

**Scott Trusty, God Is Faithful**  
**Reading: Revelations 22:12-22**

**January 24, 2016**

As a teacher I spend a lot of time observing my students as I'm up lecturing, as they're doing group work, as they're taking tests. I keep an eye on them. I want to know are they confused, do I need to repeat something in a different way, are they bored, (likely), are they paying attention, are they interested, are they asleep, are they checking their cell phone ( which some of you have already done). I want to know those kinds of things as I'm up there. And as I observed these things, it's kind of interesting to watch the dynamics. I have these two kids a couple years ago, Katie and Laura who were very good friends. They were not really unusual kids, but they were somewhat unusual if that makes sense. They didn't have a lot of friends. They were very good friends to each other. They always wanted to sit together; if I ever allowed partner work, they always were going to be partners; if there were any groups, they wanted to be in the same group. If one of them was gone, the other one wouldn't really interact with anybody else in the class. If they were both there, they would talk to each other at the start and end of class, that type of thing-- not totally unusual but maybe the extreme level of their bond was a little unique. Again, fairly typical for high school kids. They had a big project towards the end of the year, and they could either work on this on their own or with a partner. Those two, of course, chose to work as partners. This was 10% of the semester grade or something like that; they had several weeks to work on it. Probably about two or three days before the project was due, Katie came up to me right before class and said, "hey, can I move to a different seat?" That's fine. Do you need to be in front where you can see better? I was trying to see if I needed to move somebody else. She said no, I just need to move. So I said okay, pick an empty spot. She sat as far away from Laura as she could be. And they did not make eye contact and at the end of class, they immediately went out the door and went separate directions and those two did not speak again for the last six weeks of school. Well, come to find out, on the project they had divided what each was going to do, and Laura had not done her part. Katie, worried about her grade, had to do all the work. That ended their friendship and to this day occasionally when I see them going down the hall, they don't interact at all. So Laura had not upheld her promise. She had not been faithful in doing what she said she would do.

People are like that. People are unfaithful, people lie, people break promises. I see this all the time in school--students making excuses, reasons why they didn't get done what they said they would get done. I'm sure teachers do that. I'm sure I've said I would do something and haven't finished it. We know that--you guys have all worked with people who are not faithful to the task that they said they would accomplish, or promises made by bosses that didn't come through. We're in the middle of an election cycle; we hear all kinds of promises that we know are not going to be kept. Marriage partners are not faithful. I was looking up-- somewhere between 40 and 50% is the divorce rate, so we know that people are not faithful. People break promises. People don't do what they say they're going to do.

God is the opposite. God is always faithful, has always been faithful, always will be faithful. Nancy put in the bulletin this morning on the front cover as she so kindly does every week, Numbers 23:19: "God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?" This sounds like man; this sounds like what man does all the time. They change their mind; they don't do what they say they're going to do, and we have here the statement that God is not like this. And it ends with a question: "Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?" Well, if we look in the 89th Psalm we have an answer to that. Psalms 89:8 says, "Oh Lord God Almighty, who is like you? You are mighty, O Lord, and your faithfulness surrounds you." God is consistently faithful. This morning what I want to do with the time we have is I want to look at the faithfulness of God. I want to look at how he is consistently faithful. I want to specifically see how he keeps his promises. There are several Old Testament passages we'll look at that shows this over and over again. I want to end that section as we look at the promise that he made that he would send a Savior. How that promise was also upheld, and I want to see, finally, how that promise of salvation by a faithful God is still there for us today. Thousands of years later, we still have, because we have a faithful God, that opportunity for salvation.

