

Biblical Measures of Faithfulness

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction:

- A. There are some who may consider the content of this lesson to be unkind. It is not my desire to be unkind to you.
 - 1. However, as an evangelist and an elder, I understand that it is more important for me to be clear when preaching the word, than it is for me to be liked for having done so.
 - 2. The elders here love every one as a member of our family at Trilacoochee; and, because we love all of our family, we want all of our family to be together in heaven.
 - 3. Please listen carefully, humbly, and open-mindedly.
- B. 2Tim. 3:10-11 - The power of Paul's faithful example.
 - 1. Paul exhorts Timothy to remain faithful, even in persecution, using his own example which Timothy has observed for years.
 - 2. Paul was not boasting but telling Timothy that his life was open to him. Timothy knew Paul's teaching and trials.
 - 3. He wanted him to remember his example of faithfulness and continue in it after Paul passed away.
 - 4. How could Paul do this? He knew that he was faithful.
- C. A faithful example blesses two persons: the observer who can see and imitate faithfulness, and the one who is faithful is rewarded for his faithful example
 - 1. "Preach the Gospel at all times. When necessary, use words." (Francis of Assisi)

I. JEHORAM: HE KNEW HE WAS UNFAITHFUL

- A. 2Kings 3:1-3 - King Jehoram was a man of half measures who tried to live two lives at the same time, trying to live partly by God's law and partly by the religion of his father.
 - 1. He knew that he was not faithful. He just hoped that his half measures would be accepted.
- B. When his father Ahab died, the king of Moab attacked Israel immediately after Jehoram's coronation.
 - 1. He asked Jehoshaphat the king of Judah to help him, because he knew he wasn't up to the task of leadership. He knew he was displeasing to God
 - 2. On the journey to the battle, the armies ran out of water. Jehoram instantly concluded that God had brought them out into the desert to perish. Apparently his conscience was bothering him, and he knew that he was unfaithful.
 - 3. Jehoshaphat asked for a prophet, and Elisha came - 2Kings 3:13-14
 - 4. Elisha told Jehoram that if it weren't for the fact that Jehoshaphat king of Judah was standing there, he wouldn't even be seeing Jehoram, let alone speak to him. Jehoram knew he was unfaithful.

5. The Lord gave them water in the desert and a decisive victory over Moab. The Moabite king offered his first born son and heir in sacrifice hoping to end the slaughter.
 - a. Jehoram saw all of this, and still remained a half measure king, respecting Elisha, but never becoming completely faithful. He continued to practice idolatry while pretending to be at peace with the people of Judah.
 - b. He died unfaithful, shot in the back with an arrow for treachery 2Kings 9:22-25
 6. The Lord did not give Jehoram credit for his half service. God also knew that Jehoram was unfaithful.
- C. Does the spirit of Jehoram live on in professed members of the Lord's church today? Are there any "half measure" children of God who know that they are unfaithful, but secretly hope that their half service will somehow be enough to secure a little home in heaven?
1. Jehoram's attitude is manifest in those who attend only a token number of services. They come just enough to be known as members, enough to avoid being disciplined, but not enough to be laborers in the vineyard of the Lord.
 2. Jehoram's spirit is seen in the manner of the token contributors who put in enough to keep from being embarrassed by those who pass the plate, but not enough to be truly giving of their means.
 3. It is seen in those who are honest and pure of speech with other Christians, but who curse, gossip, and lie before the world.
- D. Moreover, those who presently live Jehoram's way before God know that they are unfaithful, too.
1. It is seen in their angry responses when a caring brother tries to admonish them to greater devotion and service.
 2. When physically sick, it is seen in their desire for the preacher and elders to visit and pray with them.
 3. When dying, it is seen in their call for a sound preacher to present the funeral, or in their choice of a weak preacher who doesn't have the courage to speak of their unfaithfulness.
 4. When in fear, it is seen in their prayers and Bible hugging. To soothe an aching conscience, they will repost Bible memes in the social media.
 5. But when times are good, they return to half measure service. They know that they are unfaithful. And so does God.

