

God is Faithful

God had made a covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In this covenant he promised to bless all people and to give Israel land. However, Israel came under the oppression of Egypt. Now, after 400 years the time has come for God to deliver his people. God calls Moses at the burning bush to deliver his people. This deliverance, the exodus, was the central event in the Old Testament that anticipated Christ because of its model of God delivering his people and bringing them into sonship and blessing. We all know that we need to see God as faithful. We may have seen God's faithfulness in our own lives. Looking at this passage will help us to learn about God's faithfulness.

Now let us read God's word to what it has to say starting with verse 1. Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. 2 And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. 3 And Moses said, "I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned." 4 When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." 5 Then he said, "Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." 6 And he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. 7 Then the LORD said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, 8 and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with

milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. 9 And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. 10 Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt." 11 But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?" 12 He said, "But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain." 13 Then Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" 14 God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" 15 God also said to Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.

[Prayer before sermon]

“I never wanted to be away from her. That is what a man named Grant said in the movie “Away from Her.” Grant is married to Fiona for 44 years. Grant has never been away from her. Fiona then develops alzheimers disease. Her condition becomes such that when she goes out to in their back yard she has difficulty remembering where she is. She begins to forget things: she washed a frying pan and put in the freezer because she forgot where it went. She was going to get bottle of wine for friends at a dinner party and forgot what she was going to get. She would

go outside and forget why she went out. Her condition got to be such that she made the decision to go to the nursing home. Her husband Grant did not want her to go but Fiona wanted to. Due to the policy of the nursing home Grant was not able to see her for her first month there. Grant then visits Fiona numerous times while she is in the nursing home. Fiona however does not remember Grant due to her condition and meets another man there. She begins spending a lot of time with him and when Grant comes to visit her, she is with this other guy. She won't see Grant but a few minutes before she wants to get back to being with the other guy. However, Grant is persistent and remains faithful to her through it all even though he is worried she is being unfaithful. We all know we need to be faithful as Grant was to Fiona. We know the importance of remembering that they are faithful to us. However, we often don't remember how the person has been faithful. In relation to God we often fail to remember God's faithfulness. We fail to remember His faithfulness when we suffer or we may know he is faithful but fail to remember it. Here in Exodus 3 we will see when we must remember God is faithful.

First, we must remember God is faithful when we perceive God is unfaithful. We see this in verses 7 and 9. By understanding the nature of the affliction that verses 7 and 9 refers to we may see this point. Israel had taskmasters over them whose job was to subdue the spirits of the people so that they would not try to seek freedom. One way this was done is that the taskmasters would beat the people of Israel with a whip tearing the flesh off their back if they did not meet their quota. Their suffering would have also meant that they suffered emotional break down because of the physical torture inflicted on them. This torture then would have resulted in a feeling of hopelessness and despair. Since, they lived 400 years under these conditions an Israelites grandfather and his grandfather and his grandfather before him would have lived in this

bondage without ever seeing deliverance. Given then the nature of their suffering and what it means to suffer surely some of them must have questioned the faithfulness of God perceiving Him as unfaithful. Yet, God says here in verse 7, “I have surely seen the affliction of my people.” God says it emphatically and so erases all doubt. We see the need then to remember God’s faithfulness when we perceive Him as unfaithful because He reveals to us in these verses that He is a God that remains faithful to His people even when they perceive Him as unfaithful in the midst of their sufferings. Though it is not always God’s way to take away our suffering when we would like, God still remains faithful and we need to remember this.

In his book, *“Is God to Blame?”*, Gregory Boyd tells of a woman named Melaine who perceived God as unfaithful. She came to him saying, “I have lost my passion for God and my joy in life.” Church used to seem so exciting but now I bores me to death. I used to love to read the Bible and pray but now I find it aggravating.” After conversing with Melanie he learns that about four years earlier she experienced the loss of a baby in childbirth. Melanie wanted to mother a child. After three years of trying to have a baby with no success due to a medical condition Melanie’s extreme distress over not having a baby was overcome. Then a glorious miracle occurred. She finally conceived. However, her delivery had tragic complications, the umbilical cord wrapped around the baby’s neck choking it to death in delivery. The miracle of her conception was overshadowed by the foreboding cloud of death to her child during delivery. Melanie struggled with doubt and depression for two years. Since, She then had difficulty trusting God’s plan, she perceived God as unfaithful. When she and her husband went to a Bible teacher they respected they were encouraged to remember the faithfulness of God.

Like Israel and Melanie, we experience suffering. We must remember God is faithful when we may suffer from a disease such as: a tumor, multiple sclerosis, or prostate cancer. When we suffer from other circumstances in our life such as an abusive father, being sexually abused, being neglected by parents, being betrayed by a close friend, experiencing the death of someone close to us or by being verbally abused by people. In such circumstances it is easy to perceive God as being unfaithful. We may ask questions such as: "Why must I suffer this God?" "Why do allow me to suffer this?" "Don't you care that I am hurting?" Like God said to Moses, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people" so also does He see our affliction in these kinds of circumstances and care because He is faithful. God has remained faithful to us despite whether or not we perceive Him as faithful. Despite our perception of the situation, because God reveals His faithfulness to us here in Exodus we can have assurance that even when we suffer or things in our life don't work out the way we plan, God is still remaining faithful to us. We may derive comfort from this as well as free our mind from worry. From this we see that we are empowered to remember God's faithfulness despite our perception of the circumstances of life because God is faithful. We are to remember God as faithful by acknowledging that He is faithful when we may find it difficult due to the brain tumor afflicting us, the neglect of parents trouble us or whatever else we suffer. By remembering he is faithful we should be lead to refuse to believe the lie that He is unfaithful when we suffer though the tendency is to fail to remember His faithfulness.

