

FAITHFUL BROTHERS AND SISTERS

Colossians 1:2

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I. INTRODUCTION

- a. The greatest crisis in America today is the loss of virtue (moral excellence; Christian character).
 - i. Not only do most people have serious character flaws;
 - ii. But most people do not know what it is to be virtuous. They do not know right from wrong.
 - iii. The loss of virtue has not only plagued the culture at large, but the church. Most professing Christians show very little resemblance to the character of the God of the Bible.
- b. This is a great crisis for several reasons:
 - i. God will only withhold His wrath for so long. If we continue in sin, then the Lord will eventually destroy us.
 - 1. **Habakkuk 3:12** “You march across the earth with indignation; you trample down the nations in wrath.”
 - ii. Freedom is only possible if it is supported by virtue.
 - 1. If the people are not virtuous – responsible for themselves and respectful of one another – the government will grow in scope and power.
 - 2. For example, one of our liberties is the right to bear arms; but as our country is becoming more vicious, with inner-city gun violence at an all-time high, and mass shooting occurring more frequently than ever, the demand is growing for the government to eliminate the right to bear arms and to forcefully confiscate all guns.
 - iii. Without virtue, relationships crumble.
 - 1. The Christian graces are the oil in the engine of relationships that allow the parts to rub together without destroying one another.
 - 2. Without virtue, there can be no peace in the home; no unity in the church.
 - iv. The absence of virtue defames the name of God.
 - 1. God created us to glorify Him. We do this by reflecting His moral nature.
 - 2. When we claim to be the people of God, but live without the character of God, then we ruin the reputation of God.
- c. Today we are going to focus on one Biblical virtue – faithfulness.

II. TEXT

- a. **Colossians 1:2** “To the saints in Christ at Colossae, who are faithful brothers and sisters.”
- b. This sentence is part of the greeting, which begins with the name of the sender – Paul, and then the name of the recipient – the church in Colossae.
- c. Paul describes the saints in Colossae as “faithful.”
- d. Faithfulness is a grace that every Christian must possess:
 - i. It is a command of God that we must obey. **Revelation 2:10** “Be faithful to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.”
 - ii. It is an attribute of God that we must imitate. **Deuteronomy 32:4** “The Rock—his work is perfect; all his ways are just. A faithful God, without bias, he is righteous and true.”

III. WHAT IS FAITHFULNESS?

- a. Faithfulness has two definitions:
 - i. Faithfulness is keeping your word.
 - ii. Faithfulness is loyalty to Christ.
- b. **First Definition: Faithfulness is keeping your word.**
 - i. Faithfulness is keeping your word; doing what you say you will do. It is being reliable, dependable, and trustworthy. Your word is your bond.
 - 1. **1 Corinthians 1:9 (NLT)** “God will do this, for he is faithful to do what he says, and he has invited you into partnership with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”
 - a. Notice that God is called faithful because He does what He says.
 - 2. **Proverbs 12:22** “Lying lips are detestable to the Lord, but faithful people are his delight.”
 - a. Faithfulness here is contrasted with lying. Lying is not keeping your word. Faithfulness is keeping your word.
 - ii. The faithful person:
 - 1. Does what he says he will do.
 - 2. Goes where he says he will go.
 - 3. Arrives when he says he will arrive.
 - 4. Avoids what he says he will avoid.
 - iii. Faithfulness is not simply keeping your promises; it is keeping your word.
 - 1. You don’t need to promise for your word to be binding.
 - 2. Your word is your bond. It is binding.
 - 3. By itself, your word is a promise.
 - 4. If you agree to do something, it is a lie if you fail to keep your word.
 - 5. Your word is your commitment to a course of action that must be backed up with faithfulness.

