



How Do You Rate Yourself In Terms of Personal Faithfulness?

MAY 12, 2014

When we hear those words “Personal Faithfulness” today our attention is often drawn to the synonymous intonation regarding marital fidelity. For sure that is an accurate understanding of the biblical word usage. But the character quality of **faithfulness**, stemming from the Greek word *pistos*, meaning (in the passive use of the verb) “trusted” or “reliable” carries with it a broader personal application than just sexual purity. *Apistos* means “untrustworthy” or “not worthy of one’s confidence.” Accordingly, **faithfulness** is a quality that every believer should strive to emulate to the utmost degree.

How do you rate yourself in terms of personal faithfulness? Let’s think about this together.

Read on, my friend....

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Weekly Bible Study During Session

Wednesday Mornings 8:00 AM Sharp. Capitol Building Family Room H324
Hot Breakfast Served.



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I. INTRODUCTION

At the close of the Ephesian epistle the Apostle Paul conveys some personal comments as it relates in part to his close friend and ministry companion, Tychicus. And by way of this narrative passage, one can glean poignant insights into the matter of **faithfulness**. As we ponder this passage, we'll see some practical reasons why – and Tychicus is a great illustration – personal **faithfulness** is so important. Ephesians 6:21-22 reads as follows....

But that you also may know about my circumstances, how I am doing, Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister of the Lord, will make everything known to you. I have sent him to you for this very purpose, so that you may know about us, and that he may comfort your hearts.

The context of this passage is this: Paul was under house arrest in Rome as is seen from the immediately preceding passage in Ephesians 6:20, "I am an ambassador in chains." It was there that he penned what are commonly referred to as the Prison Epistles: Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians and Philemon. Many commentators believe that he wrote Colossians in a very close time proximity to Ephesians, in that the Colossian epistle, also to be delivered personally by Tychicus, contains an almost verbatim passage to the one under study this week. Note Colossians 4:7-9....

As to all my affairs, Tychicus, our beloved brother and faithful servant and fellow bond-servant in the Lord, will bring you information. For I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts; and with him Onesimus, our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of your number. They will inform you about the whole situation here.

Each passage from the two epistles not only refer to Tychicus as **faithful**, but actively indicate that very same thing: Paul sent him as an apostolic emissary to the respective churches on his behalf. Keep in mind Paul was unable to go because of his imprisonment. The fact that he was behind bars meant he had to trust in his fellow workers in order to accomplish certain ministry tasks, as is witnessed in by these two passages. Paul said in this regard (Philippians 1:12), "Now I want you to know brethren that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel..."

One of the ways the Gospel progressed in a greater way due to his imprisonment was via Tychicus who had over the years proven himself to be **faithful**. Tychicus then is a personification of the type of person Proverbs 13:17 and 25:13 speak about respectively...

***A wicked messenger falls into adversity,
But a faithful envoy brings healing.***

***Like the cold of snow in the time of
harvest Is a faithful messenger to those
who send him, For he refreshes the soul of
his masters.***

Being from California where much of America's fruits and vegetables are grown and harvested, I know that farmers often immediately douse their fresh-picked harvest in ice water in order to preserve the quality of the produce; such practices maintain its integrity. Similarly, without hydro cooler technology, it was a blessing in this regard whenever it **snowed** during **harvest** in ancient days. Such meteorological conditions served to preserve the integrity of the crop in a way similar to a **messenger** preserving the integrity of his **master's** message. Tychicus was this kind of person. He would not alter nor degrade the ministry of Paul, even when Paul was vulnerable. Tychicus was faithful and loyal.



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Note the summation of Tychicus' character quality of **faithfulness** by commentator Horner:

Later in his second Roman imprisonment, Paul sent Tychicus to Ephesus to relieve Timothy in order that Timothy could come to Paul (2 Tim 2:4) and Paul sent either Tychicus or Artemas to Crete to relieve Titus so that Titus could visit Paul in Nicopolis (Tit 3:12). Tychicus, then, bore five letters (Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians, 2 Timothy, Titus) and probably relieved two of Paul's apostolic legates. It is no wonder that he was called a "beloved brother and faithful servant of the Lord."¹

The first mention of Tychicus is in Acts 20:4.² Of Asian descent, he had been chosen by Paul to take the relief offering to Jerusalem. Therein was the start of a beautiful relationship that can best be termed *collegial*. Tychicus was not only **faithful**, but he was also available and teachable: three key ingredients relative to being used mightily by God. Notice one particular way that Paul evoked this character quality in him:

