

GLIMPSES OF GOD – Lesson #5

“The Faithfulness of God”

Open:

- Ever get a case of the mullygrubs? Feeling down, discouraged, overwhelmed by life ... after rainy cloudy days you might get the “mullygrubs.”
 - One definition said: it is the little pieces of lint that accumulate in your belly button from wearing cotton t-shirts.
 - Jeremiah is called “the weeping prophet.” Called of God to be a prophet when only a teenager, he saw Jerusalem destroyed, he served faithfully for forty years but saw little fruit, and to make matters worse, he was not well liked by the people.
 - ✓ He was a contemporary of Daniel and Ezekiel. Daniel prophesied from the Babylonian palace, Ezekiel was out on the countryside of Babylon, but Jeremiah stayed in Jerusalem and watched it fall.
 - ✓ Due to Israel’s disobedience, God’s anger had been unleashed ... buildings crumbled, the wall of protection dismantled, the Temple was burned ... bodies lie dying in the sun, scavenger birds filled the air.
 - ✓ The pains, sobs and groans of Jeremiah are recorded in the book of Lamentations which means “loud cries.”

Visual: potato sack ... slip on.

- **Lamentations 1:1-2 NKJV** ¹ How lonely sits the city that was full of people! How like a widow is she, who was great among the nations! The princess among the provinces has become a slave! ² She weeps bitterly in the night, her tears are on her cheeks; among all her lovers she has none to comfort her. All her friends have dealt treacherously with her; they have become her enemies.
 - ✓ This was a sad time for Jerusalem and the people of God ... soon the grief turns inward ... Jeremiah lets down his guard, becomes vulnerable and he writes:

Lamentations 3:1-20 The Message Paraphrase:

¹⁻³ I'm the man who has seen trouble, trouble coming from the lash (rod) of God's anger. He took me by the hand and walked me into pitch-black darkness. Yes, he's given me the back of his hand over and over and over again. ⁴⁻⁶ He turned me into a scarecrow of skin and bones, then broke the bones. He hemmed me in, ganged up on me, poured on the trouble and hard times. He locked me up in deep darkness, like a corpse nailed inside a coffin. ⁷⁻⁹ He shuts me in so I'll never get out, manacles my hands, shackles my feet. Even when I cry out and plead for help, he locks up my prayers and throws away the key. He sets up blockades with quarried limestone. He's got me cornered. ¹⁰⁻¹² He's a prowling bear tracking me down, a lion in hiding ready to pounce. He knocked me from the path and ripped me to pieces. When he finished, there was nothing left of me. He took out his bow and arrows and used me for target practice.

¹³⁻¹⁵ He shot me in the stomach with arrows from his quiver. Everyone took me for a joke, made me the butt of their mocking ballads. He forced rotten, stinking food down my throat, bloated me with vile drinks. ¹⁶⁻¹⁸ He ground my face into the gravel. He pounded me into the mud. I gave up on life altogether. I've forgotten what the good life is like. I said to myself, "This is it. I'm finished. God is a lost cause." ¹⁹⁻²⁰ I'll never forget the trouble, the utter lostness, the taste of ashes, the poison I've swallowed. I remember it all—oh, how well I remember—the feeling of hitting the bottom.

– Jeremiah had a case of the mullygrubs. Can you identify? Have you ever been that low? Depressed about life ... he didn't hold anything back ...

✓ This is the setting of one of the most precious passages in the Bible.

✓ The weeping prophet then turns his attention to the character of God.

Vs. 21-23 The Message ²¹ But there's one other thing I remember, and remembering, I keep a grip on hope: ²²⁻²³ God's loyal love couldn't have run out, his merciful love couldn't have dried up. They're created new every morning. How great is your faithfulness!

→ The message today is intended to remind you that our God is faithful!

– Difficulties reveal what kind of hope we have.

√ Someone has said that hope is the oxygen of the soul ... our bodies can go without food for a few weeks, without water for a few days, but without oxygen we are dead in minutes.

→ Just as our bodies need oxygen, our souls need hope.

- Hope strengthens us, helps us get through difficulties, creates optimism for the future ...
- Some people put their hope in their bank account, job, relationship, sports, ability ... when these things are going well life is good, but when the bottom drops out, we gasp for air/hope.

√ The athlete suffers a career ending injury, the economy turns sour, your job ends, you stand by a freshly dug hole at the cemetery.

