

Back to Basics: Faithful Unto Death

Concluding our back to basics series of lessons, this morning we will examine being faithful unto death.

Jesus places great value on **faithfulness**. In fact, it is one of the factors that will be evaluated at the judgment seat of Christ. The Bible gives us principles concerning being faithful that will enable us to receive Jesus' high praise as we stand before Him on that day.

Matthew 25:21 tells us that when we stand before the judgment seat of Christ, Jesus will declare to His followers: ***“Well done, good and FAITHFUL servant!”***

“Good and FAITHFUL,” Jesus said. Of all the possible words Jesus could use, He will choose ***“good”*** and ***“FAITHFUL”*** to describe those on whom His favor rests. This shows how *important* it is to God that we **be faithful and remain faithful**.

One thing to understand is that faithfulness is not *bored compliance* with requirements. Faithfulness springs from a godly **HEART attitude**. Faithfulness reflects a heart where **God is #1**. ***“Well done, you of a sincerely faithful HEART!”***

Proverbs 20:6 says, ***“Most men will proclaim every one his own kindness; but a faithful man who can find?”***

Faithfulness is demonstrated in **shoe leather**. In other words, it is in actions, and not just words. There was a young couple I knew who began attending a congregation. After their first visit or so, they told us how much they looked forward to being a part of the congregation, and how much they looked forward to working with the elders. Well, it was not shortly after that when they had been asked to help out that they were never seen from again, and calls went unreturned. God expects our actions, not just the words of our mouths. Talk is cheap! As James, the Lord's brother, says, ***“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deluding your own selves.”*** (James 1:22)

“Well done,” Jesus will say, ***“you faithful DOERS of My will, not you mere talkers about it!”***

In Paul's letter to the churches of Galatia, he stated in Galatians 5:22-23, ***“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law.”*** So from this passage alone we can see that one aspect of the fruit of the Spirit is faithfulness.

One has faith when one first becomes a Christian, but an aspect of the fruit of the Spirit is that a person will display faithfulness as they grow and mature in the Lord. This is a quality of the Christian life produced by having the Holy Spirit guiding our lives. Paul tells us in Galatians 5:16, ***“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh.”***

Thus, faithfulness carries the idea of **trustworthiness** or **dependability**. One who is faithful is one who is **loyal**. Such a person possesses **perseverance**. He has determination to remain true to the commitments he has made in his life.

Faithfulness is a necessary characteristic in the life of one who is preparing to go to Heaven. Writing through the Apostle John to the persecuted disciples in Smyrna, the Lord said, ***“Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.”*** (Revelation 2:10) Paul also stated shortly before his own martyrdom how he had led a life of faithfulness, saying, ***“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the Righteous Judge, shall give to me at that day; and not to me only, but also to all them that have loved His appearing.”*** (2 Timothy 4:7-8) One who does not remain faithful does not have the Lord's promise of the crown of life. Thus, it is extremely important for us to understand as much as humanly possible what is involved in the biblical doctrine of faithfulness to God.

First of all, we should learn from the biblical examples of faithfulness we see in God's word. Let's get a sense of that word's meaning in various biblical contexts showing people living and acting **faithfully**.

The best and most important example we have of faithfulness is that of God Himself, for God is faithful. At least eleven New Testament verses declare the fact of God's faithfulness. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:9, ***“God is faithful, by Whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”*** (1 Corinthians 1:9) He also states in Romans 3:3, ***“What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God?”*** We could provide many more, but this should suffice to demonstrate that God is undeniably faithful Himself. After all, He did fulfill His promise first given in the Garden of Eden to provide a Savior for mankind by sending us Jesus Christ when He said in Genesis 3:15, ***“ . . . and I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed: He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.”***

We have the assurance that God is always dependable and He acts consistently and faithfully within His nature.

He is faithful in that He is always holy. Peter writes in 1 Peter 1:15-16, ***“ . . . but like as He Who called you is holy, be yourselves also holy in all manner of living; because it is written, ‘You shall be holy; for I am holy.’”***

He is faithful in that He is always a loving God. The Apostle John says in 1 John 4:8-11, ***“He that does not love does not know God; for God is love. Herein was the love of God manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”***

God is faithful in that His word is always truthful. Jesus prayed to the Father in John 17:17, saying, ***“Sanctify them in the truth: Your word is truth.”*** We can depend on God to do what He has said He would do.

He has promised to help us overcome temptation. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 10:13, ***“There has no temptation taken you but such as man can bear: but God is faithful, Who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.”***

He has promised to cleanse and forgive us of all of our sins. The Apostle John writes in 1 John 1:9, ***“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”***

God has never given a promise that He failed to honor. His word is completely trustworthy. The question becomes, are we going to believe that God's promises are worth us staying faithful to our commitment as Christians? If we do, we have ample motivation to be faithful to Him.

Jesus Christ is also a great example of faithfulness. The Hebrews writer tells us in Hebrews 2:17, ***“Wherefore it behooved Him in all things to be made like unto His brethren, that He might become a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.”***

Jesus had to go through with the plan for His coming to Earth. The Father's will required that He "drank the cup" by dying on the cross to ***“make propitiation for the sins of the people.”*** Up to the last minute Jesus could have "bailed out" by calling on more than twelve legions of angels to deliver Him (Matthew 26:53). If He had done so, however, the Scriptures would not have been fulfilled and the Father's purpose in sacrificing His Son would not have been accomplished. Jesus was **dependable**. He carried out His mission **faithfully**. He was faithful to Him Who appointed Him (Hebrews 3:2).

