

## **GOD IS FAITHFUL**

### **Psalms 105:7-11 & 106:6-7; 19-21; 40-46**

Objective: Determine how the faithfulness of God should impact the way we go about our daily lives.

When you think of faithfulness, what sort of example comes to your mind? Is there a particular person you know today that you might think would be a good example of what faithfulness is all about? I was a little amused that the lesson writers in the Teacher's Commentary and in the Leader Guide both picked dogs they had known or heard about as their examples of faithfulness. If we can't think of any person whom we know, then that has to be a pretty sad commentary on the people of this time in which we live.

Unfortunately, it is a lot easier to come up with examples of folks who show a lack of faithfulness. There are a lot of people who will tell you they will do something and they never do. There are many who can be counted on to do the wrong thing - you just know it's going to happen. That raises the question: WHY? During our study of Psalms 105 and 106, we hope to find some answers that would shine some light on "why" and help us to learn how to cultivate and walk in faithfulness in our own lives.

The themes we will be looking at are the faithfulness of God, the forgetfulness of people, the consequences of unfaithfulness, and the amazing grace of God's mercy.

### **FAITHFULNESS OF GOD**

<sup>7</sup> He is the LORD our God; His judgments are in all the earth. <sup>8</sup> He has remembered His covenant forever, The word which He commanded to a thousand generations, <sup>9</sup> *The covenant* which He made with Abraham, And His oath to Isaac. <sup>10</sup> Then He confirmed it to Jacob for a statute, To Israel as an everlasting covenant, <sup>11</sup> Saying, "To you I will give the land of Canaan As the portion of your inheritance," Psalm 105:7-11 (NASB95)

The first several verses of this Psalm tell us that God blessed Israel so that all the nations of the earth could be blessed. However, they were inwardly focused and fail to make His name know to all people. In our time, God blesses us for the same reason - so we can share His blessings and tell others. We must not make the same mistake as they by failing to share the gospel with all people. If we look to the Lord in complete trust and obedience, then we will be aware of His will and the work He has for us to do. He saved us that we might do His will. We are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works that He has foreordained we should do (Eph 2:10).

The starting point in what we do in relation to God is to recognize that He is God and that He is in control of everything. The phrase "His judgments are in all the earth" speaks to the fact that things operate according to the way He decided they would and we can count on His promises coming to pass. The example of faithfulness the Psalmists used was the Covenant God made with Abraham and confirmed with both Isaac and Jacob.

It is thought that these two songs were written during the time of the Babylonian exile although the first 15 verses of Psalms 105 are almost identical to 1 Chronicles 16:8-22. Also, we find that verse 47 of Psalms 106 is the same as 1 Chronicles 16:35. The historical setting of the account in Chronicles was when the Ark of the Covenant was being brought to Zion. These two chapters (105 and 106) certainly are linked to each other in that the first shows us the faithfulness of God and the second shows the unfaithfulness of the Israelites. The fact that parts of these songs are found in earlier writings does not rule out that someone penned them during the Babylonian captivity and "borrowed" existing verses from Scriptures they had available to them.

When the Jews were in Babylon, they needed a reminder that they could trust God to be faithful to His promises. There are times when we may wonder if God's promises and provisions are still valid. We pray and it seems that nothing happens. We ask for what we are sure is God's will and nothing happens. We ask for healing and nothing happens. We wonder, "What's going on?" One thing for sure: the problem is not with God. He does not forget and His word never fails.

This Psalm reminded the people that God's covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to give them the Land of Canaan did happen. It took a long time, but, eventually the descendant of this line of their ancestors possessed the land that God had promised to them.

When the covenant is mentioned it is usually in connection to all three of these men: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The covenant was specific in that it did **not** apply to all the children of Abraham (it did not apply to Ishmael or to the other children Abraham fathered after the death of Sarah). The covenant applied only to Isaac, but not to all of his children. Esau was not a participant in the covenant.

