

Faithfulness

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[0:00] Psalm 12 verse 1, Psalm of David.

Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth, for the faithful fail from among the children of men. They speak vanity, every one with his neighbour, with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak.

The Lord shall cut off all flattering lips and the tongue that speaketh proud things. Who have said, with our tongue will we prevail, our lips are our own. Who is Lord over us, for the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy.

Now will I arise, saith the Lord. I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him. The words of the Lord are pure words, as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.

Thou shalt keep them, O Lord. Thou shalt preserve them from this generation forever. The wicked walk on every side when the vilest men are exalted.

[1:19] Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth, for the faithful fail from among the children of men. Let us pray. Lord, dear God, we thank you for this word. We tremble at it, Lord.

We take it seriously. We want to take it in. Help us by your spirit, Lord, to heed it and obey it. That this will not just be token words, Lord, but real and personal words that we would want to do your word.

In Jesus' name, amen. Faithfulness. The godly man ceaseth, the faithful fail. Faithfulness is important.

It's sadly lacking. Faithfulness is lacking. And it's lacking just in the world in general. In the world in general. Humans have a powerful tendency to be faithful to what they think is truly important.

If you think it's important enough, then you'll be faithful. Be faithful to your family name. You don't want your family name dishonoured. Faithfulness. To your spouse.

[2:25] To friendships. To your employer. To your school. The team you support. Perhaps the brand of car that you drive. You're faithful to that.

Faithful to that which is important to you. Just in natural terms. Faithfulness is a fruit of the spirit. Faithfulness is authenticity.

It's about being the real deal. It's the hallmark of a true Christian. Faithfulness. Faithfulness is being able to hold your course. To do that which is right. To do that which you said you were going to do.

There is no shortcut. A wife who is 85% faithful to her husband is not faithful at all. So said Van Saffner, an old time preacher.

There is no such thing as part time loyalty to Jesus Christ. Look at the men of God and women of God through history. In the Old Testament we see Noah, Abraham, Elijah, Elisha, Joshua, David, Daniel and his three friends.

[3:26] And many others. Of Moses it says in Numbers 12 verse 7. In part it reads, My servant Moses is faithful in all mine house. Of Daniel it says in Daniel 6 verse 4.

Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom. But they could find none occasion nor fault for as much as he was faithful.

Neither was there any error or fault found in him. In the New Testament we see the disciples. We see Paul, we see Timothy, Titus, many others.

The Lord Jesus of course is our ultimate and absolute supreme example of faithfulness. That model and the Christ-like spirit should be in us too as God's people.

Faithfulness is a feature of the Christ ones, of the Christians. Faithful is our God to us. And we should be faithful as believers to him.

[4:27] And one of the biggest problems in our world, in our society, is faithlessness. Faithlessness or unfaithfulness. Unfaithfulness. We see that in marriages in all kinds of places in the world today.

And a Christian must always be faithful. As a child, spouse, parent, friend, as an employee. Faithful to the contracts, to the promises we make.

Faithfulness is a character trait of one who others can confide in and trust. It should be a characteristic of we that are God's people. Unfaithfulness is a common failure today in many places.

And it leads to misery. As the world will press us into its mould. Unfaithfulness is a great threat. A great danger. That we slip into that. But faithfulness is something that blessings flow from. God promises much for the faithful. And it should be something that should characterise our lives as God's people.

[5:33] God is faithful. He keeps his promises to us. We referred to it this morning. How he's always faithful. He's always there for us. And we should want to be faithful unto him.

Do we walk faithfully? Are we living in faithful Christian living? Faithful. The word means constant. Reliable. Dependable. Trustworthy. The faithful one is one you can depend upon.

And I know as employers we'd be looking for people like that, wouldn't we? If you wanted to think, considering who you're going to employ. You want someone who's going to be faithful. Someone who's going to be trustworthy. God is looking for faithful men.

God is looking for faithful ones. The faithful ones. We see that in the book of Nehemiah. From verse 13 of chapter 13. Nehemiah 13.13. Nehemiah says, I made treasurers, for they were counted faithful.

