

FAITHFULNESS
Colossians 1:21-23

I. INTRODUCTION: I

1. **2** Several weeks ago we began a 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)
 - (1) **Lesson #1** we established that all Christians must put “first things first” (Matt. 6:33).
 - (2) **Lesson #2** the necessity that we strive to attain spiritual maturity (2 Pet. 1:5-11).
 - (3) **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.
2. **3** We must realize baptism isn’t the **end** of Christianity, it’s the **beginning** (Rom. 6:1-4, 12-13, 16-18).

Rom. 6:1-4: “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? 2 Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? 3 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

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.”

Rom. 6:16-18: “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? 17 But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. 18 And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.”
3. ****** To be saved eternally a baptized believer must remain faithful: **Col. 1:21-23a:** “And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled 22 in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight — 23 **if indeed you continue in the faith**, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel...”; 1 Cor. 15:58; Rev. 2:10
 - A. ****** 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. 2 And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.”
 - (1) Admit our sin: admitting our sin to ourselves is nearly important as admitting it to God! **1 Jn. 1:8:** “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”
 - (2) Confess 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.”
4. **4** Let’s go God’s word and consider **three** major areas where we must be faithful to God (**Prov. 20:6:** “Most men will proclaim each his own goodness, but who can find a faithful man?”).

II. DISCUSSION:**I. 5 Worshiping God:**

A. Every Christian 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.” (Note: 4 of the 5 channels of worship are mentioned!)

I 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 “when you come together in one place” as the local church; we are to come together as a church to properly worship God:

I Cor. 11:17-18: “Now in giving these instructions I do not praise you, since you come together not for the better but for the worse. 18 For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it.”

(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 those assemblies is a S-I-N! (Heb. 10:23-31).

C. We must also worship God as He has designated (**Jn. 4:24:** “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”).

(1) We cannot worship God in just any old way we please, but we “must” worship in “spirit and truth”! (Matt. 15:9).

(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; Col. 3:17).

(3) To worship “in spirit” is to put our heart into our worship with all sincerity and with meaning (Attitude)(Mal. 1:13, 10).

(4) If we don't have an intense desire to assemble with the saints it is a sign of serious spiritual problems!

D. **6** Let's examine the acts of worship revealed in the New Testament from these two standpoints: “in spirit and truth”:

(1) ** **The Lord's Supper:**

(a) **Elements:** **I Cor. 11:23-26:** “For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; 24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’ 25 In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.’ 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.”

(i) The occasion was Jesus' last observance of the Passover: Matt. 26:17-30

(ii) No leaven was allowed during the Passover meal: Ex. 12:15 (Therefore, the elements would be unleavened bread and “fruit of the vine”; unfermented!).

(b) **Time:** **Acts 20:7:** “Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.” (cf. **Acts 2:42:** “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.”; cf. Acts 2:1; Lev. 23:15-16)

- (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 NOT to take the bread and cup “in an unworthy manner”! We are never “worthy” in an absolute sense. We partake in a worthy manner when we:
- ☛ “examine” ourselves (Not others! Honest self-reflection about ourselves and our relationship with the Lord as Savior, etc.).
 - ☛ Discern “the Lord’s body”: not discriminating between the Supper and a common meal, not appreciating the Supper’s great significance as a memorial to our Savior, to remember His death on the cross.
- (ii) We take the bread and cup “in remembrance of Me [Jesus]” (1 Cor. 11:24-25).
- (iii) The Lord’s supper is a **memorial** of Christ’s death, a communing with Him. Our minds must be focused upon Him and His suffering.
- (2) **** Giving:**
- (a) **All** Christians are to give weekly (not weakly!): **1 Cor. 16:1-2:** “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: 2 On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.”
- (b) How often does the “first day of the week” roll around?
- (c) Note: every member is to give: “let each of you,” that’s everyone! Mk. 12:42-44
- (d) 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.”).
- (e) How much? The New Testament sets a very specific amount we are to give:
- (i) “as he may prosper” (1 Cor. 16:2),
 - (ii) “with liberality” (Rom. 12:8),
 - (iii) “as he purposes in his heart” (2 Cor. 9:7),
 - (iv) “cheerful” (2 Cor. 9:7),
 - (v) “out of her poverty” (i.e., sacrificially; Mk. 12:41-44).
- (f) Willingly (2 Cor. 9:7; Lk. 6:38).
- (g) Most of us are so very blessed (90%!). God gave His Son, and the Son gave us His life. Surely, we can give generously of the temporal things God has given us.
- (3) **** Preaching/teaching:**
- (a) Notice the early church (**Acts 2:42:** “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.”).
- (b) Paul gives the prescription for sound preaching: **2 Tim. 4:1-2:** “I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: 2 Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.”
- (i) The Word is to be preached, not opinions of men, not a social or political gospel!

