

The Faithfulness of the Son Hebrews 3:1-19

When you think of faithfulness what comes to your mind? You may think of your spouse in the context of faithfulness. You may think of your friends and family members in the context of faithfulness. You may even think of your pets in the context of faithfulness. You might even think of a piece of equipment being faithful and reliable. Faithfulness is an important concept expressed throughout the Bible. The Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary says that faithfulness is "dependability, loyalty, and stability, particularly as it describes God in His relationship to human believers. The faithfulness of God and His Word is a constant theme in the Bible. It is particularly prominent in Psalms 89 and 119. God is "the faithful God who keeps covenant" (Deut. 7:9) and chooses Israel (Is. 49:7); great is His faithfulness (Lam. 3:23). It is not surprising that this aspect of God's nature should also belong to the Messiah, who would be clothed with faithfulness (Is. 11:5) and who is described as the Faithful one (Rev. 19:11), the "faithful witness" (Rev. 1:5; 3:14), and the "faithful High Priest" (Heb. 2:17; 3:2). God's faithfulness is the source of the Christian's deliverance from temptation (1 Cor. 10:13), assurance of salvation (Heb. 10:23), and forgiveness of sins (1 John 1:9). He is faithful to His children because He is first of all faithful to Himself (2 Tim. 2:13)."

A few weeks ago, I preached on Hebrews chapter one which emphasized the importance of our focus on the Son of God, Jesus Christ. The writer of Hebrews said that the Son was radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of God's being. The Son is superior to the angels and the angels worship him. Therefore, our focus needs to be on the Son. The writer of Hebrews is going to continue to emphasize the superiority of Jesus over everything the Jewish people revered by

demonstrating the superiority of the Son over Moses, who was one of the most important heroes of their faith. He is not going to tear down Moses as a faithful servant to God, but he is going to emphasize the faithfulness of the Son in Hebrews 3 by demonstrating the superior faithfulness of the Son as the Apostle and High Priest of God. Stuart Sacks says that “The pinnacle of faithfulness in the Bible is seen in the work of Jesus Christ, who showed himself faithful to his Father (Heb 3:2) and in his witness (Rev 1:5). God calls men and women to be faithful by following Christ, relying on him for all things.”¹ Vernon Grounds writes that “As the self-revelation of the divine character, Jesus Christ is fittingly designated the Faithful One (Rev 19:11), who with absolute faithfulness discharges all the responsibilities of High Priest (Heb 2:17), Apostle (Heb 3:1–2), and Witness (Rev 1:5; 3:14).”²

3Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess. ²He was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all God’s house. ³Jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself. ⁴For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything. ⁵Moses was faithful as a servant in all God’s house, testifying to what would be said in the future. ⁶But Christ is faithful as a son over God’s house. And we are his house, if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast.

¹ Stuart D. Sacks, [“Faithfulness,”](#) in *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 765.

² Vernon C. Grounds, [“Faithfulness,”](#) in *The Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. Charles F. Pfeiffer, Howard F. Vos, and John Rea (Moody Press, 1975).

⁷ So, as the Holy Spirit says: “Today, if you hear his voice, ⁸do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the desert, ⁹where your fathers tested and tried me and for forty years saw what I did. ¹⁰That is why I was angry with that generation, and I said, ‘Their hearts are always going astray and they have not known my ways.’ ¹¹So I declared on oath in my anger, ‘They shall never enter my rest.’ ” ¹² See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. ¹³ But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness. ¹⁴ We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first. ¹⁵ As has just been said: “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion.” ¹⁶ Who were they who heard and rebelled? Were they not all those Moses led out of Egypt? ¹⁷ And with whom was he angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the desert? ¹⁸ And to whom did God swear that they would never enter his rest if not to those who disobeyed or disbelieved? ¹⁹ So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief. ³

1. Fix Our Thoughts on the Faithfulness of the Son

The first point the writer makes is to fix our thoughts on the faithfulness of the Son. The writer addresses them as holy people who share in the heavenly calling. As God’s people how much do we think about Jesus? We are told to fix our thoughts on the faithfulness of the Son. Hebrews tells us to fix our minds, ponder carefully, and focus on the true significance of Jesus. Bruce Barton reminds us that “In our age of

³ [*The Holy Bible: New International Version*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), Heb 3:1–19.

sound bites, fast food, and quick-fix solutions, very few people take time to think about anything or anyone. In Jesus we have one to whom we should listen as God's messenger, through whom we come to the Father as our High Priest, and to whom we give obedience as the ruler of God's house. When we think about the significance and superiority of Jesus, how does it affect our life today? Our decisions? Our actions?"⁴ Kent Hughes says that "we must continually "fix our thoughts" on him—always—perpetually. We must *desire* to gaze on him with all our heart, and then we must utilize our powers of *concentration* and must *discipline* ourselves to spend *time* doing so. By God's grace we must lift our eyes away from the troubles and distractions around us and focus on Christ."⁵ The writer of Hebrews reminds us of the need to consistently fix our thoughts on the faithfulness of the Son, Jesus Christ.

