

BE YE FAITHFUL

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I talked last week about whether a man or a woman could be righteous in God's eyes — or whether all of our righteousnesses are as filthy rags ... we can never please God.

But as we saw last week — God ... Jesus ... Luke and others all refer to many righteous men and women.

As we saw ... nobody is perfect ... but what sets a righteous person apart in God's eyes is:

- Loyal to God (Faithful)
- Relationship with God
- Love God
- Obedient (as humanly possibly)

Many of us tend to focus perhaps to a large extent on doctrine — Biblical knowledge ... but God can easily add technical knowledge to anyone. What He's looking for are men and women who have a desire for a relationship with Him — and a commitment to maintain that relationship ... if necessary through thick and thin — good times and bad.

God is looking at all of us for loyalty to Him. Or more common Biblical term: Faithfulness. Irrespective of our head knowledge — or technical knowledge — are we faithful?

Matthew 25:14-30

14 "**For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them.**

15 "And **to one he gave five talents, to another two,** and **to another one, to each according to his own ability;** and immediately he went on a journey.

16 "Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents.

17 "And likewise he who had received two gained two more also.

18 "But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money.

19 "After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them.

20 "**So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.'**

21 "**His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things.'** Enter into the joy of your lord.'

22 "**He also who had received two talents came and said, 'Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.'**

23 "**His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things.'** Enter into the joy of your lord.'

24 "**Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed.'**

25 "**'And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.'**

26 "**But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant,** you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed.

27 'So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest.

28 'Therefore take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents.

29 "**'For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance;** but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away.

30 "**And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness.** There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

The Parable of the Talents ... according to ability.

WELL DONE — GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT!

Faithful in a little ... implies faithful in much. IT REVEALS THE ATTITUDE.

He could have said: "Well done for your hard work ... or creativity ...or imagination" — but COMMENDED FOR BEING FAITHFUL.

Luke 19:11-26

11 Now as they heard these things, **He spoke another parable**, because He was near Jerusalem and because they thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately.

12 Therefore He said: "**A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return.**

13 **"So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, 'Do business till I come.'** (*Minas = Pounds in the KJV*)

14 "But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We will not have this man to reign over us.'

15 **"And so it was that when he returned, having received the kingdom, he then commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.**

16 **"Then came the first, saying, 'Master, your mina has earned ten minas.'**

17 **"And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.'**

18 **"And the second came, saying, 'Master, your mina has earned five minas.'**

19 **"Likewise he said to him, 'You also be over five cities.'**

20 **"Then another came, saying, 'Master, here is your mina, which I have kept put away in a handkerchief.**

21 **'For I feared you, because you are an austere man. You collect what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.'**

22 **"And he said to him, 'Out of your own mouth I will judge you, you wicked servant.** You knew (*did you?*) that I was an austere man, collecting what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow.

23 'Why then did you not put my money in the bank, that at my coming I might have collected it with interest?'

24 "And he said to those who stood by, 'Take the mina from him, and give it to him who has ten minas.'

25 ("But they said to him, 'Master, he has ten minas.')

26 **'For I say to you, that to everyone who has will be given; and from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.'**

GET BUSY!

"BECAUSE YOU WERE FAITHFUL" HAVE AUTHORITY!

Jesus knows if we are trustworthy in the little things ... faithful ... loyal ... He can trust us with the big things.

ONE DICTIONARY DEFINITION OF FAITHFUL: STEADFAST IN AFFECTION ... LOYAL.

This describes the righteous men and women of the Bible. Steadfast in affection for God ... loyal to Jehovah God ... though sometimes troubled by human weakness and human flaws.

And of all people on the earth ... Bible believers should be well-known as faithful ... loyal people.

Colossians 1:1-3

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

2 **To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colosse:**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,

Church members are often referred to as “The Faithful”. Remember the Xmas carol: “O come all ye Faithful”!

Also ... if you think about it — we’re supposed to be imitators of God. He’s our Father ... we’re supposed to share His characteristics. Jesus also — we’re called “Christians” — meaning that we are followers of Him.

AND GOD IS FAITHFUL!

1 Corinthians 10:11-13

11 Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

13 No temptation (*test or trial*) has overtaken you except such as is common to man; **but God is faithful**, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

God is faithful. Meaning you can rely on Him. We can depend on Him — no matter what the circumstances. He will make the way of escape.

We can't depend on politicians ... or the media (they are not faithful witnesses)
... probably can't depend on some church leaders? They aren't faithful.

Lamentations 3:22-24

22 Through the LORD's mercies we are not consumed,
Because His compassions fail not.

23 They are new every morning;

Great is Your faithfulness.

24 "The LORD is my portion," says my soul,
"Therefore I hope in Him!"

GREAT IS YOUR FAITHFULNESS!

Jeremiah looked at the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem. But he knew there was a hope — God would not totally cast off His people.

God would be faithful to His Word (both for punishment and redemption).

Hebrews 10:19-23

19 Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus,

20 by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh,

21 and having a High Priest over the house of God,

22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

23 **Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.**

God's Word is good!

Revelation 19:7-9

7 "Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready."

8 And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, **for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.**

9 Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!' " And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God."

Revelation 19:11-13

11 **Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse.** And **He who sat on him was called Faithful and True**, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.

