

BIG QUESTION UNDER INVESTIGATION

We're in... Unit 4: The God Like None Other

Unit 4 Big Question and Answer:
Can Anybody Tell Me What the LORD Is Like?

He's Not Like Anyone Else!

PFI ESV Songs 4, Tracks 3,4

Unit 4 Bible Verse: 1 Kings 8:23, ESV

Bible Verse: "O LORD...there is no God like you, in heaven above or on earth beneath."

PFI ESV Songs 4, Tracks 6,7

BIBLE TRUTH

We're learning... Bible Truth 8:

The LORD Is Faithful

Being faithful means doing what you promise you will do.

Many times people are not faithful to the promises they make to each other or to God. They do not do what they promised to do. But even though people are often unfaithful, God is always, completely faithful. He always keeps His promises, no matter what.

The Bible is full of God's many promises. He promises to forgive the sins of all turn away from their sins and trust in Jesus as their Savior. He promises to take care of them, to help them, and to only allow in their lives what will be for their good and His glory. He promises to work in their hearts so that they will love God and live for Him more and more. Best of all, God promises to bring these, His dearly-loved people, to live with Him in heaven to enjoy Him forever.

Because God is always completely faithful, His people can fully trust Him and all the promises He makes to them. Thinking about these promises gives them peace and joy for every day of their lives—no matter what happens.

BIBLE VERSE

How do I know this is true? The Bible tells me so!

Bible Truth 8 Bible Verse: Psalm 86:15, ESV

"But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness."

CASE STORY

Acts 27-28; Romans 1:8-13

Our story is:

The Case of the Snake Shaker.

As you listen to the story, see if you can figure out:

1. Who was the Snake Shaker? Why did he shake the snake?
2. What did everyone think would happen to him? Why did he know it wouldn't happen?

This story takes place in New Testament times, about thirty years after Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead.

"Whoosh! Crash! Bang!" For many sunless days and starless nights, the mighty Alexandrian (a city in Egypt) grain ship had been beaten up by a mighty Euroquilo—a terrible storm that sometimes struck the Mediterranean Sea in winter. Violent winds, soaking rain, and bolts of lightning crushed down upon the ship, while huge, powerful waves squeezed it from side to side. The sailors did all they could to keep the ship from going down. They wrapped ropes around the ship to keep it from splitting apart. They threw the anchor over, letting it drag along the bottom to slow down the ship. They even got rid of all the precious grain that had planned to sell, hoping that a lighter ship would be less likely to sink.

At last the sailors gave up. "There's no way we can survive a storm like this. We are as good as dead," the men said. "Even with the ropes wrapped around the ship, the ship can't last much longer. We last much longer either. We're exhausted and we've not eaten for days."

This was dreadful news for the Roman soldiers and their prisoners who were passengers aboard the ship. They were headed to Rome to be judged and sentenced. Now it looked like the sea would drown them long before Caesar had anything to say.

Only one man aboard that battered ship still had hope: a Roman prisoner named Paul. But his hope was not because he thought the storm was weakening or the sailors were so brave, or the ship so strong. No. There was nothing on earth he put his hope in. His hopes lay in faithful promises of God. He stood up among them and said, "Be encouraged! Not one of you will die. Only the ship will be lost. Last night, an angel brought me a message from God. 'Don't be afraid,' he told me. 'You must stand trial before Caesar Nero. God will not let you or

anyone else on the ship drown, though the ship will run aground on an island! So be encouraged, men," Paul urged them. "I have faith in God that it will happen just as the angel said." Paul knew that God was always, completely faithful. If He promised something would happen, it would happen. If He said Paul was to go to Rome, not even this storm would stop him.

Sure enough, the battered ship did not sink in the storm and those on-board survived. Winds swept it across the raging Mediterranean Sea towards the island of Malta. There, ship struck an off-shore sandbar and shattered into hundreds of pieces. The sailors, soldiers and prisoners jumped into sea and swam against the huge waves and strong undertow to shore.

"Two hundred seventy three, two hundred seventy-four, two hundred seventy-five, two hundred seventy-six!" the captain counted the survivors, scattered on the beach in exhaustion. "Not a single person has been lost, just as Paul had said," the captain announced in astonishment.

But Paul was not surprised at the captain's news. He knew that God was always, completely faithful. If He promised something would happen, it would happen. Had not He promised them that everyone would be saved? If the Lord promised that everyone was to be rescued, then not even the worse storm or the strongest undertow could drown them.

