

# BIBLE CHALLENGE 2019

Week 14: March 31 – April 6

## *God and His Faithfulness*

Read: Genesis 19:19; 24:12-14,27,49; 39:21; 47:29; Exodus 15:13; 20:6; 34:6-7; Numbers 14:18-19; Deuteronomy 5:10; 7:9,12; 31:6-8; Joshua 1:5; 21:45; 23:14; 1 Samuel 12:22; 20:14-15; 2 Samuel 2:6; 7:15; 9:1-7; 22:6; 1 Kings 6:13; 1 Chronicles 28:20; 2 Chronicles 15:2; Psalm 5:7; 6:4; 13:6; 18:25; 23:6; 25:10; 31:7,16; 32:10; 33:18;36:10; 36:5; 40:10-11; 89:2,33-34; 103:17; 119:90; 141:5; 143:12; 147:11; Job 6:14; Isaiah 41:17; 42:16; 54:10; 55:3; 63:7; Jeremiah 9:24; 16:5; 31:3; 32:18; 33:11; Hosea 2:19; 6:6; Joel 2:13; Jonah 2:8; Micah 6:8; Zechariah 7:9; Matthew 23:23; Romans 2:4; 9:22; 1 Corinthians 1:9; 10:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:24; 1 Timothy 1:16; 2 Timothy 2:13; Hebrews 2:17; 3:6; 11:11; 13:5; 2 Peter 3:9; 1 John 1:9; Revelation 17:14; 19:11. Also Read: Nehemiah 9 & Psalm 94 in full.

For the Christian, one of the most blessed attributes of God is that he is faithful to his own. That does not mean that everything will always go our way or that we will not face hard times, but it does mean that even in the midst of the hardest times, God will be faithful to his promises. In fact, even when we are not faithful in our obedience to God, God is still faithful to the promises made to his people.

In the Old Testament, there is a very special Hebrew word that communicates this idea. The word in question is **חֶסֶד** (chesed — but pronounce the "ch" as a hard sound, like in the word "Loch"...like "Loch Ness Monster" — in fact, to communicate this, sometimes people transliterate the Hebrew word as "khesed"). The word is translated in various ways in our English Bibles — sometimes as "loving-kindness" (or just "kindness") or as "mercy" or as "steadfast love" or as "loyalty" and also as "faithfulness." The most basic meaning of this term is that it reflects God's covenantal faithfulness to us in spite of our covenantal unfaithfulness in return. And, while we are to exemplify **חֶסֶד** in our lives, we are always doing to in imitation of God's **חֶסֶד** to us.

You will notice, though, that when we talk about the faithfulness of God, we clarify that term and speak of God's "Covenant Faithfulness." God interacts with mankind through covenants. Covenants are agreements between two persons or parties (similar to a contract except that covenants are a life-long bond). Historically, Covenants had various elements to them:

- Each party has a representative or a "Covenant Head" who has the authority to bind the party to the terms of the covenant
- There is a sign or symbol of the covenant given to remind future generations of the covenant's existence
- There are terms and responsibilities of the covenant, with blessings for obedience and punishments for disobedience
- The Permanent nature of the covenant is illustrated through the shedding of blood — implying that "if I break this covenant, may my life be forfeit."

### **A Covenant of Works**

What we find in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 1-3) is the establishment of what we call a "Covenant of Works" made with mankind. God the Father established the Covenant with Adam (Adam acting on behalf of himself, his wife, and his future family (all of mankind). The symbol of the covenant was access to the Tree of Life in the garden. The terms were clear: "Don't eat of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil." The rewards were life and divine fellowship in the garden; the punishment was death and exile from fellowship in the Garden. And since death had not yet entered into the world, no blood was shed at that time.