Jesus is a faithful witness (Revelation 1:5, Revelation 3:14). He is the One described as Faithful and True in Revelation 19:11: ***“And I saw the Heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and He that sat thereon called Faithful and True; and in righteous He does judge and make war.”*** We can depend on Jesus to lead us to victory over Satan and the powers of darkness.

In the Old Testament the children of Israel were commanded to be faithful to God. Deuteronomy 11:13-15 says, ***“So if you faithfully OBEY the commands I am giving you today . . . then I will send rain . . . so that you may gather in your grain, new wine and oil. . . . you will eat and be satisfied.”***

A faithful person does **not** try to get God to **rubber-stamp our** agenda. Rather, a faithful person learns the **Lord’s** commands and obeys **them**. *“Well done, good and **faithful OBEY-ers!**”*

2 Chronicles 31:11-12a is also another example of faithfulness in the Old Testament: ***“Hezekiah gave orders to prepare storerooms in the temple of the Lord, and this was done. Then they faithfully brought in the CONTRIBUTIONS, TITHES and DEDICATED GIFTS.”*** I know that am thankful for the **faithful givers** in this congregation.

Eight men in the New Testament are called faithful: Timothy, Tychicus, Epaphras, Onesimus, Silvanus, otherwise known as Silas, Antipas, Moses, and Paul.

Paul told the church in Corinth, ***“For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.”***

Paul also refers to Tychicus in Ephesians 6:21 and Colossians 4:7 as faithful and Epaphras as well in Colossians 1:7 when he writes how they are called ***“faithful ministers*** (or servants) ***of the Lord.”***

Paul called Onesimus a ***“faithful and beloved brother”*** in Colossians 4:9 while Peter referred to Silvanus [Silas] as ***“our faithful brother”*** in 1 Peter 5:12.

Antipas is mentioned only once in the Bible, but it is by the Lord Himself. Jesus identifies Antipas as the one who gave His life for the Lord. Jesus called him ***“My faithful martyr”*** in Revelation 2:13.

The writer of the *Book of Hebrews* says that Moses was ***“faithful in all his house as a servant”*** while Christ was ***“faithful as a Son over His house”*** in Hebrews 3:5-6.

Paul, too, acknowledges that he had been found faithful by the Lord in 1 Timothy 1:12 when he said, ***“I thank Him that enabled me, even Christ Jesus our Lord, for that He counted me faithful, appointing me to His service. . . . ”***

These men illustrate the dependability and trustworthiness God expects to find in all of us who are His children.

All Christians should be faithful stewards. God has graciously provided us with many blessings, and we are to be good and faithful stewards of everything we have. It is all God's. He has left it all in our care, but we are responsible for being faithful stewards of God's property. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 4:1-2, ***“Let a man so account of us, as of ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Here, moreover, it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.”***

We as God's children need to take particular care in some areas where faithful stewardship is needed, such as in our marriage, our jobs, our friendships, and our service to God.

A loving, committed husband or wife is one of God's great blessings for our happiness in this life. God joins us together in marriage with the expectation that we will be faithful to one another for life. As Jesus said in Matthew 19:4-6, ***“Have you not read, that He Who made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh’? So that they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder.”***

One who accepts employment makes a commitment to put forth his best effort to do the job well. Anything less is unfaithfulness to our employers and to God. The Apostle Paul teaches in Ephesians 6:5-6, ***“Servants, be obedient unto them that according to the flesh are your masters, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not in the way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers; but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. . . .”***

The Wise Writer in Proverbs 18:24 says, ***“He that makes many friends does it to his own destruction; but there is a friend that sticks closer than a brother.”*** It is not easy to be that kind of friend. A considerable amount of time, effort, and love has to be invested. Do not be a false friend; be a faithful friend.

God has given each of us various talents which we can use in our Master's service. It is vitally important that when He judges our stewardship, He will be able to say, ***“Well done, good and faithful servant: you have been faithful over a few things, so I will set you over many things; enter into the joy of your Lord.”*** (Matthew 25:21)

Being a faithful servant means we are dependable in spite of whatever adversity we might face. Jesus reminds us in Revelation 2:10 that persecution will come to Christians: ***“Fear not the things which you are about to suffer: behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that you may be tried; and you shall have tribulation ten days. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.”***

The Apostle Peter also says in 1 Peter 4:12-14, ***“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial among you, which comes upon you to prove you, as though a strange thing happened unto you: but inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings, rejoice; that at the revelation of His glory also you may rejoice with exceeding joy. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you; because the Spirit of glory and the Spirit of God rests upon you.”***

A faithful steward is one who will not become easily discouraged. Paul writes in Galatians 6:9, ***“And let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.”***

If circumstances demand it, it is good to lose one's life for Jesus Christ. But be sure that you don't **LOSE HEART** or **LOSE INTEREST** in serving the Lord. When that happens, you have become unfaithful and lost your hope of eternity.

Remember what the Wise Writer said in Proverbs 13:15: ***“Good sense wins favor, but the way of the faithless is their ruin.”*** So however difficult the cross you have been given to carry may seem, it is nothing compared to what will become of you if you become unfaithful. That will be your ruin.

Are you faithful? When asked this question is your response, “No, I know I have failed God and fallen away from Him.” Is it, “I'm not sure; I hope so.” Or is it, “Yes!” If “Yes!” is not your answer, then you need to take action now while the Lord is waiting to become absolutely certain of your faithfulness in the eyes of God.