Safe from the storm they may have been, but very hungry, cold, wet and exhausted, too, for the storm was still raging. Everyone lay upon the beach, trying to regain their strength. Eventually they would need food and help. But where would food for over two hundred come from? Paul knew. The same God who had been faithful to get them safely through the storm and ashore, would be faithful to keep taking care of them.

When the people of Malta got news of the ship-wrecked survivors, they came to their aid with unusual kindness. They welcomed them to their island and built them a huge fire to help them get warm and dry. Oh, how good that fire must have felt to those men, chilled to the bone from their icy swim in the sea and the cold rain that still fell!

Paul helped gather brushwood from nearby undergrowth to keep the fire burning. No one, including himself, wanted to see it go out! But what a deadly surprise Paul received when he put his wood on the fire! In the Middle of the wood was a poisonous viper, cold and stiff from the winter

rain, himself. As Paul went to put the wood in the fire, the heat drove the resting viper out of its resting place. It struck out at Paul, sinking its sharp fangs deep into his hand. When the islanders saw the snake hanging from his hand, they said to each other, "This man must be a murderer! Dike, daughter of Zeus and Goddess of Justice must know this and has been watching him. This man escaped death from the sea, so she has seen to it that he still gets his just punishment by death from this deadly snake," they told each other.

But Paul just shook off the snake into the fire and never got sick. The people of Malta kept watching him to see if he would swell up or suddenly fall over dead, as usually happened from the bite of this kind of snake. But to their surprise, nothing happened to Paul at all.

"This is no murderer. This is a god! For no ordinary man could survive such a snake bite from this viper," they told each other.

There was no way Paul would let these people think he was some god with special powers to keep him from dying. No, he made sure they knew that it was the power of his faithful God who saved his life. "You must stand trial before Caesar Nero," the LORD had told Paul. Paul knew that God was always, completely faithful. If He promised something would happen, it would happen. If the Lord said Paul would appear before Caesar, then nothing—not even the bite of the deadliest viper could stop him. The Lord was faithful to keep all His promises.

November, December, January. The men waited on Malta three, long months until the safe sailing weather of spring returned. Perhaps 256 men saw their time on Malta as a frustrating accident, but one of them didn't. Paul knew this shipwreck was part of God's plan for him to tell the good news of Jesus to the people of Malta.

It started when Publius, the chief, Roman official invited Paul and some others to his house to be his special guests. Paul learned that Publius' father was terribly sick. He went and prayed for him and God healed him. News of God's healing power spread throughout the island. Soon, all the sick on the island were brought to Paul and healed, too. Paul was delighted to get to show God's power and use it to point the people of Malta to the good news of salvation through Jesus.

That spring another Alexandrian grain ship stopped in Malta on its way to Rome. The sailors and the Roman

soldiers boarded the ship with Paul and the other prisoners. At last they were on their way to Rome. Within a week, the ship arrived at Puteoli, the grand port of Rome. Soldiers escorted Paul to the place where he would stay as he waited for his trial before Caesar. And wait, he did. For two, long years Paul endured being chained day and night at the wrist to a Roman soldier in a poor, shabby apartment house, near the Roman prison.

What did Paul do as he waited for his trial with Nero? Did he pout about waiting so long, or worry that he would never come to trial? No, he did not. "You must stand trial before Caesar Nero," the LORD had told Paul. Paul knew that God was always, complete faithful. If He promised something would happen, it would happen. If the Lord said Paul would appear before Caesar, then nothing—not even Caesar himself could stop him. The Lord was faithful to keep all His promises. He would go before Caesar in the Lord's perfect timing. He wouldn't spend his time worrying. Instead, he would spent every moment he could proclaiming to all—from the soldiers he was chained to, to all the people who came to visit him, to all the little churches of believers to whom he wrote letters-- about the faithfulness of the Lord to always take care of His people and to forgive all who confess their sins and trust in Jesus.

At the end of those two years, Paul finally got to present his case to Caesar Nero and tell him about Jesus. No one knows exactly what happened to Paul next. Some say the Romans killed him after his trial. Others say that Nero released him from prison. Everyone says that Nero rejected the good news of Jesus. But even though Nero rejected Paul's testimony to his faithful God, many, many others—from some of the soldiers who guarded him to the many people who visited him in prison those two years--heard Paul's testimony to the faithfulness of His beloved God and came to believe and love Him, themselves.

Our Bible Truth is:**The LORD Is Faithful****Our Bible Verse is: Psalm 86:15, ESV**

"But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness."

