

## Seeking God'S Will (Part Two): Faithfulness

We Can Trust God

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Most of us are aware that the phrase, “Semper Fidelis” is the motto of the US Marine Corps. Surprising to me, it did not become the official motto until 1883. Before that the corps used “Fortitudine,” a Latin word and it means, “With Courage.” There was also “Per Mar, Per Terum,” which means, “By Sea, By Land.” That one was taken from the British Royal Marines, which was their motto, because they would fight on land, and on the sea. Another one that they used before 1883 was, “To the Shores of Tripoli!” Obviously, that is part of the Marine’s Hymn.

“Semper Fidelis,” literally means, “Always Faithful.” But, to a marine it means a great deal more than just those two words.

The following, a rather long quotation, was written by a retired marine named, Cam Beck. This was posted on a marine website. As I read this, I would like you to consider what this man says as it applies to us—God’s people, Christian soldiers.

For my family Semper Fidelis is more than a fancy slogan. It is truly a way of life. My father retired from the Marine Corps in the 1990s after serving over 20 years in more than one tour of duty in a combat zone. Therefore, my two brothers and I grew up in a culture that demanded excellence, and loyalty of its members. And it showed. It is partially for this reason, I am convinced, that we all joined the Marine Corps when we were of the appropriate age.

Because of my upbringing, it is somewhat difficult to imagine what life would have been like had I not grown up surrounded by living, breathing, personifications of Semper Fidelis. And, I am increasingly beginning to realize that I do not understand the mindset of those who did not. It is this realization that led me to reflect upon the history of the phrase, and speculate on the reason that it holds such weight with the members of the Marine Corps.

The first thing I questioned was the Latin thing. Why not simply make the slogan, “Always Faithful,” since that is what the Latin phrase really means? More people would certainly understand it. Apparently whenever someone has something to say, he translates it into Latin, and that lends the phrase credibility and respectability. When doctors started translating ailments into

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Latin-Greek hybrids, they were criticized for creating a language that only doctors could understand. Of course, that was partly the point. It set apart those who could understand from those who could not, signifying both the value that doctors provided, as well as creating a group of people who could identify one another by their similar values, and education.

The use of Latin in the Marine Corps motto is not bred from a different motivation. Of course, the Marine Corps has never experienced a mutiny. Marines in England were revered for their loyalty to the crown just as United States marines are now revered for their downright fanatical dedication to each other, their service, and their country. Using Latin to characterize this quality represents its legitimatization—its codification. Significantly, for marines at least, it provides a caste—a group that is separate and unique from any other; a group that has no desire to be like any other.

What is left unsaid in the motto is also notable. The phrase is, “Always Faithful.” It is not “sometimes faithful,” nor is it “usually faithful,” but “always.” It is not negotiable. It is not relative, but absolute. Who is always faithful, though, and to what, exactly, are the faithful? Interestingly, the simplicity of the phrase, and the calculated neglect to specify its parameters seems to strengthen it. Marines pride themselves on their straightforward mission, and steadfast dedication to accomplish it. Things do not need to be spelled out for them. They know what it means, and what to do about it.

Even though marines are known to swell with pride from time to time (they do, after all, have a noble legacy to continue), they are not snobbish. Even the use of Latin must make them uncomfortable, because they shorten the already short motto to the more colloquial, “Semper Fi.” This does not misrepresent the phrase, but simply symbolizes the ability of common people to become part of a brotherhood that demands more of its members than any other comparable group in the world.

I know this quote was a long one, but I hope it was interesting for you to hear this man’s understanding of what “Semper Fidelis” means to a marine.

Although the motto itself does not a marine make, it certainly plays a large role in shaping the character of a marine. Knowing that “Semper Fi,” or “Semper Fidelis” is what he is expected to live up to, he is loyal. He does his duty, whatever they are. It does not matter, he braves whatever obstacle and resistance he must face to

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accomplish his country's goals. He does not become distracted. He is always faithful to his country, his commanders, to his brothers-in-arms, and would give his life rather than to let them down.

This is the second sermon in my series regarding "Seeking God's Will." And, if this series of sermons has a theme verse, it is what we read last time, Ephesians:

**Ephesians 5:17** Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

If you will recall, that is the end of a short section in which he told us to redeem the time, because the days are evil. He told us that we need to know what the will of the Lord is in order for us to do God's will and to move forward, even though things are getting worse and worse. So, I have used this verse as a way for us to understand that we need to put on the character of God. If we mimic or imitate the character of God, then we will (almost by definition) do God's will, because His will comes out by what He is.

