

# Life: God's promise of faithfulness

August 21, 2015

• *The Bible Studies for Life* lesson for Sept. 6 focuses on Psalm 89:1-2, 5-8, 15-18.

Promises, promises, promises. Who hasn't experienced a broken promise? The feeling of disappointment can be overwhelming, but the psalmist declares God's faithfulness.

## **God's faithfulness is a cause for praise (Psalm 89:1-2)**

Singing comprises a major element of praise and worship. Why sing? Because of God's love and faithfulness. God's single unrelenting, unchanging and unmitigated attitude toward each and every person is love. That love is certain, just as the stars are fixed in the sky—they do not fall.

The psalmist's resolve to sing highlights the desire to testify of God's faithfulness. Singing expresses praise and does so in a public fashion. Telling others about God's love is evangelism. Here, it is evangelism through song.

My dad whistled throughout his life. I believe it expressed the joy deep inside him and even testified to his love for God and his faithfulness. Today, whistling is a dying art. More and more people simply are listening to music with earbuds in place and attached to electronic devices. There's no outward expression of the music. Perhaps we need a bit of electronic detachment for a simple testimony of praise to God for his faithfulness.

## **God's faithfulness is celebrated in heaven (Psalm 89:5-8)**

Praise for God is not limited to the earth or to the physical realm. The

heavenly beings worship God, too, for his faithfulness and his wonders.

Too often, spiritual reality slips the mind. What is seen and heard becomes the

only focus of life. "God is Spirit" (John 4:24). So, praise on the earth accompanies praise in the heavenly and spiritual realm. This is real praise that takes place affirming the faithfulness of God.

In addition, heavenly praise proclaims there is none like God. He is

unique, and part of his uniqueness may be experienced in his faithfulness. There

is no other who can be counted on and trusted in life more than God.

Peter said as much in John 6 the day after Jesus fed the 5,000. Many

returned to Jesus perhaps expecting another free lunch, but none arrived. Many left and quit following Jesus. At that point, Jesus turned to the 12 and asked if they, too, wanted to leave him. Peter answered: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:68). Peter knew there is no one like God.

### **God's faithfulness is experienced by his followers (89:15-18)**

These verses return the reader to the earth, where God's faithfulness enables

followers to walk with strength in life. One might say those experiencing

God's faithfulness can "walk the walk."

Praise to God continues to be prominent in these verses of the psalm. It is a proper response to God who provides all the necessities for life. Although the specific setting of this psalm was a corporate worship service that

acknowledged the human king over Israel (a royal psalm), it still encouraged individuals to a lifestyle of praise.

Life is full when God strengthens his followers as indicated by use of the word “horn” (v. 18). God also protects, as noted with the use of the word “shield” (v.19). God’s faithfulness strengthens and protects, which is all that is needed to live faithfully for him.

The prophet proclaimed, “They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not be faint” (Isaiah 40:31). What a wonderful statement of God’s faithfulness.

### **God’s faithfulness in application**

When one asks, “God, can I count on you?” the answer seems obvious. Yes. At the same time, that “yes” may be qualified with bewilderment as to how God’s faithfulness actually works. Many are encouraged to trust in the Lord with their marriages, sick loved ones or desperate financial situations.

How is God faithful when divorces occur, loved ones die and financial ruin comes even to the most faithful of believers?

The psalmist understands the tension between God’s faithfulness and the reality of disappointments in life. In its entirety, Psalm 89 celebrates the covenant with David (see 2 Samuel 7). In that covenant, God promised David he always would have a descendant on the throne of Israel. That was true for centuries, but David’s descendants on the throne disobeyed God. Their disobedience brought punishment in the form of the Babylonians who came and conquered Judah. They sacked Jerusalem, destroyed the temple and deposed the king. There was no longer a descendant of David on the throne. What about God’s promise to David?

The psalmist recognized this reality. He saw the apparent contradiction between God’s promise and historical events. He sought a solution in

verses 19-37 and noted the unconditional covenant with David evidently had unstated and conditional elements. Obedience was required for the covenant to remain in effect. Unstated truths may be found in other passages, such as in Jonah's proclamation that Nineveh would be destroyed in 40 days, but no caveat was given to avoid the coming judgment; however, when the people repented, God forgave them and withheld his judgment.

Is God dependable? Is he trustworthy? Is God faithful? The answer is still, "Yes." Circumstances must not be allowed to deceive us about God's character and especially his faithfulness. Such circumstances are an opportunity to get closer to God, to wrestle with him, and to learn more about his character and his ways.

Above all, remember God has made a clear and constant statement about his love for everyone. That statement was made at a place called Calvary.