We looked at attributes of God in the high school class downstairs in November, December. This was an attribute of God that really stuck with me. And as we've been looking at the minor prophets, this is something that came up. Steve really hit this last week, and then some again this week. This faithfulness of God. Hebrews 10:23 says, "Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful." The promises that we have, the accounts we have in the Bible, all the things that tell us about salvation are given to us by a faithful God, and they are repeated over and over and over again. So let's start out by looking at some Old Testament examples that prove that God is faithful. One of the other attributes we looked at in the downstairs class was the eternity of God. God has always been, God will always be. For us who live here for such a short time, this is kind of a hard concept, and of course we are eternal beings in the sense that from the time we're born our souls go on forever, but we don't have the front end that God has. To look back into these Old Testament accounts, things that happened thousands and thousands of years ago, it's hard for us sometimes to grasp the consistency of God. The faithfulness repeats itself over and over again. God keeps his promises. He keeps his promises for long periods of time. Isaiah 25:1 "O Lord, you are my God; I will exalt you and praise your name, for in perfect faithfulness you have done marvelous things, things planned long ago." Things planned long ago-- that's a concept we're going to hear several times here. Something God said many many years, many ages later, it finally comes to fruition.

Several of these accounts are ones most of us are very familiar with, some of these might be things that maybe are not familiar to you, or things that maybe you hadn't thought of this particular aspect. We go back to the story of the flood, and of course after the flood, Noah offers a sacrifice. God promised not to destroy the earth again by water. Genesis 8:22 says, "As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease." So every year we go

through this cycle. We're soon, hopefully, going to have spring, then seedtime, we'll go through a hot summer, we'll come to the fall, harvest. And we'll do it again, and we'll do it again, and we'll do it again. For 4000 years that promise is being kept, over and over. We've gone through these cycles of the seasons--they keep repeating themselves. God said this and it comes true again and again. In Genesis 9:12 through 15, we have the promise not to destroy the earth by flood; the rainbow is a reminder of that. Genesis 9:12 "And God said, 'This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life.'" So not only is that promise been fulfilled, but the promise of the reminder has been fulfilled. We've all seen rainbows, double rainbows, and every time we're kind of amazed. Every time we're reminded and we think of this story, which is exactly what God said would happen and it's come true over and over again

Just a little bit after that in Genesis 15, we have a promise made to Abraham. God promised Abraham that he'd be a great nation. Genesis 15:4-5 "Then the word of the Lord came to him: 'This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir.' He took him outside and said, 'Look up at the heavens and count the stars--if indeed you can count them.' Then he said to him, 'So shall your offspring be.'" This was an account that was reviewed in the children's class a couple weeks ago maybe, and one of the things that came up that the kids found very interesting was that this was a very old man. Abraham was very old. Sarah was very old. So here's these very old, elderly people being promised suddenly that they're going to have numerous offspring. We of course know this is true. I want to look at Hebrews chapter 11. In Hebrews chapter 11, a very interesting statement is made. I never really paid that much attention to, but Hebrews 11 verse 11 says, "By faith Abraham, even though he was past age--and Sarah herself was barren--was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise." The promise of this came from a faithful God. God said this is going to happen. And it did. Because when God says something's going to happen, it happens. It's a promise--it's true.

Of course we know that Abraham and Sarah tried to figure out a way--how could this be? We're old; Sarah says I'm old. Go to my servant, go to Hagar, and we have the whole account with Ishmael being born. So here's man trying to make what God already said was going to happen, make it work. Because they thought God needed help. And when you look at that, you notice that it was 13 years after Hagar has Ishmael that we finally have the birth of Isaac. So here's this very old couple--man, there is no way this could happen, and not only did it happen, but it was 13 years down the road after that. So this faithfulness of God-- when he says it is going to happen, it's going to happen. Shortly after all of that, as we continue through Genesis, we see that there is another promise made to Abraham. It has to do with what's going to happen to the Jewish people. There's a promise made that they're going to be enslaved, and that they're going to be set free, and that this is going to take place much, much later. We of course

