunday on the wrath of God, because no consideration of God's attributes would be complete without that. So we are going to set that aside for this morning but when we think of God's dealings with His people and the way that people of God have depended upon His Word I want to speak on God's faithfulness in that respect this morning and thinking especially of the four

different themes. You might want to take these down but this will show you where we are going this morning. First of all God's faithfulness in our salvation. Secondly, God's faithfulness when we sin. Thirdly God's faithfulness in our sufferings and finally God's faithfulness in our service. Now first of all let's think for a few moments about God's faithfulness in our salvation. And I want you to turn to the passage of Scripture which we read as our Scripture reading this morning in I. Corinthians chapter 1. And I chose this passage because this is one of several passages in the New Testament that has the statement as it does in verse 9, "God is faithful by whom he were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." Now if you read the preceding verses and we only need to go back as far as the 7th verse you will see the complete picture, Paul of course is just introducing his letter to the Corinthians. And he is dealing with a church that is in deep trouble. Many have characterized this book of I Corinthians as a book which deals with problems of various kinds. And Paul knew about some of these problems and he writes about them and then he had received a letter which told him about other problems and so he wrote about those problems but as you go from I Corinthians 1 to I Corinthians 16 you find that just one after another the Apostle Paul is dealing with problems. And it's amazing that a church could survive that had as much wrong with it as the Corinthian church did. Churches often go through times of testing and have one or another or maybe two or three at a time. But it seems that almost everything that could possibly be wrong with a church was wrong with the Corinthian church and you would think that if this were just a work of man you would know that if it were just a work of man that the work would have failed and gone out of existence long before. But the Apostle Paul who is under no misgiving as far as his task is concerned as he faces the responsibility as an apostle of writing to them about these problems has to cling personally to some truth that would encourage his own heart that there really is some purpose in writing to them and seeking to deal with these problems. And it is interesting that the truth that he clings to is the faithfulness of God. And notice what he says

starting with verse 7, "So that you come behind in no gift waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ 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." Now that statement, "called unto the fellowship of his Son is the statement that introduces the beginning of their relationship to God." This has reference to the time that they were saved. God called them into fellowship with His Son. The statement that they were waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ marks the culmination. That is what we are all waiting for. And we are waiting for it not just because that is going to be the time when we will see the Lord, that's going to be the time when we will be caught up to meet Him, that's going to be the time when we leave earth and go to heaven and dwell there for all eternity. But when the Lord comes that is going to be important also because that's going to be the time when the work that began when we were called into the fellowship of His Son will eventually be completed. "We shall be like him for we shall see him as he is." And so you see the Apostle Paul is bringing together here the beginning of their relationship to Jesus Christ and the ultimate culmination of that relationship when they become like the Son of God. But now when you consider where the Corinthians were at this particular time in the light of what they eventually would be then you see that this is his hope when he says, "At the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ who also shall confirm you unto the end that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." Now I am sure that if we had been acquainted with the Corinthian church and really didn't know the truth that Paul was talking about here we would have been inclined to say, what is the matter with the Apostle Paul? Now after all it is right to expect God to do certain things but can He do this? Can He take the believers in the Corinthian church with all of their problems and all of their sins and all of their divisions and all of their difficulties and actually mean that some day when the Lord Jesus comes they are going to be blameless in that day of our Lord Jesus Christ. Well now if the answer to that question is dependant upon what

