

Faithful to the Faith

Today's journey of discovery will take us through the pages of the ESV to consider, "Just what does it mean to be faithful?" To better understand the fundamentals, let's begin by asking:

To What or Whom Are We Faithful?

A commonly accepted modern definition of faithfulness is loyalty *to a person or cause*. But is this truly what God is after?

Proverbs 20:6:

Many a man proclaims his own steadfast love, but a **faithful man** who can find?

Is God saying here that we are to be loyal to a person or cause? Or is a higher calling involved? 1 Corinthians gives us further light.

1 Corinthians 4:1,2:

This is how one should regard us, as **servants of Christ** and **stewards** of the mysteries **of God**.

Moreover, it is required of **stewards** that they be found **faithful**.

Here we see that faithfulness is greater than loyalty to a man or men, or to any cause of men. God's faithful ministers are to be **servants of Christ** and **stewards of God**.

Faithfulness is Between You and God

In a biblical context, therefore, **faithfulness is** not just between one man and another, but **between man and God**, first and foremost.

Our Covenant Relationship with Our Lord

The first scriptural reference to “the faithful God” points us to the foundation of all faithfulness.

Deuteronomy 7:9:

Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations,

Let’s take a closer look at the statement “the LORD your God is God, the faithful God,” breaking it down into its component parts:

| | |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------|
| “the LORD” | With whom you have covenanted |
| “your God” | Who is your very Creator |
| “is God” | The One and Only God |
| “the faithful God” | No other is or could be so faithful |

We have a relationship with the faithful God because we love Him and keep His commandments — His Word. And that Word is faithful.

Faithful to the Faithful Word

As stewards of God, we are exhorted to hold firm to the faithful Word.

Titus 1:9:

He [God’s steward] must hold firm to the trustworthy [or faithful] word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

We are to uphold the trustworthy Word in all our dealings, both with the faithful and the unfaithful. A faithful steward holds the Word high, regardless of responses or outcomes. His focus is not just on himself, but also on others.

Philippians 2:4:

Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Care and concern for one's fellow believer is a hallmark of faithfulness. This is why we want to become experts in

Our Walk Together

Faithfulness is bigger than just a “wilderness walk” with the Father. God’s vision for believers is that they might learn to walk *together* as members of the one body.

1 Corinthians 12:27:

Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

Though we each have our own individual walk with the Father, we are all nevertheless members of the body as a whole. When the members each contribute individually, they have the same care for one another and the body functions optimally, as God designed it. [This is the beauty of acting in concert with one another as believers.](#)

Faithful to Support One Another

The Bible teaches from the outset that [an important element of faithfulness is supporting one another.](#)

The Hebrew word for “faithfulness” is אֱמוּנָה *emunah*. *Emunah* is used almost entirely in reference to God or to those who are faithful to God. The basic root idea of *emunah* is firmness or certainty.

We can learn a lot about faithfulness by taking a look at the first occurrence of this word *emunah* in Scripture. Please turn to Exodus, chapter 17. Amalek had barred the way, thwarting Israel on their journey through the wilderness to the promised land, and God was not pleased about it.

Exodus 17:8,9:

Then Amalek came and fought with Israel at Rephidim.

So Moses said to Joshua, "Choose for us men, and go out and fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand."

In this period before the written Word, the staff of God represented the authority of the Word of God to the people of Israel. Moses had used the staff to perform signs before Pharaoh. When Pharaoh refused to let God's people go, Moses used the staff as a signal of God's judgment before the unleashing of the various plagues. During the exodus he held the staff out over the sea and the waters parted.

Exodus 17:10,11:

So Joshua did as Moses told him, and fought with Amalek, while Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.

Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed, and whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed.

Why did Israel prevail when Moses held up his hand? Because he held in his hand the staff of God, representing the Word of God. Moses was doing his faithful best to hold the Word high; but he soon found he couldn't continue to do it alone.

Exodus 17:12a:

But Moses' hands grew weary, so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it, while Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side...

What a beautiful act of caring support! Just picture what this would have looked like. Moses was holding up the staff of God with both hands, but got tired and couldn't keep his hands up. Then Aaron and Hur stepped in to help him. Here we have *two supporting one*. The staff of God was now held aloft supported by three hands on one side, and three hands on the other side. And what was the result?

Exodus 17:12b:

... So his hands were steady [literally, “steadiness” — “his hands were steadiness”] until the going down of the sun.

Moses’ hands had grown weary; they were no longer steady. Now, however, with the support of his two brethren, “his hands were steadiness.” The meaning of this metaphor is that *his hands were what steadiness is*.

The word “steady” (literally “steadiness”) in this verse is actually the Hebrew word for “faithfulness” (*emunah*) that we spoke about earlier. This is the only time that *emunah* is translated “steady” rather than “faithfulness”.

This is also the very first time that *emunah* is used in the Bible, so that fact alone makes this a precedent-setting verse in terms of defining faithfulness.