### **A Covenant of Grace**

With the the breaking of the Covenant of Works, mankind (due to the failure of the Covenant Head) fell from their place in the Garden. God, in his wisdom, had used the Covenant of Works as a tool to teach mankind an important lesson — we are not God and we are unable to rise to glory by our works (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Thus, God again engaged in relationship with man through a Covenant; this time it was a covenant based on grace. The big difference is that this covenant, God revealed little by little across the pages of redemptive history until it culminated in the coming of Christ. And so, if you look across Scripture, you will find all of the elements mentioned before when it comes to aspects of the covenant:

- Christ is the Covenant Head (Mediator) on behalf of mankind and God the Father is the other party
- The sign of the Covenant prior to Christ is circumcision, but with the shedding of Christ's blood, the sign becomes the blood-less sign of baptism.
- The terms and responsibilities are found in the Ten Commandments and Law of God, which Christ fulfills in his own life and the penalty for disobedience is God's eternal wrath, which Christ accepts on behalf of his people on the Cross.
- The Permanent nature of the covenant is marked by blood — namely, Jesus' blood. Hence, when we partake of the sacrament of Holy Communion, we partake of the fruit of the vine, which is symbolic of the blood of Christ.

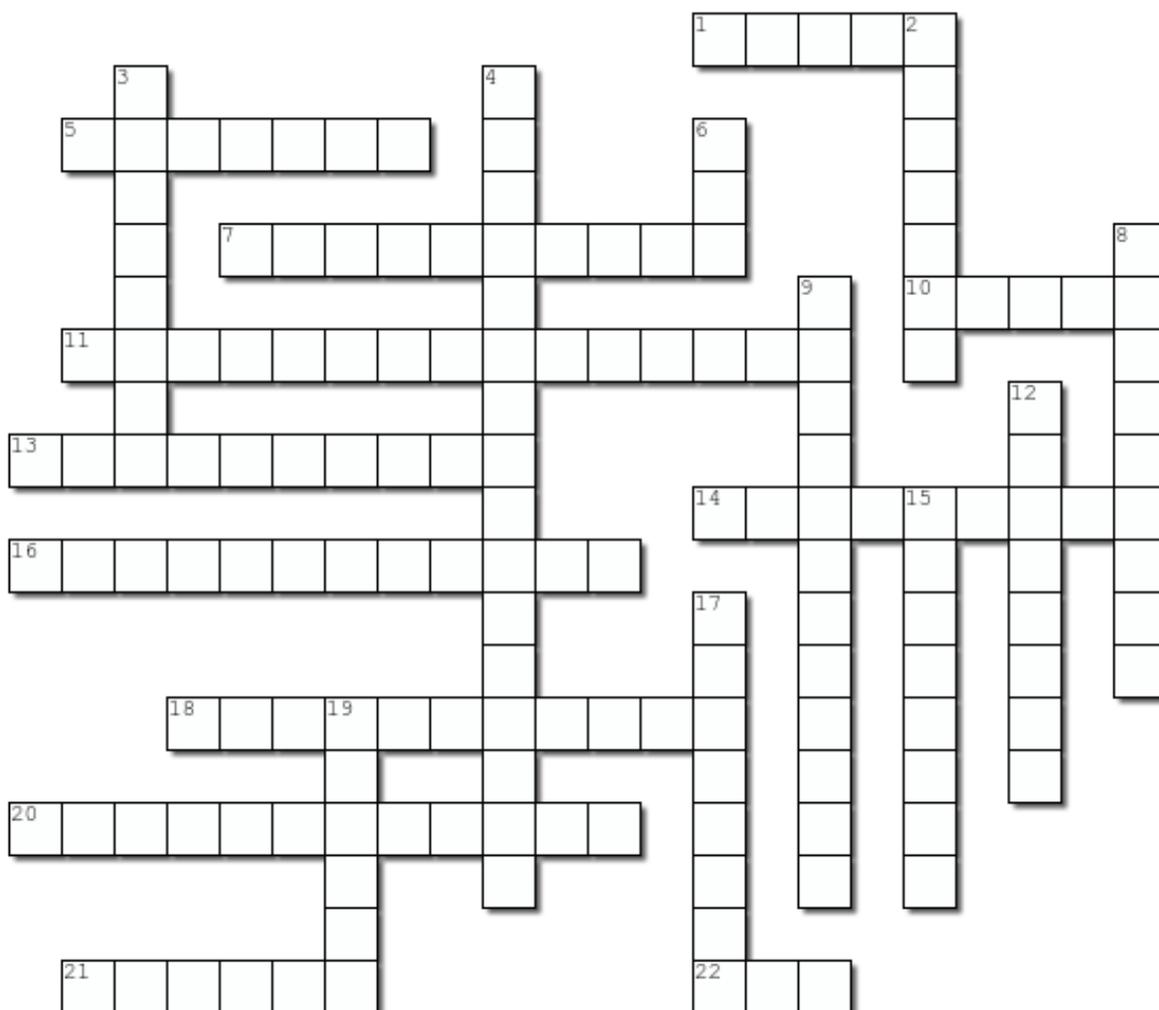
Ultimately, this covenant is one of Grace, because Jesus made it on our behalf, fulfills it on our behalf, substitutes himself for us to take the punishment on our behalf, and opens the gates to glory for us — we participate only vicariously in this covenantal work.

