

Remembering God's Promised Faithfulness  
Deuteronomy 7:7-9; I Thessalonians 5: 23-24

In a few hours the year 2006 ends and we enter the New Year 2007! As we begin this New Year, it is an opportunity for us all to recall with thanksgiving God's promised faithfulness to us, not only over these past twelve months, but His gracious goodness and mercy to us from the very beginning. It is vital that we do this, so that we have a positive God-honoring and glorifying attitude about what lies ahead for us in the months and years ahead.

New Year's Day is a time when people make resolutions and re-examine their lives, their lifestyles, and plan out their next twelve months of living. In that process, we also reflect on the past twelve months with all of its positive and negative moments and issues. For some it can be very difficult as they recall the death of a loved one, the loss of a job, the diagnosis of a life-threatening illness, a strained or broken relationship, or the disappointment of a shattered dream.

But it also can be a time of recalling some of the best moments in a person's life: weddings, births, graduations, reconciled marriages, new job or career advancements, new friends, healed and deepening relationships, spiritual growth and renewal, and certainly the excitement and joy of having accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.

The bottom line is that all of us have experienced a combination of both positive and negative moments this past year.

So what mindset, focus, or objective are we to have as we look to the next twelve months and beyond? How do we anticipate and look forward and make plans to reach new goals as we live in a time of an ever-changing world and local events that seem so unpredictable and yet can so dynamically affect the outcome of those plans?

As a Reformed Presbyterian minister, I believe the answer to the first Catechism question found in the Westminster Confession of Faith gives an excellent answer to this challenge: Q: "What is the chief end of man?" A: "The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever." This is a solid Biblical truth that one finds spread throughout the pages of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. The big

question for us all is: How do we accomplish such a daunting challenge? I believe “remembering God’s promised faithfulness” is how we make great strides in reaching that goal in our lives! Therefore, it is a vital truth, that: **To glorify God and enjoy Him forever, Christians must recall with thanksgiving God’s faithfulness in the past and trust that He will be faithful in the future.**

You may like to know why I selected this topic and the Scriptural texts for my last sermon as one of your Assistant Pastors. This is the end of 2006, so preaching about preparation for the New Year coming is timely. But even more significant is the fact that this is indeed a **transition** moment: This church is in a transition period as the Pastor Search Committee looks for your new Senior Pastor. The country and the world are in transition, both in the economic sphere and the armed conflicts sphere. You personally, in many and varied ways, are in some sort of a transition in your lives. Jerrie and I are in transition as we begin our retirement after 32 years of pastoral ministry. Consequently, I wanted to speak to the reality of these many changes and give us all hope and confidence for the future as we experience the impact of these transition moments.

There are a multitude of truths about God and His love for His people found in the Scriptures about the unconditional love that He so powerfully and infallibly has for His children. The most significant theological or doctrinal truths that relates so specifically to that love are the covenants He has made with us, His people, Israel: Those promises He first made with Adam, then to Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David, and through the prophets, which culminated ultimately in the final covenant sealed for all eternity by the death of His Son Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary.

It is a wonderful blessing to know the **truth** that through **trust** and **faith** in Jesus Christ for **salvation** and all those other wonderful **promises** found in those covenants belong to **you**: sins forgiven and adoption into God’s covenant family!

Consequently and wonderfully: **God’s covenant promises are the basis for his guaranteed faithfulness.** Time precludes me from examining and discussing all the covenants He made, but the texts for today will illustrate my point. (Read Deuteronomy 7:7-9.)

Note the wonderful truths Moses is recalling:

- God sought to love you and chose you for His own.

- Because He loved you from the beginning, He swore an oath of eternal love (made a covenant) with our First Fathers of the Faith, (Noah and Abraham), and He kept that oath!
- He redeemed the Hebrews from physical captivity in Egypt and redeemed you from spiritual captivity to sin and death!

He concludes with these powerful, loving words in verse nine. *“Know therefore that the Lord your God is God; He is a faithful God, keeping His covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love Him and keep His commands.”*

Praise the Lord!! God is faithful to His Word and faithful to His people! He swears upon His Word that He will be eternally faithful to His beloved children, you and me!

The Apostle Paul’s words to the church in Thessalonica resounds with this same positive affirmation of God’s eternal faithfulness to His covenant promises (read I Thessalonians 5:23-24).

Note again the implications for you and me when Paul says it is God who makes you holy in His sight, it is God who will keep you blameless because of His promise to Jesus in John 10: *“I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who gave them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand. I and the Father are One.”* Thus Paul can conclude with great assurance: *“The one who calls you is **faithful** and He will do it.”*

In the covenant God made with Abraham, He promised him that his spiritual offspring would be as numerous as the stars in the heavens and the sand on the sea shore. God reminded Abraham, Moses, and Joshua that He would never leave or forsake his dear children. Jesus promised us He would be with us always. What immutable, unchangeable promises from God Himself! His covenant promises are eternally guaranteed for every generation that lives and dies until Jesus comes back to issue in the new heaven and new earth. Always, in every circumstance, forever and forever, God is 100% lovingly faithful. God is a covenant keeping God! Eternally faithful!

