

“The Faithfulness of God”
(Romans 3:3-4)

I. Introduction.

- A. Paul begins chapter 3 by dealing with four objections the Jews might raise over the fact that God’s covenant people might be lost, while those who were strangers and aliens to the covenants – the Gentiles – might be saved and counted the true Jews.
1. The first objection was if this is true, then what good is it to be a Jew?
 - a. We saw last week – great in every way.
 - b. They had the covenants, the promises, the Law, the Temple, the priesthood, the sacrifices, the sacraments – the signs and seals of God’s covenant grace – in short, they had God’s Word – all of which were able to point them to Christ.
 - c. The fact that they didn’t make the right use of these advantages doesn’t mean they were not advantages.
 2. The second objection is, If Jews can perish with these advantages, then does this mean God isn’t faithful to His promises? This is what we’ll look at this morning.
 3. By way of preview, the third objection is if the unrighteousness of the Jews allowed God to show His righteousness in punishing them, then isn’t it unjust of God to punish the Jews for this?
 4. And the fourth, closely related to the third, is if God’s truth was more fully known through the lies of the Jews, then why is God judging the Jews?
 - a. In other words, if the end justifies the means, then God is unjust to punish anyone who commits sin, because He works it together for good.
 - b. The logical conclusion would be: Let’s sin more, so that God’s grace can be glorified more.
 - c. Paul will deal with this more fully in chapter 6, where he asks the question, “Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase?” His answer will be, “May it never be!” the strongest way in the Greek of saying no!
- B. As I’ve said, this week we want to consider the second objection: Doesn’t the fact that some or many of the Jews weren’t saved mean that God is not faithful?
1. The answer is no, God will always be, He must be, faithful to His Word.
 2. For the believer, this is the greatest assurance that we can possibly have, because it means that the work He begins in us through faith in Christ, He will finish.
 3. But for the unbeliever, it is the most frightening truth he can possibly have, because it means that God will be faithful to execute His vengeance on all who refuse to submit to Him.

II. Sermon.

- A. Paul begins by asking the question, “What then? If some did not believe, their unbelief will not nullify the faithfulness of God, will it?”
1. Now remember, Paul has just brought many charges against the Jews.
 - a. He basically said that they were just as bad as the Gentiles who don’t know God.
 - (i) Yes, they had the Law, but that didn’t make them any better.
 - (ii) They weren’t keeping the Law.
 - b. This actually made them worse, because they knew better.
 - c. And God knew they knew better, which is why He would punish them more severely.
 - d. This is what He did in A. D. 70.

2. But the fact that some did not believe, will that nullify, or cancel out, God's faithfulness?
 - a. We need to remember that even though a vast majority of the Jews didn't believe, this wasn't true of all of them.
 - b. There were 120 Jews praying on the day of Pentecost who were converted.
 - c. There were 3000 more who were converted on that day.
 - d. There were 5000 more men who were converted when Peter and John healed the lame man.
 - e. And there were many more converted throughout the Roman Empire as the Gospel was preached.
 - f. Even though they were by far the minority, still many believed.
 - g. Does the fact that some didn't believe and weren't faithful nullify God's faithfulness?

B. Paul answers in the strongest way possible in the Greek language to say that this is impossible.

1. He says, "May it never be!"
 - a. In the King James it is translated, "God forbid!"
 - b. The meaning is may it never in the furthest realms of possibility even begin to be thought of.
2. It is impossible that God could ever fail to be faithful to His Word.
 - a. He is truth itself. He is the standard of truth. He is the One who makes truth what it is.
 - b. This is why the Shorter Catechism's description of God includes truth as that which is in God that is unchangeable.
 - c. The Catechism asks the question, "What is God?" and answers, "God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable in His Being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth" (4).
 - d. He cannot deny Himself. He could just as easily cease to be God, which is impossible.
 - e. If anyone ever accused God of being guilty of falsehood, when put on trial, that man would be found guilty of a lie himself.
 - f. If the whole world accused God of being untrue or unfaithful to His Word, the whole world would be found to be full of liars, and God would be vindicated.
 - g. Paul writes that God is justified in His Words – everything He says is true. He has never spoken one lie.
 - h. When He enters into judgment with the whole earth – which is what that last sentence means in verse 4, not when *He* is judged – when He enters into judgment on the last day, He will be found to be true, not man.
 - i. His Word will prevail, no matter what anyone might think.
3. And so the unfaithfulness of the Jews does not mean that God wasn't faithful.
 - a. He never promised to save all the Jews.
 - b. He promised to save those who believe, and He has been faithful to that promise.
 - c. He has also promised to preserve a remnant of people, a succession of believers, but not all the people (Rom. 9:6; 11:5).
 - d. The Jews may not blame God. They may only blame themselves if they didn't receive what God promised, because His promises may only be received by faith.

III. Application: God wants us to remember this morning that He is faithful.

A. Nothing that God said will ever fail to pass.

1. If it sometimes appears that God doesn't keep His Word, it's either that we misunderstood what He said, or didn't meet the right conditions.
2. Moses wrote, "God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent; has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good" (Numbers 23:19)? God will keep His Word.

B. Now this means two things this morning: God will fulfill what He said – He will be faithful to His promises, and He will be faithful to His threats.

1. First, God will be faithful to His promises.
 - a. God has promised to save all who believe (Rom. 3:22-23).
 - b. He has promised that the work He has begun, He will complete (Phil. 1:6).

- c. He has promised that He will work everything in our lives together for good while we're here (Rom. 8:28).
 - d. He has promised to be with us and keep us all during our stay on earth (Matt. 28:20; Heb. 13:5).
 - e. He has promised to bless our obedience and to reward it in heaven (Matt. 6:19-20; 1 Cor. 3:14).
 - f. And God will do it.
 - (i) If you have taken hold of Christ, and you know that He has through the power of a changed life, know also that He will never let you go.
 - (ii) Yes, there are times that you fall into sin, but hasn't He been faithful to bring you to repentance again and again?
 - (iii) You've had to face difficult times – sickness, financial difficulties, loss of friends, death of those near to you – but hasn't the Lord been faithful to see you through those difficult times?
 - (iv) You've also undoubtedly struggled from time to time with your assurance, but when you sought the Lord, wasn't He faithful to renew that assurance by His Spirit?
 - (v) The work He began, He will complete. His Word guarantees it, and God cannot lie. Be comforted by these promises.
2. But second, realize that God will also be faithful to His threats.
- a. We need to remember that God is not only a God of love, He is also a God of justice and vengeance.
 - b. He has given many warnings to us and to others that if we will not turn from our sins, if we will not obey Him, He will exact judgment.
 - c. The God who threatens must carry out His threats, or He is liar. If He didn't mean to carry them out, He would never have made them in the first place.
 - d. Paul tells us in Galatians 6:7 that we should not be deceived. God is not mocked. Whatever a man sows that he will also reap.
 - (i) If you believe in Christ and cultivate faithfulness, God will be faithful to give you eternal life and reward you in heaven.
 - (ii) But if you refuse to believe and submit to Him, He will destroy you in the lake that burns with fire.
 - (iii) It doesn't matter if you have convinced yourself otherwise: God is faithful to His Word.
 - (iv) I would counsel each of you here this morning to make sure that you're trusting in Christ. Turn from your sins. Put your feet in the way of obedience. Walk with Christ and submit to His every Word.
 - (v) He never said anything that He doesn't intend to carry out.
 - (vi) This is a great blessing to those who know Him.
 - (vii) But it should be a great concern to those who don't. Amen.