

## FAITHFUL TO THE UNFAITHFUL

For the past three weeks, we have been dealing with a series titled **FROM RUBBLE TO RADIANCE**, and today I want to do **part 3** of that teaching. We are building line upon line, a thesis that says we serve a God of comebacks and that with God, no situation is beyond redemption.

We have been exploring the story of the Jews who were taken into captivity because of their idolatrous lifestyle. But we see God coming and putting in place a redemptive plan for His people.

This morning, I want to talk to you on the subject matter, **FAITHFUL TO THE UNFAITHFUL**.

- It has been the case since creation that God has always proven to be faithful, and man has always proven to be unfaithful.
- It is human tendency to overestimate one's ability, uprightness, faithfulness, and ability to do good. The quicker you realise how prone you are to missing the mark, the easier it is for you to humbly submit yourself to God's helping hand.
- The story in Ezra gives us a picture of the contrast between the faithfulness of God and the unfaithfulness of people.
- Israel found itself in captivity because it was unfaithful to God, and God used the Babylonian invasion of Judah as a tool to bring His people back to a life of faithfulness.
- Two weeks ago, we spoke about how Israel was unfaithful and, by extension, how we can become unfaithful to God in a message titled "Dancing with the Forbidden."
- During Israel's unfaithfulness, we see God making 2 promises. The first one was a promise of the destruction that was coming upon Israel, and we have dealt with that.
- The second promise was the restoration that was going to take place after 70 years.

*Jeremiah 29:10 This is what the Lord says: "When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my good promise to bring you back to this place. 11 For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.*

- We serve a speaking God, and if you are to develop a strong relationship with God, you must get acquainted with a speaking God.
- God always has a word for you that addresses your prevailing circumstances.
- It is either He is speaking in the moment, or He has spoken before. The Bible tells us that God is always speaking either in a dream or in a vision, but man does not perceive.

*Job 33:13 Why do you complain to him that he responds to no one's words? 14 For God does speak—now one way, now another— though no one perceives it. 15 In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls on people as they slumber in their beds, 16 he may speak in their ears and terrify them with warnings, 17 to turn them from wrongdoing and keep them from pride, 18 to preserve them from the pit, their lives from perishing by the sword.*

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- Seek what is God's word for your prevailing situation. God is not a bystander regarding what you are facing.
- The church must rediscover the art of hearing God's voice. When you seek God's word for a situation, you will either hear it, read it, or be reminded of it.
- You need to know God's mind because that is what you go with into combat, into war. Jesus responded to all the temptations that He faced in the wilderness by saying "it is written..." and in one of those responses, He said the following:

*Matthew 4:4 But He answered and said, "It is written: 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.'"*

- Jesus is telling us that yes, you need other provisions, but you cannot do without the provision of God's word.
- It means that you can never have enough bread (life provisions), so you don't need the bread of heaven.
- God's word was present when Israel was committing idolatry, and God's word was present when they settled in the promised land.
- The story in the Book of Ezra highlights the importance of God's word in the life of a believer.  
*Ezra 1:1 And in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, so that the Word of Jehovah by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, Jehovah stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia.*
- Whilst Israel was in captivity, we see something profound occurring in which God comes to the scene and starts putting into action a 70-year-old promise.
- There is nothing that God says that He cannot and will not fulfill.
- God has the highest regard for His word, such that when He speaks, it is as good as done.
- That is why you need God's word – His word is backed by His character.
- By the time 70 years had passed, many of the people who were taken into Babylon had died, some had forgotten about the promise, and some had defected to the gods of the Babylonians.
- But God does not forget His word.
- Nothing stops the fulfillment of a word whose time has arrived. No authority on earth can override God's word that is ready to happen. God touched the heart of Cyrus.
- There is no place, no heart, and no system that can oppose the fulfillment of God's word.
- Men's infidelity cannot stop God's word from being fulfilled. Israel had been unfaithful, but God remained faithful. That is why I am talking about being faithful to the unfaithful.
- Maybe you feel disqualified from seeing God at work in your life, but when you turn your heart to the Lord, the Lord will still fulfill His promises in your life.

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- The 70 years were enough for a level of repentance to have taken place, and when God saw the desired change of heart, He went into action and started fulfilling His promise.
- God is punctual in the fulfillment of His word – when seventy years were accomplished, God did not waste time.

*Galatians 4:4 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.*

- The redemptive plan was always planned and promised, but it was going to be fulfilled at a certain time.
- Someone said rain is only good for those who have seeds in the ground, meaning a farmer without seed in the ground does not benefit from the rain.
- The timing of God is only good for those who have the word in their heart. Without God's word, you have no hope of a good future.
- We must declare Jeremiah 29:11 with God's word backing us. That declaration was made at the backend of the promise of the 70-year promise.
- We have confidence that God's prophecies and promises will be fulfilled.
- We know that God is not a man, that He should lie – Numbers 23:19
- We know that heaven and earth shall pass away, but His words shall not pass away – Matthew 24:35
- We know that the word of the Lord endures forever and that He abides faithfully – Isaiah 40:8. God cannot deny Himself and remains faithful and true to His word – 2 Timothy 2:13.
- The nature of God must prompt you to put your trust in God's word. You might not see how His word will be fulfilled, but you have to trust Him because He is systematically putting together a puzzle, and before you know it, the picture will be clear.
- There are two aspects to the fulfillment of God's word. The first aspect is that God fulfills His word because He is sovereign, meaning that He does what He wants, whether man allows it or not. I don't think this is God's preferred way of doing things. I believe the second aspect is what God usually uses.
- The second aspect is that God wants man to believe Him and seek Him for the fulfillment of His word.
- God wants to partner with man to fulfill His plans on earth, and He finds pleasure in co-laboring with His creation.
- When there is a word, we must align ourselves with the word; we must demonstrate our trust in Him. Prayer is about asking Him to do what He promised.

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- When our hearts are not aligned with God's will, God might take longer to fulfill His word. Prayer does the job of aligning us with God's heart.
- There was a man in Babylon that stood in the gap regarding the 70-year-old promise.  
*Daniel 9: 1In the first year of Darius son of Xerxes, a Mede by descent, who was made ruler over the kingdom of the Chaldeans— 2in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, understood from the sacred books, according to the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years. 3So I turned my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and petition, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes*
- What God had started with Cyrus, He continued with Darius until Jerusalem was fully restored and resourced.
- Daniel took upon himself the sins of Israel in repentance. He knew that without a repentant heart, the 70-year promise might take another 70 years to be fulfilled.
- When an unfaithful man turns to God in prayer and repentance, the hand of the faithful God is revealed.
- In our unfaithfulness, we must never run away from God but must run to God because He will not deny us. He is one who remains faithful to the unfaithful.
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