And we see that in, there was a couple of other references I didn't jot down. But in the book of Nehemiah, it was the faithful ones who were appointed tasks to do. And I know we see through the book of Nehemiah, the various families had different sections of the wall.

[6:38] They had to be faithful to their allotted tasks, to their allotted responsibilities. And I know Julie was sharing with me how she was reading of an earlier book in the Bible where it was talking about the tabernacle, where all the different families had a certain responsibility to do with the tabernacle.

And they had to be faithful to that role that they had to play. A lot of tasks that was given to them. There was a job for all to do. And it's like that in the Christian walk, isn't it? In the church of God. That's how it's meant to be. Someone said, you cannot see faith, but you can see the footprints of the faithful. That's true, isn't it? The footprints of the faithful.

They go ahead of us. We want to walk in their tread. Consider the cost of faithfulness. The cost of faithfulness. It costs to be faithful. It cost Abraham, as he was willing to yield up his only son. It cost Esther, as she was willing to risk her life. It cost Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, to use their, not their Hebrew names, but the names that the heathens gave them.

[7:47] These three children, Hebrew children, Hebrew young men, were put into the fiery furnace. Their faith, their faithfulness cost something. It cost Stephen death by stoning.

It cost Paul his life. Now, does it cost you to be faithful? Does it cost you to be faithful to your Lord and King? What would you be willing to die for?

This is something that is true in many countries around our world today. It's been said that over 400 million Christians live under 66 governments who restrict religious freedom and persecute believers.

You know, there's some folk here who are down at a couple of local shopping centres the last weekend, the last few days, and witnessing for Christ, giving out tracts. It wouldn't be allowed in some countries.

You wouldn't have that opportunity. Why aren't you seizing that opportunity while you have the opportunity? 66 governments who restrict religious freedom and persecute believers.

[8:48] Every year, an average of 200,000 Christians are killed for their faith. We see there's material on the back there from a concern that's sharing the news from such persecuted countries.

We need to be informed about that. We need to be challenged about that in our own lives. We need to be ones who could be counted faithful, even if it were, to be faithful under fire.

Faithful under fire. That's what the military has to be. I know Brother Ian can testify of that, having served in the military. You've got to be faithful under fire.

Faithful when the chips are down, when everything's against you. As the brave martyrs of old, they did not flinch at that burning stake. They went to their dying bread in faithfulness.

As we read in Revelation 2 verse 10, it says there of the suffering of these ones referred to, that some will be tried, they'll be cast into prison, they'll have tribulation.

[9:46] And Revelation 2 verse 10, in part it says, Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. There's some men and women of God who have been just that.

Faithful unto death. In some countries around our world, Africa, the Middle East, in the Soviet countries at least of old, there was much blood shed by believers who were willing to be faithful under fire.

And he strengthens us through our trials. We may have nothing such like to stand up to, but we need to stand firm despite the pressure that is applied against us. Someone put it like this, that whoever desires to walk with God, walks right into the crucible.

We walk right into the crucible, where the fire is, where the testing is. Stay faithful, whatever the cost. Here's a quote. Our troops in Afghanistan must stay loyal to their commanders under hostile fire.

And we must stay loyal to Christ under growing hostility, from militant atheism, aggressive temptation to sin, whether we're experienced veterans, near recruits, or still considering enlisting with Jesus.

[11:01] We all need help to be faithful under fire. Faithful under fire. Think of the apostles. Now, some of this is not confirmed history, but it's what we've heard through records of history.

Certainly, the majority, if not all of the apostles, suffered severe persecution for Christ. Consider this. Peter. And again, these are what is understood to be the case, but it's not necessarily confirmed.

Peter was crucified upside down in Rome after much outreach. James the Elder was beheaded by Herod for his fearless preaching.

John, after a life of evangelism, some say he was boiled in oil, but that did not kill him, and then he was banished in exile in Patmos. Andrew was crucified in Greece while spreading the gospel there. Philip died as a martyr in Asia Minor after preaching the gospel to the Gauls. Nathaniel preached the gospel in India and Armenia before being flayed alive and beheaded.

