

# Bible Lessons



“He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?”

*Volume 54, No 4*  
*October • November • December*  
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*Quarterly Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People*

# Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People

Volume 54

October • November • December

No 4

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*Publishing the Bible truths in the interest of Jesus Christ and His Church.  
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## THEME FOR BIBLE LESSONS—4th QUARTER, 2022

### The Reward of Faithfulness

Faithfulness can be taken for granted in so many ways – until we’re suddenly let down. It’s unpleasant when our car tire blows out at an inopportune time, not that any time is convenient. We depend so much on all of our modern conveniences, such as electricity, water, computers, appliances, telephones, etc., that it’s easy to assume they will always be there, working properly. Reviews are compiled and published that rate the reliability of everything from automobiles to the smallest gadgets, simply because the general public tends to want something dependable. Who wants to buy a car that is known to break down often?

Faithfulness in relationships can be taken for granted too. While death ends the two-way communication we enjoy with loved ones and friends, there is another way our relationships can be marred that wound deeper than even death – unfaithfulness. Lack of faithfulness brings heartache and failure on so many levels. Faithfulness, on the other hand, yields far more good than we can imagine!

The theme for this quarter delves into three areas: faithfulness toward God, ourselves, and others. May the Lord help us rise to the challenge to fight for faithfulness!

—Bro. Clifford Cole

**OCTOBER 2, 2022**

### **FAITHFULNESS IN THE EARLY PATRIARCHS – ENOCH AND NOAH**

**Hebrews 11:6** But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

**Genesis 5:21** And Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah:

**22** And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three

hundred years, and begat sons and daughters:

**23** And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years:

**24** And Enoch walked with God: and he *was* not; for God took him.

**Hebrews 11:5** By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

**Jude 1:14** And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints,

**15** To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard *speeches* which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.

**Genesis 6:5** And GOD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every imagination of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually.

**6** And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.

**7** And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.

**8** But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.

**12** And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth.

**13** And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.

**14** Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch.

**17** And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein *is* the breath of life, from under heaven; *and* every thing that *is* in the earth shall die.

**18** But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee.

**21** And take thou unto thee of all food that is eaten, and thou shalt gather *it* to thee; and it shall be for food for thee, and for them.

**22** Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he.

**2 Peter 2:5** And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth *person*, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly.

**MEMORY VERSE:** Mine eyes *shall be* upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me. — **Psalms 101:6**

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Enoch and Noah were both faithful in their earthly walk. The LORD appreciated Enoch's faithfulness so much that he translated Enoch directly to heaven, bypassing the usual passage through death. What a reward! Noah's faithfulness saved the human race from being completely destroyed. Faithfulness yields unique benefits that cannot always be properly anticipated.

### WORD DEFINITIONS

**Hebrews 11:6** "Faithful" can be broken down into two words, faith and full. Turned around, we can form the phrase "full of faith." The web site, [www.etymonline.com](http://www.etymonline.com) has this to say about the word faithful: The noun sense of "true believer, one who is full of faith." This meaning comes from the late 14<sup>th</sup> century. The Latin church used "fideles" in the same sense.

**Genesis 5:22** "Walked with God": set himself to walk, he was fixedly purposed and determined to live to God. (*Clarke*)

**Hebrews 11:5** "Translated": transferred, transported, exchanged, change sides, or carry over. (*Strong's Concordance*)

**Jude 1:14** "Prophesied": preached, spoke, declarations. (*Clarke*)

**Jude 1:14** "The Lord cometh": Most likely referencing the great judgment day. (*Albert Barnes*)

**Genesis 6:5** "Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.": We have here a perfect word picture of total moral and spiritual corruption by the use of the words "every" and "only."

**Genesis 6:13** "The end of all flesh": God realized that mankind's total corruption would soon lead to utter degradation, with hardly a hope of any more righteous to be found in it. God has the power and

foresight to recognize patterns and trends and the full fruits thereof.

**2 Peter 2:5** “Eighth person”: God saved a total of eight people, including Noah.

**Psalm 101:6** “Faithful”: firm, to trust or believe, to be permanent or quiet, to be true or certain, steadfast, trusty (Condensed from *Strong’s Concordance*).

## LESSON BACKGROUND

Because God found Enoch faithful, He translated him to Heaven, bypassing death. All of Enoch’s forefathers, with the exception of Adam, lived beyond his translation. Enoch, six generations from Adam, had opportunity to know Adam well. No doubt Adam’s determination to serve God after his fall in the garden impacted Enoch greatly.

