

“Thy Faithfulness”

A Faith That Holds to God’s Faithfulness

Psalm 89

There are times in the Christian life when what we know about God does not seem to match what we are experiencing. We are taught that God is faithful; that His promises are sure; that His covenant cannot fail. And yet there are seasons when circumstances seem to say the exact opposite.

This psalm is one of the clearest Old Testament declarations of the faithfulness of God — and at the same time, one of the most troubling. It begins with praise, centers on God’s covenant promises, but ends with questions and confusion.

The heading states that this psalm was considered a “Maschil of Ethan the Ezrahite.” 1 Kings 4:31 compares his wisdom with Solomon’s: *“For he [Solomon] was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman...”* This shows that this was not written by a novice in the faith, but by a wise man who knows truth and yet is struggling to reconcile that truth with what he saw around him.

While not explicitly stated, many connect this psalm to a time when the Davidic throne was in decline or collapse, possibly during the Babylonian exile or a similar national crisis. God had promised an everlasting throne (2 Sam. 7), but what they were seeing was a defeated king and a broken kingdom.

The central theme of this psalm is the faithfulness of God — not just declared, but questioned... wrestled with, and ultimately appealed to.

This psalm forces us to face a critical question: What do we do when it seems like God is not keeping His Word?

I. THE PRAISE OF HIS FAITHFULNESS (VV. 1-18)

A. A declared faithfulness (vv. 1-4)

1. A personal commitment to praise (vs. 1a)
2. A public declaration of truth (vs. 1b)

Faithfulness is not just believed — it is proclaimed.

3. A settled conviction about God's nature (v. 2)
4. A covenant ground for confidence (vv. 3-4)
 - a) God Himself is speaking here — this is a divine commitment.
 - b) "Chosen" — sovereign selection; "sworn unto David" — an oath-bound promise (2 Sam. 7:12-16).

B. A displayed faithfulness (vv. 5-14)

1. Displayed in heavenly worship (vv. 5-7)
 - a) Even heavenly beings recognize His faithfulness.
 - b) "Sons of the mighty" (v. 6); "assembly of the saints" (v. 7) — likely speaking of angelic beings.
2. Displayed in His Sovereign power (vv. 8-10)

The name "Rahab" here is not referring to the woman of Jericho, but is a poetic name used in Scripture for Egypt (Is. 30:7; 51:9) — a proud and powerful enemy that God crushed in the Exodus (the name means boisterous strength, arrogance, pride). It emphasizes a nation characterized by arrogance that stood against

God.

3. Displayed in creation (vv. 11-12)

“Tabor and Hermon” — the former of these mountains is on the west side of Palestine; the latter on the east side.

4. Displayed in His character (vv. 13-14)

His faithfulness is not just what He does — it is who He is.

C. A delighted-in faithfulness (vv. 15-18)

1. A blessed people (v. 15a)
2. A walking relationship (v. 15b)
3. A rejoicing life (v. 16)
4. A secured identity (vv. 17-18)

- If Point I established that God is faithful, Point II establishes what that faithfulness is tied to — His covenant.

II. THE PROMISE OF HIS FAITHFULNESS (VV. 19-37)

This section is essentially a divine oracle (God speaking), recounting His covenant with David.

A. A chosen king established (vv. 19-25)

1. A sovereign choice (vv. 19-20a)
2. A sacred anointing (v. 20b)

This marks divine appointment.

3. A sustaining strength (vv. 21-23)

4. A sovereign expansion (vv. 24-25)

B. A covenant relationship defined (vv. 26-33)

1. A personal relationship (vv. 26-27)

There is a Messianic fulfillment anticipated in these verses.

Colossians 1:18

¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all *things* he might have the preeminence.

2. An everlasting covenant (vv. 28-29)

When God promised David an everlasting throne, He did not mean there would never be a gap in the visible reign. He meant that the right to that throne would never be lost, and that His promise would ultimately be fulfilled.

Though the throne has stood empty for a time, it has not been abandoned — because Jesus Christ, the Son of David, will yet sit upon that throne and reign forever.