The sermons, then, are designed to help us to understand some of God's character traits. Unfortunately we will not go into all of them, because I just do not have enough time in my life to do that. But, the main gist of all this—the reason why we are doing it—is so that we can determine what His will is in just about any situation. I am going to try and pick out what I feel are the most significant character traits. And then I will let you fill in the other ones yourself.

Also, in addition to all that, I want to try as well as I can to translate what we learn of His character into practical speech and actions so that we can see ways that we can put this into practice in our everyday lives. They should not be nebulous concepts. We should actually see how we can use these things practically when we go to the store, when we go to work, when we deal with one another within the congregation, or any other time or place. So then, we will get the big concepts and see how God functions within this trait of character, and then we will bring it to our own level.

As you have probably figured out, this sermon in particular will focus upon faithfulness—*Semper Fidelis*—always faithful. Although we are not marines, we are to have "always faithful" as a foundational part of our character, just as it is a foundational part of God's character.

Do you know that God never fails? He is always trustworthy. His words, whether you believe them or not, is always sure and true. It says in one place that it is refined seven

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times it is so pure and true. If He makes a promise, you can be sure that He will carry it through. If He makes a prophecy He will bring it to pass. He never lies. He is never late. He never changes His plans and begins something else. God is faithful—Semper Fidelis (more dignified than Semper Fi).

Let us examine for a moment the New Testament word that is usually translated “faithful.” This is the Greek word, “pistos.” If you know your New Testament Greek, then you will know that is a cognate of “pistis,” from which they translate the word “faith.” Like a lot of words such as these, the word has both an active sense, and a passive sense, and whichever sense is being used, changes the meaning—the application. So, in the active sense, the word “pistos,” means “trusting or believing.” In Galatians 3:9 you will find:

**Galatians 3:9** So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.

This is a way to describe Abraham, that he was a believing person. This is an active sense, as well as a description—trusting or believing. Now, in most cases this is applied to people. People are trusting; people are believing.

More often, though, it is used in a passive sense in which it describes God. In this manner, the meaning is trustworthy, rather than trusting. He is trustworthy, reliable, and faithful. So you can see the difference between trusting and believing, with trustworthy. This happens to oneself. You can be trusting of other people, but are you yourself trustworthy? This is the difference between the two. How are you? How is God? Are you trustworthy, reliable, and faithful? God *is* trustworthy, reliable, and faithful!

Those are just the basic definitions. But, it can have various senses, too, that are not quite the definition. One of these is the word “sure.” It can have the sense like, “you have a sure foundation,” meaning it is trustworthy, or solid—it is firm, and it is not going to be moved. You can see where it is similar—sure, trustworthy, reliable, faithful, solid, unmovable.

It can also have the sense of “believable,” as in, “When you speak, you are believable.” When you say something, you have the experience, knowledge, and education that your audience would think, “Yeah, that sounds right; he’s a believable type person.” He comes across like he knows what he is talking about.

This is applied to Jesus Christ in Revelation 1:5 (there is no One more believable than

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Jesus Christ Himself):

**Revelation 1:5** And from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood.

Here Jesus Christ is called, “the faithful witness.” That word “faithful,” is, again, the Greek word, “pistos.” This is easy to understand in this passage. If He were brought before a judge, and was asked to witness about our lives, He would tell the absolute truth. If He were to witness about what He went through, and the things that He did, we would say that He was entirely believable because of who He is, what He knows, and what He did.

“Pistos” also has the sense of “fidelity—faithful in duty.” So, as found in Colossians 4:9, Onesimus was called a faithful and beloved brother—he was someone who Paul could rely on to get a job done. If he gave Onesimus a duty to do, he knew that it would get done. He was a faithful and beloved brother. We would think of this, normally, that he was a man of faith, but that is not the understanding that we should get out of this. Obviously, he had faith in God, but Paul was using this in the sense that he was a dutiful person, reliable, and therefore faithful to get it done.

Do you see the different shadings of the meaning as we went through this? Putting it all together, we say that “pistos” suggests dependable, reliable, trustworthy, true, sure, believable, as well as intimations of being loyal, devoted, and committed. We will see bit of these as we continue on.

To me, this all shows Semper Fidelis. To a marine, he would see that all of these things apply.

Turn to a basic scripture on this subject found in I Corinthians. I want you to see the whole context of what Paul is trying to get across to us, and the Corinthians. This is his first letter to them, but he obviously has had experience with them, because he began the church there in Corinth. After his introduction, Paul says:

**I Corinthians 1:4** I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus.

He is letting them know what he prays to God for about them. So he begins with thanks

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for them, thanks that they have been called, and that God has given them grace.