the Corinthians were going to do for themselves then it is a great big no. It could never happen. But you see the Apostle Paul is not placing his hope upon what the Corinthians are going to do for themselves, the Apostle Paul is placing his hope upon the faithfulness of God. And this is the reason I am saying this morning that we look at this in the light of what is eventually going to take place and here is what we call the eternal security of believers, it's not a Scriptural term but it is a Scriptural truth. Once a person comes to know the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal Savior, really comes to know the Savior he is secure eternally in Christ and he may have all kinds of difficulties and problems but as Paul said when he wrote to the Philippian believers, "We are confident of this one thing that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." You see salvation is God working in you, God working in me. A Christian is not a selfmade person. Oh there are things that we do and God works in us that we may do these things, it is important for us to read our Bibles and to pray and to be concerned about our lives and to do things that are honoring and pleasing to God. But when you take the whole thing into consideration it is a divine work and God is faithful, God never starts a work but what He sees it through to its completion. And it is wonderful to see this with reference to this truth in Scripture. Let me show this to you one other place before we pass on to the second point. Will you look at I Thessalonians 5:23 and 24 it says basically the same thing that Paul says in the verses we have just been looking at in I Corinthians 1. Notice his prayer for the Thessalonians. "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Now that could be today, or that could be tomorrow, or that could be a year from now. We don't know when it is going to be, maybe longer off than that. Although it does seem that the time of the Lord's coming must be very very near. This is an amazing prayer isn't it. There is no indication that the Thessalonian church was in the same kind of trouble that the Corinthian church was in but I don't care what believer you're

looking at and let's all look at ourselves this morning, look at the work that has to be done before in spirit, soul and body we are being preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. How could he pray such a prayer as that. Well verse 24 gives you the answer doesn't it. Faithful is he that calleth you who also will do it. Now again I am not saying and Paul isn't saying that you and I just sit around and let God do it. That isn't what he's saying. Because this epistle is full of things that the Thessalonian believers were to do. But you see even in the doing of these things God is at work in us, God is the one who gets the glory. And if you and I are to be presented before the Father blameless in spirit, soul and body what Christian in his right mind would even intimate that he could ever do that for himself. That is the work of a faithful God. And you see God has promised to do this for us and it eventually is going to be done. And this is the reason that we can talk about the secure position that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. Because it rests not upon our faithfulness to Him but it rests upon His faithfulness to us. And that's the reason when we get to heaven we are going to give Him all of the glory for this marvelous work of salvation. That is great truth isn't it. Alright secondly the faithfulness of God when we sin. And I am sure that you know that I am thinking about a verse most of you could quote I John 1:9. If you need to look at it you can turn to it. "If we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Now a true child of God will never use a verse like this as an excuse for sin. The only true confession is the kind of confession that the Proverbs speak about when we confess and forsake our sins then the promise is that we are going to have mercy. But I want you to look this morning just at that statement, "he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." And while He is faithful to us because we belong to Him and faithful because the Lord Jesus Christ has died for us yet basically in this case God's faithfulness is not directed primarily at us. This is a special kind of faithfulness that is exercised by one member of the Godhead toward another member of the Godhead. And it is God who is being faithful

because we acknowledge our sins to Him. But He is especially being faithful to His Son who offered Himself as a sacrifice for the sins of His people. His faithfulness to His own beloved Son and His faithfulness to us because of our relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ and you see actually when a child of God sins then that ought to do as many think it does do and that is remove our salvation and either call for a salvation all over again or leave a person in an absolutely hopeless condition. But you see God is faithful to His Son. The Lord Jesus Christ was a lamb slain from the foundation of the world. And somewhere though we just have intimations of it in Scripture in the counsels of the Godhead in eternity past this whole marvelous scheme of salvation was laid out. Before there were any human beings, before there was any sin the Lord was ordained to be a Lamb slain for the sins of men. And you have that teaching in Scripture. So that when a child of God sins because a child of God is not yet perfected in the likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ this potentially should create a lot of problems but as we come to Him we can't always come to Him on the basis that we didn't know that it was sin. Sometimes we can't even come to Him on the basis that we have never done it before and that before we have promised Him that we would never do it again. But the promise here is that if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. And it is because of God's faithfulness to what He promised to do through the work of His Son that the sins of believers are forgiven past, present and as they are committed in the future and we come acknowledging our sins and seek the forgiveness that is to be found only in Him. You see David could not have prayed as he did in Psalm 51 except for the faithfulness of God. The same is true of our Lord's prayer on the cross when He said as He was hanging on the cross and looking out over the mob of people who had gathered around the cross, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." So how thankful we can be that when our Lord died He died for all of our sins and it's not necessary for Him to go back to the cross but He has made provision for the sins that we commit and they are forgiven because of His faithfulness