Noah, while not personally acquainted with Enoch, probably heard much about him from his own father and grandfather. It seems that faithfulness passed down from generation to generation. When we look at a timeline chart, we can see that faithfulness passed down the line from Adam through every one of the patriarchs. Other branches of the human family, however, seemed to pass down unfaithfulness from generation to generation.

### DISCUSSION:

1. Given the facts about the word “faithful,” how does this impact our thoughts on the Hebrews 11:6, and how important is our faithfulness toward God?
2. What comes first – faithfulness toward God or being honest with our own souls?
3. How does our faithfulness impact others?
4. If Enoch had been “a little less faithful,” is it possible he could have lived longer than 365 years? The six generations before Enoch, including Adam, lived an average of 919 years. If Enoch had lived just a few more years he would have personally known his great-grandson, Noah.

5. If Enoch had chosen the path of unfaithfulness, how could Noah, his great-grandson, have possibly been influenced to be less faithful?
6. What would have been the consequence for mankind if Noah had not been someone God could trust?
7. If, after many years of toil, Noah had decided the ark project “just wasn’t worth it” and gotten discouraged with the 120 years of hard work, as well as with the ridicule from his friends and neighbors, how would the story have been different?
8. How many generations did Noah’s life affect because of his faithfulness?
9. How has someone’s unfaithfulness affected you and/or changed your life?

### **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

Brother Roy Harmon told the following story in a message years ago to illustrate the importance of faithfulness: “A certain home builder had a young apprentice who eventually fell in love with the home builder’s daughter. After the young couple’s engagement, the homebuilder handed a checkbook to his apprentice and told him that he was to use whatever funds were necessary to build a nice home from start to finish. The young man was to be in charge of everything during its construction. No expense was to be spared and the finest materials were to be used throughout. It was quite an honor to be entrusted with this great responsibility!

The young man, however, decided to make a little extra money by using inferior building materials that would be hidden from view. He planned to pocket the money he saved. He reasoned with himself that the extra money would come in very handy as a new husband. After the home was completed and the final inspection was over, the homebuilder handed his apprentice the keys to the front door with the explanation that this home was to be the wedding present for him and his future wife.”

Imagine the dismay the young man must have felt! He had every opportunity to use the very best materials available, yet he chose the other path, thinking he would better himself in the process. If only he had done otherwise! But, alas, it was too late. The young man and his bride would now live in the home he had built.

Using this analogy, God provides to us the very best of His resources through His grace, Word and Holy Spirit. He also has absolute knowledge of the building materials we are using in our moral and spiritual home.

*“Lord, help me to be faithful to utilize what is afforded me. So much depends on it!”*

## REFLECTIONS

Wow, what spiritual giants of faithfulness Enoch and Noah were. How did they get such a high rating from God? I think we would find that they merely chose to be faithful to God’s truths on a daily basis instead of yielding to the easier choices of man’s reasonings that were constantly offered to them. Like them, we are constantly bombarded with alternatives to faithfulness by the siren call of the world.

In business, clients are looking for someone they can consistently count on to be faithful to meet their needs. They are looking for someone who will respond in a timely manner and treat them fairly regardless of how inconvenient it is to the provider.

Just as humans are looking for a faithful person to lean on, so God is looking for someone faithful who will consistently demonstrate their faith in Him by choosing to let His grace and love flow out in the midst of trying circumstances. Although some people are naturally more dutiful, it takes much more than sheer will power to be faithful to God’s will throughout the duration of life, because we are consistently opposed by satan’s strong distracting force.

Setting a single purpose to seek first the Kingdom of God, in combination with daily communion with our maker, as well as nurturing an humble, teachable spirit before the Lord, will go a long way toward ensuring that we are found faithful like Enoch and Noah at the end of our life. Lord, please help each of us to promptly heed your instructions that when we are summoned before your throne, we may be counted worthy to hear you say, “Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

—Bro. Jeremy Booher



OCTOBER 9, 2022

**JOB – PART 1: HAST THOU CONSIDERED MY SERVANT JOB?**

**Job 1:6** Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them.

**7** And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.

**8** And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that *there is* none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?

**9** Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought?

**10** Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land.

**11** But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.

**12** And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath *is* in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD.

