

FAITHFULNESS

Prov. 20:6

I. INTRODUCTION: I

1. **2** We continue our series of lessons with the general theme of “grow[ing] in the grace and knowledge of the Lord.” (2 Pet. 3:18)
 - A. These lessons are designed to help Christians grow and be strong in the Lord (1 Pet. 2:2).
 - B. We cannot remain “babes” in Christ (1 Cor. 14:20); and even if we’ve been Christians for many years, we need to be reminded of these first principles (2 Pet. 3:1)
2. In our previous lessons:
 - A. Lesson #1: We established that all Christians must put first things first (Matt. 6:33).
 - B. Lesson #2: We talked of the necessity that we strive to attain spiritual maturity (**2 Pet. 1:5-11**: “His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, 4 by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith...”).
 - C. Lesson #3: We saw that Christians must turn away from “worldliness” and “keep oneself unspotted from the world” (Jas. 1:27) in order to please God (Jas. 4:4).
3. **3** We must all realize baptism is not the end of Christianity, but the beginning (**Rom. 6:12-14**: “Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. 13 And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. 14 For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.”).
4. To be saved eternally a baptized believer must remain “faithful unto death” (Rev. 2:10) in order to receive “the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls.” (1 Pet. 1:9); 1 Cor. 15:58; **2 Tim. 4:7-8**: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.”).
 - A. At the same time we must be careful not to equate faithfulness with sinless perfection.
 - B. Even after baptism we will sin, but God has a “second law of pardon” (**1 Jn. 2:1-2**: “My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”):
 - (1) Admit our sin (**1 Jn. 1:8**: “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”),
 - (2) Confess our sins to God and repent of it (**1 Jn. 1:9**: “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”; **Acts 8:22**: “Repent therefore of this your wickedness and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you.”).
5. **4** Today, let’s consider three major areas where we must be faithful to God: worshiping God, moral purity, and bearing fruit.

II. DISCUSSION:

I. **5** Worshiping God:

- A. As a Christian we must be faithful in worshiping God (**Acts 2:42**: “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.”; **1 Pet. 2:5**: “you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”).
- B. Though not all worship is restricted to it, we are to come together as a church to properly worship God (**1 Cor. 11:17-18**: “come together as a church”).
 - (1) The Bible says we are not to forsake the “assembling of ourselves together” (Heb. 10:25).
 - (2) To be a faithful Christian one must regularly attend the services of the church. To forsake (no good reason; constant challenge!) those assemblies is a S-I-N! (**Heb. 10:24-31**; “The Starbreather”).
- C. We must also worship God as He has designated:
 - (1) We cannot worship God in just any old way we please, but we “*must*” worship in “*spirit and truth*”! Jn. 4:24
 - (2) To worship in “*truth*” is to worship God according to the right standard...the standard of truth—the Word of God (Jn. 17:17; Matt. 15:9: traditions of man result in vain worship!).
 - (3) To worship “*in spirit*” is to put our heart into our worship with all sincerity and zeal (attitude)(Mal. 1:13, 10: **v. 13**: “Oh, what a weariness!” And you sneer at it.”; **v. 10**: “Who is there even among you who would not shut the doors...I have no pleasure in you.”).
- D. Let’s examine the acts of worship revealed in the New Testament from these two standpoints: “*in spirit and truth*”: Why do we do what we do every Sunday? **1 Pet. 4:11**; **Col. 3:17**
 - (1) **6** The Lord’s Supper:
 - (a) **Elements:** (**1 Cor. 11:23-26**; **v. 26**: “For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes.”; no leaven!).
 - (b) **Time:** (**Acts 20:7**: “Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread,”; ****How many “first day of the week” are there? One every week!****).
 - (c) **Manner:** (i.e., worshiping “*in spirit*”)(**1 Cor. 11:27-29**: “Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. 28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29 For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body.”).
 - (i) We are to take the bread and cup “*in remembrance of Me [Jesus]*” (**1 Cor. 11:24-25**, see v. 26 above).
 - (ii) The Lord’s supper is a memorial of Christ’s death, a communing with Him. Our minds must be focused upon Jesus while we partake of the symbolic.
 - (2) **7** Giving of our means:
 - (a) **Time:** All Christians are to give weekly (**1 Cor. 16:2**: “On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper,” NASV).
 - (b) **Manner:** Our giving is to be done with purpose (**2 Cor. 9:7**: “So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.”).