to His Son. Let me show you a third thing and this enters in to the experience of every one of us day by day and that is the faithfulness of God when we suffer. I wonder what your trial is this morning and what your difficulty or what your trials are? You never find a promise in the Word do you to the effect that the children of God will never suffer. And remember we are thinking this morning about God's faithfulness to His Word. He hasn't made any promise like that. So when a child of God suffers God is not being unfaithful and God is not breaking any promises that He has made because there is no such promise. Instead we are told things like this that you find in Hebrews 12:6, "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth and scoureth every son whom he receiveth." And while we can't always see the purpose that God has in our trials while we are going through them yet most of the time when we get through the trials and we look back upon them we can say as the Psalmist says in 119:75, "I know O Lord that thy judgements are right and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me." Now whether we realize this or not and whether we can see it or not this is always true. Remember God is always faithful under all circumstances and in every case, even when we may be responsible for some of the difficulties that we get into. We can always count on the faithfulness of God. And we can count on the faithfulness of God to do several things. And I am sure that I am not enumerating all of them this morning but we can count on the faithfulness of God according to First Corinthians 10:13. Do you remember that verse? "There hath no temptation taken you but such is common to man but God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able but will with the temptation also make a way of escape that you may be able to bear it." Now this means and we often struggle with this don't we, this means that my burdens, my trials, my testings can never be too great for me to handle provided I am trusting the Lord to give me the strength to meet those trials and testings. Even the smallest will often falter me. And when they continue on and on or when they are multiplied in the life of a child of God we come to the place where David did you remember when he was fleeing from Saul and he said that I will never be the king

over Israel though God had said that he would be and then he makes this amazing statement he says there is nothing better for me than to go to the Phillistines and one writer has summed it very beautifully I think when he said David left his best friend and turned to his enemies for help. Now often we are inclined to do that. And yet we have his promise and God is always faithful to His promise that He will not allow our testings to be greater than we are able to bear by the sustaining grace which he gives to us. Now I often feel and you often feel I can't take another thing. Or I can't take another day of this. And yet you find the next day comes the trial may be even worse but you are still there. And God's grace is still sufficient and He purposely lets these trials and difficulties get to the place where they overwhelm us and where we recognize that we can't handle them so that we will see that when relief comes and we are let out of the affliction and out of the testing and trial that it's been solely due to the faithfulness of God Himself. Let me tell you another thing that you already know about the sufferings and trials of the people of God related to the faithfulness of God and that is they always have a good purpose. Romans 8:28, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God to them who are the called according to his purpose." I like the translation that says and we know that God works all things together for good to them that love Him to them who are the called according to His purpose. Now we know that. I don't see why I have to go through this or that or the other thing or why they all converge upon me at one time but I turn to the word and I find the Apostle Paul not saying we hope this or we trust that this is going to happen but we know that God is working all things together for good so that that thing that I would have avoided at all costs if I had only known that it was coming is something that God in His marvelous grace takes into His hands and He works it together so that the outcome is good. As I said the other day in speaking to you about another attribute there is a sense in which nothing ever bad happens to a child of God. The reason because we have a faithful God who takes the bad things and He works them together for good. Finally we see the

