

Monday, MARCH 1, 2010

For those of us who drive Toyota vehicles, it seems the news just doesn't let up and keeps raising more questions about RELIABILITY. I wonder how many Toyota owners now drive, as I do, wondering if the vehicle they are driving is different and will prove to be, as we have always anticipated, reliable over hundreds of thousands of road miles?

As nations and organizations pour huge amounts of rescue and recovery finances into Haiti, many are wondering how RELIABLE the present Haitian leadership will be, as compared to the past several decades of greed, corruption and unreliability?

Reliability...when you think of it, every aspect of your life and mine is touched by this one concept...everyday! We assume, we hope, we even pray that vehicles, home heating systems, telephones, refrigerators, car seats, even people are reliable...and when they aren't, life gets painful quickly, right?

This week I'm asking you a simple question: Have you discovered that God is always reliable or is "the jury still out" on that for you?

If you still have your outline from this weekend, I gave you several key Scriptures in which God makes profound "reliability" statements about Himself.

In Isaiah 45:18,19 God claims to be the author of truth and right, thus He challenges us to trust His reliability to be truthful and morally right at all times. That's a strong claim, have you found it to be true? Do you remember Jesus echoed it many times? Repeatedly He said "I tell you the truth" and on one occasion claimed "I am the way, the TRUTH, and the life" (John 14:6), thus claiming to be living truth. In His prayer (John 17:17) Jesus said "Your word is truth", thus affirming both God's spoken and written word (the Bible) are truth. Every person must find a "truth source" that is reliable in life. Have you discovered that to be Jesus Christ?

Have you read Psalm 119 lately? Nearly every verse is a statement declaring God's truthfulness in His precepts, commands, statutes, decrees, principles etc. A reliable truth foundation is essential for living life. Have you found yours?

Tuesday, MARCH 2, 2010

Reliability is our theme this week, and by now in your life journey I'm confident you have experienced UNRELIABILITY, perhaps many times. Unreliability is particularly painful when it happens with people, right? How often have you experienced broken promises, people who didn't hold up their end of the agreement, people who let you down...maybe repeatedly? Look closely...what is your natural response to a person when you find them "unreliable"?

Our theme verse from 2009, Isaiah 40:28,31 claimed "*The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth. He will not grow tired or weary and His understanding no one can fathom. Those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength.*" Have you found this to be your experience...or is it just words to you?

Several people down through history have had such significant encounters with God that they wanted to put up a monument so they and their descendants would never forget. It was a way of proclaiming to all that God was reliable. Consider the event in Joshua 3 & 4. Finally, after 40 years of desert wandering, nearly 2 million Hebrews follow Joshua across the miraculously dried Jordan river bed into their new homeland. That night they piled up 12 huge stones which they had taken out of the riverbed, before they bedded down for their first night in the land that had been promised to Abraham more than 500 years before! For generations, that pile of stone told a story of God's reliability. I urge you to read it and ask yourself, do you have a "Gilgal"?

Years later in Joshua's old years, he had accomplished his mission and was preparing to die. As a final declaration to his family and the nation, Joshua drew up a covenant at Shechem and stood up a stone pillar as a memorial to God's RELIABILITY throughout his lifetime. "*As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD*" (Joshua 24) was his parting challenge! Sadly, it didn't take long and generations which followed him turned away from God. Consider Judges 2:6-15. What happened? While God was reliable, they were not! For centuries God has proven Himself reliable...have you made a declaration for your legacy? And how reliable have you been in your lifetime?

Wednesday, MARCH 3, 2010

As we wrestle with the question of RELIABILITY this week, do you sometimes find it difficult to separate your personal life circumstances from your perception of God's character and especially His reliability? If He's reliably holy, why so much evil in our world? If He's reliably truthful, why so much dishonesty? If he's reliably just, why so much injustice? Do you sometimes hold God responsible for the dysfunction of unreliable people, unreliable equipment, even unreliable Christians!?

You know a man named Paul wrote much of the New Testament. Perhaps you know he prided himself as being a student of Jewish studies with an aim to be a great Rabbi one day, probably with his own Rabbinical school. His given name was Saul and he studied under some of the best of his day. Unexpectedly, he had an encounter with Jesus on his way to Damascus, papers in hand, to arrest and "punish" any Jews who had believed Jesus was Messiah and were His followers. His "conversion" (Acts 9) was dramatic. In his zeal and passion for truth he switched from being a persecutor of Christians to being the strongest proponent of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, almost overnight! The reaction to this total change was painful to him. Soon he found no safe haven, and he spent far more time recovering from beatings and stonings than he could have ever imagined. Facing such a painful life of constant danger and rejection, Paul had to answer some fundamental questions about God's reliability, the reliability of Jesus and His truth, and the reliability of the Holy Spirit and His powerful work in the life of a person who chooses to trust Jesus.