Paul faced many difficulties that were so big that his very life was at stake; but Paul always kept trusting in the faithfulness of God to keep His promises to him. Paul knew

that God had already taken care of his greatest need: to be saved from his sins when Jesus died on the cross. He knew if God had done that, surely He would take care of all his other needs. What greatest need: to be saved from his sins when Jesus died on the cross. He knew if God had done that, surely He would the faithfulness of God to keep His promises to him. Paul knew that God had already taken care of his greatest need: to be saved from his sins when Jesus died on the cross. He knew if God had done that, surely He would take care of all his other needs. What greatest need: to be saved from his sins when Jesus died on the cross. He knew if God had done that, surely He would take care of all his other needs. What about you and me? If we are God's people—those who turn from their sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior—then those very same promises of God that Paul trusted in are true for us, too. We can keep trusting God with all our difficulties, just as Paul did—even if our own life is at stake. God is always, completely faithful.

Let's praise God for being so faithful to His people. Let's ask Him to help us to learn and live by the promises He gives His people, so that like Paul, our trust might be a wonderful testimony to many others about the great faithfulness of the Lord.

SOME QUESTIONS FOR YOU

1. A Question about the Bible Truth, True or False:

The Bible is full of God’s promises to save all those who turn away from their sins and trust in Jesus as their Savior, but it doesn’t tell us much about God’s promises to help us live for Him.

Answer: False! The Bible is full of God’s promise to save us when we trust in Jesus as well as His promises to help us to live for Him.

2. Crack the Case Questions:

a. Who was the Snake Shaker? Why did he shake the snake?

Answer: Paul. It bit into him when he got firewood for the fire.

b. What did everyone think would happen to him? Why? Why did he know it wouldn’t happen?

Answer: They thought he would die because the snake had a very poisonous bite. They believed the gods were punishing him for something bad he had done. Paul knew it would not kill him because God was unstoppably faithful and He had told Paul that he would go to Rome to appear before Caesar.

3. Fill in the missing words from the Bible Verse:

Psalms 86:15

“But you, O Lord, are a God ___ and gracious, slow to anger and ___ in steadfast ___ and faithfulness.”

Answers: merciful; abounding; love.

BIBLE TRUTH HYMN

Day by Day

PFI ESV Songs 4, Track 32

Verse 1

Day by day and with each passing moment,
Strength I find to meet my trials here;
Trusting in my Father’s wise bestowment,
I’ve no cause for worry or for fear.
He whose heart is kind beyond all measure,
Gives unto each day what He deems best,
Lovingly, its part of pain and pleasure,
Mingling toil with peace and rest.

Words: Caroline V. Sandeel-Berg Music: Oscar Ahnfelts

God’s people can testify to God’s faithfulness to take care of them, helping them and allowing only what is for their good and God’s glory, every hour of every day. He gives them strength to go through whatever trials (hard times) they must go through in their life. They may not like them. They may even wish they didn’t have to go through them. But, they know that the LORD is wise and powerful. And, if He has allowed them, then they are part of His wise bestowment (His perfectly good choices, even gifts) to them. They do not have to worry or fear. They can trust in their Heavenly Father who loves them so much. He is faithful to give them all they need in life, through all of life—the pleasure of each day and the pain of each day. Both peace and rest, and even one day. Perfect peace and rest with Him in heaven, forever.

AN ACTS PRAYER FROM OUR STORY

A=Adoration, C=Confession, T=Thanksgiving, S=Supplication

A God, we praise You for being always faithful, even in the most impossible-looking situations.

C God, we confess that many times when we are in hard situations, we doubt that You will be faithful, even though You have always been faithful ever time before.

T God, we thank You for being faithful to always be with Your people, even when they are worried and are unfaithful to You.

S God, work in our hearts! Help us to turn from our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior. Help us to trust You to be with us and help us in hard situations rather than giving into fear.

BIBLE VERSE SONG

Incline Your Ear

PFI ESV Songs 4, Track 33

Incline your ear, O LORD, And answer me,
For I am poor and needy.
Turn to me and be gracious to me;
Give your strength to your servant.
You, O Lord, are a God, merciful,
Merciful and gracious, Slow to anger, abounding in love,
Steadfast love and faithfulness. You’re a God, merciful.
Merciful, Gracious, Slow to anger,
Abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.
You, O Lord, are a God, merciful,
Merciful and gracious,
Slow to anger, abounding in love,
Steadfast love and faithfulness. You’re a God, merciful.
Psalm Eighty-six, one, fifteen and sixteen.

Words: Psalm 86:1,15,16, ESV Music: Constance Dever ©2014

This verse reminds us that the Lord is always faithful to His people. He is merciful and gracious to them. He is slow to anger and abounding in love that never ends. Even when they are unfaithful to Him and deserving of punishment rather than kindness, the Lord goes on being faithful to them. How amazing is the Lord!