know that we have this in Genesis 15 and of course in Exodus this finally takes place. Genesis 15:12 through 14. Let me just read that real briefly. Genesis 15:12 says, "As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him. Then the Lord said to him, 'Know for certain that your descendents will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated 400 years. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterwards they will come out with great possessions.'" This a very specific promise made--your offspring are going to go, they'll be in captivity for 400 years. This is a long time. I teach history, so I try to make connections. Jamestown, first permanent English settlement in 1607, is roughly 400 years ago. So 400 years ago the British set some sort of settlement on North America; here we are today. I can't really comprehend anything from 1607. I don't have - on yeah, I remember Uncle Fred. He was one of those guys on the boat. I have a hard time remembering back to last Tuesday, and here we go 400 years and this promise was upheld. How many of the Hebrews under Egyptian slavery remember that promise? But that promise is still there. That promise was fulfilled to the letter because this is not you're going to be set free, but you will come out with great possessions and that's exactly how it played out.

I'm not going to go through the whole book of Exodus-- we'd be here all day-- but we do see that Moses is chosen, and in chapter 7 through 11 in Exodus, we have the accounts of the ten plagues. Again, in the interest of time, I won't go through all those but what happens over and over again is we have a promise made. Moses is a spokesman of God to Pharaoh, goes to Pharaoh and says if you don't let us go, this is going to happen--and then it happens. So we have God making his promises. This affliction is going to hit you, and the affliction hits. This one is going to hit, and it hits--over and over again, these promises are upheld. And also as you'll remember as we go through those chapters that Pharaoh, being the man that he is, of course, makes promises, right? So there's this terrible plague that hits, and Pharaoh says oh, you can go, but when the plague goes away and Pharaoh says oops, never mind, I've changed my mind. So here we have God making promises, and because of his faithfulness he fulfills those and they happen. Here we have man making promises and breaking them because that's what man does. This happens over and over again.

Finally, in chapter 12 of course we have the Exodus. We have the promise made--Yes, you can finally leave in chapter 10 and in chapter 12, he tries chasing them down. So even at the very end, Pharaoh says I will pursue you after I said you can go. Of course we know what happens at the Red Sea. God has numerous times made promises and upheld him. He says I'm going to do this for you, and he does. Keep in mind, however--and this is something that we've looked at a little bit with the minor prophets study--those promises are not always something we want. Sometimes discipline is involved. God is faithful in disciplining his people, as well as rewarding them. Psalms 119:75 says, "I know, O Lord, that your laws are righteous, and in faithfulness you have afflicted me." If I've done something wrong, there's going to be punishment. We've been looking at Hosea--luckily the verses I picked weren't mentioned in class today--but in Hosea chapter 5 verses 14 and 15 says, "For I will be like a lion to Ephraim, like a great lion to Judah. I will tear them to pieces and go away; I will carry them off, with no one to

rescue them. Then I will go back to my place until they admit their guilt. And they will seek my face; in their misery they will earnestly seek me." So here we have this again, this promise made and we know about the captivity and all those things. The promises, that faithfulness of God is true whether it's a positive or a negative. In Joshua chapter 7 we have the account of Achan. Achan kept some of the devoted things that he wasn't supposed to. Jericho fell and they weren't supposed to keep certain things; Achan does and brings all these problems. In Joshua 7:15 God promises the person who is caught with the stolen items will be destroyed by fire. In Joshua 7:25 that happens. In Numbers chapter 16 followers of Korah challenge Moses and Aaron. God promises to destroy them and prove the doing is God's, not man's. He says that they're going to die in an unnatural way. It's going to be very obvious that they didn't just get sick and die of some disease. The earth, in Numbers chapter 16, the earth opens up and swallows them and their possessions immediately and they're gone, so God makes promises, has made promises. They're available to us in the Bible, and they've been fulfilled over and over.