**I Corinthians 1:4-9** I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus, that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you, so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

So, he tells them all these things that he prays for them about. He tells them that he thanks God for His grace and favor bestowed upon the Corinthians. That God had called them, and that He had opened their minds to the truth, and that He had given them pardon, and grace, and accepted them into His family.

It also says that he thanks God that He enriched them with all that they needed to learn, grow, and serve—giving them the gifts that they needed through His Holy Spirit, giving them the ability to grow, learn, and therefore apply those things in service toward other people.

Then he adds (verse 8) a very straightforward, positive statement. He says that Jesus Christ will confirm them unto the end blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is very interesting in that how positive and forceful this is. He said that there is no equivocation here. He will also confirm you until the end. He will. He will do it. Jesus Christ will keep us firm, steadfast, strong, and established in the faith, blameless all the way to the resurrection from the dead.

That is an astounding statement to make! He will confirm you to the very end—blameless! Wow! In other words, He will complete His work in you. That is an astounding thing! We can take this to the bank. What is being said is that God—Jesus Christ—is all in for the whole shebang. He is going to do *everything* in His power to get you to the resurrection from the dead. He is going to make sure that you are one of His firstfruits. How encouraging is that?

Now, how can Paul be so sure of this? How could he just say that He will do everything to confirm us all to the end? Because, Paul knew God's character. He is faithful. That is what he says. That is what he follows this up with, because I am sure that he thought the readers of this epistle in the Corinthian church would also say, "How does he know

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that? How does he know that Jesus Christ will confirm us to the end, blameless?" So, Paul answers that question immediately. God is faithful by Whom you are called into the fellowship of His Son.

Do you see what he is saying, there? God is faithful, and if He was not willing to do this, if He had not already determined to do this, He would not have called you into the church. He would not have made you a part of this fellowship. But, since He did make you part of the fellowship, and made that commitment, He is going to see you through to the end, all that He can to get you into the Kingdom of God, because He has chosen you—He is faithful. He never waivers. He never goes back on His Word. He never drifts off course. He never gives up. He is the definition of steady, reliable, and trustworthy. *He is always faithful*—Semper Fidelis.

If you will, please turn to I Thessalonians 5 where Paul, in effect, says the same things to the Thessalonians.

**I Thessalonians 5:23-24** Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.

So, he may have started that saying, "May God do [this], and may God do [that]. But, Paul ends it with, "God is faithful; He will do it." Paul could say, "God will do this," because he knew God's character—God is faithful. And if God called us into the fellowship, then He is going to bring us into the Kingdom of God—unless, we, ourselves, trip things up.

See, that is the thing, here. God is always true, sure, and constant, doing everything He can. We are the weak link. That is why we need to learn to be as faithful as He is. That is why we need to take "Semper Fidelis" as our own motto.

Let us go through the Bible to see some of the ways that God shows Himself faithful. We have already seen that He is faithful in His side of completing our course toward the Kingdom of God. That is a huge one. If nothing else, that should make us joyful and happy, ready to commit ourselves to going forward. But, we can see several other variations in the Old Testament.

Please turn to Deuteronomy 32. I have to let you know that sometimes in the Old Testament the translation is not very good. I should probably say that the translators

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chose to use a different word to use, rather than faithful. They would use some synonym that they thought would capture the intended meaning better. But, I have noticed while preparing the sermon that the older translations would use some of the synonyms, while the newer translations tend to use some variation of “faithful, trustworthy, and reliable.” I think that they have used the thesaurus well to try and give us an exact term, rather than a larger term that might be okay, but too general. I believe that is the problem in the King James and the New King James versions regarding this idea. They do not use the terms “faithful” as much as maybe they should have.

Now, before we read the passage, let us make sure we understand the background, here. Remember that we are at the end of the Pentateuch—Moses is about to die. The people are standing on the edge of the Promised Land, and they are ready to go in, and it is the end of that 40-years-long trek in the wilderness, and they are about to step in and inherit the promises. This is the song that Moses composed just before their entering. This is about the last thing that Moses preached to them, as it were, before they went in.

**Deuteronomy 32:1-4** "Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. Let my teaching drop as the rain, my speech distill as the dew, as raindrops on the tender herb, and as showers on the grass. For I proclaim the name of the LORD: Ascribe greatness to our God. He is the Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice, a God of truth and without injustice; righteous and upright is He.

So, Moses starts this off with a proclamation. “Okay, everybody listen up! I’m going to proclaim to you the name of the Lord.” And then Moses begins to list, starting with the Rock, these traits of God.