3. A conditional discipline (vv. 30-32)

There's an important distinction to be made here: correction is promised — cancellation is not.

4. An unchanging loyalty (v. 33)

➤ This verse is one of the most important in the psalm.

C. A commitment guaranteed (vv. 34-37)

1. An unbreakable covenant (v. 34)

2. A sworn oath (v. 35)

God swears by His own nature.

3. An eternal throne (vv. 36-37)

- God's faithfulness is guaranteed by His unchanging word and His own character.
- After such a powerful declaration of God's faithfulness; after such clear promises; after such unbreakable assurances... what follows in the next section seems shocking. Because the psalmist now looks at his present situation... and it seems as though everything God just said is not happening.

III. THE PROBLEM WITH FAITHFULNESS (VV. 38-45)

When circumstances seem to contradict the covenant.

Everything in this section hangs on the first word of verse 38: "But..."

A. A rejected king (v. 38)

"Thine anointed" — still God's king of the Davidic line. The psalmist is describing what it looks like, not rewriting the covenant.

B. An apparent broken covenant (vv. 39-40)

The psalmist is not denying the covenant — he is struggling with how it appears to have failed. This is perceived contradiction, not doctrinal correction.

C. A defeated kingdom (vv. 41-43)

God promised victory (vv. 22-23), yet the psalmist sees defeat. This is where the struggle intensifies.

D. A dishonored throne (vv. 44-45)

This is the lowest point in the psalm. Everything God said as seen in Point II of our study now appears reversed; undone; contradicted.

- There will be times when what you see does not match what God has said.

Lamentations 5:19–20

¹⁹ Thou, O LORD, remainest for ever; thy throne from generation to generation. ²⁰ Wherefore dost thou forget us for ever, *and* forsake us so long time?

Habakkuk 1:2–3

² O LORD, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! *even* cry out unto thee *of* violence, and thou wilt not save!

³ Why dost thou shew me iniquity, and cause *me* to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence *are* before me: and there are *that* raise up strife and contention.

2 Corinthians 5:7

⁷ (For we walk by faith, not by sight:)

- When faith cannot reconcile what it sees with what God has said, it has only one place to go — not away from God... but back to God.

And that is exactly what the psalmist does in the final section.

IV. THE PLEA FOR HIS FAITHFULNESS (VV. 46-52)

A. A cry of delay (vv. 46-48)

1. A question of duration (v. 46)
2. A reminder of human frailty (vv. 47-48)

Faith appeals not only to God's promises — but also to man's limitation.

B. A call to covenant (vv. 49-51)

1. An appeal to past mercy (v. 49)

He is not asking for something new — he's asking God to act according to what He already promised.

2. An appeal to present reproach (vv. 50-51)

C. A confession of praise (v. 52)

1. A deliberate declaration — "Blessed be the LORD for evermore."

No change in circumstances is recorded and no explanation given — yet praise is still offered.

2. A settled conclusion — "Amen, and Amen."

This is a deliberate double affirmation. It is a statement of confidence, not resolution.

- True faith does not wait for answers to prayer in order to worship — it worships based on what it knows to be true.

Habakkuk 3:17-18

¹⁷ Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither *shall* fruit *be* in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and *there shall be* no herd in the stalls: ¹⁸ Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.

Job 13:15

¹⁵ Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him.

2 Timothy 2:13

¹³ If we believe not, *yet* he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.

Conclusion:

The faithfulness of God is not determined by what we see — it is established by what God has said.

- Circumstances change
- Thrones fall
- Situations confuse

But God's Word does not change.

Numbers 23:19

¹⁹ God *is* not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do *it*? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?

There will be times in our life when it seems like God's promises aren't lining up with our reality.

- Prayers go unanswered
- Situations don't improve
- Things you believed God would do — He has not yet done

It is in those times that this psalm comes in.

What do we do when we cannot reconcile what we see with what God has said?

- Remember His faithfulness (what He has done)
- Rest in His promises (what He has said)
- Return to Him in prayer (what the psalmist does)