

## Great Is Your Faithfulness

Lamentations 3:22-23 New American Standard Bible

<sup>22</sup> *The LORD'S acts of mercy indeed do not end, For His compassions do not fail.*

<sup>23</sup> *They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.*

### Introduction

Happy New Year!

Today, I am going to talk about God's faithfulness with the intention that I urge everyone to start their new year with the faithfulness of God in mind. He will be faithful to us throughout the year. Amen?

We often talk about an animal's faithfulness such as a dog's faithfulness to its owners. E.g. One dog in Japan faithfully went to a bus stop for a couple of years every single day even after his owner passed away.

How about people's faithfulness to each other such as committed marriage relationships? We love and appreciate it. E.g. The other day a gentleman confided in me with tears in his eyes that he missed his wife of 60 years in marriage who went to be with the Lord.

When it comes down to God's faithfulness, though, we don't talk about it often enough even in the church. So, this morning, I am inviting you to join me in pondering God's faithfulness to us to which we can commit ourselves every day. If God's presence is the best antidote to fear, God's faithfulness is the best antidote to despair. If you are depressed with what's going on in your life right now, ponder God's being there for you faithfully.

### Content

Let me begin with the **definition** of faithfulness so that we may stay on the same page. I looked it up in the Oxford dictionary and this is what it says: faithfulness: *noun of faithful. Being faithful.* So, I looked further up the word *faithful*. And this is what it says:

faithful-- *Staying with, supporting a particular person/ True and accurate/ Not changing/ Loyal/ Able to be trusted; that you can rely on*---Wow. Pretty accurate definition of faithfulness.

I later realized, though, that the dictionary definition is indebted to ancient Hebrew words such as ‘Hasad’ (from where the word ‘Hasidic’ comes) and ‘Amuna’: *loving kindness and faithfulness*. These two divine attributes often go hand in hand. In fact, those two words appear in today’s text: <sup>22</sup> *The Lord’s **acts of mercy** [‘Hasad’: אֲמוּנָה] indeed do not end, for His compassions never fail;* <sup>23</sup> *they are new every morning; great is **Your faithfulness** [‘Amuna’: אֲמוּנָה].*

Jeremiah the prophet declares that God’s loving kindness never ceases or comes to an end. It never runs out. What’s that mean for us? It means, we can tap into God’s unlimited supply of mercies and compassion for us. Every single day! By the way, it surely defies our notion of the Old Testament God who is angry, harsh, violent, and cruel, doesn’t it?

As I prepared my message, I listened to Jeremiah. I felt as if he was saying to me, “You don’t know what I’ve been through!” Of course, I don’t. I have no clue what he had been through. Since I don’t have the same experience as Jeremiah had, I was unable to fully comprehend God’s faithfulness which Jeremiah talks about here. I was quite impressed with his confession despite his afflictions.

His conviction was deeply rooted in his affliction and it surely makes his declaration of God’s faithfulness more powerful, real, and poignant than anyone else’s. At the end, I reasoned, “After such hardship and life’s disappointment, if Jeremiah can confess that God is still faithful and that He is still worthy to be trusted and hoped for, how much more should I put my hope in God and in His unfailing faithfulness?”

**Historical background:** here’s a little background information about Jeremiah and his time. In the early 6<sup>th</sup> century, B.C., Prophet Jeremiah was still active in his prophetic ministry. He painfully witnessed, though, that his beloved country (the Kingdom of Judah to be exact) was destroyed by their foreign enemy, the Babylonian Kingdom, in 586 B.C. They looted, killed, and burned the house of the Lord, the king’s house, and all the houses of Jerusalem. The enemy also razed all the walls around Jerusalem. Furthermore, they took away thousands of people, nobles and commoners alike, as captives to Babylon (Jeremiah 52:12-16). This historical event is called the Babylonian Captivity that lasted 70 years.

Jeremiah wasn’t taken away, though. In fact, he was kept behind in his homeland with the weak and the poor. Day and night, he would witness and grieve over the utter

destruction of his beloved country and her people. His despair and affliction were well recorded in the book of Lamentations. In today's text, Jeremiah begins the chapter with his anguish about the way the Lord treated His own people (*"I am one who has seen affliction under the rod of God's wrath; v. 1*), yet at the end of his lament, he surprisingly returns to God declaring that he still trusts in the Lord and His everlasting faithfulness for His people. What a confession! What a faith! What a tough example to follow!

**Jeremiah's theology:** Let's take a look into Jeremiah's heart. The Scripture says, "To the faithful, God shows Himself faithful" (2 Samuel 22:36). I believe God showed Himself faithful to Jeremiah because Jeremiah remained faithful to Him. This kind of faith that Jeremiah had only comes from a man who believes deep in his heart that the Lord does no wrong to His people (Deuteronomy 32:4). E.g. Job vs. his wife. In his heart, Jeremiah must have known the following verse well: *<sup>9</sup>Know therefore that the Lord your God, He is God, **the faithful God**, who keeps His covenant and His loving-kindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments;* (Deuteronomy 7:9).

He believed that the ways of the Lord are loving and faithful (Psalm 25:10). To him, the divine works are faithful and just (Psalm 111:7) even though they sometimes appear to His people as a total ruin and destruction. Through hardship and ruins, he learned anew that God is faithful even when His people are faithless (2 Timothy 2:13). He confesses in today's text that he experiences such divine faithfulness anew every morning (v. 23). He declares that God is faithful (He was, is, and will be faithful) to His people: His loving kindness and mercy are steadfast and never changing. God is always faithful in all He does (Psalm 33:4). He never flip-flops. He remains faithful forever (Psalm 146:6). In the end, Jeremiah exhorts God's people that they can stick with God always relying on Him and having hope in Him, especially in times of despair.

There must have been a **question** in Jeremiah's heart, though: If God is so faithful to His people, how can I explain this destruction? He realized that it is not the Lord who was faithless, rather it was the unfaithfulness of God's people that resulted in the utter destruction and ruin in their homeland. In fact, hundreds of years, Israel would break the heart of God and break their covenant with God by worshiping other gods and practicing injustice against God's commandments. May I say, you cannot conveniently claim God's faithfulness when you are unfaithful to Him. In other words, their hardship was their own doing, the direct consequences of the choices they had made. It is not that God has cancelled His faithfulness. Rather, their own disobedience to God and His commandments caused their hardship and ruin. Through the hardship and affliction, Jeremiah made a rediscovery of who and what kind of God the LORD was: He is the God who holds His people

accountable and remains forever faithful to His people and promises. That leads us to the next point.

**God is faithful to His promises.** The LORD makes promises to His people and keeps them. Faithfully (Psalm 145:13, Hebrews 10:23). His faithfulness is demonstrated in the following four ways:

1. He will **not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear** (1 Corinthians 10:13).
2. He will **strengthen you and protect you from the evil one** (2 Thessalonians 3:3).
3. He will **sanctify you through and through** (1 Thessalonians 5:24).
4. He will **forgive you your sins** (1 John 1:9).

### **Conclusion**

So, folks, let's begin our new year with such an assurance of God's faithfulness. I am sure we will go through some heart-breaking moments and hardships this year. However, in such times of disappointment with God, and in times of despair, let us have hope in God and **stick with Him**. In our fiery trials, let us trust our God. He stays with us, supports us, and protects us. He is true and accurate. He doesn't flip flop. He is loyal to us. He is faithful to us forever. Let us rely on His faithfulness. Let this be our attitude throughout this new year, and we will do well. Amen.