2. The Faithfulness of the Son as the Apostle and High Priest

The writer of Hebrews writes that the faithfulness of the Son is demonstrated by his work as an Apostle and High Priest. Usually, we think of apostles as the ones that Jesus sent. Literally the word "apostle" means "one sent". Leon Morris writes that "Apostle" is applied to Jesus only here in the NT, but the idea that God "sent" him is more frequent, especially in the fourth Gospel. The basic idea is that of mission. Jesus was sent by the Father to accomplish his purpose. "High priest" brings before us the sacrificial nature of that mission. In the Greek the verse ends by naming him simply "Jesus." Though he is the

⁴ Bruce B. Barton et al., [Hebrews](#), Life Application Bible Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1997), 32.

⁵ R. Kent Hughes, [Hebrews: An Anchor for the Soul](#), vol. 1, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1993), 94

most glorious of beings, this name draws attention to his humanity. It is as man that his work as apostle and high priest is accomplished.”⁶ Simon Kistemaker says “The term *apostle* refers to the one whom God has sent—a concept repeatedly used by John in his Gospel (3:17, 34; 5:36–38; 6:29, 57; 7:29; 8:42; 10:36; 11:42; 17:3) and even in his first epistle (1 John 4:10). The word *apostle* has the deeper meaning of ambassador. The apostle is not merely sent: he is empowered with the authority of the one who sends him. Furthermore, he can and may speak only the words his superior gives him. He is forbidden to utter his own opinions when they are at variance with those of the one who sends him. Jesus, then, proclaims the very Word of God. He brings the gospel, the good news.”⁷

F. F. Bruce emphasizes that “When Jesus is designated as “the apostle and high priest of our confession,” he is marked out as being both God’s representative among human beings and their representative in the presence of God. The Old Testament writings tell the story of God’s self-revelation to human beings and their response to that revelation; in both respects these writings find their fulfilment in Jesus. For he is not only, as has been emphasized already, the one in whom God has revealed himself finally and completely, but also the perfect embodiment of humanity’s obedient response to God.”⁸ In other words, Jesus embodies God’s intent for how humans should live. God’s Word

⁶ Leon Morris, [“Hebrews,”](#) in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Hebrews through Revelation*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 12 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 31.

⁷ Simon J. Kistemaker and William Hendriksen, [Exposition of Hebrews](#), vol. 15, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953–2001), 84.

⁸ F. F. Bruce, [The Epistle to the Hebrews](#), Rev. ed., The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 91.

emphasizes that the people of God are to become more Christlike as they grow and mature in their faith.

The Son has proven himself faithful in fulfilling his mission as the sent one. Donald Hagner notes that “Jesus as the one sent by God represents God to humanity; Jesus as high priest represents humanity to God. Jesus is therefore God’s revelation and makes possible human response.”⁹ God the Father appointed Jesus to be the mediator between God and man and to bring the good news of salvation to sinful humanity. God appointed him to be apostle and high priest and expected him to faithfully execute his task, which Jesus did. I love how Bruce Barton writes that “God sent Jesus to earth as an apostle; Jesus returned to heaven as our high priest (a role introduced in 2:17–18). He came delivering God’s message to people; he returned bringing people back to God.”¹⁰ We fix our thoughts on Jesus because of his faithfulness as Apostle and High Priest.

3. The Faithfulness of the Son Over God’s House

The writer of Hebrews continues to demonstrate the superiority of the Son as the one who is faithful over God’s house. God’s house in this context is God’s people. Simon Kistemaker reminds us that “we know, the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself has. When a house or a building is erected, people may admire the beauty of the structure and speak words of praise, but they reserve tribute and honor for the architect and for the builder. The architect and the builder

⁹ Donald A. Hagner, [Hebrews](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 59.

¹⁰ Bruce B. Barton et al., [Hebrews](#), Life Application Bible Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1997), 32.

stand, figuratively, above the structure they have created. They stand on a different level. By analogy, the author says, God is the architect; Jesus is the builder of God's house; Moses is a servant in God's house."¹¹ The Lexham Context Commentary notes that "Moses served in the house of God, which was built by God, as were all things. Since Jesus is the Son of the Creator God and one with him (1:2, 4, 10), he is with the Father as the builder of the house. Thus, he is more worthy of glory and honor than the house, and he is greater than Moses, who serves in the house."¹² Indeed "Moses was a faithful servant in God's house, but Christ is faithful as the Son, who is indeed one with the Father as the builder of the house. Always joining doctrine with exhortation, the paragraph concludes with the challenge to remain confident and hopeful."¹³ The faithfulness of the Son is demonstrated by the revelation that sinful humans can be incorporated into the house of God as God's people since the Son is faithful over the house of God.

