

Great Is Thy Faithfulness

by Chuck Smith

The sermon emphasizes God's unwavering faithfulness and the importance of maintaining hope in Him during difficult times.

Duration: 32:35

Scripture: Psalm 143:1

Topics: "Gods Faithfulness", "Hope In Christ"

Description

This sermon focuses on the journey from despair to hope, emphasizing the importance of shifting our focus from personal struggles to God's faithfulness, mercy, and love. It highlights the transformation that occurs when we redirect our thoughts towards the Lord, leading to a mindset of hope, waiting on God, and seeking His presence. The message encourages trust in God's promises and faithfulness, reminding believers to find strength and encouragement in the certainty of God's ultimate plan and kingdom.

Transcript

Now let's turn in our Bibles to Psalm 73 for our scripture reading today. The 70, I beg your pardon, Psalm 143. Let's switch root.

Psalm 143. I'll read the first unnumbered verses. Pastor Brian will lead the congregation.

In the even number of verses, let's stand as we read the 143rd Psalm. Hear my prayer, O Lord, give ear to my supplications. In thy faithfulness answer me, and in thy righteousness.

And enter not into judgment with my servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified. For the enemy hath persecuted my soul, he has smitten my life down to the ground. He hath made me to dwell in darkness as those that have been long dead.

Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me, my heart within me is desolate. I remember the days of old, I meditate on all thy works, I muse on the works of thy hands. I stretch forth my hands unto thee, my soul thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty lamb.

Hear me speedily, O Lord, my spirit faileth. Hide not thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit. Cause me to hear thy loving kindness in the morning, for in thee do I trust.

Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk, for I lift up my soul unto thee. Deliver me, O Lord, from mine enemies, I flee unto thee to hide me. Teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God.

Thy spirit is good, lead me into the land of uprightness. Quicken me, O Lord, for thy name's sake, and for thy righteousness' sake, bring my soul out of trouble. And of thy mercy cut off mine enemies, and destroy all them that afflict my soul, for I am thy servant.

Let's pray. Lord, we pray that today you will help us to keep our eyes focused on you. Lord, as we look around at the world in which we live, it's very easy to become discouraged, to become depressed, Lord.

But when we look to you, we realize, Lord, that you are working out your plan. You indeed are sovereign. You do rule over all.

And Lord, you are going to bring your kingdom to this earth. And the day is coming, and we pray very soon, when your kingdom will come, that day when your will will be done here on this earth, even as it is in heaven. So cause us, Lord, to be encouraged through the word of God, and through the promises, knowing, Lord, that indeed you are faithful, and you will keep your word and your promise.

Your kingdom shall come. Thank you, Father, for this hope. In Jesus' name, Amen.

You may be seated. As we continue our journey through the Bible, we've come to Lamentations chapter 3. And tonight, Pastor Skip will be bringing us and study an exposition of the third chapter of Lamentations. So we encourage you to be with us this evening.

It's a very interesting chapter indeed. It is one that goes from the lowest depths to the highest heights. Have you ever felt like you hit bottom, that everything is against you? You remember Jacob one time cried, all things are against me.

And there comes those times when we feel like everything is going against me. There's really no reason to even try to keep going on. That's exactly the position that Jeremiah was in, and he expresses in the first part of chapter 3. Hopelessness.

He had hit bottom. As Jeremiah assesses his situation, surely he was a melancholy. Listen to what he says.

I have been afflicted by the rod of God's wrath. He has led me into darkness. He has turned against me.

He has made me old and frail. He has surrounded me with sorrow. He's put me in a dark grave.

I cannot escape from his trap. He holds me with a heavy chain, and though I cry unto him, he will not listen. He has been like a bear or a lion, ready to pounce on me.

He has pulled me to pieces and made me desolate. I've been the target of his arrows, which have wounded me. My life has been filled with bitter experiences.

He has broken my teeth and covered me with ashes. I've been removed far from peace. I have no hope of prospering.

