

Can God be Trusted?  
[Genesis 18:1-15; 21:1-7; Mark 10:27](#)

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September 17, 2023; 24<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

Can we trust God? Can we trust God? Is God trustworthy? This is a quandary every age, and every person, has to answer for themselves.

Trust is important. We want to be able to trust our friends and family, our teachers and pastors and supervisors. We want to trust they are for us, on our side. We want to trust they will do what they've promised. So, can we trust God?

Abraham's no fool. He knows he and Sarah are way too old. Not only that, God is not acting quickly. At least in this case God is not moving in an expeditious manner. Can Abraham and Sarah trust God? Can we trust God?

I'm sure most of us, maybe all of us, have had reason to wonder if we can trust God. Most of us, maybe all of us, have had a painful experience, a crisis of faith, a Dark Night of the Soul.

My wife and I only ever had one pregnancy. (She knows I'm talking about it. She said it was OK.) That pregnancy ended with a miscarriage on the New England turnpike. We were on our way to visit my brother, his wife and their three adorable children.

Much effort, many doctors' visits, and lots of money later, there was still no pregnancy. Where are you, God? Are you with me or not? Can I trust you or not? God, can I trust you?

Maybe that's not your experience but most of us have asked, God – are you on my side? Are you with me? Divorcing. Losing a job. Bankruptcy. A child dies. Someone much too young has a terminal illness. None of it was our fault. We didn't make it happen. We didn't want it to happen. God, where are you?

The hard reality is we live in a fallen world. As Christians in the Reformed Tradition, we know we are living in a sinful world. Evil happens. We also know we are free to choose goodness and we are equally free to choose sin. We're not robots. We're not

programmed to only do good things and never do evil things. We're free. Free! Sadly, many of us use our freedom badly.

In this uncertain, sinful world, we want to be able to trust God. We want God to be our rock that cannot be moved, our tree that can never be uprooted.

The problem is God is just as free as we are. God is not a robot. God is not programmed to only do good things but never bad. God is free to make promises and break promises. God is just as free as we are.

The other week I was at home in Indianapolis visiting my wife. Every night I went to sleep knowing my wife loves me very much. But also knowing we have a very large and very heavy cast-iron skillet. I know my wife loves me, but I also know one night she might wake up and come to her senses. Elizabeth is free to do good. She is free to do evil. But I know her. I know how much she loves me. And so, I trust her.

We are all free to do good and to do evil. And God is just as free as we are. God is free to do good. And God is free to do evil. God is free to make promises and to break promises. God is as free to break God's promises as we are.

But what kind of promises has God made? What kind of promises has God made to us, to you? God never promised me a wonderful life. God never promised I would have children who would love me and care for me. God never promised my churches would treat me with dignity and respect. God never promised I would enjoy many years of retirement with good health and a clear mind, dying at a ripe old age. I can't speak for you, but I can tell you God never promised me any of that.

But God has promised something I believe is even better. God has promised to love us. God has promised to be with us. God has promised to weep with us when we weep and rejoice with us when we rejoice. God has promised us loving relationships. God has promised us a meaningful, powerful life. God has promised us resurrection in this world and the next.

God has promised to be with us in the fire and the flood. The flood may cover us, but it will not bring us down. The fire may burn us, but we will not be consumed. When our life is one big dumpster fire, God is there with divine comfort and the deep knowledge we are not alone.

This is the promise God made to us in our baptism. Not that our lives would be happy, but that God would be with us through all of life, in both our joy and our pain.

It's said of Martin Luther, when he was on the run from the Holy Roman Emperor and was hiding out in dank, dark castles, sometimes it would be almost too much for him. At those times he would put his hand in a little water and pat himself on the head saying, "I am baptized. I am baptized." He knew he could trust God.

We live in a fallen world. In this fallen world, you and I are not constrained. We are not robots, programmed to do good but not evil.

And God, in whose image we are made, is also not constrained. God is not a robot programmed to make and keep promises. God is free to keep God's promises or not. God is just as free as we are.

So, can God be trusted? Can God be trusted? This is the question we all have to ask ourselves. Even Abraham and Sarah must have asked themselves. Can God be trusted?

Speaking for myself, I will tell you boldly, in my experience, yes. Yes. God can be trusted. God keeps God's promises.

God never promised me lots of obedient and successful children who would revere me. God never promised me a rich church with a big steeple in the suburbs. God never promised me a long and contented retirement.

But God has promised to love me, to be with me. When the floods came, I went down a few times, but I was never overwhelmed. When I walked through fire I was burned, badly, but I was not consumed. When my life has been a living dumpster fire, God has sent me loving relationships and meaningful work. God has loved me and will, I believe, love me forever.

This is what Sarah and Abraham learned. This is God's promise to us at our baptism. We can trust God. God keeps God's promises. Not because God has to. God is free. God keeps God's promises because God loves us. God chooses to love us this much. Thanks be to God. Amen.