**Job 1:20** Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped,

**21** And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.

**22** In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.

**Job 2:1** Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the LORD.

**2** And the LORD said unto Satan, From whence comest thou? And Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.

**3** And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that *there is* none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth

fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause.

**4** And Satan answered the LORD, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life.

**5** But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face.

**6** And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, he *is* in thine hand; but save his life.

*(Also read Job 1:1-5; 13-19 and Job 2:7-13.)*

**MEMORY VERSE:** Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him.—**Job 13:15**

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** The LORD blessed Job with a large family, great wealth, and a good reputation. The LORD had such confidence in Job's integrity and love for him that He mentioned it to satan, who adamantly declared that Job was a good man only because of God's blessings and the hedge He put around him. The LORD allowed satan to touch Job twice. The devil first destroyed all of Job's possessions in rapid succession then killed all his children. When Job still maintained his integrity with God, satan then smote Job with "sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown. In all this did not Job sin with his lips."

### WORD DEFINITIONS

**Job 1:1** "Eschewed evil": departing from or avoiding evil.

**Job 1:3** "Greatest of all the men of the east": It is generally held that Job had roughly half as much as a Persian king in the 1600's. *(Albert Barnes)* Adam Clarke's words describe Job thus: He was more eminent than any other person in that region in wisdom, wealth, and piety. He was the chief emir of that district.

**Job 1:6** "Sons of God": possibly the angels. "Satan came also among them": The adversary, or accuser, came in the midst of them. *(Albert Barnes)*

**Job 1:10** "Hedge about him": Thou hast fortified him with spikes and spears. Thou hast defended him as by an unapproachable hedge.

He is an object of thy peculiar care; and is not exposed to the common trials of life. (*Adam Clarke*)

**Job 2:7** “Sore boils”: There are various opinions of Job’s affliction – small pox, elephantiasis, and black leprosy being among them.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

The story of Job starts after his seven sons and three daughters were grown and away from home. Job was most likely seventy years old, or older. We are told at the end of the book that he lived another one hundred forty years after his suffering ended.

Bible scholars believe Job lived in the time of the patriarchs, but do not have exact dates. Most agree, however, that Job did not have the benefit of the writings of Moses since there is never any reference in the book of Job of scripture. Job’s entire understanding of God most likely came through oral history from those who knew God, and through personal revelation from God Himself.

According to Adam Clarke, Job’s three friends were men of no small influence. Eliphaz the Temanite was king of the Thaimanites. It is probable that he was one of the sons of Esau. Bildad the Shuhite seems to have also been a ruler, or king. The Septuagint calls him Baldad, tyrant of the Shuhites. Bildad was of the lineage of Abraham through Keturah, Abraham’s second wife after Sarah died. Zophar the Naamathite was also called Sophar king of the Minaites, according to the Septuagint. Since Job was reckoned to be “the greatest of all the men of the east,” it is reasonable that his three closest friends would be men of influence also.

## DISCUSSION:

1. Without probable access to any written word of God, how could Job have been a man that “was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil?”
2. Job was probably a busy man, yet he took time out of his schedule to offer sacrifices for his children on a continual basis. If Job had not been “up to date” in his own spiritual experience, how diligent do you think he would have been in his concern, prayers, and sacrifice for his children?

3. Is it possible that the LORD and satan have conversations about us today?
4. Why does God allow anyone to be tested with great difficulty? What good can there be in it and what comfort can we get out of the fact that the Lord puts limits on Satan's power?
5. In Job's great grief, would it have helped ease his pain any if he had charged God with his great losses?
6. Job took the attitude, "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" How could this outlook help Job to not "sin with his lips"?
7. Considering Job's severe trials, what can we glean from the way he handled it all?

### COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Is it possible for any human being to suffer so greatly, yet maintain their integrity? The LORD believed it to be possible or he would not have permitted Job to be tested to such extremities. The devil was confident, however, that "just a little more suffering" would ruin Job and push him to the point of no return. It might surprise us if we knew how much confidence God has in his grace for us .

An important aspect of Job's sufferings is pointed out in the last part of Job 2:13, "...they saw that *his* grief was very great." They "saw," but could not fully participate. They had never been there before. It was obvious Job had more than he could seemingly bear, but they could do nothing to really help. We have, however, several chapters of Job's friends missing the mark and wrongly misjudging and/or trying to "fix" his problems by getting him to admit to some hidden and grievous sin. How easy it is for us to do the same thing. However, Jesus never misjudges our troubles; How fitting that our Savior gladly walked every valley for you and me so that he could enter into our deepest heartaches, and our greatest sins!