The one that is the most significant to us, of course, is the promise of the Savior. Isaiah 7:14 says, "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel." Several other prophecies of this are made, but we here we see this promise, and now we're at 700 years roughly before we see this fulfilled. To man again that's a long, long time. To God it's not so long, but Galatians 4:4-5 says, "But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons." So the promise was made; he would send his son, but he had to wait until the right time. We've studied this before. There's all kinds of things going on that that made the time Christ came the right time. When it finally was, God did fulfill that promise and that should give us all hope because that promise is there and was fulfilled. Definitely that promise affected Paul. Let's look at Titus, the very start of the book of Titus, the first three verses. "Paul, a servant of God and apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness-- a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time, and at his appointed season he brought his word to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Savior." Paul, who is going to face all these afflictions, gets comfort in the fact that here again was this promise made from the very beginning, that there would be a Savior.

Now this faithfulness of God carries over not only in sending the Savior, but it's also there and helping us as we go through our challenges. We're not worthy, we're not capable as man to overcome all the things that we face. We need strength. We need guidance. Steve mentioned we need to be in the word, need to be studying, we need to be reminded of these things. Paul says in Romans chapter 8:28-31: "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us,

who can be against us?" We take comfort in that; we know that God is on our side. God sent a Savior, but God also helps to lift us up, to protect us, to comfort us in time of need. Paul says similar things in II Timothy chapter 1 verse 12. "That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day." God sent a Savior, God comforts, God protects, God guides us, so God is faithful. God keeps his word. We see all these Old Testament accounts. We see the promise of the Savior and the key thing for us today, our practical application as it were, is that that promise is still there. We can read about people --Stephen who was stoned. We know that he is faithful to the end preaching the Word as they are throwing rocks at him and we know that he has a good result. But we know that we have that same comfort. We know that that promise is still there for us today. Proverbs 28:13 says, "He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy." Whoever, whenever. Throughout history that promise has been there. If we hide our sins, if we think we're being sneaky and fooling anybody, God knows and there's going to be punishment. But on the other hand, it says that if we confess those sins, if we ask for mercy, that promise is there. I John 1:9 "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." He is faithful if we obey his Word. If we do what he's asked us to do that promise is going to be there for however long this earth is here, for however many more seasons we go through that promise is going to be repeated over and over again. We need to be asking for forgiveness. We need to be working to stay true to his Word.

in the reading today that Charlie had at the end of the book of Revelation, the end of the Bible, we have again this promise. We have Jesus saying I will come, I will come soon. Of course that's been a couple thousand years. He's not here, but we also know again that God's an eternal being and time doesn't really mean anything to him. So for us two thousand years seems a long, long time, but SOON will be whenever that is. But God will come, Christ will come and he will have the Judgment and the people that are faithful to God, He will be faithful to.

My daughter Alysse-- most of you know her, but some of you don't, so I thought I should at least mention that-- she teaches in Nashville. Her department chair is a woman that is roughly my age, Melissa's age, same age as us. Tammy befriended Alysse, took her under her wings. They went on Christmas break, came back from Christmas break, and Tammy McCann, Tammy wasn't there. She misses the first day, she misses the next day, so Alysse thinks that's weird. So Alysse got a hold of Tammy and found out that over break Tammy had gone to the doctor. She is diagnosed with cancer, didn't have any issues before. She had liver cancer. She died this week. So she went off to break; now she's gone. That's a month; that's pretty quick. We all know people that have died faster; I had an email yesterday that a student at the high school died this weekend in a car wreck. Most of us probably know people that have lingered-- people that have health issues that hang on for months if not years. It doesn't really matter. Everybody in this room is going to die--some of us are going to die quick and some of us are going to die slow. Life is a terminal disease; we're all going to die at some point. After death is going to come Judgment. We have promises in the Bible that

says what's going to happen at that point. If we have been faithful to God, God will be faithful and that judgment is going to go in a good way. If you've not been faithful to God, if you've not obeyed his commandments, not been immersed, then we have this one more opportunity to do so. Please come forward if we can help you in any way, as we stand and sing.