

Epiphany 2 / January 15, 2023

1 Corinthians 1:9

“God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”

What comes to mind when you think of God? His immensity? In Jeremiah the Lord said, “Do I not fill heaven and earth.” His knowledge? The Psalmist confessed, “Lord you have searched me and known me! You know when I sit and when I rise up...Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it altogether.” Nothing is hidden from His sight! His power? God promised Abraham and Sarah a child in their great old age. When Abraham expressed doubts, God asked, “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” Then He showed His power, granting a ninety-year-old woman to conceive and give birth to a child (and giving her the energy to keep up with him).

Those along with His eternal being and holiness are among the primary qualities we associate with God. They are awesome to contemplate, but those qualities are beyond our experience or ability to comprehend. God’s holiness burns hotter than all the stars in the universe. If we were to fully experience God’s holiness, it would consume us in an instant. God said to Moses, “No one can see my face and live.” God’s holiness consumes all that is sinful like flames lick up dry grassland. The Psalmist said, sinners cannot stand in His presence. Isaiah was terrified by God’s holiness when He came into His presence in a vision. He cried, “Woe is me. I am ruined. I am a man of unclean lips and my eyes have seen the Holy One.”

Eternity is beyond our experience and surpasses both our imagination and comprehension. We experience life in terms of beginnings and endings. God has neither beginning nor end. Our minds are wired to think in terms of beginnings and endings. We can more easily imagine something having no end than something that has no beginning. We are creatures in time and live under time. God stands over time and sees it as an eternal panorama. We have a biological clock programmed within us. Moses sang, “The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty.” We have stretched that limit by a decade or two, but our days quickly pass and we fly away. Most people grow weary with the passing years anyway, imagine dealing with eternity! From our experience the most tangible aspect of God’s nature is His love, expressed in mercy, grace and faithfulness. God is faithful to love us in time and for eternity. Great is His faithfulness!

God is love. He expresses His love in many ways. He gives humans blessings from the earth. He fills our hearts with joy and gladness. He blesses us with creaturely comforts to preserve our lives and with human love and friendship to help us in times of sorrow. Jesus said, “He makes His sun rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.” God expresses His love most dearly in giving Christ to be our Saviour. In His body sacrificed on the cross, He bore the sin of the world and purchased redemption for every human soul.

God is merciful. He offers forgiveness as a free gift for all to receive. He blesses all who believe with forgiveness for the sake of Christ and brings us into fellowship with Him in the holy church. God is gracious. He does not treat us as our sins deserve or even see us through our sins. He sees us as children through Christ’s righteousness, given in baptism, received by faith continuously through the hearing of the word and reception of the sacraments. Great is His faithfulness!

God is faithful in expressing His love in the mercy of forgiveness. He is faithful in showing kindness to all people, regardless of their actions and attitude towards Him. He sent Jesus into the world to seek and to save the lost. He sends the church into the world for the same purpose, to call people to turn to Him in repentance through the gospel of salvation received through faith in Jesus’ Name.

God is faithful in offering the grace of forgiveness for all to receive through faith in Jesus. God is faithful in giving the grace of forgiveness abundantly to all who believe, continuously throughout the course of our lives. We may give up on God, but God doesn’t give up on us. When we turn away, He calls us back in repentance. When we fall, He lifts us up in forgiveness. He who has called us to faith and blessed us with fellowship in His Son, is faithful to sustain us in this grace until Christ returns and fulfills our faith in the resurrection to life everlasting. Great is His faithfulness!

God is faithful means that He doesn't quit offering His grace to those who refuse. In Isaiah, God said, "All day I have held out my hands to an obstinate people, who walk in ways not good." He holds out His hands to us today! To say God is faithful means His faithfulness is not conditioned by our faithfulness or undermined by our unfaithfulness. God is faithful means that when we turn away, He hopes for our return. It means that when we return, He receives us with loving arms. God is the Father in Jesus' parable who rejoiced at the return of His lost Son, saying, "for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost and is found." God is faithful!

When we turn away to sin, God is faithful to show us our sins, chastise us, and call us to return in repentance. He is faithful to show us our sins, so we do not feel their full effect in eternal death. God has no joy in the death of sinners. His desire is that we turn from sin and return to Him. The prophet Hosea said, "Come let us return to the Lord; for He has torn us that He may heal us; He has struck us down and He will bind us up...that we may live before Him." Jesus said when a sinner repents, heaven rejoices. God is faithful to forgive, heal and restore us to fellowship with Christ so we may live before Him in time and for eternity.

Epiphany is a season of seeing Christ as God and seeing that we need Him to be our Saviour. Paul saw Jesus and himself in a different light as he travelled to Damascus to persecute Jewish-Christians. In the light of Christ, he saw himself, not as a righteous man, but rather as a sinner who needed repentance. When he saw his sins he saw Christ as his Saviour. In his sin He experienced God's grace. He saw himself as a sign that no one is beyond the power of God's grace. His grace extends to everyone. He calls all of us to believe in Christ as Saviour. He calls all who believe into fellowship with Himself and with each other in Christ Jesus. Epiphany is a season of seeing Jesus as Saviour. We see Jesus best when we see Him as our Saviour. We see Jesus as Saviour when we see Him through the cross in the forgiveness of our sins. Christ crucified for our sins and raised for our eternal salvation is the greatest sign of God's faithfulness! Great is His faithfulness!

He who began a good work within us will be faithful to bring it to completion in the day of Jesus Christ. Amen