

God is Faithful, But All are Unfaithful

Psalm 14:1-3; Romans 3:1-20

By Rev. Nollie Malabuyo • August 1, 2021 (BSCC)

Dear Congregation of Christ: The hymn “Just As I Am” is the most popular hymn sung during evangelistic rallies. The most well-known famous stanza is, “Just as I am, without one plea, But that Thy blood was shed for me, And that Thou bid'st me come to Thee, O Lamb of God, I come, I come.” As the evangelist persuades the audience to walk up the aisle and come to the front to “accept Jesus into your heart,” the words, “O Lamb of God, I come, I come,” is sung repeatedly.

But did you know that Charlotte Elliott, the writer of the hymn, became disabled for the rest of her life due to a serious illness at age 32? The irony in using “Just as I Am” to call people to walk to the front is that this hymn was first published in a hymn book called *The Invalid's Hymn Book*. Miss Elliott must be rolling in her grave whenever her hymn is misused out of context in evangelistic rallies today.

The reason behind these evangelistic calls to walk to the front is the doctrine that a person's decision to come to the Lamb of God is from that person's own “free will” to “accept Jesus as his own personal Savior.” But can and does a person save himself by his own “free will” decision to “accept” Jesus? The whole Bible, including our text today, belies this doctrine. Specifically, Romans 3:10–12 declares, “None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.” This is a clear indictment of today's evangelistic methods, for it says that not a single person in the whole world has the will and the desire to be righteous, to understand God, and to seek for God. If the state of every single person in the whole world is as described in these verses, how then can anyone be saved?

The Apostle Paul opens Romans Chapter 3 with an indictment of both Jews and Gentiles as unrighteous and unfaithful to God, meaning, all human beings. The question then that Jews ask him is, if all Jews are unfaithful to God, then how can God be faithful to his promise that he would save them as his own people? And if Jews are unfaithful and cannot be saved, how much less would Gentiles or non-Jews be saved? Is God then unfaithful to his word?

We will study these and a few other questions in our meditation today entitled, **God is Faithful, But All are Unfaithful**, under three headings: first, **God is Faithful to His Word**; second, **All are Unfaithful to God's Word**; and third, **Jesus is Faithful to God's Word**.

God is Faithful to His Word

Last Sunday, we learned from the last five verses of Romans Chapter 2 that the Apostle Paul rebuked the Jews for relying on the Law of Moses to please God. One of the provisions of this Law is circumcision for membership in God's covenant nation Israel. But Paul contradicts this belief, saying that even in the Old Testament, true circumcision is only a sign of the “circumcision of the

heart” (Deu 10:16). If a Jew is circumcised, but he does not obey God’s commandments, then his circumcision means nothing.

Paul continues this line of thought in our text today, asking his Jewish readers, *“Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what value has circumcision?”* He agrees that Jews have the advantage of having the oracles of God—God’s Word. They have God’s covenant promises of blessing while all other nations do not. Therefore, if God judges them for violating his covenant laws, does this make God unfaithful and untruthful to his word? Paul answers emphatically, *“By no means!” (ESV); “Certainly not!” (NIV); God forbid! (KJV)*” God is perfectly truthful, but all human beings are liars because they are all sinners.

The Apostle then quotes a verse from David’s confession of sin in Psalm 51. David’s plea for God’s mercy on him is based on God’s “steadfast love [and] abundant mercy.” He declares that even if God punished him, God is *“justified and blameless in his judgment”* (Psa 51:4). God was merciful to him after he confessed his sins of adultery and murder with his whole heart.

Throughout human history, God was merciful and faithful to his word. He promised Adam and Eve a Redeemer after they fell in the garden of Eden. God fulfilled this promise when he sent his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, to save his people from their sins. He promised Abraham that through his Seed, all the nations of the earth will be blessed. God fulfilled this promise through Christ who is still saving people from all nations. He promised Moses that he would send a Prophet from among the Jews, greater than him. God fulfilled this promise through Christ our Great Prophet who revealed his Father and his Father’s word to his people. He promised King David that his kingdom will be an eternal kingdom through his Son. God fulfilled this promise when Jesus the Son of David established an eternal kingdom with him as King of kings and Lord of lords.

But God is not only faithful and just in blessing his people. He was also faithful and just in judging his people when they sin against him. God cast Adam and Eve out of the garden of Eden after they sinned. He punished the Israelites in the wilderness with plagues when they grumbled against him in their sufferings and hardship. After he gave them the Promised Land, he judged them when they sinned by sending foreign invaders to oppress them. Later, the Israelites were conquered and exiled by the Assyrians and Babylonians to different lands. Finally, when their sins were full, their temple was destroyed by the Romans, never to be rebuilt again. This event marked the end of their nation as God’s chosen covenant people.

Paul’s Jewish readers objected to this teaching, saying, *“Is God unrighteous to inflict wrath against us?”* Again, Paul answered, *“By no means!”* If God did not judge sinners, how could he be faithful to his covenant provisions? His covenants with his people included not only blessings for obedience, but also curses for disobedience (Deu 30:19). But these blessings *and* curses are for his glory.