Remember I said that this term is hidden a bit by the translations in the King James Version, and the New King James. Although the context—if you read it with the faithfulness of God in mind—you can see it coming out, particularly in the figure of the Rock.

Think about it. Nothing is more firm and sure, steadfast and reliable than a huge, hard boulder, or a big crag of a rock. I mean, it is there. Nobody is going to push it over. It is not going to go away. It is not going to crumble. You are not going to be able to take a pick to it, and minimize it in any quick time. It is going to be there. You can rely on it staying there.

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You could found a building on it, and it will not move. So this is the first idea after his remark and proclamation that he puts into your mind. “God is the Rock. You’re not going to move this Rock.” It is constant. It is firm. It is sure.

So, this gets his wheels working, and it should get our wheels working as we go through these other things. We cannot go through them all, and I am not going to take a great deal of time on it, but this is the idea that He wants in our head first thing—God is sure. You can depend on Him. But to make this plain, he says it most explicitly in verse 4, “a God of truth.” If you look in a modern translation, they normally translate this as, “a faithful God.” Let us read that in there:

**Deuteronomy 32:4** He is the Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice, a faithful God and without injustice; righteous and upright is He.

So, what we now see is something that the modern translators have understood—this is a literary thing. What is the most common Hebrew literary device? Parallelism! And what we see here is that the two halves of this verse are roughly parallel. And when he says, “He is the Rock,” he parallels that with, “A faithful God.” Just as, “His work is perfect,” is parallel with, “As without injustice,” and “All His ways are justice,” is parallel to, “Righteous and upright is He.”

These are not perfect parallels, but what we need to concentrate on, here, is the fact that the Rock, and the faithful God are almost exact parallels. They are immovable. He is sure. He is always going to be the same.

So Moses in these first four verses, especially verse 4, is trying to emphasize God’s faithfulness or trustworthiness; His perfect justice as well, and His total righteousness. Those are the three ideas he is trying to get across—faithfulness, justice, and righteousness—the three big ones.

That is why I wanted you to remember the context—the background to this. Moses was about to die, and he was also about to transfer leadership over to Joshua. And though Joshua had been with him all these years, he was, in a sense, a new guy. “What’s the new guy going to be like? Is his leadership going to be like Moses’ leadership? Can we trust Joshua as much as we can trust Moses? Will we be able to enter the land if Moses dies? What if Joshua has a mental breakdown right here at the edge of the Jordan?”

What else are the Israelites like? You know what they are like. They cannot see a bit of good in the new guy. Who is he? What has he done? So, Moses is trying to say, “Look.

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Let's cut through all this. It doesn't matter. Joshua has been chosen, just as I was chosen." Human leaders will come and go. But what is the one constant?

The Rock!

In a sense Moses is saying, "It doesn't matter which person is leading you, whether I lead you through the wilderness and Joshua leads you across, and then someone else is raised up to judge you later. It doesn't matter. God is there. And, He is faithful—always faithful—always there. "

And so, though we follow a man doing God's work, we always should have our eyes on the One that man is following. See, we look beyond the human man, and see the spiritual Creator, and Lord of all, who is actually leading the parade.

In this situation, Moses is turning Israel's attention toward God's constancy, His total reliability, His perfect abilities, and His rightness in absolutely everything. And if a man is in the mix too, then we just have to have faith in God to guide and direct that man, and these things.

God is sure. The road He has mapped for us is true, and it will bring us into the inheritance. We do not have to worry about all that. The life that He has called us to is good and right. We do not have to worry.

It is just like Charles Whitaker was saying in the sermonette today: There is no reason to fear. God is there. He is constant. He is reliable. He is just, and good, and right.

So, if you just keep your eyes on God, like Peter did when he walked on water, then you can walk safely. It does not matter what is going on around you, or what it is like underneath you, you are not going to fall, or sink. But if you take your eyes off of God, that is when things start to go wrong.

So, Moses, as he begins the song of Moses, is trying to get Israel's attention focused on the right things—God's constancy and His faithfulness in everything.

The Hebrew word for "faithful," which we will be looking at in most of these examples, is a word pronounced, "emunah." It means firmness (like a rock is firm), or steady (like a rock is steady), and fidelity. That kind of comes out of all that because it is faithful.

What this Hebrew word does is that it expresses God's total dependability of character, and His faithfulness to His promises. God makes a promise, you can be sure that it will

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be fulfilled, because God is *emunah*—faithful. This word, and the Greek term we looked at earlier are virtually synonymous.