Paul's letter to his friends in Philippi is in large measure his declaration of the reliability of God and calls us to ask ourselves deep questions. "*Being confident that He who began a good work in you will continue it...*" (Phil. 1:6) is a strong statement. Have you found it to be true? Is God reliable in His daily, ongoing, sanctifying work in you? How are you growing, changing, becoming more God honoring each day? That work involves the deep, personal work of the Holy Spirit as described in Romans 8:5-17...is that your experience? Do you see it also in Phil. 2:13? What complicates or stands in the way of this in you?

Thursday, MARCH 4, 2010

While at every stage of life the question of God's reliability is important, I wonder if you'd agree it really rises to prominence in our 50's and 60's? At the pinnacle of career, nearing retirement, moving through grandparenthood, enjoying maturity in our marriages...we also face unprecedented anxiety about a global economy in turmoil, declining house values, skyrocketing health care costs, societal troubles on every side...and we naturally wonder about the reliability of everything, every leader, and even God!

The Apostle Paul, in this late adult season of life, writing from a prison cell in Rome is not angry or disheartened with God, rather his Philippians letter overflows with confidence and even joy in the RELIABILITY of God! I urge you to read the first three chapters today, carefully watching for every statement confidently made about the faithfulness, trustworthiness or reliability of God, Jesus Christ or the Holy Spirit.

Do you see Paul's confidence as he approaches probable death in Phil. 1:19-23? Or his confidence in the supremacy of Jesus Christ in Phil. 2:9-11?

Look carefully at chapter 3, especially verses 7-21. Reflecting back, I'm sure Paul saw many things which had seemed important achievements at various times in his life, some of which likely brought him great accolades. But now in his mature wisdom, what do you see he views as singularly most significant, most important in his life? *"I consider everything a loss compared to knowing Christ Jesus my Lord...I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection..."* Spend some time with Jim and Gretchen Riedel, or Perry and Sandi Bradford, or Jack and Joan Schafer, or Chuck and Shirley Buchweitz...ask them about these verses and about God's reliability over a lifetime. Ask them what they think Paul was talking about and if they feel some of the same sentiment. (I haven't asked them, but I surmise just by watching them live life, they echo his sentiments in their own words). Of course, I could name many others of you at Calvary Church!

Consider Phil. 3:12-14 and ask yourself a simple question: WHY? What is the reason Christ Jesus took hold of you? What would happen if you grasped that as a life mission?

Friday, MARCH 5, 2010

This week we've been wrestling with the matter of God's reliability. It's a fundamental character question, right? If a person is unreliable...that's a character flaw that raises all kinds of other questions including integrity, trustworthiness, respect, dependability, leadership etc. So you see, with God it's fundamental! If God is ever unreliable...we have a serious problem...ALL of us, the entire universe, everything is in danger if God is unreliable! Think that through...do you agree?

Chapter 4 of Philippians is one of the great chapters of the Bible, in my view. Consider Paul's confident claims about the power of trusting God's reliability in prayer, and then experiencing the miracle of *"a peace that passes all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."* (Phil. 4:7) Is that true friends, have you experienced it? How does it happen?

Link Psalm 9:9,10 with Phil. 4:4-7 and what do you see? Yes, confident trust in God yields a calm heart in the storm! I gave you several "names of God" in the sermon outline last week. Each name has significant meaning for the foundation of His reliability because they describe how God has been found to be powerfully trustworthy by people like you and me over time! Have you ever given God a new name...out of your personal, powerful journey with Him?

Consider Phil. 4:11-13. What a remarkable statement of confidence in the reliability of God *"I have learned the secret of being content in each and every circumstance..."* What is the secret? I think the same secret Abraham learned as he followed God to an unknown place, or Moses learned as he led 2 million people following a cloud and depending daily on Manna, or Daniel learned as he advised several kings with wisdom from God. The secret is this...God is reliable, and the more you know Him personally, the more you are able to discern when He is speaking to you and can respond by making necessary changes in your life to come into "lock step" with His leading in your life...the more you'll find His reliability has a defining role in your life!

Finally, what do you think of Paul's almost boastful statement in Phil. 4:19? Would you link it with Malachi 3:6-10. Have you found God to be reliable even in financial matters?



Pastor Doug Anderson

MARCH 1 - 5, 2010

Discovering God is Reliable



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