4. Believe in the Faithfulness of the Son

The writer of Hebrews is concerned with the recipients of the letter and uses Israel's past wilderness wanderings, disobedience, and unbelief to warn them not to miss out on God's rest which only comes through belief in his faithful Son, Jesus Christ. The Lexham Context Commentary emphasizes "Considering Jesus, who is better than Moses, is the way to avoid the unbelief and disobedience of those who

¹¹ Simon J. Kistemaker and William Hendriksen, [Exposition of Hebrews](#), vol. 15, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953–2001), 85–86.

¹² Douglas Mangum, ed., [Lexham Context Commentary: New Testament](#), Lexham Context Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020), Heb 3:1–6.

¹³ Douglas Mangum, ed., [Lexham Context Commentary: New Testament](#), Lexham Context Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020), Heb 3:1–6.

failed to enter the rest of the promised land. The author warns his readers not to fall into sinful disbelief like the Israelites.”¹⁴ Ray Stedman writes “If unbelief kept Israelites out of the land of Canaan (a picture of God’s rest), how much more serious is it today to give way to unbelief and thus miss the greater rest (the rest of justification and salvation). The warning is addressed to the whole assembly (*See to it, brothers, ... encourage one another daily*). These phrases recognize individual responsibility to act (*that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart, ... none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness*) and describe accurately the terrible result of sin’s hardening.”¹⁵ Douglas Mangum says the “Readers are given here direct commands to watch out for evil disbelief like that of the wilderness generation, and to encourage each other daily not to have hard hearts like Israelites and so be deceived by sinful faithlessness.”¹⁶ “Unbelief was the reason the wilderness generation was denied entrance into God’s rest. The point is that failing to believe is sinful disobedience, which results in the punishment of not experiencing the blessing of God’s rest. Instead of unbelief, readers are urged to continue in faith, holding fast to confidence as they consider their high priest and God’s faithful Son”¹⁷ One of my favorite New Testament scholars, N.T. Wright, says “There is such a thing as ‘the deceitfulness of sin’, and it’s very powerful. You start by allowing

¹⁴ Douglas Mangum, ed., [Lexham Context Commentary: New Testament](#), Lexham Context Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020), Heb 3:7–15.

¹⁵ Ray C. Stedman, [Hebrews](#), The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Westmont, IL: IVP Academic, 1992), Heb 3:12–19.

¹⁶ Douglas Mangum, ed., [Lexham Context Commentary: New Testament](#), Lexham Context Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020), Heb 3:7–15.

¹⁷ Douglas Mangum, ed., [Lexham Context Commentary: New Testament](#), Lexham Context Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020), Heb 3:16–19.

yourself the apparent luxury of doing something small which you know you shouldn't but which you think doesn't matter. When it becomes a habit, you stop thinking it's wrong at all. If the question is raised, you are ready with rationalizations: everyone does it, this is the way the world is now, you mustn't be legalistic, no good being a killjoy. This creates a platform for the next move: here's something else which a while ago you would have shunned as certainly wrong, but it's quite like the thing you've got used to, so maybe ... And before too long you're rationalizing that as well. And once the mind has been deceived, the habit will continue unchecked.”¹⁸ “And, finally, what matters is continuing to believe. Many of the people in the wilderness simply stopped believing that God was really with them, really leading them. Again and again they accused Moses of simply tricking them so that he could lead them where he wanted. When they came close to the promised land, early on in their wanderings, the spies who went to look over the land told the people what a dangerous and difficult place it was, so that they stopped believing in God's promises and instead believed a lie. That's the ever-present danger which faced Christians in the first century, and which faces us today as well. Once you stop believing either in the God who called you, rescued you and guides you, or in the future he has promised you, you may simply go round and round in the wilderness and never get anywhere.”¹⁹

Our salvation and deliverance from judgment on sin is based on the grace of God and his provision through the faithfulness of his Son in his

¹⁸ Tom Wright, [Hebrews for Everyone](#) (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004), 30.

¹⁹ Tom Wright, [Hebrews for Everyone](#) (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004), 33.

life, death, resurrection, and ascension. God's grace is applied to us when we respond to Jesus Christ with faith by trusting in his provision. That is why the writers of scripture emphasize the importance of trusting and believing in the faithfulness of the Son, Jesus Christ. John 3:16-18 says "For God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son."

The faithfulness of the Son can inspire a response of belief in our lives. If you do not have that trusting saving relationship with Jesus do not harden your heart. You can believe in the Son. The faithfulness of the Son can inspire a life of commitment in living for Jesus Christ as we keep our thoughts focused on the Son. The faithfulness of the Son can help inspire us to keep depending on God's grace as we journey through this life. The faithfulness of the Son assures us of being members of God's house and entering into his eternal rest. He is worthy of our belief, worship, gratitude, and service. We can evaluate the strength of our belief, our heartfelt worship and service to the Lord. God's grace saves us bringing us into his eternal rest and strengthens us though the journey. He is faithful and has promised to never leave or forsake us.