- (c) **Amount:** How much should we give? The NT sets no specific amount or percentage of our income (i.e., no “tithing”).
 - (i) As we have prospered (1 Cor. 16:2).
 - (ii) Liberally (Rom. 12:8).
 - (iii) Sacrificially (Mk. 12:41-44: widow’s two mites; “she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood”). **Give something!**
 - (d) **Willingly:** (2 Cor. 9:7: “God loves a cheerful giver”; Lk. 6:38: “Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.”).
 - (e) Most of us are so very blessed here in the U.S. God gave His Son, and the Son gave us His life. Surely we can give generously of the temporal things God has given us (explain ramifications insofar as choosing a career, budget, etc.).
- (3) **8 Preaching and teaching:**
- (a) **Steadfastly:** Notice the early church (Acts 2:42; 8:4).
 - (b) **Manner:**
 - (i) ****** Paul gives the prescription for sound preaching in 2 Tim. 4:2: “Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.”
 - (ii) The “word” is to be preached, not opinions of men, not a social or political gospel!
 - (iii) Notice preaching has negative aspects: “reprove, rebuke, exhort.” Some toes are bound to be stepped on! I don’t relish such, but we can’t hold back!
 - (iv) Jesus and the preachers in the Bible never held back from rebuking error and telling people what they needed to hear:
 - ☛ Jesus: Matt. 15:1-9; vv. 12-14: “Then His disciples came and said to Him, ‘Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?’ 13 But He answered and said, ‘Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. 14 Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch.’”
 - ☛ ****Apostles: Acts 20:26-27:** “Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. 27 For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.”
 - (v) ****** Given and received in love (Eph. 4:15: “speaking the truth in love”).
 - (vi) Let us not get angry with the preacher but accept the Word and make changes where they are needed (Psa. 141:5: “Let the righteous strike me; It shall be a kindness. And let him rebuke me; It shall be as excellent oil; Let my head not refuse it.”).
 - (vii) This requires paying close attention to the lessons! Come prepared to worship!
- (4) **9 Prayer:**
- (a) **Manner:**
 - (i) Offered to God through Christ (Jn. 15:16: “ye shall ask of the Father in my name...”).
 - (ii) Offered in faith (Jas. 1:6: “ask in faith, with no doubting...”).

(b) **Attitude:**

- (i) Offered according to God's will (**1 Jn. 5:14**: "if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.").
- (ii) Must be offered in the proper spiritual condition (**1 Jn. 3:22**: "And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight."; **Jn. 9:31**: "Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth.").
- (iii) With thankfulness: **1 Thess. 5:18**: "in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."; count our blessings! **Phil. 4:6**: "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;"
- (c) **Time**: Offered often (**1 Thess. 5:17**; cf. **Lk. 18:1-8**); never can pray too much!
- (d) Prayer is not simply pious wishing. God does answer our prayers if we meet His conditions, but He does not always answer "yes" or in the way we may desire; but always in a way that's in our best interest.

(5) **10 Singing:**(a) **Kind:**

- (i) God only authorized only one kind of music—vocal, not instrumental (**Col. 3:16**: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.").
- (ii) **11** God only authorized certain types of songs (**Eph. 5:19**: "speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord,").
- (iii) "Preacher, you're making a 'mountain' out of a 'molehill'!" **Heb. 8:5**: "See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain."; **1 Pet. 4:11**; **Lev. 10:1-2**

(b) **Manner:**

- (i) Our singing is directed in two directions simultaneously:
 - ✓ "singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (**Col. 3:16**).
 - ✓ "teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" (**Col. 3:16**).
- (ii) Singing must be from the heart (**Eph. 5:19**: "making melody in your heart to the Lord"; **Mal. 1:13**: "Oh, what a weariness ! And you sneer at it,").
- (iii) Remember worship is showing respect and reverence for God. Our attitude should be respectful during the assembly and show itself by thoughts, actions and even our dress (**Mal. 1:8**). Singing can "make or break" a worship service! Worship is not entertainment, but something we do!