Let us look at Psalm 33. We will go through a few psalms because this idea of God's faithfulness is really expanded in the Psalms. This one is another psalm of praise to God. And again, the translation covers the idea of faithfulness.

**Psalm 33:1-4** Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous! For praise from the upright is beautiful. Praise the LORD with the harp; make melody to Him with an instrument of ten strings. Sing to Him a new song; play skillfully with a shout of joy. For the word of the LORD is right, and all His work is done in truth.

This passage is saying that we need to praise God, raise a beautiful song to Him of thanksgiving, because His word is right, and His works are true.

Here, as in Deuteronomy 32, the translators have opted to use the word "truth," instead of faithfulness. So, verse 4 should read, "For the word of the LORD is right, and all His work is done in faithfulness, or done faithfully, or done trustworthily." I do not know why they did not use any of these, because they would have been much more descriptive.

I really like the Living Bible regarding this verse, and they paraphrase that last part as, "Everything He does is worthy of our trust." "For the word of the LORD is right, and everything He does is worthy of our trust." That is really why we can praise Him, because we can be sure that everything that He does is trustworthy.

I know that sometimes He may seem to go way out and make us do something that we would never have expected, but if we are faithful as He is faithful, we are going to do it, because we know that everything He does is trustworthy. And if He takes us on a road that does not seem right, or does not seem quite what we were expecting, well, we can, in faith, walk along that road knowing that everything He does is trustworthy. We can rely on Him that this road He is *now* leading us on is going to get us to the Kingdom of God better and faster than the road that we *were* on. We can trust Him.

Now, that is awfully hard to do, because we feel like we are going down the road with a blindfold on; we cannot see what is coming in the future. We think things are going in a certain direction, and suddenly God twists things differently. It is like we have taken a 90-degree turn off the way our lives were "supposed" to go, "God! Why are you doing this?" But, we can do as the psalmist says here, and praise Him, sending our beautiful

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voices into the heavens, and follow that turn He has made in trust and faith—because He is trustworthy. This is hard to do, but if we understand that this is a thing that God had chosen for us, and if we have the faith—just do it, because if it is from God, it is trustworthy and reliable. It is very hard to do, I know, but we need to understand that God is always faithful. He is not going to put us on the wrong road. We do not have to doubt Him, not at all! We can take that road, even though we do not know what is out there.

This next passage emphasizes this.

**Psalm 36:5a** Your mercy, O LORD, is in the heavens.

Notice what the psalmist is doing here. This is a psalm of David. He is giving us a metaphor. He is saying, “Your mercy is in the heavens.” And we will see that the word “is” is not the best word to use, here. Notice that “is” is *italicized* in your Bibles. The translators have added it. It is not in the Hebrew. There is probably a better verb to use here. They do this in the next half of the verse.

**Psalm 36:5b-6** Your faithfulness *reaches* to the clouds. Your righteousness is like the great mountains [very tall, or high]; Your judgments are a great deep; O LORD, You preserve man and beast.

What David is doing here is getting us to look at it in terms of quantity. There are four things here: Mercy, faithfulness, righteousness, and judgment, and he says that all of these things reach all the way up to the heavens. What he is saying is that these characteristics of God are in totality all around us, and all the way up. He is showing us how immense they are. He is giving us an idea that we are totally immersed in these things of God. The whole universe is totally immersed in these portions of His character: His mercy, His faithfulness, His righteousness, and His judgments.

He is trying to get us to understand that these things will *never* run out. There is so much of it out there that it covers the entire earth. It is not just something that He dribbles out for us. It is something that is absolutely immense! It is the idea of the rock, again. He uses the great mountains, not with faithfulness, necessarily, but with righteousness. But, the idea is the same—it is huge! It is wonderful to behold. It totally encompasses us, and so, we can rely on it, because it is always there. God is a never-ending fund of all of these things. You can withdraw, and withdraw, and withdraw some more, and it never runs out. There is just so much quantity there that we can absolutely rely on it.

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So, we have here, again, *Semper Fidelis*—He is always faithful. It reaches all the way up to the clouds. You are not going to exhaust His faithfulness.

Let us turn to Psalm 89. This *entire* psalm is about God's faithfulness. We will not read it all, because it runs to 52 verses, but we will read two sections of it. The theme is faithfulness, and the subject is God's covenant with David. What happens here is that Ethan, the Ezrahite (Ethan lived during the time of Ezra) is looking back through time on God's covenant with David. What he is doing here is in a way from his historical perspective showing that God is faithful to that covenant. This is interesting because it did not look like, at the time, that there were any of David's people around to govern. But, Ethan the Ezrahite is sure that God is going to keep His part of the covenant.