- iv. If you tell your friend that you will meet him at 6 am Saturday morning to help him move a piano, then you must follow through. If you fail to show up at 6, or at all, then you have been unfaithful. That is a sin.
- v. In our society faithfulness is all but completely lost.
 - 1. People say they'll show up, but they're late, or they don't show up at all.
 - 2. People say they'll do something, but they don't.
 - 3. Husbands tell their wives they'll be home for dinner, but they don't.
 - 4. Teenagers say they'll be home for 10, but they're late.
 - 5. Fathers tell the kids they'll take them camping on Saturday, but they don't.
 - 6. People tell the bank they'll pay them back, but they don't.
 - 7. People R.S.V.P. but don't show up.
 - 8. Parents allow their kids to sign up for a team or organization and then allow them to drop out mid-season.

vi. How to Become a Person of Your Word

1. Stop making promises.

- a. **Matthew 5:33-37** "33 Again, you have heard that it was said to our ancestors, You must not break your oath, but you must keep your oaths to the Lord. 34 But I tell you, don't take an oath at all: either by heaven, because it is God's throne; 35 or by the earth, because it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, because it is the city of the great King. 36 Do not swear by your head, because you cannot make a single hair white or black. 37 But let your 'yes' mean 'yes,' and your 'no' mean 'no.' Anything more than this is from the evil one.
- b. There was a faithfulness crisis in the first century. A man's word meant nothing. He could only be trusted if He said "By God." If not, a man's word was worthless.
- c. The Jews divided oaths or promises into two classes – binding and non-binding:
 - i. A binding oath contained the name of God – "By God." It was a great sin to break a binding oath. Therefore, people would use non-binding oaths.
 - ii. A non-binding oath did not contain the name of God. In order to avoid sin, people would say, "By heaven," "By the earth," "By Jerusalem," "By my head." This way if they broke the oath they would not sin against God.
- d. Jesus corrected this line of thinking by teaching that an oath is an oath, because your word is your bond. Whether you say

“By God,” or “By heaven,” your word is your bond. Your word is binding. It is a promise. And to break your word is a sin against both God and man.

- e. Therefore, since your word is your bond, Jesus taught not to make promises. Promises are unnecessary. Once you give your word, you are bound to follow through.
- f. Is it okay to take an oath, such as marriage vows, or the oath of office, or an oath in a court of law? Yes. The majority Christian interpretation through the centuries has been that Jesus was not trying to prohibit all oath-taking. In fact, the Bible commands us to take oaths in God’s name repeatedly (Dt 6:13).
- g. Instead, Jesus’ point was three-fold:
 - i. You do not need to take an oath for your word to be binding.
 - ii. If you have to take an oath to persuade people to believe you, it shows that you are not trustworthy.
 - iii. Therefore, avoid making promises, and be a person of your word. Let your “yes” be “yes,” and your “no” be “no.” Start treating your word as an oath.

2. Be careful about giving your word.

- a. Before you give your word, be sure that you are willing and able.
- b. Do not say “yes” when you have no intention of following through.
- c. Do not say “yes” just to avoid offending or disappointing someone. It is much more offensive to break your word.
- d. Do not say “yes” if you are unsure of your schedule, or if you first need to get your parent’s consent.

3. Get organized.

- a. Often the cause of unfaithfulness is disorganization – forgetting the commitments you have made or over-committing yourself.
- b. Simple tools like an alarm clock, a wrist watch, to-do lists, and a personal calendar can help you to avoid forgetfulness and over-commitment.

4. Plan ahead.

- a. If you agreed to meet someone early in the morning, get plenty of rest the night before.
- b. Give yourself plenty of drive-time so that you can be prompt.

- c. If you said that you would bring something to a friend, set it out where you won't forget it.

5. Apologize if you break your word.

- a. If ever you are unfaithful, be sure to give a sincere apology. Do not make excuses. Simply admit your fault, apologize, and renew your commitment faithfulness in the future.
- b. This tells people that you consider your word to be binding, and that, if nothing else, your goal is to be a person of your word.

6. Pray for faithfulness.

- a. We cannot be like Christ without Christ's power.
 - b. The prayer for faithfulness is a prayer for the will of God, and God always answers the prayer that is in line with His will (1 Jn 5:14).
- vii. The first definition of faithfulness is keeping your word. Be a person of your word. Let your "yes" be "yes," and your "no" be "no."
 - viii. Psalm 15 asks the question, "Lord, who can dwell in your tent? Who can live on your hold mountain?" In other words, who can have a right relationship with God?
 - 1. Several qualities are mentioned: blamelessness; righteousness; acceptance of God's truth; don't slander; don't harm or discredit others. But notice verse 4.
 - 2. **Psalm 15:4** "who despises the one rejected by the LORD but honors those who fear the LORD, who keeps his word whatever the cost."
 - 3. That's faithfulness: Keep your word whatever the cost.

c. Second Definition: Faithfulness is loyalty to Christ.