2. **12 Moral purity:**

- A. We live in a world of immorality. ****Alcohol** is the drink of the day; ****murder** (abortion) has been legalized by our Supreme Court; ****gambling** is legalized and encouraged; ****prostitution** (sometimes legal!) is widespread and often overlooked ("escort services"); ****premarital** and

extramarital sex abounds; ******lying is justified; ******homosexuality is glorified; same-sex marriage; transgenders using lady's room; etc. No matter where we live or what we do for a living we live right smack dab in the middle of a moral sewer!

- B. But the worst problem is not that we live in an immoral world, but that we become immune to it and condone such with our silence! Political correctness is a powerful influence!
- C. **13** Christians are to live morally pure! **1 Tim. 5:22:** "...keep yourself pure."; **Titus 2:11-12:** "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, **12** teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age,"
- D. ****** Sin is pleasurable, but deceitful (Heb. 11:25; **Heb. 3:13:** "but exhort one another daily, while it is called 'Today,' lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.").
- E. ****** Sin isn't worth it because it brings death! Rom. 6:23
 - (1) Galatians 5:19-21 lists some specific examples of ungodliness. Those who commit such things "will not inherit the kingdom of God." (Gal. 5:21) Playing around with sin is playing with fire!
 - (2) Sinners will not abide forever! **1 Jn. 2:15-17:** "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. **16** For all that is in the world — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life — is not of the Father but is of the world. **17** And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever."
- F. ****** Sensuality is all around us, it is piped into our minds by TV, radio, and the internet. Sensuality is a constant threat to destroy our purity. We are confronted daily with pornography, filthy talk, suggestive language and behavior on TV shows and commercials; all around is indecent dress, and a multitude of opportunities to sin.
 - (1) Don't become a slave to sin! **Rom. 6:16:** "Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?"
 - (2) Resist temptations and "Abstain from all appearance of evil." (1 Thess. 5:22; 1 Cor. 10:13)

3. **14** Bearing fruit:

- A. An apple tree that bears no apples is useless! ******A Christian who does not bear fruit is also useless and unfaithful! **Jn. 15:2:** "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit."
- B. To bear fruit is to:
 - ☛ Lead others to Christ: 1 Tim. 2:4
 - ☛ Restore unfaithful Christians to faithfulness: **Gal. 6:1:** "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted."
 - ☛ Practice undefiled religion: Jas. 1:27
 - ☛ Share with those in need: Matt. 25:31-46; **Heb. 13:16:** "But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."; **1 Jn. 3:17:** "But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?"; Acts 20:35
 - ☛ Be a good citizen: 1 Pet. 2:13-17 (pay taxes, honor/respect authority, vote, serve, pray!)

- ☛ Be a good husband, wife, child, parent: Eph. 5:25; Titus 2:4; Col. 3:20; Eph. 6:1-4 (Be careful who you marry! Cherish and love your children! **Prov. 22:6**: “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.”)
- ☛ Live righteously: Gal. 5:22-23; Matt. 5:13 (You are the only Bible most people will ever read!)
- ☛ Be zealous of good works: Titus 2:14 (**1 Pet. 4:16**: “glorify God in this name”)
- ☛ Be a worker for the Lord: 1 Cor. 15:58 (We all have something we can do! Eph. 4:16)

C. Our responsibility is in proportion to our ability (Matt. 25:14-30). We must, without fear, use our abilities and opportunities to serve God. Judgment will be based upon it (Matt. 25:31-46)!

III. CONCLUSION: 15

1. Many start the Christian life, but few finish it!
2. There are many reasons why Christians become unfaithful.
 - A. Departures are normally gradual.
 - B. Don't believe it can't happen to you! **1 Cor. 10:12**: “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.”
3. Let us be checking constantly to see if we are slipping (2 Cor. 13:5).
4. The picture of an unfaithful Christian is not pretty! 2 Pet. 2:20-22
5. When we do sin and become unfaithful, we can be forgiven.
 - A. Repent of sins (Acts 8:22).
 - B. Pray for forgiveness (Acts 8:22; 1 Jn. 1:9).
 - C. If it is a public sin (known by others), it should be confessed publicly (Jas. 5:16).
6. Let us strive ever to be faithful, because it is obvious that a Christian can be lost! **Heb. 10:39**: “But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.”

Adapted from: *Growing in Grace and Knowledge of the Lord*, by Johnie Edwards, Titus Edwards, Johnie P. Edwards, Edwards Publishing, pp. 11-14)