

Faithfulness

In Psalm 119:89-90, the Bible says, "Your word, Oh Lord, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens. Your faithfulness continues through all generations; you established the earth, and it endures." The Bible presents our God as being a faithful God. Then I want to call your attention to Revelation 2:10, the Words of our Lord Jesus Christ, "Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life." From this scripture we learn that God loves faithfulness. He want each one of us to be faithful to Him. In Matthew 25:23, Jesus said, "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness.'" In this passage we learn that God will reward faithfulness.

Unfaithfulness is a sin among us that plagues us. Unfaithfulness is the sin that has broken more hearts than any other sin. Unfaithfulness has wrecked more homes than any other sin. Unfaithfulness has destroyed more churches than any other sin. Unfaithfulness has condemned more souls to hell than any other sin. Unfaithfulness is the sin that breaks the hearts of young wives

and husbands. Unfaithfulness is the sin that breaks the health of a mother. Unfaithfulness will destroy the effectiveness of the church. Unfaithfulness will hinder the growth and the progress of the church. Unfaithfulness keeps missionaries from the foreign field. Unfaithfulness kills soul winning efforts at home. Unfaithfulness steals money from God.

Some preachers are constantly waging war against drunkenness and we should wage war against drunkenness. Some preachers constantly wage war against gambling and we should wage war against gambling. The same could be said of any sin that you want to name. Every preacher, I suppose, has his pet peeve. If there was one pet peeve of mine it would be the sin of unfaithfulness. That is what I would like to wage war on more than any other sin that I can think of.

A Question to Married Men

I would like to ask all of you married men a question. What would happen if tomorrow morning when you got up and prepared to go to work, kissed your wife and your children goodbye, and you walked out the door and said, "See you this evening." But then suppose tomorrow evening you did not come home and you did not come home all night and you did not come home the next day, in fact, you did not come home all week, then two weeks, three weeks, four weeks? During all this time there was no communication. You did not write. You did not telephone. You did not send any money. You simply disappeared. Suppose after four weeks you would walk in one morning, about breakfast time, and say, "Good Morning, everybody. Is breakfast ready?" What would happen at your house? I dread to even think what would happen at our house! I don't even dare to think what might happen if I were to do a thing like that! Of course, I wouldn't do a thing like that, because I don't believe in acting like that. I don't even desire to act like that. There would never be a thought in my mind of treating my family like

that. And I don't believe that there would be a thought in the mind of any married man here this evening to treat your wife or children in the manner that I have just described. But, I think you see the point.

Church Members Walk Out on Jesus

I know church members and you know church members and you may even be one of the church members, that has treated Jesus in the manner that I have just described. They simply walk out on the Lord and are absent week after week. Nobody knows what is wrong, there is no communication, then suddenly they reappear and say, "Howdy everybody!" Oh, my friends, that really troubles me. I've talked about this a lot, so you know it is my pet peeve. You know how this does break my heart, but just think how much worse God must feel if we treat him like this. I hope if there is one thing that I can be remembered for, that I might be remembered as a preacher that urged you to be faithful to Jesus Christ.

Teachers in My Life

When I first accepted Jesus as my Savior, I was eight years old. I shall never forget the words my father spoke to me. He said, "Son, do you realize you are making a decision that is going to last all the days of your life?" I said, "Yes, I do!" He said, "Is it your intention to always live for Jesus?" I said, "That's what I intend to do." He said, "Well, you'd better, because that is what this decision means." So, from the earliest days of my childhood I knew from the teaching of my father that to be a Christian meant to be faithful to Jesus Christ. Then I went to the Cincinnati Bible Seminary. The president of the Seminary was Ralph Records. As he spoke to those of us who were Freshman students, I shall never forget his words. He said, "Boys, the motto of the Cincinnati Bible Seminary is

‘Loyalty to Jesus Christ and every teaching of His Word.’ We expect you to be loyal to your alma mater, but beyond that God expects you to be faithful to Jesus Christ and every teaching of His Word.”

Faithfulness is essential to the success of any movement. Kings rise or fall depending on the faithfulness of their subjects. Public figures rise or fall depending on the faithfulness of their supporting public. Athletes depend on the faithfulness of their teammates. Officers in the Army depend upon the faithfulness of the men who serve under them.