The promises God made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were sure but these three were not in position to receive the promises except by faith. The manifestation would come when they (their descendants) grew. God's promises to us may not materialize until we have grown to such a point as to be able to receive them. In the meantime, we can see God's protection for us from the influences of the world and the dangers these pose as we faithfully await the manifestation (realization) of all His promises.

The rest of this chapter gives a historical account of how God brought about the fulfillment of the promises of this covenant. Many things happened such as Joseph was sold into slavery, a famine occurred in the land of Canaan, the children of Jacob (Israel) moved to Egypt, the years of slavery in Egypt, the call of Moses, the plagues on Egypt, the Exodus, and forty years in the wilderness. They could look back on all that had happened and appreciate that God is faithful.

## FORGETFULNESS OF PEOPLE

In contrast to God's faithfulness (which is the theme of Psalm 105) we see Israel's failure to be faithful in very next chapter. The first five verses of Psalm 106 provide a transition from the historical recitation of God's benevolent actions on behalf of His people to an examination of why the nation had problems in spite of all that God had done for them.

Psalm 106 starts in a similar manner to the beginning of Psalm 105 with praise and thanksgiving for God's character (He is good, His love is everlasting). The Psalmists also acknowledged that God's actions were such that no one could describe all He had done. We continue to see evidence of the vastness and complexity of the created world and the more we learn, the more we realize that we know so little of what is there and how it works.

We also see in the initial part of this Psalm an acknowledgment of what is needed to enjoy the blessings of God and that is to "maintain justice and constantly do what is right." Those requirements are real challenges. Being just in their dealings with others and doing what is right is possible **only** because of the presence of the love of God in our lives. We are not capable of always doing the **right things** in the **right ways** apart from the life of Christ in us.

Verses four and five form a petition for them to be counted along with those who enjoy God's favor as a result of being His people. You could argue that the author of this Psalm realized that God's blessings are for those who are His people **indeed** and not just in name. These considerations bring the Psalmist to the point of identifying the cause or source of the

problems the nation continued to encounter.

<sup>6</sup>We have sinned like our fathers, We have committed iniquity, we have behaved wickedly. <sup>7</sup>Our fathers in Egypt did not understand Your wonders; They did not remember Your abundant kindnesses, But rebelled by the sea, at the Red Sea. Psalm 106:6-7 (NASB95)

Part of the problem we have is that we just are not able to “connect the dots” so we can see the picture of what right in from of us. A good example of this was what happened in the Exodus. After seeing all the plagues that came upon the Egyptian (and not the Israelites), the Israelites panicked when they came to the Red Sea and could not figure out how to cross it. How often in our lives do we witness the miraculous intervention of God only to doubt His power the next time problems come our way.

When we fail to see God and His provision, then we may wind up in taking things into our own hands and do things that are contrary to God’s will. That is sin. Without the intervention of the saving grace of God, then the cycle of sin is not usually broken. If people do not respond to the salvation offered by God, then His grace can do them no good.

In the case of the example of the Exodus, we see the “forgetfulness” of the people which lead to doubt and to rebellion or unfaithfulness. We know from the outcome of what happened next was that God was **not** deterred in His effort to save them. Deliverance from Egyptian slavery was part of what needed to happen if the promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were going to be fulfilled. The next few verses tell us that He saved them.

God’s salvation is never on our merit. His love is based on Who He is and He acts according to His purposes. God has a purpose (a work to be done) for each of us. He will continue to work in and through us to accomplish that purpose in spite of our rebellion. (A word of warning is needed in that God’s Spirit will not always strive with man — we may find that God will choose someone else by which to accomplish His purposes.)

It did not take long for forgetfulness to come back as a problem. If we forget (or fail to recognize) all that God has done for us, then we will act on our own wisdom which will eventually fail us. We know the story of what happened on the journey to Mt. Sinai and even when Moses went up on the mountain to receive the Ten Commandments.