- (ii) Notice the negative aspects of preaching: *reproving* and *rebuking*; when the gospel is properly preached some toes will be stepped on! Sound preaching is not mean-spirited! But it is “cut to the heart” type preaching! Acts 2:27; 7:54
- (iii) Jesus and the preachers in the Bible were never afraid of rebuking error and telling people what they needed to hear (**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.”).
- (c) Manner: Sound preaching should “step on toes,” but it is given and should be received in love (**Eph. 4:15**: “speaking the truth in love”; **Gal. 4:16**: “Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?”).
 - (i) When any preacher speaks “the truth in love”; even if his words “step on our toes”; don’t get angry but accept the Word and make changes where they are needed.
 - (ii) This requires paying close attention to the lessons!
- (4) **7** Prayer:
 - (a) Offered to God through Christ (**Jn. 15:16**: “...whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.”).
 - (b) Offered in faith (**Jas. 1:6**: “But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.”).
 - (c) Offered according to God’s will (**1 Jn. 5:14**: “Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.”).
 - (d) Offered in the proper spiritual condition (**Jn. 9:31**: “Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him.”).
 - (e) Offered often (1 Thess. 5:17; cf. Lk. 18:1-8).
 - (f) Prayer is very inclusive: **1 Tim. 2:1**: “Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men,”; **Matt. 5:44**: “...pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,”
 - (g) Prayer is not simply pious wishing (Jas. 5:16). God does answer our prayers if we meet His conditions, but He does not always answer “yes” or in the way we may desire. How’s your prayer life? 1 Thess. 5:17
- (5) ****** Singing:
 - (a) God only authorized 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.”).
 - (b) 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.”).
 - (c) Manner of singing
 - (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”).

- (d) Worship is showing respect and reverence for God; our attitude should be respectful during the assembly and shown by our dress, thoughts, & actions (Mal. 1).
- (i) Worship is not entertainment!
- (ii) We are **participants**, not spectators!

2.8 Moral purity:

A. We live in a world saturated with immorality.

- (1) Alcohol is the drink of the day.
- (2) The “numbers racket” is now legalized gambling sanctioned by the government (i.e., lottery).
- (3) Prostitution is widespread and legal in some jurisdictions (or just conveniently overlooked!).
- (4) Fornication (i.e., premarital and extramarital sex) abounds! Pornography!
- (5) Lying is justified!
- (6) Homosexuality and all manner of sexual perversion (e.g., transgenderism) is not just accepted it is glorified! In fact, people are being persecuted for using the “wrong” pronouns! *Equality Act*

B. ** The problem is not that Christians live in an immoral world, but that many of us practice and condone immoral (at least questionable!) things ourselves!

- (1) 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,”

- (2) ** The threefold nature of sin:

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.”

- (3) Galatians 5:19-21 lists some specific examples of ungodliness (“adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, 21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like;”); those that commit such things “will not inherit the kingdom of God.” (Gal. 5:21)
- (4) Sensuality is all around us, it is piped into our minds by TV, radio, internet, etc. and is a constant threat to destroy our purity.
 - (a) We are confronted daily with pornography, filthy talk, suggestive language and lewd, suggestive behavior on TV shows and commercials.
 - (b) Inundated by indecent dress, and a multitude of opportunities to sin.
 - (c) ** Let us resist these temptations and “Abstain from all appearance of evil.” (1 Thess. 5:22)
 - (d) God expects it! Yea, He demands it!

2 Cor. 6:16-7:1: “...God has said:

‘I will dwell in them

And walk among them.
I will be their God,
And they shall be My people.'

17 Therefore

'Come out from among them
And be separate, says the Lord.
Do not touch what is unclean,
And I will receive you.'
18 'I will be a Father to you,
And you shall be My sons and daughters,
Says the LORD Almighty.'

7:1 Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting **holiness** in the fear of God."

3. **9** Bearing fruit:

A. An apple tree that bears no apples is useless! A Christian who bears no spiritual fruit is also useless and unfaithful!

Jn. 15:1-8: "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. 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. 3 You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. 4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. 5 I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. 8 By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples."

B. ******To bear fruit is to:

- (1) ****** Lead others to Christ (**2 Tim. 2:2:** "And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."),
- (2) ****** Restore unfaithful Christians to faithfulness (**Gal. 6:1-2:** "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. 2 Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."),
- (3) ****** Live righteously (**Gal. 5:22-24:** "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. 24 And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires."),
- (4) ****** Be zealous of good works (Titus 2:14; **Matt. 25:31-46**),
- (5) ****** Be a worker for the Lord (in the church): **Eph. 4:16:** "...the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love."; **1 Cor. 15:58:** "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."). **We all have something we can do!**

C. ****** Our responsibility is in proportion to our ability (Matt. 25:14-30; **v. 15:** "to each according to his own ability"). We must, without fear, use our abilities and opportunities to serve God; our judgment will be based upon it!

III. CONCLUSION: 10

1. There are many reasons why Christians become unfaithful; most departures are normally gradual.

A. Therefore, let us be checking constantly to see if we are slipping (2 Cor. 13:5).

B. ****** The picture of an unfaithful Christian is not pretty! **2 Pet. 2:20-22:** *“For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. 21 For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. 22 But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: ‘A dog returns to his own vomit,’ and, ‘a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire.’”*

2. When we do sin and become unfaithful, we can be forgiven (aka; God’s second law of pardon).

A. Confess our sin(s) to ourselves (1 Jn. 1:8) and to God (1 Jn. 1:9).

B. Repent (Acts 8:22).

C. If our sin is a public sin (known by others), it should be confessed publicly (Jas. 5:16).

3. ****** Let us strive ever to be faithful, because it is obvious that a Christian can be lost!

Heb. 10:35-39: *“Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. 36 For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise:*

*37 ‘For yet a little while,
And He who is coming will come and will not tarry.
38 Now the just shall live by faith;
But if anyone draws back,
My soul has no pleasure in him.’*

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)