**Psalm 89:1** I will sing of the mercies of the LORD forever; with my mouth will I make known Your faithfulness to all generations.

So, here in the first verse, he is already telling us what this is about: God's faithfulness. And knowing this time frame of Ezra and Nehemiah, they were not really truly settled. There were things going on at the time that made them worry—would this re-colonization of the land work? Would our enemies overrun us, or will we fight them off? Are we going to be able to get the temple up? Can we get the wall up? There were things going on in Judah at the time that made them a bit uncertain.

But, Psalm 89 is Ethan the Ezrahite's answer to these questions, and that he would let everyone know for all time God's faithfulness.

**Psalm 89:2** For I have said, "Mercy shall be built up forever; Your faithfulness You shall establish in the very heavens."

This echoes Psalm 36 above where He said His faithfulness reached up to heaven. This, here, is the same idea. It is forever, and it is inexhaustible.

**Psalm 89:3-5** [God speaking] "I have made a covenant with My chosen, I have sworn to My servant David: 'Your seed I will establish forever, and build up your throne to all generations.'" Selah [Ethan speaking] And the heavens will praise Your wonders, O LORD; Your faithfulness also in the assembly of the saints.

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This brings us into the picture, now, because we are also of the congregation of the saints. This is a clue, here, that we need to think about this too. That God's faithfulness is in the congregation of the saints! God's faithfulness is with us now. It has brought us together. It has made us what we are. God's faithfulness will advance the church, and all of us in it, toward the Kingdom of God. And we can look at God's covenant with David as proof.

**Psalm 89:6-8** For who in the heavens can be compared to the LOORD? Who among the sons of the mighty can be likened to the LOORD? God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be held in reverence by all those around Him. O LOORD God of hosts, Who is mighty like You, O LOORD? Your faithfulness also surrounds You.

So, here we have Ethan the Ezrahite giving us a lesson in God's faithfulness. Just look at who God is! No one could compare to Him! And He has chosen us to be part of the congregation of His saints! Why do we need to fear? He has made a covenant with David, and the covenant is still in force—it is still going on. God is continuing to be faithful to that covenant, and if He is faithful to that covenant, do you not think that He is going to be just as faithful to the covenant He has made with you?

This is how He wants us to be thinking, here.

We are being shown that just as His covenant with David is unconditional, and eternal, and backed by His unswerving faithfulness, He will be this same way in all His covenants, including and especially with the ones He has made with us. We can think about the covenant with Abraham, and neither God nor Abraham reneged on that one. It says very clearly that Abraham was faithful. And so, God was at least as faithful if not more so, and this one continues. It is still there.

If we want to think about the Old Covenant, they say, "Aha! Isn't that obsolete? Hasn't it passed away?" Yes, but that was not God's fault either. It was Israel's fault. It was Israel who failed, not God.

If we were to go into Romans 11, we would also see that God has not totally forsaken Israel either. In fact, He says that He will graft them back in—into the Israel of God (Galatians 6:16). So, He will give them the opportunity to get in on the New Covenant in the future. Does not Paul say, "All Israel will be saved"?

That covenant, even though Christ died, and it is now done away, well, He has made a

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covenant that is even better. He is going to pick Israel up out of the ash heap and give them glory once again. And as for us under that New Covenant we can have absolute trust that God will uphold His end of the bargain. He will forgive our sins, and grant us pardon and grace.

You will want to jot down I John 1:9, where John tells us that He is faithful to forgive us. That is part of His faithfulness. It is part of the bargain. If we believe, and we repent, and we seek forgiveness, He will forgive our sins. He will give us grace, because that is part of the bargain. He also says as part of the bargain that He will give us His Spirit, and He will hear our prayers, and He will guard our lives. He will do all these things if we let Him.

So, we can be thankful and rejoice that Jesus Christ is always faithful. What does it say in Hebrews 13, "He is the same yesterday, today, and forever." In Malachi 3 He says, "I am the Lord. I do not change."

He is not going to give up on the covenant. He is not going to say, "These people! They are just awful and terrible! I'm going to rip this thing up, and that's it."

But, He did not do that. He will not do that with the New Covenant. How many times have we sung the song, "His Mercy Never Fails"? In the Bible it is often seen as, "His mercy endures forever." There are whole psalms devoted to just that phrase—His mercy endures forever. It is structured as, God does something, and then the response follows, "His mercy endures forever." These psalms are showing us of all the little things that He does in order to bring us to the point where He wants us, and it is all done in His mercy, and His faithfulness.