faithfulness of God in our service. And I want you to look at II Thessalonians 3 for this as I close. "Finally brethren pray for us that the Word of the Lord may have free course, that means there won't be anything hindering it and be glorified even as it is with you and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men for all men have not faith." And then he says something that doesn't seem really to be related to the prayer request that he's just made but he says this, "But the Lord is faithful who shall stablish you and keep you from evil and we have confidence in the Lord touching you." I like that don't you. He doesn't say we have confidence in you but we have confidence in the Lord touching you that ye both do and will do the things which we command you and the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patient waiting for Christ. And isn't it interesting how many times when he talks about the faithfulness of God he is talking about it in the light of the coming of Christ. That is going to be one of the greatest evidences that God is faithful to His promise because He has promised that someday the Lord is going to come. But here you see he is involved in the work of the Lord and a vital part of the work of the Lord is prayer. And he is calling for help by prayer as he did in the passage in Romans that we considered together on Wednesday night. "Brethren pray for us." And his prayer concerns the ministry of the Word, his prayer concerns the enemies of the Gospel, those men who have not literally the faith as Paul says here in this passage. But his hope is that as they engage with him in the work and do the things that he has been exhorting them to do in this passage by way of their own ministry his one hope for this is that the Lord is faithful who is going to establish them and keep them from evil because you know when a child of God gets into sin the first thing that it effects is his prayer life and Paul says we have confidence in the Lord touching you that you are going to do the very things that we have asked you to do and most of all that you are going to pray for us. How could they have confidence in the Lord concerning them simply because of the faithfulness of God. I don't feel that I have done justice to this wonderful subject. I doubt if we ever could. But let me

close with just this example from Scripture because it is appropriate for us to be coming to the Lord's table this morning and thinking of the faithfulness of God because these elements which point us to the death of the Lord Jesus Christ certainly indicate one of the greatest ways in which God has been faithful to His Word all through the Old Testament you read of Redeemer coming. He came, He died, He shed His blood and salvation is now offered to men. But you know it seems from Scripture that there is no greater example of human love than the love that a mother has for her child. All of us have seen examples of this in our own home and other homes. And Isaiah uses this to emphasize the faithfulness of God and I want to you it that way this morning too. And he raises the question in Isaiah 49:15 and 16, "Can a woman forget her sucking child that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?" Now what's the answer, the answer is yea which means yes, "they may forget." And you know it is one of the indications of the times in which we live that they often forget. It seems like every week you hear of some mother who has left a child or abandoned her family and in mere human relationships you know this is unthinkable. I know that I am speaking to mothers here this morning who would lay down their lives for their children and that's the way that it should be. But we hear today of mothers leaving their children or being cruel to their children, sometimes even killing their children. But what does Isaiah refer to this, he says you take this great example of human love possibly the greatest, the love of a mother for her child and sometimes you see it aborted, sometimes you see a mother leaving her child, forgetting her child. Then the Lord says this, "Yea they may forget yet will I not forget thee." And then he says this interesting thing. And can't you see a relationship here to the cross because He speaks in the plural "Behold I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands and thy walls are continually before me." Now you see what the significance of this passage seems to be. When the Lord Jesus looks at His hands what does He see? He sees scars. As far as I can see in the Scripture the only one in eternity, in heaven who is going to have a scarred body is Jesus Christ. It was in His glorified body that

He said to His disciples, "Behold my hands and my feet" and He went to heaven in that body. And the angels said, "This same Jesus shall so come in like manner as you have seen him go into heaven," and I believe that the Lord Jesus is going to bear those marks for all eternity when He looks at them what does He think of? "I have engraved you in the palms of my hands." He doesn't think of His suffering. He doesn't think of the agony. He thinks of those whom He has redeemed. And the promise is that He will never forget us. And if I am speaking to someone here this morning who is going through some deep waters remember the faithfulness of God. Remember that God not only will not fail you, remember that God cannot fail you. As you read through the Scriptures and you see those promises remember that they are just as true today as they ever have been. He will not leave you nor forsake you. And though you and I may not see the purpose and we certainly can't see the outcome how wonderful it is to rest in the care and in the power and in the purposes of the one who has committed Himself to His people through His Word and who will never break a promise that He has ever given.