

Increasing in Holiness

The Holiness of Faithfulness

Introduction:

I like this eloquent quote from James Sizoo about what keeps the world going: "Let it never be forgotten that glamour is not greatness; applause is not fame; prominence is not eminence. The man of the hour is not apt to be the man of the ages. A stone may sparkle, but that does not make it a diamond; people may have money, but that does not make them a success.

It is what the unimportant people do that really counts and determines the course of history. The greatest forces in the universe are never spectacular. Summer showers are more effective than hurricanes, but they get no publicity. The world would soon die but for the fidelity, loyalty, and consecration of those whose names are unhonored and unsung."

Fidelity, loyalty, consecration—these are the qualities that keep the world going; and they also keep the church going. All three qualities are captured in one of the words Paul uses as he describes the holy fruit which the Holy Spirit produces in us in order to make us like our holy God:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. (Galatians 5:22-23)

Let's talk about the holiness of faithfulness.

Faithfulness is the trustworthiness or loyalty that grows out of consecration to God.

The Greek word is pistis. It is found 243 times in our NT.

It is the common word for faith or belief in God, in Christ, and in the word of God, etc.

It is also used to describe the things which are believed such as "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). But probably in a character list like this one, it should be more narrowly defined in a way that is complementary to the other characteristics mentioned. The NASV in doing so translates with the word "faithfulness."

William Barclay calls it "the virtue of reliability."

It is that trustworthiness or faithfulness that enables others to describe the person as "faithful, trustworthy, reliable" (Greek pistos). He ends his examination of this word in this way: "It describes the man on whose faithful service we may rely, on whose loyalty we may depend, whose word we can unreservedly accept. It describes the man in whom there is the unswerving and inflexible fidelity of Jesus Christ, and the utter dependability of God."

To put it another way, it means that one is loyal not fickle, consistent not unpredictable, committed to doing right not easily vulnerable to temptation.

This virtue, unfortunately, is becoming increasingly uncommon.

While many may claim it, the wise man declared it hard to find
Many a man proclaims his own loyalty, but who can find a trustworthy man? (Prov. 20:6)

The Psalmist decried the lack of "faithfulness" in his day, describing a condition that sounds much like our situation today.

Help, Lord, for the godly man ceases to be, for the faithful disappear from among the sons of men. They speak falsehood to one another; with flattering lips and with a double heart they speak. (Ps. 12:1-2)

Day by day we benefit from that faithfulness which is a part of the holy character of God.

We depend upon our faithful God.

God has always been known as a God of faithfulness

“Know therefore that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments... (Deut. 7:9)

Repeatedly in Scripture God’s trustworthiness and faithfulness are praised as a reminder of how much we can depend upon Him.

Not to allow us to be tempted beyond that we are able to bear
No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it. (1 Cor. 10:13)

To protect us from the evil one

But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one. (2 Thes. 3:3)

To complete His work of salvation in us

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass. (1 Thes. 5:23-24)

Isn't it wonderful to know that God can be trusted in these and many other ways? What if God occasionally abandoned His place?

We depend upon our faithful Savior.

Jesus was faithful in fulfilling His role as the Son of God.

He was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was in all His house. (Heb. 3:2)

Because of his faithfulness, God could count upon Him to accomplish his work.

He is also faithful in fulfilling His role as our high priest

Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted. (Heb. 2:17-18)

What the Hebrew wants us to understand is that we have a high priest upon whom we can depend.

We can surely depend on God because He is trustworthy and reliable.

Can God depend upon us?

To remain loyal in living and teaching the truth when others are departing from it?

And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also. (2 Tim. 2:2)

Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy. (1 Cor. 4:1-2)

If we do not do this, who will? If not now, when? Can God depend upon us to do our job?

To use our abilities when opportunity is there to serve?

“His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things, enter into the joy of your master.’ (Mt. 25:21)

If there is anything that this remarkable parable makes clear, it is that God has put His trust in His servants to do His work. Too often, people are like the one talent man, burying their talent; this greatly displeases the Lord. Can the Lord depend on you to use your abilities to furthering His work?

To remain true to the Lord when times are difficult?

“If you have run with footmen and they have tired you out, then how can you compete with horses? If you fall down in a land of peace, how will you do in the thicket of the Jordan? (Jer. 12:5)

‘Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. (Rev. 2:10)

Can our brothers and sisters depend upon us?

To be present to break bread with them and worship God?

...and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near. (Heb. 10:24-25)

To do our part in the Lord's work?

He also who is slack in his work is brother to him who destroys. (Prov. 18:9)

To be there for them when they need us?

Like a bad tooth and an unsteady foot is confidence in a faithless man in time of trouble. (Prov. 25:19)

Ask yourself: "If everyone were as faithful as I am, what kind of church would this be?"

Would anyone be here, except for Sunday morning worship?

Would there be any teachers for our children's classes?

Would visitors ever attend, would anyone be taught the truth? Would the church be growing, both numerically and spiritually?

Would the church even exist?

Conclusion: Let us be faithful remembering these promises of God:

"for the Lord preserves the faithful" (Ps. 31:23)

"A faithful man will abound with blessings..." (Prov. 28:20)

Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. (Revelation 2:10)