Perhaps a point too often neglected is the pain of Job's wife. Along with her husband, she also suffered tremendous financial loss and the untimely death of all their children. While she did not have the added burden of a terrible affliction, she did have the deprivation of many other things: 1) Job's comfort - it was probably

difficult for Job to comfort his wife when he could barely contain himself in his physical agony. 2) Prestige among friends and neighbors – this fact is mentioned in some of Job’s lamentations later in the book. 3) The enjoyment of everyday life that must have been present before their calamities struck. She naturally assumed that Job was as heartbroken as she was. It is possible that she thought, “If Job would just curse God and die, then I could do the same, and it would surely be better than this heartbreak!” What if, however, Job had cursed God and died? How would his wife have handled this added burden? Would it have been too easy for her to follow his lead?

God counted on Job maintaining his integrity, and his faith. The devil pulled with all his might the other way. Who decided the outcome? Job. So, it is with you and me today. We decide the outcome of our trials. God’s vote is, “My grace is sufficient.” The devil’s vote is, “It will be too difficult!” Our vote is the tie-breaker.

*“Heavenly Father, help me to accept your grace in my every need! Help me to hold a candle along the way so that others might not stumble at the places I almost lost my own footing. Help me prove you right and the devil wrong! Amen.”*

## REFLECTIONS

In considering the rewards of being faithful, it would seem disingenuous to at least not acknowledge the material blessings of Job. By following the guidelines set out in the Word of God, the combination of hard work, honesty, integrity, wisdom, and a respect for others almost always seems to yield material rewards and garners the good opinion of others.

However, there are greater rewards to be had for one with an eternal point-of-view beyond mere material gain. With the words, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust him...,” expressing Job’s commitment to his God, it seems a gross understatement to say Job experienced a deep, abiding relationship with God. Which of us don’t covet that depth of communion in our own personal experience?

It’s easy to think of a reward as being one-sided, but both parties are actually beneficiaries. The party who is giving the reward has received something of value, not just the person who receives the reward. Bro. Larry Abbott preached a message I’ve never forgotten entitled, “Can God Trust You” (May 6, 2012). I highly recommend

listening to it. He pointed out that we know we can trust God. The real question is does God know He can trust us? In the story of Job, what God valued was that Job was a man on whom He could rely. Job's reward for being faithful was that God trusted him. What a tremendous reward to have earned the trust of the Eternal God!

Another reward for being faithful is the comfort in knowing that nothing can touch our life unless it first passes His approval. And as was pointed out in the lesson, we have the assurance that His grace is sufficient for whatever He calls us to suffer. "Wondrous grace pure gift from heaven..."

When the trying of our faith is complete, it brings its own rewards. If I have been faithful, I have another Ebenezer stone in the wall of my experience. One of the definitions I read on reward was a return on behavior. When through the tests of life, I discover areas that need work, I have gained valuable information to help me grow in my walk with God.

It cost Job dearly to prove his faithfulness. It will cost us, too. But if we will remain faithful the rewards are 'out of this world.' Ecclesiastes 7:8 "Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof." Though the path to Job's reward was seemingly impossible, surely the end was worth it. These are just a few rewards of faithfulness this side of eternity, Heaven awaits!

—Sis. Diane Doolittle

## REFLECTIONS #2

*"Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy" (James 5:11).*

It is a privilege to know the introduction of Job's life in the scripture, as well as the conclusion of his blessed ending. We can read and study all that occurred in between, with all the highs and lows he experienced. This book of the Bible has served a great purpose down through all past generations, for it speaks of human responses to adversity.

Often, we may wonder why God allows tribulation and suffering; and we may even question or doubt God's goodness before the end of a trial. The book of Job teaches us to trust God in all circumstances. It

teaches us to trust God, not only WHEN we do not understand but BECAUSE we do not understand. It is almost beyond our human ability to see God's purpose as we endure and wait.

The psalmist tells us, "As for God, His way is perfect." Therefore, if God's ways are "perfect," then we can trust whatever He does and whatever He allows is also perfect. Suffering may sometimes be allowed to purify, test, teach, or strengthen the soul. Yet, God remains faithful, and He deserves and requests our faithfulness in all circumstances of life.