I said, my hope is gone. And he is describing his condition, that he feels desperate and hopeless as he looks at the ruins of the city of Jerusalem. You think you've had it bad? Read through the first 20 verses

and you'll realize Jeremiah has really hit bottom.

He said, as I mused on these things, and I remembered all of the grief that I had experienced in life, those griefs that I had experienced because I was obedient to the Lord. I was telling the people what God was warning them about. They didn't like God's message.

They shunned me. They persecuted me. They put me in prison.

They plotted to kill me because they didn't want to hear God's word. And when I mused on all of this, he said, it was just like a dark cloud and I became discouraged and despondent and in despair. Many people fall into the trap of looking at the dark side of life.

It becomes a deep pit from which there seems to be no escape. The more you look at the dark side, the darker things seem to become. And it leads to total despair and to hopelessness.

You get to the place where you can see absolutely no way out. And that is where Jeremiah had come in his thinking process to the bottom. There's no way out.

God has turned against me. He's shot his arrows at me. He's holding me with a chain and there's no escape.

You know, there's one advantage of getting to the bottom and that is you can't look any lower. There's only one direction you can look when you're at the bottom and that's looking up. But it's amazing if you look up how the whole perspective can change.

Jeremiah had hit bottom and from that perspective he began to look up and there is a dramatic change in the third chapter between verse 20 and 21. This total change of attitude. He said in verse 21, when I think on this, in other words, I'm changing now the direction of thought.

I'm not thinking on the problems and the miseries and the sorrows and the pain and all. I'm now thinking about the Lord. When I think on this, I have hope.

Even in a hopeless situation, the important thing is to get your mind on the Lord because in the Lord there is always hope. Paul wrote, finally brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of a good report, if there is any virtue, if there's any praise, think on these things and the peace of God which passes understanding will keep your hearts and your minds through Christ Jesus. We are the product of our thoughts and if I'm always thinking negative thoughts, if I'm always looking at the dark side, I will find that my life will always be one of great depression.

But if I will look at the Lord, if I will see not my problems but his power to deliver me from my problems, I have hope. And he said, when I thought on this, I had hope. His new mindset was, it is the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed because his compassion, it fails not.

In other words, yes it's bad but it could be worse. At least I'm still alive. I could have been killed in the siege.

I could have been killed by the Babylonian soldiers who killed so many people around me. Yes, the city does lie in ruins. Yes, people have been carried off captive but I'm still here.

And he begins to realize that it could be a lot worse for him than it actually is. And oftentimes as you look at your situation, you realize it could be a lot worse. Like the fellow who said, I complained that my shoes were too tight until I saw a man who had no feet.

And thus we often are complaining about things but it could be a lot worse. And that's what Jeremiah, the first kind of ray of hope. You know when you are sinking, any kind of ray of hope is something that you're ready to grab onto because you know that you're going down.

And Jeremiah is going down but here is the change of thought. When I start thinking about this, there's a ray of hope. You grasp on to that ray of hope.

It's the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed. He saw the mercy of God even in the judgment of the nation. We deserved to have been and we should have been totally wiped out.

The punishment that God brought on Jerusalem was really less than they actually deserved. We didn't deserve to even survive the Babylonian siege. And so God's faithfulness is manifested.

His mercy is manifested even in the judgment that God had brought against Jerusalem. No longer is he thinking, oh woe is me. But now he is thinking, oh I have been blessed.

By God. We are spared because his compassions, they fail not. The unfailing love of God for each of us.

The unfailing love of God that causes him to extend to each of us his forgiveness and his mercies though we deserve to be judged for our sins. You can think of all of the bad things that have happened to you or you can think of all of the good things that God has done for you. The one mindset will bring you depression.

The other mindset will bring you joy and thanksgiving. In the first 20 verses, 21 verses, I counted Jeremiah 38 times. He spoke of I, I, I or me, me, my, my.