Levels of Faithfulness

Faithfulness is the backbone of life. It’s the backbone of the home. And, it is the backbone of the church. But, to simply be faithful is not enough. Because, actually, there are levels of faithfulness. I want to present to you from the word of God the three levels of faithfulness.

I. First of all, I call your attention to Genesis 28, where we read about the “if” level of faithfulness. There is that little, two letter word, I-F. Reading from Genesis 28:20-22, “Then Jacob made a vow, saying, ‘If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear so that I return safely to my father’s house, then the Lord will be my God and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God’s house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth.’

Sounds good, doesn’t it? How many times have you heard preachers take this for a text and then preach a stewardship sermon and exhort everybody to be a tither. They say, “Look, Jacob made a vow to be a tither to God. He promised that he would serve God all the days of his life and give a tenth to God. That is what we ought to do.”

I don’t see it that way!! And, if you will read the scripture I

don't think you'll see it that way, either, because Jacob made a conditional promise. Jacob said, "IF God does such and such."

Jacob Cheats

You remember that Jacob and Esau were twins. Jacob was the deceiver. He deceived his father and cheated his twin brother out of his father's blessing that by rights belonged to the oldest boy. Since Esau was first born, he should have had the father's blessing, but Jacob was very crafty and deceitful and he got the blessing. He cheated his twin brother, Esau. He went out and disguised himself as a hunter, which his brother Esau was. He put hairy skins upon his arms and hands. He came in and had his mother fix a delicious meal. It was nothing but goat, but she disguised it to taste like venison. His poor old father, who was blind, thought it was his eldest son. He gave Jacob the blessing, gave him the birthright, the inheritance, and then, when it was too late, realized the mistake. Esau, of course, was furious. He was ready to kill his brother. Then Jacob's mother told him that he would have to flee for his life. Jacob took off for another country, there to live with his Uncle Laban.

If

Jacob made this conditional promise to God as he was on his way to this far away, foreign country; after having lied to his father, after having cheated his brother out of the birthright and the blessing. And, now, Jacob comes to God in prayer and he makes this conditional promise. "If, if," he says, "If God will bless me. If God will watch over me and help me make this journey safely. If God will give me food to eat. If God will give me clothes to wear. If God will bring me back to my father's house and make peace again between me and my brother that I have treated so wrongfully. If God will do all of this, well then, I'll serve God and I'll give a

tenth to God.” Well, who wouldn’t under those conditions? I find that so many times, we Christians want to make a bargain with God. We’ll say, “God, here it is. If you will bless me. If you will give me a job, where I can make the kind of salary that I feel I need to make. If You will give me the house that I want. If you will do this and do that, then God, I will serve you.” It is very, very bad to bargain with God. I’m sure of one thing, we will never get to Heaven if we try to get there on the IF level of faithfulness.

II. There is a second level of faithfulness that is mentioned in the Bible. This level is found in Psalm 116:1-2, where the Psalmist says, “I love the Lord for He heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy. Because He turned His ear to me, I will call on Him as long as I live.” It seems to suggest that **BECAUSE God answered prayer, therefore, the Psalmist would trust God and would serve God and would live for God.** My question is this, what if God did not answer his prayer like he wanted? Then what? Would he still trust God? Would he still serve God? What I am trying to get you to see is that there is no credit for being faithful only **BECAUSE** God answered my prayer in the way I wanted Him to answer. Because, if you haven’t experienced it, there will come a time in your life when God will say, “No,” to your prayers. There will come a time in your life when God will say, “Wait awhile,” when you pray. And you might have to wait a year or you may have to wait five years or you may have to wait ten years, because God doesn’t always say, “Yes!” He may give a different answer than what you are expecting. So, if your faithfulness is just going to be based upon the times that God said, “YES,” then you are in trouble. We will not make it to Heaven on the **BECAUSE** level. And, we will not make it to Heaven on the IF level.

III. There is a third level of faithfulness, which is found in Habakkuk 3:17-18. “Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle

in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior.” Is it clear what the prophet is saying here? It’s so clear to me. The prophet is saying, “**Regardless of what happens.** Maybe everything will go wrong. Maybe the crops will fail and there is no food to eat. Maybe there is no job, no income, no house to live in. Sickness comes, trials come, disappointment overwhelms me, the bottom drops out, everything goes wrong. But, regardless of that, I am going to serve the Lord and I will joy in the God of my salvation.” This is the kind of faithfulness that God is asking for. This is the kind of faithfulness that God will bless. This is the kind of faithfulness that will take us to Heaven.