During a recent circumstance of my life, I received many encouraging cards, but there was one that stood out and spoke to me. On the front of the card were these words:

"God is still writing your story—  
It's not finished yet.  
He alone holds the pen,  
that gets to write, 'The End.'  
--Holley Gerth

We all know the "end of the Lord" in Job's life. It took patience and endurance. It will take the same for you and me. "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end" (Jeremiah 29:11). "Great is thy faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:22).

—Sis. Maxine Busbee

**OCTOBER 16, 2022**

**JOB – PART 2: WHEREFORE I ABHOR MYSELF, AND REPENT IN DUST  
AND ASHES.**

**Job 40:1** Moreover the LORD answered Job, and said,

**2** Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct *him*? he that reproveth God, let him answer it.

**3** Then Job answered the LORD, and said,

**4** Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth.

**5** Once have I spoken; but I will not answer: yea, twice; but I will proceed no further.

**Job 42:1** Then Job answered the LORD, and said,

2 I know that thou canst do every *thing*, and *that* no thought can be withholden from thee.

3 Who *is* he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not.

4 Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me.

5 I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee.

6 Wherefore I abhor *myself*, and repent in dust and ashes.

7 And it was *so*, that after the LORD had spoken these words unto Job, the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me *the thing that is right*, as my servant Job *hath*.

8 Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I accept: lest I deal with you *after your folly*, in that ye have not spoken of me *the thing which is right*, like my servant Job.

9 So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite *and* Zophar the Naamathite went, and did according as the LORD commanded them: the LORD also accepted Job.

10 And the LORD turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before.

12 So the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she asses.

13 He had also seven sons and three daughters.

14 And he called the name of the first, Jemima; and the name of the second, Kezia; and the name of the third, Kerenhappuch.

15 And in all the land were no women found *so fair* as the daughters of Job: and their father gave them inheritance among their brethren.

16 After this lived Job an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, *even* four generations.

17 So Job died, *being* old and full of days.

**MEMORY VERSE:** By humility *and* the fear of the LORD *are* riches, and honour, and life. —**Proverbs 22:4**



**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** We don't know how long Job suffered before the LORD began speaking to him, but toward the end of the book of Job, God spoke to him in a way that revealed a little more of the omnipotence of God. Job was one of the most upright men around at the time, but he came to the understanding of how low he really was compared to God. Job confessed and repented of his earlier attitudes regarding his suffering. After this, Job was able to pray for his friends, lest they suffer from the repercussions of their erroneous judgments of Job and the LORD's ways.

### WORD DEFINITIONS

**Job 40:2** "Contendeth": to *toss or grapple; to wrangle; to hold a controversy; to defend, chide, complain, contend, debate, lay wait, plead, rebuke, or strive.* (Condensed from *Strong's Concordance*)

**Job 40:4** "Vile": light, small, trifling, and contemptible. (Condensed from *Strong's Concordance*)

**Job 42:6** "Abhor": to spurn; to cast away; to contemn, despise, disdain, loathe, melt away, refuse, or reject. (Condensed from *Strong's Concordance*)

**Job 42:7** *...the thing that is "right"*: to be directed aright (proper, correct, accurate), be fixed aright, be steadfast (Condensed from *Strong-Lite: H3559*)

**Job 42:15** And in all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job: and their father "gave them inheritance among their brethren." It was an uncommon thing at that time for daughters to share in the inheritance, unless there were no brothers. This may be one of the reasons it is recorded in the book of Job. (Condensed from *Albert Barnes, Adam Clarke, and Matthew Henry.*)

### LESSON BACKGROUND

Because of what is recorded in the book of Job, we know just a little of what Job was thinking during his extreme trial of mourning his children, loss of property, and great physical suffering. It is likely, however, that Job's suffering went far deeper than he could utter. No doubt, it was even difficult for Job to understand his own pain in a proper manner.

When God began to speak to Job in chapters 38 through 41, he did not speak of Job's afflictions and great difficulties at all. God only dealt with the deeper issues Job struggled with anger and self-pity. The way God worked with Job's inner problems was not to upbraid him directly with comments such as, "Job, you are just feeling sorry for yourself!" Or "Job, you should trust me more!" Instead, God simply reminded Job of who He really was – the God of all creation, love, infinite wisdom, grace, and ultimate power.

When Job finally recognized where he had gone wrong in the midst of his grief, he repented "in dust and ashes." The LORD accepted Job's confession and turned his captivity. Praise God!

