

Sunday, November 3, 2024 am

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE FAITHFUL? (Concerning First Principles)

Often times when we give the steps of salvation, we will mention there are 6 steps – H, B, R, C, be Baptized. We then add a 6th step – be faithful. I describe it this way because the first 5 steps lead TO salvation, while that final step is about maintaining our salvation. It is that final step that I wish to address in this lesson.

I identify this as a “first principles” lesson because it is something one MUST understand when they obey the gospel. There needs to be an understanding that being baptized into Christ is only the beginning of your Christian life – cf. Galatians 3:27. NOTICE that when you obey the gospel you, “put on Christ” meaning He becomes the influence for “the new you”. 2 Corinthians 5:17 notes, *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.* Consider also Romans 6:3-4 – *buried with Him through baptism... raised... so that we should walk in newness of life.*

Let us consider “faithfulness” in light of this understanding.

I. What is faithfulness?

- a. According to AHD, “1. Adhering firmly and devotedly, as to a person, cause or idea; loyal. 3. Responsible; conscientious.”
- b. Biblically, Baker’s Bible dictionary: *Maintaining faith or allegiance; showing a strong sense of duty or conscientiousness.* To be trustworthy (cf. 1 Corinthians 7:25 – NKJV), reliable, loyal, to have confidence in, etc.
- c. The root word, both in Hebrew and Greek is tied to the word faith. And **when it comes to the way we live our lives they are inseparable.** If we have genuine faith, we will be faithful.
 - i. A great illustration of this is Abraham. He is known for his faith and faithfulness. Romans 4:3, Galatians 3:6 both of which address his faith (trust) in God’s promises (from Genesis 15:6). James 2:23 – his actions were a PRODUCT of his faith. He was faithful. That is demonstrated in Hebrews 11:8 – *By faith Abraham obeyed...; 11:17 – when tested he offered up Issaac ... his only begotten son.*
 - ii. James 2:17-20 illustrates this. James makes it clear noting that faith without works (action) is dead.
 - iii. Even Ephesians 2:8-10 emphasizes that we are created for good works. And Paul ties it to our saving faith.
- d. God is faithful – if we want to learn what it means to be faithful, consider God.
 - i. He is continually described as “faithful” - 2 Tim. 2:13 – He remains faithful, even when we are faithless, 1 Corinthians 1:9, 10:13; Heb. 10:23 – He who promised is faithful; Hebrews 2:17 – Jesus is a faithful and merciful High Priest; 2 Thess. 3:3 – the Lord is faithful who will establish you; etc.
 - ii. How is God faithful? We know that He keeps His word and cares about us. He keeps His promises and covenants – Deuteronomy 7:9, *“Therefore know that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments;”* David would say in Psalm 36:5, *Your mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens; Your faithfulness reaches to the clouds.*
 - iii. He hears our prayers, knows how to deliver us, does not lie, etc.
 - iv. Even His word is described as faithful – Titus 1:9, 3:8, 1 Timothy 3:1, 4:9, 2 Timothy 2:11.

v. Hebrews 10:23, *Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.*

e. Described in scripture – Matthew 28:19-20 – teaching them to “observe all things commanded.”

II. **Why do we need to remain faithful?**

a. *Because it is commanded* – 1 Corinthians 4:2 – it is required of stewards...; Cf. Matthew 25:14-30 – the parable of the talents. Both obedient stewards were called faithful and rewarded (25:21, 23). Hebrews 10:38 – notes that the just shall live by faith, BUT if anyone draws back...

b. *Because our salvation depends on it* - Revelation 2:10, Hebrews 5:9, Matthew 10:22, 24:13.

c. *Because unfaithfulness can cause us to lose our salvation.* The scriptures teach that we can forfeit our salvation.

i. Hebrews 3:12 – beware, lest there be an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. NOTE: Why such warnings if you cannot forfeit your salvation.

ii. 2 Peter 2:20-22 – clearly describes one in Christ who has departed

iii. Galatians 5:4 – you have fallen from grace

iv. 1 Corinthians 10:12 warns us that we can “fall” thinking we stand.

v. James 5:19-20 – if one wanders from the truth – save a soul from death.

vi. Consider 1 John 1:9, Acts 8:22 – passages that instruct believers who have sinned. Why, if we cannot lose our salvation?

d. Being faithful means we continue in the faith.

III. **How Can I Know I Am Faithful?**

a. ***Am I living a holy life?*** 1 Peter 1:13-16, Hebrews 12:14 – pursue peace and holiness... NOTE: Both of these passages, and many others are imperative verbs – meaning an expressed command.

b. ***Am I striving to obey God in everything?*** Acts 5:29. You can know you are faithful when you CHOOSE to serve God, even when the choice is difficult. Consider 1 Samuel 15:22-23 after Saul did not obey God (he partially did what he was told, but that is inadequate).

c. ***Am I walking in the light?*** 1 John 1:5-10 – it is in His light that fellowship with Him is found. That is what pleases Him. I need to let His word guide my life.

d. ***Am I walking in love?*** Ephesians 5:1-2. The Bible continually emphasizes the importance of love – EVERY relationship. John 13:34-35 – a new commandment – love one another.

e. ***Am I growing in the faith?*** Hebrews 5:12-6:3, 2 Peter 3:17-18. Is my knowledge of Him greater today than before. Do I have more confidence now?

f. ***Am I walking in good works?*** Ephesians 2:10 – we are His workmanship. Titus 2:14 describes us as ***“His own special people, zealous for good works.”***

g. ***What do I do when I sin?*** How do I address sin? Do I despise it? What steps am I taking to overcome it, especially in those areas where I struggle? 1 John 1:9, 2 Corinthians 7:10-11 – this is what true repentance looks like.

h. ***Can God depend on me?*** That is really what faithfulness boils down to. Consider Job 1:8 – ***“Then the LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?” (Also 2:3).***

i. ***There are many examples of faithfulness in scripture*** – Abraham, Moses, David, Josiah, Paul, Peter. Study their lives and you will see what it means to be faithful.

Let us understand that when obey the gospel, that is just the beginning. The act of baptism put us into Christ. But we MUST understand what that means. We now belong to Him. We are His servants. Will we remain faithful? He will accept nothing less. Think about it!