[12:11] Thomas established churches throughout Babylonia and India before being axed to death. Matthew was burnt to death while preaching the gospel in Ethiopia. James the Younger was crucified while evangelizing in Egypt.

June preached the gospel through Syria and Persia where he was finally martyred. Simon the Zealot preached the word through Syria and Mesopotamia and was sawn in half in Persia.

And Matthias was crucified on a missionary outreach in the Crimea. These are the accounts of the men of God that our Lord appointed as his disciples of the first twelve.

Think of it, of their testimony. Do we walk in their tread? Do we walk in their footprints? There was a goldsmith purifying gold at a white hot fire at the furnace.

And someone asked him, how do you know when the gold is pure? How do you know when that metal is purified? He says, when I can see my face in it.

[13:12] Sometimes God does the same with us, doesn't he? He allows the heat to be turned up. He allows that crucible time.

He allows that furnace time. That trial, that testing. So that our sin can be burned away. So that it can, we can reflect his character more clearly.

Faithfulness costs. Faithfulness costs. Faithfulness has a blessing to it. Faithfulness brings blessings. There's a great value in faithfulness.

In Proverbs 28 verse 20, it says, A faithful man shall abound with blessings. But he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent.

A faithful man shall abound with blessings. Are you a faithful man? A faithful woman. God's blessings are promised to you.

[14:14] Now that, just to couch that, that's not necessarily in material terms. God's blessings can be quite immaterial. They can be quite essential and eternal.

And everlasting benefits of blessings. But God's blessings are promised. It says it will overflow for you. It will abound for you. His blessings for you. They're promised for the faithful.

Not for the unfaithful. Not for the inconsistent. But for the faithful. It says in Psalm 31, 23. O love the Lord, all ye his saints.

For the Lord preserveth the faithful. And plentifully rewardeth the proud doer. He preserves the faithful. Think of it, through history there's been faithful men and women about the work of God. Faithful men and women. In faith they served God. They followed him. Charles Spurgeon started his ministry by passing out trunks and teaching a Sunday school class as a teenager.

[15:18] And God blessed the ministry that he gave. He was invited to preach in obscure places in the countryside. And he used every opportunity to honour the Lord.

He wrote, Faithfulness.

Faithfulness, brothers and sisters. There was an elderly lady crippled with arthritis. She used to hobble to the services of this church on crutches. Not this church, but this is an account I read. An elderly lady hobbling along, crippled with arthritis. Coming to church services faithfully was a great ordeal for her. She had considerable pain. A friend observed and commented about her regular and faithful attendance.

And asked her, How do you manage to be at every service? Her answer was, My heart gets there first and my old legs just followed after.

[16:29] That's what we need to be like, isn't it? Our heart. To serve God, to be in fellowship. Faithfulness is required.

Faithfulness is something God commands. We've considered the cost of faithfulness. It might mean fire for you. It might mean trial. We've seen the blessings of faithfulness.

The blessings are promised by God. But you will abound with blessings if you are a faithful one. Consider the dimension of faithfulness. The faithfulness is not necessarily in the big, obvious things. The faithfulness is in the trivial. The trivial, the small things. We read in Luke 16.10, He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much.

It's a truth there, isn't it? Faithful in the little things. Are we faithful with those things that maybe the others may not even see that we do?

[17:38] Are we faithful when no one's watching? Are we faithful with those insignificant responsibilities that we could carry out?

Friends, we need to be, don't we? We need to be. Here's a story that illustrates that just in a practical sense. There was a stormy night one day at a lobby of a small hotel.

And an elderly couple came into this hotel. And the clerk was there at the counter. And they asked for a room. And he explained that they were all filled.

All the hotels in the town were filled. And he said, But I can't send a fine couple like you out into the rain. Would you be willing to sleep in my room? The couple hesitated.

But the clerk insisted. And the next morning when the man paid his bill, He said, You're the kind of man who should be managing the best hotel in the United States. Someday I'll build you one.

[18:35] And the clerk smiled politely. A few years later, the clerk received a letter from the elderly man recalling that stormy night and asking him to come to New York. A round-trip ticket was provided.

