

- I. Session 69: The Faithfulness of God Part 3: Christian Faithfulness
- a. Purpose: In this session we shall explore how Christians can also cultivate faithfulness in light of God's faithfulness.
 - b. Reminder: What is the faithfulness of God?
 - i. Millard Erickson: "His faithfulness means that he proves true."¹
 - ii. Wayne Grudem: "God's faithfulness means that God will always do what he has said and fulfill what he has promised."²
 - iii. Millard Erickson put it another way: "He always fulfills what he has said he will do."³
 - iv. My own simple definition: God is trustworthy.
 - c. What is Christian faithfulness?
 - i. Christian faithfulness is really Christians being responsible.
 - ii. Responsibility defined: "Knowing and doing what God and others are expecting of me" (Institute in Basic Life Principles, "Character Bookshelf Series").
 - d. Since God is faithful, Christians must be faithful
 - i. "*To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father*" (**Colossians 1:2**)
 1. This is the greetings written by Paul in his epistle to the church at Colossae.
 2. Notice the believers are described as "*faithful brethren.*"
 3. Thus believers are characterized by "*faithfulness.*"
 - ii. "*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus*" (**Ephesians 1:1**)
 1. This is the greetings written by Paul in his epistle to the church at Ephesus.
 2. Notice the believers are described as "*who are faithful in Christ Jesus.*"
 3. This is similar to the greeting in **Colossians 1:2** but here we find that what the believers are characterized as being faithful to is Christ Jesus.
 - iii. "*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,*" (**Galatians 5:22**)
 1. Notice that the fruit in the believers' lives that is produced by the Holy Spirit includes many virtues including "*faithfulness.*"
 2. While the passage doesn't say "Believer, be faithful!" we do see that if one is a believer, a believer will be characterized by faithfulness.
 - e. The Problem of unfaithfulness
 - i. A faithless person being described: "*Like a bad tooth and an unsteady foot Is confidence in a faithless man in time of trouble*" (**Proverbs 25:19**)
 1. The situation before us:
 - a. There is a "*time of trouble*"

¹ Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003), 317.

² Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 160.

³ Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003), 317.

- b. In that situation someone decided to put “*confidence*” in a man.
 - c. That man turns out to be “*a faithless man*”
 - 2. What is a good analogy of this situation?
 - a. “*Like a bad tooth*”—Have you ever had a bad tooth and it nags you all day and won’t go away?
 - b. “*An unsteady foot*”—Something so basic but can hinder a person’s ability to walk.
 - ii. Few can be faithful: “*Many a man proclaims his own loyalty, But who can find a trustworthy man?*” (Proverbs 20:6)
- f. The Challenge: The church needs the few, the faithful, the servants of God
 - i. David recognizes that faithfulness is required for service: “*My eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me; He who walks in a blameless way is the one who will minister to me.*” (Psalm 101:6)
 - 1. David says his eyes are looking for the faithful.
 - 2. The one who is faithful will be one who “*walks in a blameless way*”
 - 3. This same one will minister with David.
 - ii. We need faithful men to pass on down the Gospel and biblical teachings: “*The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also*” (2 Timothy 2:2)
 - 1. Humanly speaking the church is always one generation away from dying off.
 - 2. Thus each generation has a duty of passing on the truth of God to the next generation to teach also.
 - 3. The church has the duty of identifying and entrusting the truth to God’s people.
- g. How to be faithful?
 - i. Identify the root cause of your unfaithfulness/irresponsibility
 - 1. Passage: “*“But his master answered and said to him, ‘You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I scattered no seed.’”* (Matthew 25:26)
 - a. In the context this is Jesus’ parable of the Talents that focuses on the importance of faithfulness.
 - b. The words in v.26 is the Master being directed to the servant who didn’t put in any investment.
 - c. Notice that the Master identified the two problems:
 - i. “*wicked*”= There is some sin that makes this person not responsible.
 - ii. “*lazy*”= Laziness is a sin that is often embarrassing to admit, notice the guy never says it but makes excuse in v.24-25. It took the Master’s words to expose it.
 - 2. Practice:

- a. Is there any sin that holds you back from being faithful to God?
 - b. Is there any laziness that one needs to recognize?
 - c. Is there any idols that is your functional god than the God of the Bible that is hindering you from being faithful/responsible?
- ii. Identify any wrong view or wrong emphasis of God that is hindering your faithfulness/responsibility
 1. Passage: “*And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, ‘Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no seed.’*” (Matthew 25:24). → Notice this man has a wrong view of the master; he assumes him to be a hard, that is, harsh man.
 2. Practice:
 - a. Is there any wrong view of God that holds you back from being faithful to God?
 - b. Do you understand that God Himself is also faithful, and not over bearing when He wants us to be faithful?
- iii. Identify what are your excuses and evaluate them biblically⁴
 1. Evaluate your excuses and see what kinds are they:
 - a. “I can’t...”
 - b. Blame-shifting
 - c. Family excuses
 - d. Business/work related
 - e. Possession excuses (what you have)
 - f. Pleasure (recreational thing)
- iv. There’s a correlation between making excuses and being afraid as seen in Matthew 25:24-25, Genesis 3:8-12 and Acts 24:24-25. So ask:
 1. Fear of rejection
 2. Fear of conflict
 3. Fear of failure
 4. Fear of embarrassment
 5. Fear of punishment
 6. Fear of loneliness
 7. Fear of losing control
 8. Fear of poverty
 9. Fear of boredom
 10. Fear of dying
 11. Fear of pain
 12. Fear of freedom
 13. Fear of consequences (likely or unlikely)
 14. Fear of unknown
 15. Fear of something bad happening
- v. Have the proper motivation knowing the punishment of unfaithfulness:

“*Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has*

⁴ From Lou Priolo, *Faithfulness: No More Excuses*. (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing 2016).

the ten talents.’ 29 “For to everyone who has, more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away. 30 Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Matthew 25:28-30)

1. Loss of the privilege of responsibility: Notice in the parable that what the person has is even taken away from him (v.28, 29).
 2. Sobering, some might not be even Christians and are punished (v.30).
- vi. Have the proper motivation knowing the future reward: *“The one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, ‘Master, you entrusted five talents to me. See, I have gained five more talents.’ 21 His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your [c]master.’ 22 “Also the one who had received the two talents came up and said, ‘Master, you entrusted two talents to me. See, I have gained two more talents.’ 23 His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’” (Matthew 25:20-23)*
- vii. In order to not have the wrong imbalance of punishment and reward based, ultimately be motivated by Christ’ saving work as your motivation!
- viii. Overwhelmed? Be encouraged by starting small! *“’He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much.” (Luke 16:10)*