### **DISCUSSION:**

1. Why did the LORD wait as long as He did to answer Job's many questions and complaints? Does the LORD know the perfect time and manner to answer us today in our difficulties?
2. The LORD answered Job with direct questions. Why does God sometimes answer a challenging question with a question?
3. What was Job's response to the LORD's dealings with him and how did he respond when the LORD finally got through to him?
4. In what way did Job adjust his view of himself and of God after he repented? What was the LORD's response to Job's adjusted attitude?
5. Is it possible that Job could have hardened himself instead of humbling down when the LORD answered him? What would have been the likely result if Job had hardened himself against the LORD?
6. How can an attitude adjustment on our part help us today in our greatest needs?
7. Why does it sometimes take a period of time for our outlook and attitude to be adjusted properly?
8. Why did the LORD deal in such a different manner with Job's three friends than He did with Job?
9. What is the pattern laid out for us in the book of Job when we face great troubles today?
10. What value can we place on being faithful in the greatest trials we face?

## COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

How human we are! Thankfully, the LORD understands this and is long suffering with us. Just as Job had his struggles with the great sorrow and pain he suffered, so will we have our own struggles from time to time. The example Job set is a good and safe one to follow if we want similar victory.

It was very difficult for Job to accept the accusations of his three friends. Job was partially correct in this refusal, because we find out at the end of the book God noted that his three friends had not spoken that which was right. Job was not completely “in the right” himself, however, when we consider God’s dealings with him in chapters 38 through 41. When Job protested his innocence, it was in a way that did not have the full ring of true humility – to his friends or to God.

The LORD reminded Job that he was not around when creation came about, nor did he have any say in the way God set things up in His great universe.

Job’s realization of God’s greatness brought him down to a place of genuine humility. Psalm 103 has such good insight into what Job must have felt at this juncture. If we have the attitude David brings out in this psalm, we can obtain answers to many of our problems and obtain victory, a victory which will help us to be faithful.

*“LORD, help me to more fully recognize who you really are. Help me to see your august majesty, and to be completely enthralled with it! Help me to get lower and lower in true humility so that you will not have to contend with my flesh and pride. Please help me to be faithful! Amen.”*

## REFLECTIONS

Many times, we may feel we are full of strength and vigor, ready to charge into the fray and do battle for the Lord. And while we do want to be willing to serve in the Lord’s army, we must also do so in a way that recognizes our absolute inability in our own strengths and capabilities and recognize our utter dependence on God. Many men are put to the test of humility and, to see if they are pliable to the Lord, if the Lord can bend them to His will and His way.

Consider Moses: “By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible” (Heb 11:24-27). This passage seems to show Moses as a strong and confident leader, one that strode out of the palace and began leading the nation of Israel back to the promised land. A man that did not fear even Pharaoh.

Yet what does the record in Exo 2:11-15 reveal? It reveals Moses as a man that did initially stride out confidently, rather secretly striking down an Egyptian that mistreated one of his brethren. But when he realized the following day that his “secret” deed was not so secret and that Pharaoh had heard and was looking to slay him, he fled. His thoughts of being someone to bring the people up from their servitude no doubt crushed. His powers, prestige, connections, and abilities were no match for Pharaoh. And so, he fled to the wilderness, to Midian, and there finds work as a humble shepherd, an occupation of which is said “... for every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians.” (Genesis 46:34)

Now consider this same man as he approaches the burning bush. God speaks to Moses concerning His plan to bring Israel out and Moses responds, “Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?” (Exo 3:11) God speaks of the privilege of leading the people that He was giving Moses. And yet Moses basically asks, “Why would the people follow me? Who am I? How am I even going to convince them? And how will I convince Pharaoh?” As God provided answers to those questions, we see through Moses’s response and actions that he no longer viewed himself of a person of any account, going as far as angering God with his deferring of the duty to those who might be more capable. Moses had changed from a man confident in his capabilities to one who abhorred himself before the Lord, who saw no capabilities unless the Lord would provide. And it was at this point that the Lord called Moses back to the work He had for him.

And so, we too must remember our frame if we desire to be best used by the Lord: Who are we? What strengths and capabilities do

we have of ourselves? What is the source of our hope, our righteousness?

These things do not come from us. Our righteousness is but as dirty rags. “But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away” (Isa 64:6).

—Bro. Eric Doolittle

## REFLECTIONS #2

God himself gave testimony of Job when he said, “Hast thou considered my servant, Job? There is none like him in the earth, for he is a perfect and upright man, that fears God and hateth evil.” God not only believed in Job, but he trusted Job to endure the hardest tests of life and to come out “into a wealthy place,” and maintain his integrity with God.