12 His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself.

13 He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and **His name is called The Word of God.**

Jesus could have many titles ... Redeemer ... Saviour ... King (all used elsewhere) ... but here — Jesus is referred to as The Faithful!

It's not a surprise to us that God is faithful (we'd be in serious trouble if He wasn't).

But — equally — as God's sons and daughters ... being faithful should be an obvious characteristic of our lives. Hopefully if we examine ourselves ... there are indications that we are a faithful people?

Proverbs 20:6

6 **Most men will proclaim each his own goodness, But who can find a faithful man?**

Proverbs 20:6 (Message Bible)

6 **Lots of people claim to be loyal and loving, but where on earth can you find one?**

Answer: We should find them among the believers!

We are supposed to be the faithful!

Psalms 12:1-2

1 **Help, LORD, for the godly man ceases!**

For the faithful disappear from among the sons of men.

2 They speak idly everyone with his neighbor;
With flattering lips and a double heart they speak.

This is a reasonable description of our day? Not many faithful? Gossip ... dishonest ... truce-breakers ... two-faced.

Or think of faithfulness to one's marriage vows. "Infidelity" is not uncommon. Not an easy statistic to obtain ... but recent estimates suggest 30%-60% of US marriages will be affected by infidelity. And ... increasing among the under 30's.

Over 40% of all marriages in the US end in divorce. And within many churches ... the figure is similar.

So much for faithfulness!

We're supposed to be different.

Revelation 17:9-14

9 "Here is the mind which has wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits.

10 "There are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come. And when he comes, he must continue a short time.

11 "The beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition.

12 "The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast.

13 "These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast.

14 "These will make war with the Lamb, and **the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful.**"

Those with Jesus at His return are called ... chosen ... BUT ALSO FAITHFUL.

Key characteristic! There might be some (many) who were called and chosen — but were not faithful.

Revelation 2:1-5, 7

1 "**To the angel of the church of Ephesus write,** 'These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands:

2 "**I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars;**

3 "and you have persevered and have patience, and have laboured for My name's sake and have not become weary.

4 "Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. (They have not been faithful!)

5 "Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place--unless you repent.

7 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God." '

The major problem with these believers — they have left their first love. They were not faithful!

Revelation 2:8-11

8 "And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write, 'These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life:

9 "I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

10 "Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw 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.**

11 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. **He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.**" '

BE FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH!

Ancient Israel and Judah — God's people of old — were continually unfaithful. They endlessly swapped their allegiance to Baal ... Molech ... Ashtaroth ... to every abomination of the Canaanites.

As God's sons and daughters today ... our allegiance should be to Him. Not unrighteousness mammon ... fame or fortune ... or power.

We need to be faithful to one master. And stay that way. Marriage vow talks of faithfulness ... "for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health ... till death do us part".

We need to be loyal to God whatever the circumstances.

Job said: "Though He slay me ... yet I will trust Him"!

One outstanding example of a faithful person — even in hard times — is Ruth.

Ruth 1:6-17

6 Then she arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the country of Moab that the LORD had visited His people by giving them bread.

7 Therefore she went out from the place where she was, and her two daughters-in-law with her; and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah.

8 And Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go, return each to her mother's house. The LORD deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me.

9 "The LORD grant that you may find rest, each in the house of her husband." So she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept.

10 And they said to her, "Surely we will return with you to your people."

11 But Naomi said, "Turn back, my daughters; why will you go with me? Are there still sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands?"

12 "Turn back, my daughters, go--for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say I have hope, if I should have a husband tonight and should also bear sons,

13 "would you wait for them till they were grown? Would you restrain yourselves from having husbands? No, my daughters; for it grieves me very much for your sakes that the hand of the LORD has gone out against me!"

14 Then they lifted up their voices and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.

15 And she said, "Look, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law."

16 But **Ruth said:**

"Entreat me not to leave you,

Or to turn back from following after you;

For wherever you go, I will go;

And wherever you lodge, I will lodge;

Your people shall be my people,

And your God, my God.

17 **Where you die, I will die,**

And there will I be buried.

The LORD do so to me, and more also,

If anything but death parts you and me."

On a human level ... it's a great example. Many see "types" in the story — Boaz = Jesus. Ruth = Church ... who shows humility and faithfulness ... good characteristics to be found in believers!

We won't turn there ... but you can think of the contrast with Solomon. Was he faithful?

You and I can do better than Solomon!

And faithfulness brings benefits!

Proverbs 28:20

20 **A faithful man will abound with blessings,**
But he who hastens to be rich will not go unpunished.

The faithful abounds in blessings.

2 Chronicles 16:7-10

7 And at that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah, and said to him: "Because you have relied on the king of Syria, and have not relied on the LORD your God, therefore the army of the king of Syria has escaped from your hand.
8 "Were the Ethiopians and the Lubim not a huge army with very many chariots and horsemen? Yet, because you relied on the LORD, He delivered them into your hand.

9 **"For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him.** In this you have done foolishly; therefore from now on you shall have wars."

10 Then Asa was angry with the seer, and put him in prison, for he was enraged at him because of this. And Asa oppressed some of the people at that time.

God's eyes roam the earth for those who are loyal — faithful. That can be us!

So ... like so many men and women of God ... we may struggle to live perfect lives. But God can still consider us righteous if ... among other things ... He can count us as being faithful and loyal to Him.

Faithful to Him. Not to any others. We owe our allegiance to God The Father and Jesus.