Second, we also must remember God is faithful, When we know that God is faithful. The need to remember God's faithfulness when we know God is faithful may be seen in the life of a missionary named J. Hudson Taylor, who lived in the 1800's. Taylor was a man who knew how

to trust God. Prayers were his passion. He did not ask anyone to meet his material needs. Instead Hudson Taylor took everything before God in prayer trusting that He would be faithful to meet his needs. He worked for a doctor in a place named Drainside which was so named to due its foul ditch. On one occasion the doctor said to Hudson Taylor "Taylor, please do remind me when it is time to pay your salary. I'm so busy, you know, I'm quite likely to forget." And the doctor did forget. However, Taylor remembered how in China he would simply trust that God would meet his needs because of His faithfulness asking no one for anything except for God. So Taylor simply asked God to remind the doctor to pay him. Three weeks went by and Taylor was broke. It was a Saturday and his rent was due that day. He also had no money for food. He had to work until Ten O'Clock thankful he wouldn't have to face his landlady. As he was getting ready to leave the doctor surprised him. The doctor asked him "What do you think? One of my patients has just come to pay his bill! He's one of my richest patients and he could have paid me by check anytime. Yet, there he is, bringing in the money at ten o'clock on Saturday night." The doctor then added, "By the way, Taylor, you might as well take these notes. I have no change, but I can give you the balance of your salary next week ... Good night!" God delivered Taylor from the unpleasant encounter with the landlady and answered his prayer. He now had enough money for his rent, food, and even more to go to China all because he always remembered that God would be faithful to provide for his needs. He knew God would provide.

Like Hudson Taylor we need to remember God's faithfulness when we know that he is faithful. But how do we know that God is faithful? There are two ways that we may see in this text that God is faithful. First, we know that God is faithful because God reveals His name. He reveals Himself by the name Yahweh. Yahweh is a name indicating God's faithfulness to His

promises. It is in verses 2, 4, and 7 that Yahweh, God's covenant name, is used to refer to God thus indicating that He is a God that is faithful and keeps His promises. God's reference to I AM in verse 14 also underscores like Yahweh that God is a faithful God who keeps His covenants. In verses 6, 13, and 15 God refers to Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob which recalls the covenants He made with His people indicating again His faithfulness to His covenants. The significance of the name Yahweh that needs emphasized is that it confirms God's promise of redemption. This is ultimately what God's faithfulness to His covenants is.

The second way that we know that God is faithful is because God delivers His people. God's faithfulness to His suffering people may be seen in the image of the burning bush. We know from passages such as Judges 9:15 that thorn bush was used to represent Israel. Fire in the Bible is used in reference to refining affliction. It is used as a symbol of chastening or punitive justice. The fact the bush was not consumed represented God preserving Israel by delivering them from their affliction. So, while God allows His people to suffer, yet we see His faithfulness to His people in the midst of it because He sees their affliction and delivers them from it. God's demonstration of faithfulness by delivering his people from their affliction in the exodus set the stage for the demonstration of Christ's faithfulness for delivering His people from their sins in the New Testament. Williams' points this out in "Far as the Curse is Found" saying, "every other event in the Old Testament takes its cue from the exodus." God delivered His people in the Old Testament through the exodus and He delivers people today from the bondage of sin through Christ's faithfulness on the cross.

As followers of Christ we all know that God is faithful. However, we often do not remember God's faithfulness to us. Like God delivered his people in the exodus and confirmed

his promise of redemption by His name Yahweh, so today we may experience God's faithfulness today in the new covenant by God's work of delivering us from our sins by the work of Christ on the cross. Because God is faithful to us by delivering us from sin our response of gratitude and love toward God should be to remember God's faithfulness. Often though we become used to hearing what God does for us. We hear about in the classes we attend such as Christ and Salvation, and Covenant Theology. It becomes easy to just hear it and forget about it and so not take time to remember God's faithfulness to us in our lives. We should not only do it here for or classes but also at church, at work, or wherever we are. We often forget of God's covenant name Yahweh and the significance it carries for us in confirming God's promise of redemption. We should delight in the fact that God's reveals Himself by a name that communicates that He is a faithful God that acts personally for us by keeping His promises to us. We must remember His faithfulness to us in His work on the cross. We may remember God's faithfulness by stopping to give thanks to Him for His covenantal faithfulness to us and His faithfulness to us by delivering us from our sins. We are able to remember God's faithfulness because of His grace in our lives.

God has called us to remember His faithfulness at all times. We saw this when in pointing out that we must remember God's faithfulness both when we perceive that He is unfaithful and when we know that he is faithful. We may perceive Him as being unfaithful due to our suffering. We know from Exodus 3 that God is faithful because He reveals His name to us and because we can also see here in Exodus 3 that God delivers His people. That God delivers His people was seen in the image of the burning bush which we saw that the thorn bush represented Israel, the fire suffering, and the fact that it was not consumed was attributed to God's faithfulness to preserving His people and keeping His promises. God's grace which enables us to remember He

is faithful is seen in the story of Grant and Fiona. Though Grant perceived Fiona as being unfaithful to him, he knew that she was faithful to him. He knew this because Fiona did not know what she was doing and she had been faithful to him all her life. However, Fiona's condition progressed and she had to be moved to a different floor. The floor Grant never wanted to see because of the condition it would mean that she had progressed to. However, while on this floor Fiona remembered Grant and calls him by his name. Grant is then delivered from his fear that she is unfaithful when she remembers him. Like Grant in the end remembered Fiona's faithfulness to him. Let us always take care to remember that God is faithful to us. Let us strive to not forget the faithfulness God has shown to us when we suffer. We know God is faithful but let us strive to not forget that. We must do this in the strength God provides. Let us remember God is faithful!