- i. Often the word faithfulness is paired with the word loyalty.
 - 1. **Proverbs 3:3** "Never let loyalty and faithfulness leave you. Tie them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart." (See also Pr 14:22, Pr 16:6, and Pr 20:28).
- ii. Faithfulness can also refer to loyalty in general, but in the NT the primary meaning is loyalty to Christ.
- iii. Throughout the Bible, many people are described as faithful:
 - 1. Abraham:
 - a. **Nehemiah 9:7-8** "You, the LORD, are the God who chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans, and changed his name to Abraham. You found his heart faithful in your sight, and made a covenant with him."
 - 2. Timothy:
 - a. **1 Corinthians 4:17** "This is why I have sent Timothy to you. He is my dearly loved and faithful child in the Lord. He will

remind you about my ways in Christ Jesus, just as I teach everywhere in every church.”

3. The point is not that Abraham and Timothy are men of their word, as important as that is. The point is that these men are loyal. Abraham was loyal to the Lord. Timothy was loyal to Christ.
- iv. What does it mean to be loyal to Christ?
 1. Not merely obedience, but “a long obedience in the same direction” (Eugene Peterson).
 2. Several phrases in the New Testament help to draw out the meaning of faithfulness, or loyalty to Christ:
 - a. Stand firm. 1 Corinthians 16:13 “stand firm in the faith”
 - b. Continue. Colossians 2:6 “So then, just as you have received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him,”
 - c. Hold. 1 Cor 15:2 “hold to the message I preached to you.”
 - d. Hold fast. 1 Cor 11:2 “Hold fast to the traditions just as I delivered them to you”
 - e. Hold firm. Heb 3:14 “Hold firmly until the end”
 - f. Hold on. 1 Thess 5:21 “Hold on to what is good.”
 - g. Steadfast.
 - h. Immovable.
 - i. Always excelling in the Lord’s work. 1 Cor 15:58 “Be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the Lord’s work”
 - j. Keep on. Acts 18:9 “Don’t be afraid, but keep on speaking and don’t be silent.”
 - k. Persistence. Romans 2:7 “persistence in doing good”
 - l. Remain grounded and steadfast. Col 1:23 “remain grounded and steadfast in the faith”
 3. We can also get a better understanding of faithfulness from its opposites:
 - a. Give up. Lk 18:1 “Now he told them a parable on the need for them to pray always and not give up.” Heb 12:3 “So that you won’t grow weary and give up.”
 - b. Shifted. Colossians 1:23 “if indeed you remain grounded and steadfast in the faith and are not shifted away from the hope of the gospel that you heard.”
 - c. Tossed. Eph 4:14 “Then we will no longer be little children, tossed by the waves and blown around by every wind of teaching, by human cunning with cleverness in the techniques of deceit.”
 - d. Wavering. Ps 26:1 “I have lived with integrity and have trusted in the Lord without wavering.”

- e. Grow weary. 2 Thess 3:13 “Do not grow weary in doing good.”
- 4. So the idea of faithfulness is loyalty to Christ; keep on keeping on in Christ; standing firm in Christ; holding on to Christ; continuing in Christ; not growing weary; not giving up; not wavering; not shifting; not falling away; not being deceived; not backsliding.

v. Six Ways We Must be Loyal to Christ:

1. Stay active in church.

- a. **Hebrews 10:25 (CEV)** “Some people have gotten out of the habit of meeting for worship, but we must not do that. We should keep on encouraging each other, especially since you know that the day of the Lord’s coming is getting closer.”
- b. People drop out of church for many reasons:
 - i. because they got hurt;
 - ii. or because they are too busy;
 - iii. or because they grow prideful and hyper-critical, unable to find a church that is good enough;
 - iv. or because they cannot get along with others.
- c. None of these are valid reasons to drop out of church!

2. Hold on to your faith in Christ.

- a. **James 2:1** “My brothers and sisters, do not show favoritism as you hold on to the faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ.”
- b. Keep believing in Christ. Do not turn to atheism, or agnosticism, or to a false religion such as Judaism, Islam, or Buddhism.