And when the clerk arrived, his host took him to where stood a magnificent new building. And the man said to him, That is the hotel I have built for you to manage.

The man was William Astor. The hotel was the original Waldorf Astoria. And the young clerk, George Bolt, became its first manager.

He was faithful in the little things. He was faithful in something that others would have not taken the bother to do. He was faithful. And I think back through the history of this church, over long times, I know Brother Ian has been very faithful in times past as the bus driver, when he had that responsibility.

And I know Alison and Pablo have been very faithful in the Sunday school ministry, over a long period now. And we want to acknowledge that faithfulness. It's hard yakking.

[19:42] I know, having served as bus driver on occasion myself, it's hard work at times. And some of these children can be quite demanding and quite a challenge.

And I read this article of a man that a bus ministry reached. His name's Norman Geisler. Now, I don't know his theology. I'm not necessarily recommending him.

But this man, Norman Geisler, as a child, he attended a day vocational Bible school, a holiday Bible school. He was invited by some neighbour's children.

And he went back to church the same week for the Sunday school. And he ended up going back to that same church for Sunday school, 400 Sundays. 400 Sundays.

Each week, he was faithfully picked up by a bus driver. Week after week, he attended church, but he never made a commitment to Christ. And finally, during his senior year in high school, after being picked up for church over 400 times, he did commit his life to Christ.

[20:50] What if the bus driver had given up on Geisler at 395 times? What if the bus driver had said, this kid is going nowhere spiritually, why waste any more time on him?

And this man, Geisler, now, he's a Bible scholar, he's editor of over 60 books and hundreds of articles. He's founded theological colleges.

And this was a bus kid, you know, as they would call him in some places. A child that, if parents were not saved, someone that many churches would never even touch the life of.

And we want to be a church that reaches people like such a one. We want to be a church that is faithful. Faithful in the little things. And I know Sunday school ministry, youth ministry, can be quite testing work, quite arduous work, and you don't always see the result, the fruit for it.

And yet, we know that God can be in it, in the small things. God cares about the trivial things. Be faithful in those. God cares about the little things that we can do. I know I commented to one of these young ladies here tonight.

[22:01] Now, I noticed the little thing that she did last week when there was a new family in the church, she went out of her way to welcome them and to say hello to them and greet them. And that's a little thing, but it's something that's precious, isn't it?

Something that's valuable in the kingdom of God. Especially when there's new folk come and people don't take the time and trouble to greet them. I know that's very important that we do that. God cares about the very little things, are very important. Faithfulness. Can you be counted upon? Can you keep your word? Will you be loyal, steadfast, consistent, trustworthy?

God uses the faithful. 2 Timothy 2.2, Paul says, we should commit the word to faithful men and they should then be able to teach others also.

God calls men to be faithful to Christ. We thank God for faithful people as some folk have been faithfully with us and in this church for many, many long years.

[23:01] Many, many long years. And we thank God for every one of you. We thank God as we look back this time of year as one year that we've been in this particular place of worship, this particular building of stone and the church has been going what?

11? 13 years. At least count. And you wonder how we can be faithful. We want to be faithful. I look back, in fact, I was talking to Julie before how we've had a connection with Elizabeth Park for a long time because Julie and I, when we got married, we lived in Elizabeth Park just some two blocks away from here and we were helping, in fact, plant an independent church way back then after I'd come back from Bible school and we were newly married and it was an independent church just in the next block over in that, what is now the Children's Centre.

It was at that time a Red Cross hut and we helped plant a church here at that time some 20, 30 years ago. Lost track. But we thank God we can be faithful.

We've got a commitment to this area and to this place and the people of this city. We want to be faithful and I encourage everyone here to be faithful and there was, in fact, another time we made another outreach in this area but we thank God and think God's in it that we have a heart for this place, for this area, for this region and we want to be faithful and we want to encourage that

faithfulness in everyone that attends.

Faithfulness. Something that's important. God counts it important. You know, we look back, there's a story of Hudson Taylor. It was a stormy night, a stormy night. Most people would have stayed home.