Then the objectors answered, “If the glory of God is shown through our sins, then why would God still judge us for our sins? Then, we could continue to sin so that God’s glory may be shown!” Paul does not answer this accusation here, but in Romans 6:1–2, *“What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?”* The answer is

that if we are united to Christ in his sinless life and in his death for our sins, how can we continue a life of sin? How can we who have been saved from our sins, having hearts regenerated and indwelt by the Holy Spirit, continue our lives as usual? How can we not bear the good fruits of the Spirit?

God is faithful to his word. But all human beings are unfaithful to his word.

All are Unfaithful to God's Word

In verses 9-18, the Apostle Paul then switches from God's faithfulness to man's unfaithfulness and sinfulness. He unhinges the Jews' confidence in their outward and ritual obedience to the Law of Moses. In the sight of God, Jews have no advantage over Greeks or non-Jews. Why? Because he says in these verses that all human beings, except Christ, are sinners, "*None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.*"

Most people today find it most difficult to accept these words because they believe that they are "basically good." They say, "I'm not a rebel, a murderer, an adulterer, a thief, or a liar." But they are disobedient to lawful authorities, approve of abortion and LGBTQ, cheat on taxes and other business transactions, and lie to cover their offenses. They do not accept the teaching of Jesus that we commit these sins even in our thoughts. They think, like most evangelists today, that people are merely drowning in sin, not dead in sin. Theologian R. C. Sproul compares an unsaved person to one who is *dead* at the bottom of a lake, not just drowning. Jesus then retrieves him and gives him life and breath. Paul teaches this in Ephesians 2:1, 5, that we who have been saved were "*dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked... by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.*"

There is nothing we can do about this state of our unsaved souls. We cannot save ourselves with a "freewill decision" to "accept" Jesus as Savior. Why? Because we have no free will! According to Jesus, Satan is the father and master of unsaved people, and they do his bidding, "*Everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin... You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires*" (John 8:34, 44). Paul takes off from Jesus' teaching when he says in Romans 6:16, "*Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey?*" If you obey sin, you are a slave of sin. Does a slave have a free choice? No, the only choice he has is his master's bidding. In fact, Paul says that all unbelievers have two things in common. First, they regard everything about God as foolishness. And second, they never have any understanding of the things of God because they are spiritually blinded by Satan (1 Cor 2:14; Eph 4:18). Therefore, no one in the world has "free will." You are either a slave of Satan, or a slave of Christ.

But how can Paul say, "*No one does good, not even one*"? Most people do good deeds. We see them everywhere: people helping others, giving to the poor, visiting the sick, comforting those who are grieving. Even unbelievers like Bill Gates, Jeff Bezos and other billionaires give billions to charity. Aren't these good works? But the Bible says, in God's sight, they are like a "polluted garment" (Isa 64:6). Why? Hebrews 11:6 answers, "*Without faith it is impossible to please [God].*" Only those who believe and trust in God and Christ as Savior are pleasing to God. Why? Because they do good works to please God, not themselves or others. They do good deeds for God's glory alone.

Those of you who follow the Olympics must have watched or heard a couple of athletes who glorified God and gave thanks to God for their gold medals. As she was traveling to Tokyo, Tatjana Schoenmaker, a swimmer from South Africa, wrote, "Father God, may Your will be done, may Your peace fill us up, may we praise You no matter what the outcome, may we be empowered by Your strength to give our all and may we forever be in awe of Your goodness!" She then broke the world record in the women's 200-meter breaststroke. After she won, pictures of her praying showed that she wore a white cap under her green swim cap with the phrase "Soli Deo Gloria," which means "Glory to God alone," printed on her cap. Another athlete, American hurdler and sprinter Sydney McLaughlin, broke the world record in the 400-meter hurdles. After the race, she said, "Records come and go, the glory of God is eternal. I no longer run for self-recognition, but to reflect His perfect will that is already set in stone. I don't deserve anything. But by grace, through faith, Jesus has given me everything."

Who else, but a true Christian, can say these words, words that reflect Paul's command in 1 Corinthians 10:31, "*So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.*" These two athletes who are faithful to God's word are our role models as Christians. But our Lord Jesus Christ is the only man who was perfectly faithful to God's word.

Jesus is Faithful to God's Word

Jesus came down to earth to do his Father's will to save his people from their sins. How did he save us from our sins? We usually think of his sacrificial death on the cross. But part of his mission was to do all his Father's will all his life, a life without sin. He repeatedly declared this, saying in Matthew 5:17, "*Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.*"; in John 4:34, "*My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.*"; and in John 6:38, "*For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.*" Therefore, the writer of Hebrews exhorts us, "*Consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, who was faithful to him who appointed him*" (Heb 3:1-2). He was faithful to God's word.

Before he was crucified, Jesus prayed to his Father, "*I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do*" (John 17:4). He accomplished all the work that God has given him, all for the glory of God. He was "*obedient [to his Father] to the point of death, even death on a cross*" (Phil 2:8). Christ is the example of those two Olympians who gave glory to God alone for their accomplishment. May we also give glory to God alone in all that we do.

Beloved brothers and sisters, before Jesus willingly went to the cross, he prayed, "*Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done*" (Luke 22:42). He took the cup of God's wrath on our sins as his own, so we may receive the cup of blessing of forgiveness of sins and salvation from God's wrath.

So let us receive his invitation to the Lord's Table, "*Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price*" (Isa 55:1). The salvation he has accomplished for us is all of God's grace and mercy and cannot be bought by any amount of good works.