3. Stand firm on sound doctrine.

- a. **2 Timothy 4:3-4** “3 For the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, will multiply teachers for themselves because they have an itch to hear what they want to hear. 4 They will turn away from hearing the truth and will turn aside to myths.”
- b. 10 Popular False Teachings Today:
 - i. Mormonism: God was once a man, and you can become a god.
 - ii. Jehovah’s Witnesses: Jesus is not God; He is Michael the Archangel incarnate. The Holy Spirit is not God; he is the active, impersonal force of God.
 - iii. Theistic evolution: God did not create the world in six, 24-hour days; Darwinian evolution is true, but God started and directed it.
 - iv. Homosexuality is not a sin; it is natural and good. Love is love.

- v. Transgenderism is not a mental disorder; it is perfectly healthy. Gender is fluid, not fixed. Gender is not binary, but a spectrum. Gender has nothing to do with one's biological sex.
 - vi. Socialism: The job of the government is to solve all of my problems by taking money from the rich and giving it to me.
 - vii. Social justice: All disparity is a result of injustice; everyone deserves the outcome, not just the same opportunity.
 - viii. Prosperity Gospel: God wants you to be healthy, wealthy, and prosperous. You just need to have enough faith and speak it into being. Name and claim it. Receive it and believe it.
 - ix. Relativism: There is no such thing as absolute truth, or absolute morality. Truth and morality are relative. What's true for you may not be true for me. What wrong for you may not be wrong for me.
 - x. Pluralism: There are many roads to heaven, not just through faith in Jesus Christ. What's important is being a good person.
- c. **2 Thessalonians 2:15** "So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold to the traditions you were taught, whether by what we said or what we wrote."

4. Be steadfast in serving the Lord.

- a. It is tempting to stop serving the Lord (evangelizing; serving in church; discipling your kids, etc.):
 - i. When you get tired.
 - ii. When you go through a hard time.
 - iii. When you don't see results.
 - iv. When others refuse to help you.
- b. But God has called you to serve Him all the days of your life.
- c. **1 Corinthians 15:58** "Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the Lord's work, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain."

5. Keep on growing.

- a. Many Christians pursue spiritual growth for a season, but then stop. They have a daily quiet time for a while, but then they quit. Don't stop! Keep on growing!
- b. **Philippians 1:9** "And I pray this: that your love will keep on growing"

6. Continue in holiness.

- a. **Colossians 2:6** “So then, just as you have received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him,”
- b. Don’t backslide into immorality; don’t fade into sinful habits and patterns.
- c. Continue striving for moral blamelessness.

IV. WHAT TO REMEMBER AS YOU PURSUE FAITHFULNESS

- a. Faithfulness cannot save us.
 - i. We are justified by faith, not works. Eph 2:8-9
- b. Faithfulness is the response and result of salvation, not the way to salvation.
 - i. We pursue faithfulness because we have been transformed in Christ. 2 Cor 5:17
- c. Faithfulness can only be cultivated with God’s help.
 - i. It is a fruit of the holy Spirit. Gal 5:22-23
 - ii. Pray for it. Ephesians 6:23 “Peace be with you, dear brothers and sisters, and may God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you love with faithfulness.”
- d. Faithfulness must be pursued for the right reasons -- the glory of God.
 - i. Do all for the glory of God. 1 Cor 10:31
 - 1. Not to earn heaven.
 - 2. Not to receive blessings.
 - 3. Not to impress people.
 - 4. Not for better relationships.
- e. Faithfulness achieved must give glory to God.
 - i. Do not take pride in your faithfulness.
 - ii. Do not take credit for your faithfulness.
 - iii. Give all the glory to God. 1 Cor 10:31

V. CONCLUSION

- a. Faithfulness:
 - i. Keep your word.
 - ii. Stay loyal to Christ.
- b. Paul addressed the Colossians as “faithful brothers and sisters.” When you consider the meaning of faithfulness, that is high praise.
- c. Make it your goal that when you reach the end of your life you can say with Paul, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (2 Tim 4:7).
- d. Make it your goal that when you die, Jesus will welcome you into heaven and say to you, “Well done, good and faithful servant! You were faithful over a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Share your master’s joy” (Matthew 25:23).