You could actually read these words as “His hands were faithfulness” — meaning, *his hands represented what faithfulness is*. Moses, Aaron and Hur took action together to hold up both Moses’ hands and the staff of God, demonstrating faithfulness for all to see.

Let’s read on to see what else we can learn.

Exodus 17:13-15:

And Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the sword.

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Write this as a memorial in a book and recite it in the ears of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven.”

And Moses built an altar and called the name of it, The LORD Is My Banner [my standard or ensign],

Together the three men were able to faithfully lift up God’s standard as a rallying point, visible to Joshua and all the children of Israel who were fighting the enemy in the valley below. This encouraged the

warriors to realize that God was fighting for them, and the entire congregation were thus enabled to take courage and prevail together.

Do you see how this entire endeavor was one big collective partnership with God? That's what being faithful together inspires!

Other Old Testament records use words related to *emunah* to depict:

- The strong arms of a parent holding a helpless infant
 - (What parent would hold a child with only one arm?)
- Two pillars supporting the crosspiece at the top of a door
 - (What doorway would stand without a door jamb?)
- A nail or tent peg securing a tent
 - (What tent could be erected if all the stakes were on a single side?)

Each of these examples evokes an image of firmness or certainty, teaching us that faithfulness is demonstrated by the support we render to each other.

Faithfulness and the Faith of Jesus Christ

Since Pentecost, however, faithfulness has taken on an even more profound meaning due to the coming of the faith of Jesus Christ.

Galatians 3:22-26:

But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed.

So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.

But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.

Now that the faith of Jesus Christ has come, there is no longer any question that the entire work of our redemption and justification has been accomplished. *“It is finished.”* [The faith of Jesus Christ has become our new touchstone for faithfulness.](#)

Faithfulness Within the Household of Faith

Regarding this faith of Jesus Christ we all share, Galatians 6:10 states

So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

[Within the household of faith, faithfulness involves *supporting our brothers and sisters in Christ in whatever way we can: by our love, by our giving, and by our mutual respect.*](#)

One of the earliest examples of this kind of mutual care and concern is found in the first miraculous healing recorded after Pentecost. We do not know the name of the man who was healed, for God did not see fit to have it recorded. All we know him by, is as “the man at the Temple Gate Beautiful.” We do know, however, that everyone who visited the Temple during that period knew exactly who he was. And that he quickly became a role model for all is without dispute.

Just how did this healing come about?

Acts 3:1:

Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour.

Notice that there were two of them who went together.

Acts 3:2,3:

And a man lame from birth was being carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple that is called the Beautiful Gate to ask alms of those entering the temple.

Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked to receive alms [a deed of mercy or act of compassion].

The man was asking for compassion, and he expected to receive it. The word “receive” (Greek λαμβάνω *lambanō*) means “to lay hold by aggressively (actively) accepting what is available (offered).”

Acts 3:4:

And Peter directed his gaze at him, as did John, and said, “Look at us.”

The two focused on the one, giving him their complete attention and instructing him to do likewise.

Acts 3:5:

And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them.

The man in need locked in on the ones who were there to help him. He didn’t yet know what form his deliverance would take, but it was his firm expectation that he would receive it.

Acts 3:6:

But Peter said, “I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!”

Peter had the gift of God’s grace in all its fullness and he was determined to share the benefits. Look what happens next.

Acts 3:7,8:

And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong.

And leaping up, he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God.

One man’s hand reached out to lift up his fellow man, and at that very moment the lame man’s limbs received strength and support. We see

what occurred in this miracle and we tend to focus on the joyous outcome. But what enabled this incredible healing to happen?

Acts 3:16:

And his name—by faith in his name—has made this man strong whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus [the text reads “him”] has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all.

The man had been healed in the name of Jesus Christ. Peter affirmed before all that [what had given the man this perfect health in the presence of all was “the faith that is through him \[Jesus Christ\].”](#)

Because this man believed on the Lord Jesus Christ and stood on the solid foundation of the faith of Jesus Christ, “immediately his feet and ankles were made strong [or stable]”, and his previously atrophied feet and ankles were strengthened to support his whole bodyweight.

The wholeness this man realized in the physical realm was the natural outgrowth and reflection of what he had first internalized as an absolute spiritual reality in his heart. [What made him strong was His faithfulness to the truth regarding Jesus Christ.](#) He was able to now stand upright, [standing on the accomplished reality of the faith of Jesus Christ.](#)

Faithful to the Faith

The Apostle Paul made a bold statement about his faithful response to his heavenly Father as he neared the end of his life.

2 Timothy 4:7:

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, [I have kept the faith.](#)

[Keeping the faith is keeping the promise](#) we made to him when we made him Lord. This is what it is to be [faithful to the faith, upholding the faith of Jesus Christ within the household of faith.](#)

Paul charged his true child in the faith Timothy, exhorting him

2 Timothy 2:1,2:

You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus,

and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.

As the faithful entrust the Word to the faithful, the faith will live on from generation to generation until Christ's return. What a joy is ours as we *remain faithful to the faith*, loving God and exhibiting our care and concern for our brothers and sisters in the household of faith!