Let us continue in Psalm 89. I want this next section because of the Messianic overtones found within.

**Psalm 89:24-37** [speaking of Christ] "But My faithfulness and My mercy shall be with him, and in My name his horn shall be exalted. Also I will set his hand over the sea, and his right hand over the rivers. He shall cry to Me, 'You are my Father, My God, and the rock of my salvation.' Also I will make him My firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth. My mercy I will keep for him forever, and My covenant shall stand firm with him. His seed also I will make to endure forever, and his throne as the days of heaven. [returning to David] "If his sons forsake My law and do not walk in My judgments, if they break My statutes and do not keep My commandments, then I will punish their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes.

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Nevertheless My lovingkindness I will not utterly take from him, nor allow My faithfulness to fail. My covenant I will not break, nor alter the word that has gone out of My lips. Once I have sworn by My holiness; I will not lie to David: His seed shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before Me; it shall be established forever like the moon, even like the faithful witness in the sky." Selah

This is incredible, that even if people in David's line do not do right, and we have seen that they have not done right very much, He says that this does not matter. He will punish them, but His word He gave to David will stand. His line will last forever.

Of course, the greatest sign of that line is Jesus Christ Himself.

The greatest reason I wanted to go through this section is because it is a prophecy, especially verses 24 through 29. This is not just a prophecy of David and his continuing lines, but the overtones of the coming Messiah. If you look closely some of those overtones are about Christ's first coming, particularly in the sense of, "He shall cry to Me, 'You are my Father, My God, and the rock of my salvation.' Also I will make him My firstborn." These all happened as His first coming.

But, there are the other parts of this that apply to His second coming, and to the rest of eternity. So, it is not only talking about things that have already happened, but things that are still future for us.

Now, in Ethan's time, they were all still future. But, we can see that some of these things have been fulfilled, particularly those things fulfilled at His first coming. we can look at this, and say, "If God was faithful to fulfill these things regarding His first coming, and they were fulfilled exactly as He says here, then we can logically assume that He will fulfill these other things that are still in our future just as He had written here. If He was faithful at the time of Jesus Christ in fulfilling all those things, then why wouldn't He be faithful at Christ's second coming, and His plan for the remainder of eternity?"

There is hope and faith here! We see that if we can trust Him on these first-coming issues, then we can trust Him on the second-coming ones too. We know that Jesus Christ will return, and He will establish the throne of David on the earth when He comes, and it will not be moved ever again. That is what it says. And we know, as it says here, that His horn will be exalted, and that God will set His hand over the sea, and His right hand over the rivers, and He will be the highest of the kings of the earth.

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Is He not King of kings, and Lord of lords? “My covenant shall stand firm with Him!” Not only was He the Mediator of the New Covenant, He is the One that is going to make it work and last, because He is always faithful—Semper Fidelis. So, we can trust Him in prophecy too. The words that go out of His mouth (Isaiah 55:10-11) will not return to Him empty. This means that they are going to do what He sent them out to do. They will not come back to Him unfulfilled.

So, He always does what He says, He always does what He promises, and He always does what He prophesies—Semper Fidelis.

Please turn to Hosea 2. Remember that in chapter 1 Hosea had to go and take a wife of harlotry, and they had these children, and their names were a prophesy about the way Israel was to God—they were not His people. By the time we get to chapter 2 what we have is a description of how unfaithful Israel was. And by the end of chapter 2, God is saying that despite all this, I am going to bring them back. And so, we have the second Exodus, and His offering them the New Covenant. And it is this portion we are going to read.

This passage takes place after Israel has gone through the Great Tribulation, and they are devastated, and they are repenting.

**Hosea 2:16-20** "And it shall be, in that day," Says the LOORD, "that you will call Me 'My Husband,' and no longer call Me 'My Master,' for I will take from her mouth the names of the Baals, and they shall be remembered by their name no more. In that day I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, with the birds of the air, and with the creeping things of the ground. Bow and sword of battle I will shatter from the earth, to make them lie down safely. I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and justice, in lovingkindness and mercy; I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness, and you shall know the LOORD.

We can see, here, by ending this little section on the betrothal part in particular, that He is emphasizing faithfulness. He separates it. He says that He will betroth them in righteousness, justice, loving kindness, and mercy, grouping them together. But then He separates faithfulness off by itself—“I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness, and you shall know the Lord.”

Perhaps we should read the beginning of the chapter. It is all about how unfaithful they were to Him. The chapter is of two parts—Israel unfaithful, and then Israel becomes

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faithful. And so, faithfulness is very important in this chapter.