<sup>19</sup>They made a calf in Horeb And worshipped a molten image. <sup>20</sup>Thus they exchanged their glory For the image of an ox that eats grass. <sup>21</sup>They forgot God their Savior, Who had done great things in Egypt, Psalm 106:19-21 (NASB95)

This example is a warning of what will happen when we let **anything** replace God as the first priority in our lives. We may think that we are immune from such obvious mistakes. We are only fooling ourselves if we think that. They experienced greater miracles than we have ever seen and they still forgot God when problems or temptations came.

What are some things that people today put as first priority in their lives instead of having God as the number one priority? Typical answers are material things, wanting to please ourselves, power, fame, popularity, false ideologies, and the list goes on and on.

If we were to read the rest of the story of what happened to the Israelites following this incident of the golden calves we would find such things as

- \$ Failure to go into the Promised Land because they did not trust God.
- \$ Criticism of the leaders God had chosen for them.
- \$ Constantly complaining.

It seems there were no end to sinning and no learning from the results of past sins. These are the ways of carnality. If there is no change in the way we operate, then we will fail again and again. Because of their lack of trust in God they missed the promised land. If we fail to trust God today, then we will also miss the Land of Promises God has provided for us.

Even after the second generation finally moved into the Promised Land they kept on “forgetting” to put their trust in God through disobedience and willful sin. Some of the things they did that stand out in their history are

- \$ Failed to destroy pagan influence in their nation.
- \$ Adopted customs and practices of the heathen people.
- \$ Worshiped other Gods.
- \$ Sacrificed their children to demons.

We started out as a nation with laws and principles based on the word of God and acknowledging Him as the Creator and Sovereign of everything. Over the past several centuries we have tolerated philosophies contrary to those ideas that made up the foundation of our country. We have come to the point of offering human sacrifice upon the altar of “personal freedom” by having abortion on demand as the law of the land. We tolerate fornication, homosexuality, and all sorts of perversion in the name of individual rights. We have polluted the culture and society in which we live. Maybe we should have learned from the experience of the Israelites.

### CONSEQUENCES OF UNFAITHFULNESS

<sup>40</sup>Therefore the anger of the LORD was kindled against His people And He abhorred His inheritance. <sup>41</sup>Then He gave them into the hand of the nations, And those who hated them ruled over them. <sup>42</sup>Their enemies also oppressed them, And they were subdued under their power. <sup>43</sup>Many times He would deliver them; They, however, were rebellious in their counsel, And so sank down in their iniquity. Psalm 106:40-43 (NASB95)

We can see the judgment of God on such behavior as we see what happened to the nation of Israel. Do we think we will fare any better than they? We may have already progressed in our sinfulness that we are into the final stages of judgment. During the latter stages, it is not external enemies but internal decay that destroys and ruins and wastes. Another name for this is “corruption.” Corruption in a culture is like cancer in a body. Sometime the only hope is that God will be merciful. This is what happened time and again for the people of Israel.

### AMAZING GRACE OF GOD’S MERCY

<sup>44</sup>Nevertheless He looked upon their distress When He heard their cry; <sup>45</sup>And He remembered His covenant for their sake, And relented according to the greatness of His lovingkindness. <sup>46</sup>He also made them *objects* of compassion In the presence of all their captors. Psalm 106:44-46 (NASB95)

God repeatedly showed His mercy to Israel. In these verses we can see that God remembered His covenant “for their sakes.” If we look back to the earlier verses in this Psalm, we find that when they rebelled at the Red Sea that God saved them “for the sake of His name.” Sometimes we find that God blesses us just because we are powerless to help ourselves. At other times, we are recipients of His blessing because of what God is doing in revealing His power to the world. If we were to examine the history of our nation, then we also would find that God has been merciful to us and has repeatedly given us additional chances. Sometimes that was because He had a mission for us to accomplish as a nation and at other times, it was simply because we could not help ourselves.

The Psalmists closed this song with a prayer. We see it in verses 47 and 48.

<sup>47</sup>Save us, O LORD our God, And gather us from among the nations, To give thanks to Your holy name And glory in Your praise. <sup>48</sup>Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, From everlasting even to everlasting. And let all the people say, “Amen.” Praise the LORD! Psalm 106:47-48 (NASB95)

We need to make that our prayer.