II. PAUL'S MESSAGE ABOUT FAITHFUL EXAMPLES

- A. Spiritual faithfulness is not automatic, but is helped by recognizing and following godly, scriptural examples - 1Cor. 11:1; James 5:10
- B. Spiritual faithfulness in the past is not an automatic guarantee of faithfulness in the future - 1Tim. 1:18-20
- C. Spiritual faithfulness in the future demands a recognition and reproduction of godly, scriptural examples - Phil 3:16-18
 1. Learn how to discern a godly example - 2Tim. 3:14

2. Learn the importance of being exposed to godly examples. Follow closely so as to understand and embrace their life
 - a. Phil. 2:29; 2Thes. 3:7, 9
3. Learn the vital need to imitate godly examples - Heb. 13:7
- D. Spiritual faithfulness depends on godly, scriptural teaching
 1. Paul put a premium on sound doctrine, a frequent theme in his letters to preachers - 1Tim. 1:3-5, 10; 3:3, 15; 4:6, 13, 16; 5:17; 6:1, 3, 20-21; 2Tim. 1:13; 2:2, 15; 4:3; Titus 1:9; 2:1, 10
 2. A godly teacher will use scripture to teach and direct others - 2Tim. 3:15
- D. However, spiritual faithfulness also demands character.
 1. Paul could not have insisted that others follow his example of faithfulness if he had not qualified himself by a godly character
 2. "Conduct" or manner of life. How he manages time, money, and possessions, what kind of entertainment he enjoys, and how he relates to his family, friends, fellow workers, and strangers. Is he rude or sensitive? Is he oblivious to the needs of others or kind and caring? Christianity is a way of life, not a title.
 3. "Purpose" or rationale for living. Paul's purpose was to help fulfill God's purpose (Eph. 3:9-11). He did everything for the glory of God (1Cor. 10:31). Godly examples show that God and His will are the most important matters in their lives.
 4. "Faith" or conviction for life. A godly example will trust God and do what is humanly impossible. Paul said (2Cor. 1:9), "indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead." Godly examples live for eternal life and not earthly life, trusting that God will keep His promises beyond the grave (2Tim. 4:8).
 5. "Patience" or steadiness in life. Godly examples do not have quick tempers when dealing with difficult people, nor do they give up easily under pressure from the Adversary.
 6. "Love" or God's nature in our lives. Biblical love is a self-sacrificing, caring commitment that manifests itself in seeking the highest good of the one loved." Such love governs everything in a godly example.
 7. "Perseverance" or persistence throughout life. A godly example does not vary with circumstances, good or bad. It improves over time without reversals.
- E. Spiritual faithfulness depends on how one reacts to opposition or correction
 1. Paul - Acts 13:50-51, 14:5-6, 19-22
 2. Jesus - 1Peter 2:19-23, 4:12-14
 3. Simon under rebuke - Acts 8:22-24
- F. Just as important as what one professes is how he lives what he professes.
 1. "A father teaches his children that the battle is not determined by the enemy that stands around them, but by the God Who stands within them. And that lesson can only be driven home as they watch their father stand around them, while God stands within their father." (Craig Lounsbrough)

Conclusion:

A. “As church attendance numbers fade across the nation and online services become very convenient, it’s important to remember why church attendance for you and your family matters so much. You can’t serve from your sofa. You can’t have a community of faith on your sofa. You can’t experience the power of a roomful of believers worshiping together on your sofa. Christians aren’t consumers. We are contributors. We do watch. We engage. We give. We sacrifice. We encourage. We pray holding the hands of the hurting. We do life together. Yes, the church needs you. And you need the church.” (Steven Massey)

B. We profess to be New Testament Christians doing Bible things in Bible ways using Bible names. When the inspired apostle Paul taught the Corinthians about the right way to eat the Lord’s Supper, he said “When you come together” six times. Once would have been enough for us to know that we must assemble in order to engage in scriptural worship.

C. I know that some will raise the point that the online streaming of services helps the sick and those who are taking care of shut-ins. I agree and am delighted to continue this practice for their sake. However, it is inconsistent for one to say that they are too ill to attend, and then, in social media, post pictures of themselves out of town visiting relatives, selfies at state parks, and dinners with friends at local restaurants. Such persons know that they are unfaithful.

D. 1John 1:5-9