What great, encouraging Good News as we go into the New Year 2007 and the years beyond! While having the sure word of God Himself to attest to His faithfulness is certainly proof enough to enable each of us to enter the New Year with great confidence, peace and hope and joy!

But at the same time for us human beings, sinful and skeptical as we can be at times, it can also be true that **evidences of God's faithfulness in the life of the church and our individual lives attest to the powerful reality of his covenantal blessings as well.**

The historic reality of God's faithfulness to this body of His church, First Evangelical Presbyterian, is practical evidence of the presence of his covenantal blessings amongst us. From the very first moment worship services were held in that first building in downtown Renton in the late 1800s, members of so long ago witnessed God's faithfulness. Over the subsequent years, through thick and thin, through two world wars and the Depression and internal and external enemies of the body of Christ, our church flourished and moved forward as a beacon of gospel light in this area of the Puget Sound. Most importantly, His faithfulness was evidenced in the quality of spiritual leadership that He raised up and His providing pastors that were faithful to the Word of God. That obedience to the commands of God enabled that community of covenant believers to take a bold stand for the deity of Jesus Christ and God's Word in the early 1980s that led to an exodus and regrouping that culminated in the building and completion of this sanctuary and the ministries that now flow from it to the community and the world.

God has powerfully evidenced His faithfulness to you, His covenant people, here over these many years. You all are very blessed to be recipients of this outpouring of God's faithfulness and I hope this reminder will increase your faith and hope during this transition period as God raises up another faithful man of God to be your Senior Pastor. Having had the very great privilege and honor of ministering amongst you as Interim Pastor before you called Dr. Jeremiah and over these past nine years as an Assistant Pastor on staff I have observed that God's faithfulness has been vitally and powerfully evidenced in the lives of you individually and in your families.

One of the richest blessings God pours out on a pastor of His people is the privilege the pastor has to enter into the deep inner soul of those he counsels. In those very sacred moments as the Holy Spirit both oversees and interacts in the counseling process, I have seen God change hearts, give wisdom and supernatural counsel that results in marriages saved, families healed, fear eradicated, hope renewed and disillusionment and fear replaced by life-changing joy and peace. I have been involved only with a small percentage of this congregation, so I know that our covenant keeping God has faithfully worked similarly in many other lives bringing the same healings and blessings in great abundance. I hope you who have experienced such outpouring of God's faithfulness will be faithful in trusting Him more quickly and totally the next time you are faced with a crisis in your life.

This emphasis and reality of God's faithfulness to His covenant children is very dear to me and is a strong passion within me. I want to share some personal testimony of how the reality of that faithfulness in Jerrie's and my life has shaped our ministry together. We have been married 46 years and in our thirteenth year together, God called me into the pastoral ministry.

In my early years, teen years, college years and even early years of marriage God indeed faithfully preserved me from going in directions that would have been disastrous for me, our marriage and the family we were raising . Not being raised in a Christian home, receiving Christ at the age of 13 then thrust into the culture and religion of the Middle East, never attending church and no involvement in youth groups, then to a liberal college and then after marriage serving as a Ruling Elder in three different liberal Presbyterian churches where they thought asking a new member if he or she had a saving relationship with Jesus Christ was "just to private and personal a question to ask anyone," I could have been easy prey for the enemies of God.

But God was faithful to me and my family. He preserved me and guided me through troubled waters during the late 60s and early 70s in the midst of the Jesus Movement and the charismatic movement, God began calling young and middle-aged men to the gospel ministry. I was one of those men.

Thirteen years into our marriage and with three young children, I left my position at UCLA and we journeyed to St Louis, Missouri, to attend Covenant Theological Seminary. God provided for us during those four years. I was able to pastor a church for three of those years and then a church in Texas, a church in West Seattle, three years at the Seattle Union gospel Mission and then here with you at First EPC.

Just as for many of you who have sought to live faithfully for our Savior and have faced troubling and very hard moments in life, I, too, over these 32 years in pastoral ministry have similar faced very difficult and trying moments. Times when I have been totally broken, deeply hurt, and questioning whether I should even remain in the ministry.

But, oh, my friends! In those moments I could relate with the saints of old, the biblical characters like Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, the apostles and the martyrs of the church through the centuries who faced major trials and tribulations and by God's sovereign grace and faithfulness to his covenant promises I was enabled to persevere like all of those by the power of the Holy Spirit. Hallelujah!! Hallelujah!! I hope you see now that your personal testimony of God's faithfulness in your lives is another attestation of that reality active and alive

today! It is in the remembering of these moments of God's promised faithfulness that helps you and me to face whatever God has for us to face in this life .

The Scriptural basis for the assurance of this faithfulness must be the foundation upon which we stand when confronted with all that Christians face as we seek to be God's witnesses in the world through our Savior Jesus Christ! The motivation for our faithfulness to is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

I pray for you all that as you mature more and more in your faith through the experiences and moments God your Heavenly Father has ordained for you, that you will come to experientially know and rely on exclusively the reality of God's covenantal promises to faithfully love you and guide you and preserve you in Jesus Christ to your life's end. As we move into 2007 and beyond may we exclaim with great joy and thanksgiving: **HALLELUJAH WHAT A SAVOR and GREAT IS THY FAITHFULNESS!!**