→ Where you put your hope is important ... the things of this life will leave you empty ... put your hope in the faithfulness of God ... His loving compassion toward you never ends.

(1) Faithfulness Defined: loyal, dependable, trustworthy, constant, reliable, true to their word, binding, you can count on it.

A. W. Tozer: “All of God’s acts are consistent with all of His attributes. No attribute contradicts any other, but all harmonize and blend into each other God, being who He is, cannot cease to be what He is ... He is both faithful and immutable (unchangeable), so all His words and acts must be and must remain faithful.”

→ Knowing God is faithful provides stability in a shaky world.

(2) Faithfulness Demonstrated: In what ways do we see the faithfulness of God?

a) Creation

- **Psalm 119:90 NLT** Your faithfulness extends to every generation, as enduring as the earth You created.

- Speaking of Christ, Paul said: **Colossians 1:16, 17 NLT** ... through Him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth. He made things we can see and things we cannot see ... He existed before anything else, and He holds it all together.

- √ God sustains and maintains the right balance for life on earth.
- √ The tilt of the earth, warmth of the sun ... He keeps it all in check.

b) God's promise to the Jew

- Did He not tell Abraham (**Genesis 12:1-3**) He would make from him a great nation?

- √ The fact that Israel exists today is a demonstration of the faithfulness of God.
 - She has had her enemies, but the nation of Israel still exists and will because He made a promise.

c) God's promise to the church

- Over the years the church had overcome obstacles and persecution. Some have died for their faith ...

- √ The church is alive and well because Jesus said:

Matthew 16:18 NLT ... upon this rock I will build My church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it.

- √ Companies come and go, businesses rise and fall, but the church founded on Jesus is still making a difference on planet earth.

d) God has preserved His Word

- Outlawed in some countries, burned and confiscated by “God haters” of the past ... the Bible is still here and being circulated around the world.

Mark 13:31 NLT Heaven and earth will disappear, but My Words will never disappear.

- Count on it ... all that He said would happen will happen ...
- √ God cannot lie, His predictions/prophesies will come to pass.

e) We see His faithfulness in Jesus Christ

- In the Garden of Eden God told us from the seed of the woman a deliverer would come. (**Genesis 3:15**)

Galatians 4:4-5 NLT ⁴ But when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. ⁵ God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children.

- When Jesus returns to earth, note the title for which He is known:

Revelation 19:11 NLT Then I saw Heaven opened, and a white horse was standing there. Its rider was named Faithful and True ...

f) Do we not see His faithfulness in the lives of God's children?

- He is at work shaping and transforming our lives.
- He guides and provides ... opening and closing doors.

√ We see His faithfulness when we cry out for help.

2 Corinthians 12:9 NLT ... My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness ... that way when we brag it will be about Christ.

√ We see His faithfulness when we are tempted.

- Something we know is wrong looks attractive ... what to do?

1 Corinthians 10:13 NLT The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure.

- If we rely/depend on God we take the escape route ... if we give in we fall.

→ He is faithfully there ... ready to assist those who ask.

√ We see His faithfulness when we fail.

- Even if we give in to sin, God doesn't give up on us.

1 John 1:9 NLT But if we confess our sins to Him, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.

- Aren't you glad God included an "in case of failure" component?

√ Stop your sinning, come to Him, confess what you have done wrong, take the consequences and accept His forgiveness.

→ We have a faithful, forgiving God.

(3) Develop faithfulness in your life.

– We need to reflect the faithfulness of God.

√ Truth is ... we are often weak and we blow it ... We are eaten up with guilt and we feel stuck.

a) Put your past behind you.

- Confess and move on to freedom.
- Jesus' death on the cross is sufficient to cover your sin.

b) Bring your present problems, pain and failures to Jesus today.

- Ask God for His help.
- Pray Peter's prayer: "Help me, Lord, I'm sinking!"

c) Put your hope for the future in the One who is faithful.

– To get out of the “mullygrubs” reflect on the faithfulness of God.

Lamentations 3:21-24 NLT Yet I still dare to hope when I remember this: the faithful love of the Lord never ends! His mercies never cease. Great is His faithfulness; His mercies begin afresh each morning. I say to myself, “The Lord is my inheritance; therefore, I will hope in Him.”

Close: Consider blogging this week: how I have observed the faithfulness of God.

Message Notes
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