And you know when you get into that I, me, my, it can be depressing. And he was very depressed as he thought about himself, about his situation. He saw the hopelessness of it.

He was despairing. He was despondent because I, I, me, me. Be careful about that constantly looking at yourself or thinking of yourself.

It is a very depressing thing. Beginning with verse 22, he begins to speak about the Lord. And 19 times in the next 11 verses, he's talking about the Lord.

He has done this and his and he and him. And as he talks about the Lord, suddenly there is light, there is hope, there's excitement. When you bring God into the scene, we must always be careful that we bring God into every situation in our life.

Because so many times we do face things that are hopeless. And we feel helpless. And we see that man cannot offer any help to us.

And so we look at God. And we see that God is merciful. We see that God is faithful.

And we see that God is compassionate. And we know that he is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we might ask or think. So when the outlook gets so dark, that you can't see your hand before your

face, take the up look.

And there is hope. When I thought about this, he said, when I mused on this, there was hope. Speaking of the Lord's compassions, he said, they are new every morning.

Every morning God will demonstrate or manifest to you a new aspect or facet of his love. This morning when I was up and sitting there at my desk and going over the message, I said, Lord, show me your love today. Give me a new insight into your love for me.

And I think that it is good every day. Morning by morning new mercies I see. God, his compassions, they are new every morning.

And I think that it would be a good thing in the morning to begin the morning by saying, oh Lord, show me your love. Let me experience your love today, Lord. The loving care and concern that you have for me and for my life.

Finally, Jeremiah exalts, great is thy faithfulness. Even in the total destruction of the city of Jerusalem, it lies now in ruins. The people have been taken as captive to Babylon.

In this, he sees the faithfulness of God in, first of all, warning the people that this would happen if they did not turn from their sin, from their idolatry, from their forsaking God. God said, the Babylonians will come. They will destroy the city.

You will be taken captive. God was faithful in warning them of the calamities that would befall them if they would forsake the Lord. Lord, great is thy faithfulness.

He saw the faithfulness of God, not only in warning, but the faithfulness in keeping his word. What God had said would happen, did happen. God keeps his word, the faithfulness of God to his word.

For years, Jeremiah had been warning the people. For years, they mocked the message of God. They sneered at the prophet of God.

They said it would never happen, but it's happened, just like God said it would. Great is thy faithfulness. In verses 24 to 26, Jeremiah speaks of hoping in the Lord, in waiting on the Lord, and in seeking the Lord.

It is good, he said, to hope in the Lord. So many people are hoping for the government to solve our problems. I feel sorry for them, because the government has become one of our major problems.

We have been almost a year trying to get the permission of city government to allow our children to use the new play field that we prepared for them about a year ago. This beautiful grass field over here, fenced in, all set for the kids to come and to exercise and to play. But we're waiting still, almost a year now, for our conditional use permit.

In other words, for them to say, all right, you can let your children play now. And they've been putting us through the hoops. There's been one meeting after another, and further conditions that are put on the use of the fields and all.

And you think, you know, if they would make welfare as difficult to get as a conditional use permit, we would have solved all of the financial problems of the city. Hoping in government. No, government can't do it.

Hoping in politicians, they make great promises. Think of all of the great promises Schwarzenegger made before we elected him governor. And look at how one after another he's reneged on those wonderful promises of a balanced budget and things of that nature.

It's good to hope in the Lord. If you put your hope in man, you're apt to be disappointed. It's better to put your trust in God, the psalmist said, than your confidence in princes.

Better to put your trust in God than your confidence in governors or presidents or other men. As honest and upright as they may be, yet the Lord will never fail. There's always that danger of man failing you, but never a danger of God failing you.

Great is thy faithfulness. It's good to hope in the Lord. It's good to wait upon the Lord.

He declares the Lord is good to those who wait on Him. Throughout the scriptures, we've been exhorted to wait upon the Lord. Psalm 27 14, David said, wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and He will strengthen your heart.