[24:46] It was cold and wet and miserable and Hudson Taylor was invited to speak and his hostess assured him that nobody would attend on such a stormy night but Taylor insisted on going.

He said, I must go even if there is no one but the doorkeeper and as it turned out, less than a dozen people showed up but the meeting was marked by unusual spiritual power. Half of those present either became missionaries or dedicated their children as missionaries or became faithful supporters of the China Inland Mission for years to come and Hudson Taylor was committed to serving the Saviour regardless of who showed up or how many or other conditions and God honoured his faithfulness.

We can learn from that people tonight. We can learn to be faithful and faithful in the little things, faithful in the personal things of our life, faithful as an employee, faithful as a husband, as a wife, faithful.

Faithfulness. Will you be faithful? Will you be faithful? Just one quick further account. Another ministry and we could all consider is my ministry, is what I'm doing bearing fruit?

Is it fruitful? Is it worth it? Is it worth the investment of my energy? We can all think that of ourselves and there was an elderly preacher feeling much like that one time and he was rebuked in fact by one of his deacons one Sunday morning before the service and the deacon said, Pastor, something must be wrong with your preaching and your work.

[26:27] There's been only one person added to the church in a whole year and he's just a boy. The minister listened, his eyes glistening with tears, his thin hand trembling.

He said, I feel it all. I feel it all but God knows I've tried to do my duty. And on that day the minister's heart was so heavy as he stood before his flock as he finished his message he felt a strong inclination to resign.

He thought, I'm going to throw the towel in. After everyone had left that one boy came up to him and asked, do you think if I worked hard for an education I could become a preacher, perhaps a missionary?

Again, tears welled up in the minister's eyes. Ah, this heals the ache I feel he said. Robert, I see the divine hand now. May God bless you my boy.

Yes, I think you will become a preacher. Many years later an aged missionary returned to London from Africa. His name was spoken with reverence. Nobles invited him to their homes.

[27:31] He added many souls to the church of Jesus Christ reaching even some of Africa's most savage chiefs. His name was Robert Moffat. The same Robert who years before had spoken to the pastor that Sunday morning in the old Scottish Kirk.

Lord, help us to be faithful than give us the grace to leave the results to you. Faithful. God isn't interested in us being famous in the world's eyes but in us being faithful in his eyes.

In his eyes. Friends, that's what we must urge. That's what we must strive for. All who believed were together. They were faithful. There was a faithfulness there in the early church.

We want to be a faithful people. Faithful in our lifestyle. Faithful in working unto God and not to men. Being consistent. Letting nothing deter us from that faithfulness.

You know, there's some people preaching on the streets. That's a hard thing to do. A thankless task.

[28:38] But be faithful. Be faithful in what God has put on your heart to do. Be faithful. Be faithful in your worship. Be faithful in your witnessing. Stay on course. Let nothing deter you.

In Revelation 17, 14, we read of the overcomers. They that are with him are called and chosen and faithful.

Called, chosen, faithful. I urge you tonight, make tonight a rededication. You know, we can all, we can all do with a rededication, can't we?

Amen? Amen? Be faithful. Consider yourself. Take stock tonight. Examine yourselves, whether you be in the faith.

And therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as you know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

[29:43] let us pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you. Dear God, you are faithful. You are faithful. Always faithful.

We thank you, Lord, for this church, for this people, for every soul, for every family. Help us, Lord, to see where we've lacked faithfulness. Help us to see where we've been unfaithful, where we've been faithless.

Help us, Lord, to see that and to make amends to you tonight. Lord, to make a decision today to be a faithful man, a faithful woman, a faithful people, Lord, that we might be a people that you will be pleased with.

Not that our works gain merit for salvation, Lord, yet we know our works will be judged. Help us, Lord, to know how we can make further steps to be more faithful, faithful to our spouse, our family, faithful to our work situations, faithful in the responsibilities of daily living, our Christian walk.

Help us to be faithful to your word, to be faithful to one another. We thank you, Lord, that you'll give us the grace and strength too. Amen.

[31:10] You