The Fiery Furnace

It’s the kind of faithfulness that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego possessed. The king said for them to bow and worship the idol or else he was going to throw them in the furnace of fire. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to worship the idol. The king said, “Maybe you fellows didn’t hear me clearly. I said, ‘Bow and worship the idol or I’ll burn you up.’”

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego gave one of the most courageous answers of all history, when they said, “Oh king, you may throw us in the furnace of fire. We don’t know what is going to happen to us, but we want you to know something that we know; we never will bow down to any idol, regardless of what you do to us.” The king threw them in the furnace of fire, but God protected them from the fire and they came out alive, because they were **REGARDLESS** servants of the Lord.

Job

Job possessed this same kind of **REGARDLESS** faith. Job lost his children, but he still had faith in God. Job lost all of his wealth

and became a pauper, but he still had faith in God. Job lost his health and his body was covered with boils, but he still had faith in God. Job lost the love of his wife and she said, "Why don't you just curse God and die?" but Job kept his faith in God. Job lost his best friends, who came and falsely accused him and said, "Why, you are suffering so much because you have committed some big, terrible sin." Job still kept faith in God.

Job said, "regardless of what happens, even if God kills me, I will still love Him and serve Him." That is the kind of faithfulness that we must have.

W.R. Walker

Many many years ago, it was my great privilege to meet a marvelous minister of the Gospel, who had a great effect upon my life. His name was W.R. Walker. He used to be the Editorial Counselor for the *Christian Standard* and in the latter years of his life, he wrote a meditation for the Lord's Supper every Sunday that appeared in the *Christian Standard*. I heard Brother Walker speak on several occasions. He lived to be 96 years old. Shortly before his death I heard Brother Walker relate this experience.

His wife, Mrs. Walker, became very ill when Brother Walker was 90 years old. The last six years of her life, which led right up to almost the time of his own death, were spent ministering to her needs. Brother Walker never left his wife's bedside in six years. Day and night he was right there helping her, ministering to her. I'm sure many of you are thinking, "Well, that is no more than what is expected." When we get married, it is until death separates us. So, if in the latter years of our life there is an illness, that is what we are expected to do. We are going to be right by the side of our loved one.

Let me tell you something else that makes this story more amazing. Mrs. Walker lost her mind. She didn't know anything. There was no communication between them. She couldn't talk. It

was like she was a vegetable. It really wouldn't have made a difference, he could have left. She wouldn't have known the difference. But, he didn't leave. He stayed right there with her day and night for six long years.

Then, the most amazing, wonderful thing happened. One day, shortly before she died, Mrs. Walker suddenly, miraculously, regained her mind. She was able to speak again. She looked up at him as though she had been asleep for about five minutes, and she said something. He was astonished. So, they began to converse. He said they had the most lovely visit, It lasted for about two hours. They talked over everything just as though she had not even been ill. Then, just as suddenly as her mind returned, it went away again. But, just before that happened, Mrs. Walker said to her husband, "I'm getting tired. I think I'm ready to go to sleep." She reached up her arms, so Brother Walker bent over the bed and she grabbed him and she hugged him close to her and she kissed him and said, "Darling, I love you more right now than I loved you when we got married more than sixty years ago."

Brother W.R. Walker said, "That conversation that we had and those loving words that she spoke to me and that sweet, tender embrace that she gave me made it worth the six long years that I sat by her bedside and tried to help her."

When I heard Brother Walker relate that story, I thought to myself, "What a wonderful testimony as to what a Christian marriage is really like. What a wonderful testimony about a faithful wife and a faithful husband. Two faithful Christians, two faithful servants of our Lord Jesus Christ."

My prayer for each one of you is that you will be so faithful to Jesus that when it comes time for you to go to Heaven, whether it is right away or 50 years from now, that you will be able to say, "My Jesus, I love You more now than I did when You first became my Savior." Because Jesus loves you so much that He gave Himself and His life's blood to save you.

If there is one soul here tonight that has not accepted Jesus as your Savior, would you do it right now? Would you come and give

MY FAVORITE MISSIONARY SERMONS

Him your life with this idea, "I'm going to be faithful to you Jesus, forever and ever and ever!" May God help us all to do that.