Wait, I say, on the Lord. In Psalm 37 7, he said, rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him. Threat not thyself of Him who prospers in His way because of the man who brings wicked devices to pass.

That is one commandment of the scripture I have extreme difficulty in obeying. Don't fret yourself because of evildoers, men who bring wicked devices to pass. But every time I read the paper, I begin to fret over the legislation that is coming out of Sacramento.

Wicked men bringing evil devices to pass. It seems that they're more interested in passing legislation that encourages and abets the homosexual lifestyle than they do in balancing the budget. And I get upset.

I fret over this and yet the scripture says don't fret yourself. Wait patiently upon the Lord. And so this is one of those issues I constantly am battling with.

I help me Lord to just wait on you knowing that in your time you're going to take care of these issues. Going on down in verse 9 of chapter 37 of Psalms or the 37th Psalm, he tells us evildoers will be cut off but those that wait upon the Lord they shall inherit the earth. Psalm 37, 34.

Wait on the Lord. Keep his way. He will exalt thee to inherit the land.

When the wicked are cut off you will see it. So hope leads us to waiting, waiting on the Lord to see God fulfill the things that he has declared. Finally in Isaiah chapter 40 verse 31.

They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary and they shall walk and not faint.

And then finally we are exhorted to seek the Lord here in the third chapter. God said you shall seek me and find me when you seek and search for me with all of your heart. The prophet said to King Asa, hear me Asa and all of Judah and Benjamin.

The Lord is with you if you'll be with him and if you seek him he'll be found of you but if you forsake him he will forsake you. That is just basic foundational truth. The Lord is with you.

All you have to do is have a desire to be with him. If you seek the Lord he will be found of you but if you forsake the Lord you can be sure he will forsake you. Jesus said ask and you will receive.

Seek and you shall find. Knock and it shall be open unto you. Hope in the Lord.

Wait on the Lord. Seek the Lord. He had gone from the position of total despair to thinking on the mercy of God, the love of God, the faithfulness of God.

It led him to hope to waiting and to seeking from total despair into great confidence. God is faithful. He is keeping his word.

He shall keep his word and I will see God's will and God's purposes performed. Great is thy faithfulness. He went from the lowest depths to a position of thanksgiving and praise by the change of a mindset.

What are you thinking on? If the mind is on me, my, I, I, it will lead to discouragement and depression. But if your mind is set on the Lord. You see oftentimes we are facing difficult issues because we can't see the future.

We don't know what is going to come to pass. Sometimes men's best efforts have failed. My best efforts have failed.

I'm prone to get discouraged. But then I look to the Lord and I realize he's faithful. His promises are true.

God will help those that wait upon him. Wait, seek, hope, and you'll find God working in your behalf. Remember when we used to sing, hasn't the Lord been good to us? Hasn't the Lord been good? He's done all of the things that he said he would.

Hasn't the Lord been good? Yes, God has been good. Yes, God does love you. Yes, God is merciful toward you.

Yes, God is faithful and he will keep his word. Hope in him. Trust in him.

Wait on him and seek him and you can be assured that you're going to come forth victorious through him. Father, we do thank you for the hope that we have. The hope that makes not a shame.

Lord, we hope for thy kingdom to come and we look forward to that day and we know it shall come as we wait, Lord, for you. You are faithful, Lord. You've promised that day when the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Messiah who will reign forever and ever.

And Lord, we seek and we wait patiently for you to fulfill your purposes and for you to bring again our Lord Jesus Christ from heaven and the establishing of his kingdom over this earth. Lord, as we look at the world, it is discouraging. It does bring us to depression.

We see evil men waxing worse and worse, but Lord, that's exactly what you said would happen before you came. So rather than fretting over it, Lord, may we rejoice that it's just a sign that your kingdom is about here. And Lord, as we hope and look for your glorious kingdom, may we be strengthened, Lord, and may we be encouraged.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

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