### **And so...**

Thus, the faithfulness of God is expressed in the context of the covenant...or more specifically, to those who are under the covenant. To those outside of the covenant, God owes nothing, but to those of us inside of the covenant, God gives us grace because of the completed work of Jesus. In turn, we are called upon to model that same faithfulness first to God, second to those others who are in the covenant around us, and to express it in the form of mercy to those in the world.

The beauty of the theme is that the scriptures are filled with references to the faithfulness of God — there are 130 uses of the term **חֶסֶד** in the Psalms alone. As life is filled by trials and challenges, this knowledge of God's **חֶסֶד** toward his people is often the most important life-line to which we may cling. Take time with these passages and approach them devotionally, for if you are a born-again Christian, this aspect of God's character is particularly directed toward you.

# Week 14: God's Faithfulness



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## Across

1. Abraham's servant, Eliezer, learned of God's covenant faithfulness seeking a wife for whom?
5. 'He will not leave you nor \_\_\_\_ you.'
7. 'No \_\_\_\_\_ has overtaken you that is not common to man...'
10. She received power to conceive by faith because she believed that he who promised was faithful to do it.
11. 'Behold, I saw a white horse and the one sitting on it is called: \_\_\_\_\_' (3 words)
13. '\_\_\_\_\_ of all the good promises that the Lord had made to the house of Israel had failed...!' (3 words)
14. 'Those who pay regard to \_\_\_\_\_ forsake their hope of steadfast love.' (2 words)
16. 'All the paths of the Lord are steadfast love and \_\_\_\_\_'
18. 'The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, \_\_\_\_\_, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.' (3 words)
20. Baptism replaced this Old Testament bloody sign.
21. What is the Hebrew word that is sometimes translated as 'loving-kindness'?
22. God showed faithfulness to this nephew of Abraham and his family.

## Down

2. 'If we \_\_\_\_\_ our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us of all unrighteousness.'
3. 'I will not violate my \_\_\_\_\_ or alter the word that went forth from my lips.'
4. These two tribes were told that God would be found by them if they sought him out. (3 words)
6. Moses was faithful over God's house as a steward but Jesus is faithful over God's house as a \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Jesus shows contempt for this group who obeyed the letter of the law by making offerings, but neglected mercy.
9. This son of Jonathan was cared for by David after he became king.
12. '...steadfast love to those who love him and keep his commandments to a \_\_\_\_\_ generations.'
15. '...visiting the \_\_\_\_\_ of the fathers to the children to the third and fourth generations.'
17. 'with the merciful you show yourself \_\_\_\_\_'
19. 'Many are the sorrows of the \_\_\_\_\_, but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the Lord.'