II. FAITHFULNESS STEMS FROM COLLEGIALITY

The phrases Paul uses to describe Tychicus reveals much about Paul's attitude, and how a leader develops **faithful** colleagues around him or her. Notice he says of Tychicus in this week's passage, **the beloved brother and faithful servant...** What exactly does this mean? States commentator Ellis,

In this context the term 'brother' means not so much 'fellow-Christian' (though Tychicus was obviously this, and the term has this meaning in v. 21) as 'co-worker' or 'helper.'³

This is a huge insight into effective discipling of another! Paul didn't make people refer to him as "His Holiness" or "Father." He wasn't a distant figure or impersonal. Conversely he had a *collegial* relationship with those whom He disciplined! Even though he carried apostolic authority, he was non-

hierarchical in his demeanor. Merriam and Webster define collegial as follows....

COLLEGIAL: MARKED BY POWER OR AUTHORITY VESTED EQUALLY IN EACH OF A NUMBER OF COLLEAGUES

Collegiality is a key ingredient in developing **faithfulness** amongst peers. While the practice of collegiality is no guarantee of developing faithfulness in another, it certainly helps. States Paul in this regard in Philippians, "regard one another as more important than yourselves" (2:3). Paul's collegiality over time with Tychicus did evoke persevering **faithfulness** – keep in mind that he stuck with Paul even after Paul was imprisoned, whereas many other believers were found to be unfaithful in Paul's hardship (Cf. Philippians 1:12-20). That's to say there are believers who will prove faithful to you and believers who will prove unfaithful to you.

Tychicus could be counted on to complete the smallest and most difficult tasks. He was doctrinally solid, and he represented Paul void of gossip. Paul took notice of that; and God used him mightily in His Kingdom. How does God evaluate your faithfulness? Now notice some other scriptural elements of faithfulness....

III. FAITHFULNESS IS ONE OF GOD'S CHARACTERISTICS

1Thessalonians 5:24 and 2Thessalonians 3:3 reveal this attribute of God respectively and need no comment....

Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.

But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.



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IV. FAITHFULNESS NEEDS TO BE CULTIVATED

Faithfulness must be worked at and developed continually throughout one's life. Notice the following passages, Psalm 78:8, 119:30 and Luke 16:10 that underscore this need....

And not be like their fathers, A stubborn and rebellious generation, A generation that did not prepare its heart And whose spirit was not faithful to God.

I have chosen the faithful way; I have placed Your ordinances before me.

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.

V. FAITHFULNESS WILL BE COMPENSATED

Faithfulness is a key character quality. Note the following passages that indicate there is a reward to be earned for being **faithful**. This should prove motivational. Personally, it is one of my strong inner convictions, that to the degree I prove myself faithful to God's Word, is the proportionate degree to which He is capable of blessing me. As you read and meditate on the following amalgam of passages, ask yourself this question: Where can I improve in faithfulness?

A. PROVERBS 28:20

A faithful man will abound with blessings, But he who makes haste to be rich will not go unpunished.

B. NEHEMIAH 7:2

Then I put Hanani my brother, and Hananiah the commander of the fortress,

in charge of Jerusalem, for he was a faithful man and feared God more than many.

C. LUKE 12:42

And the Lord said, "Who then is the faithful and sensible steward, whom his master will put in charge of his servants, to give them their rations at the proper time?"

D. 1TIMOTHY 1:12

I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service,

E. 2TIMOTHY 2:2

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.

VI. FAITHFULNESS SUMMARIZED

Tychicus was **faithful** to God and subsequently God strengthened him. Paul noticed that and entrusted him with the most important of tasks: personally delivering original autographs of Scripture over hundreds of miles of journey! In addition, Paul called on him to substitute as a pastor. Why? *He was deemed faithful!* That is to say he was found to be reliable and trustworthy.

¹Hoehner, Harold W. *Ephesians, An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002) p 870. Cf. Titus 3:12 "When I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, make every effort to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there." ²Timothy 4:12 "But Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus. When you come bring the cloak which I left at Troas with Carpus, and the books, especially the parchments. Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds. Be on guard against him yourself, for he vigorously opposed our teaching."

²E.E. Ellis, *Prophecy*, p 3-22