

Series: The Faithfulness of God

January 12, 2020

## **Title: God's Faithfulness**

### **[Slide 1]**

**Text: Romans 1:16-17**

### **God's Power**

#### **Epic Save:**

### **[Slide 2]**

In Golden, Colorado's Bradford Washburn American Mountaineering Museum you will find an old ice axe with a story to tell. It's the story of what has been called the Miracle Belay.

The ice axe belonged to a 26 year old climber named Pete Schoening. He was part of a 1953 expedition attempting to climb the world's most difficult mountain: K2. At 25,000' above sea level trouble struck the team when climber Art Gilkey became incapacitated by high altitude sickness. The team turned around and began lowering Gilkey down the mountain with a web of towlines and tie-offs.

Then, while attempting to traverse an ice sheet, one climber lost his footing, starting a chain reaction that resulted in 5 climbers hurtling down the mountain to certain death. The only climber not falling was Schoening. He wound the line connecting him to the falling climbers around his shoulders and anchored the wooden shaft of his ice axe behind a rock. The line yanked Schoening but he held onto the axe and the rope. Miraculously, the rope didn't snap under the immense strain and all 5 climbers were saved.

#### **Free Fall:**

Each one of us has a mountain to climb. It is higher and more dangerous than we could have ever imagined. We begin with high hopes. Surely we will be successful! Surely we will stand on the summit and wave our flag. Weren't we made for this?

But along the way things go wrong. We make mistakes. Our pride and fear cloud our judgment. We aren't as good as we thought we were! The weather turns bad. An avalanche roars through camp, sweeping away our supplies.

We find ourselves traversing an ice sheet, roped to our comrades. Someone slips and we all begin tumbling out of control down the mountain. We wonder, "Is this the way it ends?"

We've all been there. We thought things were going along okay, when disaster strikes: Perhaps our spouse drops a bombshell: I want a divorce. Out of the blue we find ourselves falling, all of our hopes for the family and marriage slipping away. Perhaps we are unfaithful to our marriage vows and unleash an avalanche of hurt and pain. It might be that we become lost in a snowstorm of addiction, with no idea of how to move forward. Or it may simply be that circumstances beyond our control move in like a nasty weather front and shut us down.

Whatever the case, we need a Savior. We need Someone on the other end of the rope who will not let go.

### **God's Power:**

Paul knew exactly whom to rely on. He wrote to the Romans:

#### **[Slide 3]**

*Romans 1:16 KNT*

*I'm not ashamed of the good news; it's God's power, bringing salvation to everyone who believes – to the Jew first, and also, equally, to the Greek.*

No shame in the Gospel! Regardless of the fact that it was the story of a Messiah crucified by the armies of Rome. Paul could write to Roman Christians and say "No Shame!" Why? Because the cross wasn't the end of the story. The cross merely set the stage for the greatest demonstration of God's power the world has ever seen: the Resurrection of Jesus!

When all hope was lost and Jesus had been dead for three days, *God's Power* intervened. The angel rolled away the stone and the Holy Spirit breathed Life into the battered corpse of Jesus. Jesus rose from the dead to reign as King and Lord of God's Creation forevermore.

And that same power is here right now, every time you encounter this Good News, to rescue *you*. No matter how lost you are or how far you've fallen, Jesus is on the other end of the rope! All you have to do is put your 100% trust in Him.

## God's Righteousness

### A sacred pact:

The Miracle Belay on K2 didn't "just happen." It was made possible by something that had happened long before a single climber had set one foot on the mountain. The mountaineers had entered into a sacred pact in which they committed themselves – one could almost say "covenanted themselves" to lay their lives on the line for each other. The pact was not just a lofty promise to take care of each other in a pinch. The climbers roped themselves to each other so that if one fell, the other could try to stop his fall.

And that is exactly what Pete Schoening did high up on K2. When his entire team began plunging to certain death, Pete remained faithful to the sacred pact. He did the "right" thing.

### Covenant Justice:

This is what God has done for you and me through Jesus the Messiah. Paul writes:

#### [Slide 4]

*Romans 1:17 KNT*

*This is because God's covenant justice is unveiled in it [the Gospel], from faithfulness to faithfulness. As it says in the Bible, "the just shall live by faith."*

At humanity's darkest moment and greatest failure – when humans put to death the Son of God himself – God unveiled His love and His commitment to rescue us through the very death and resurrection of Jesus.

A more traditional translation of this verse would read:

#### [Slide 5]

*Romans 1:17a NIV*

*For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed –*

So what exactly is "God's righteousness"? God's righteousness refers to God's faithfulness to His promises, His covenant. It refers to the fact that

God will be a “righteous” Judge when it comes to making things right in His Creation. A translation like “covenant justice” helps keep the focus on God’s righteousness as God’s faithful commitment to His covenant promises.

Pete Schoening displayed this kind of “righteousness” when he saved his fellow climbers. He remained true to his promise to do all in his power to protect them if they fell. He was faithful to their sacred pact.

Jesus did this for you and me when He died on the cross for us. It was at that moment that God’s eternal covenant faithfulness and covenant justice – God’s righteousness – was *unveiled*. No doubt, Paul has in the back of his mind the fact that the veil in the Temple between the outside world and the place of God’s dwelling was torn from top to bottom at the moment of Jesus’ death.

God’s righteousness revealed!

### **God’s Righteousness:**

Every time we encounter the Good News God reveals His righteousness and faithfulness to His covenant with us. As we climb the mountain, Jesus offers to be our faithful Guide. He has climbed the mountain before. He has cut steps in the deep snow and ice for us to follow. He ropes Himself to us and promises to anchor us when we slip and fall.

So when your world spins out of control or comes crashing down, you can know that Jesus will never let you down. He will never cut you loose. He will never untie His end of the rope and leave you behind.

He *is* God’s righteousness, God’s covenant faithfulness and covenant justice *revealed!*

### **God’s Faithfulness**

#### **“From faith to faith”**

The thing that makes this all happen is “faith.” The Greek word for “faith” can also be translated “faithfulness.” Paul points out that God’s righteousness is expressed and experienced at both ends of the rope by faith:

**[Slide 6]**

*Romans 1:17a KNT*

*This is because God's covenant justice is unveiled in [the Gospel], from faithfulness to faithfulness.*

On the one hand, God is *faithful*. In Jesus, God unveils His commitment to keep His promise to save us. Elsewhere in Romans this faithfulness is attributed to Jesus Himself as He went to the cross on our behalf.

On the other hand, we are called to be *faithful*. That's where the other end of the rope comes in. We are called to stay tied in, no matter what. We are called to follow in Jesus' steps up the mountain. We are called to trust Him to be there for us when we slip or fall.

That's what "from faithfulness to faithfulness" means.

**God's Righteousness:**

Paul concludes this little passage by saying:

**[Slide 7]**

*Romans 1:17b KNT*

*As it says in the Bible, "the just shall live by faith."*

These words were originally written by an Old Testament prophet named Habakkuk during terrible times for the Jewish people. Israel's enemies were on the march and all seemed lost. How should God's people respond? Would God remain faithful in the coming trial or would He abandon them forever?

The answer the LORD gives to His people is: "the just shall live by faith."

**[Slide 8]**

You and I are called to do the same thing each and every day. We are called to remain roped up with Jesus as we climb our life's mountain. Whether the going is easy or steep and dangerous, we are in a covenant with Him. This is our sacred pact. All we need to do is trust Him and follow in His steps.

That is what God's righteousness looks like when it is unveiled in our lives.

So, get your stuff on and rope up with Jesus. It's a perfect day for a climb!