Now, what is interesting here is that not only does He separate out faithfulness in this, He also combines it with knowing the Lord. There is a connection between faithfulness and knowing the Lord. What this suggests is that only when we are faithful to Him do we have any chance of really coming to know Him.

Think about it. It makes complete sense. If we are constantly going astray, we are not with Him. We are not close to Him enough to have any idea of what He is truly like, as well as having any chance of His character rubbing off onto us. If we are always out there doing our own thing, and not doing God's thing, well, we are not going to have any of His character in us. We will have somebody else's character—Satan—in us, and not God's.

If we are going to put this in a nutshell, then we must faithfully experience life *with Him*, in order to learn, grow, overcome, and mature into godly children. That is when Israel will really change. Once they start being faithful to Him, that is when they are going to come to know Him, and they will put on His character—but not until then.

Please jot down I Corinthians 10:13. This is the verse that says that God will not let any temptation become more than we can bear. He will always give us a way of escape. But, did you know that the phrase, "God is faithful," is in there. God is faithful that He will never give you these things. So we can know that He will not give us a trial beyond our ability to overcome it. Like any good parent, He will not throw us in the deep end before we can swim. He brings us along, giving us trials that are commensurate with our abilities to overcome them. And He always gives us an out so that we can try again, and find a way of escape.

So, if He has given you a trial, He has already determined that you have sufficient faith and knowledge to conquer it. You can be thankful about this. It is very encouraging. If you are in the midst of a trial, know that God says that you can conquer this. It is no problem. You just must follow, and be faithful, and do the right thing. Then you will grow in character and become a mature Christian.

**II Thessalonians 3:3** But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one.

He is talking about persecutions and people trying to stop him in his ministry, and then he turns it around on the Thessalonians telling them that God is faithful to them, too,

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strengthening them and establishing them, making them stable, guarding them against Satan. He is faithful in that, too, in warding off our enemies, keeping the problems to our ability to overcome them.

Turn to I Peter 4:19 where this is right after where he says that the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of the Lord,

**I Peter 4:19** Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.

So, if you are going through a persecution or trial where you are suffering, such as a health problem, just know that God is with you, and commit yourself to doing right because God is faithful. He is your Creator, He knows what He is doing, He has got His mind on you and what you are going through. He knows about it, He is working with you, so just commit yourself to doing good, following His way, because He is faithful.

You be faithful, because He is faithful.

**Hebrews 10:23** Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.

Because God is faithful, we can endure to the end, and have a firm hope of being saved, and inheriting God's Kingdom. Our salvation is in God's hands, and He is good for it—Semper Fidelis! He is always faithful to us.

So now, we have seen through this sermon how God is completely faithful. How do we show this same characteristic in our lives, and, particularly in our relationships with others?

I purposely will not read a scripture, here, because I am giving you an assignment. I think this is the best way for you to learn.

First, I suggest that you read all of Jeremiah 35. This is the chapter that concerns the obedient and faithful Rechabites. If you will remember the story, their patriarch, Jonadab, the son of Rechab, commanded his sons never to drink wine forever. And God told Jeremiah to go to these descendants, and offer them a glass of wine. But they refused, reciting their story: "We won't do this. Our father told us not to. We simply will not do it." They are commended by God for their faithfulness to their ancestor, and there

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will always be a son of Rechab around. Read this chapter, and absorb the idea of faithfulness that God commends. He is our father, and wants us to follow His commands like they did theirs. That is how we can be faithful to Him.

Second, in terms of how we can be faithful to our brethren and to our fellow man is found in Psalm 15. We need to study this deeply. "Who shall dwell on Your holy hill?" This was described to me in my Ambassador College classes as the "qualifications chapter." Who qualifies to be in the Kingdom of God? These are the character traits that God wants to see in His people. They echo the character and faithfulness of God. These are very practical things concerning truthfulness, not slandering others, doing good to them, not spreading gossip, evaluating people honestly, and giving them their due whether good or bad, keeping one's word even if it hurts, lending a hand to others without a desire for gain, and being fair and just. These are all elements of faithfulness—some more than others, but if you study them, and make the effort to implement them into our lives in the way we deal with one another, we will have a much more united and forward-looking people in the church of God. So I recommend an in-depth study on this crucial chapter that spells out the character that we need in order to enter the Kingdom of God.

Let us finish in Lamentations 3 with an incredible statement. The hand of God had just devastated Jerusalem. And Jeremiah has a truly Christian and righteous way of looking at this.

**Lamentations 3:22-23** Through the LORD'S mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning. Great is Your faithfulness.

He is always faithful.

Semper Fidelis.