Suddenly, unexpectedly, and without preparation describes the day that changed Job’s life. In a day he lost his wealth, his possessions, as well as his ten children. And this was just the beginning. His wife gave him no encouragement; his physical body was greatly afflicted; his acquaintances offered no comfort, but accusations. Then, ultimately, Job fought with darkness and despair, even cursing the day he was born.

In Job’s case, seemingly being tested to the limit, the dark mind battles and the unanswered questions gave way to doubts of the goodness of God. He believed he was suffering wrongly, that he was innocent before God. Herein lay the need for Job’s repentance. Questioning God’s justice, judgment, and wisdom was Job’s error, along with the sense of self-justification. He felt deep remorse for his mistaken judgement and attitude toward God.

This experience taught Job the meaning of the faithfulness of God, as well as the need of faithfulness to God. His vision of God enabled him to surrender to the divine will. His commitment to God became unaffected by his circumstances. He no longer looked to temporal blessings as evidence of divine favor. Job placed his full trust in God’s wisdom and dealings.

—Sis. Maxine Busbee

OCTOBER 23, 2022

FAITHFUL ABRAHAM

**Genesis 12:1** Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:

**4** So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram *was* seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.

**Genesis 13:1** And Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south.

**2** And Abram *was* very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold.

**3** And he went on his journeys from the south even to Bethel, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Hai;

**4** Unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the LORD.

**Genesis 15:5** And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.

**6** And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

**9** And he said unto him, Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon.

**10** And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another: but the birds divided he not.

**11** And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

**Genesis 22:1** And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, *here I am*.

**2** And he said, Take now thy son, thine only *son* Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

**3** And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the

place of which God had told him.

**9** And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood.

**10** And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.

**11** And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here *am* I.

**12** And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only *son* from me.

**13** And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind *him* a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son.

**MEMORY VERSE:** So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. —**Galatians 3:9**

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Abram, later known as Abraham, heard the call of God to leave his familiar surroundings for an unknown destination. Abram's journey had high and low points, but he never quit. Even in times of failure, he kept his spiritual eye on the promise God gave him and did his best to get back on track with God's will.

### WORD DEFINITIONS

**Genesis 22:2** "Into the land of Moriah": There is a Muslim mosque at the site of Solomon's temple, later Herod's temple. Muslims claim Abraham sacrificed his son Ishmael (instead of Isaac) at this place. Golgotha, where Jesus was crucified, is not far away.

**Genesis 22:12** "Lad": While no definite age is given in the Bible, Jewish tradition estimates Isaac to have been around thirty years old at the time of his binding, the same age Jesus started His ministry. Others place Isaac's age at thirty-three, the same age as Jesus at the time of his crucifixion. Most historians believe that Isaac was not a young boy, incapable of resisting being bound, but old enough to reason, ask meaningful questions, and believe in God's provision .

## LESSON BACKGROUND

Abram's land of nativity, Ur of the Chaldees in Mesopotamia, was full of idolatry. Abram's grandfather, Nahor, worshiped God, according to Genesis 31:53, "The God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge betwixt us. And Jacob sware by the fear of his father Isaac." Abram's father, Terah, however, worshiped idols. We read in Joshua 24:2, "And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, *even* Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods."

The LORD wanted to remove Abram from an idolatrous country and from idolatrous kindred. When Abram's father, Terah, went with Abram part way to Canaan, however, he probably brought idolatry with him. This could be part of the reason the whole company stayed for a while in Haran until Terah died. The LORD then called Abram the second time and Abram journeyed on to Canaan.

A few years after Abram arrived in Canaan a famine gripped the land. Abram journeyed south to Egypt to sustain his family and herds. Our lesson's third verse takes up the narrative when Abram had to leave Egypt because of the half-truth he told Pharaoh concerning his wife, Sarai.

The difficulty Abram and Sarai got into regarding Sarai's Egyptian handmaid, Hagar, and Ishmael, the son born to Abram and Hagar, takes place before the verses from Genesis 22 in our lesson.

### DISCUSSION:

1. What are some of the reasons God wanted Abram to leave his country, kindred, and father's house?
2. Could Abram have remained faithful to God for very long if he had refused to leave? Why or why not?
3. God did not reveal the "whole plan" to Abram the first time he dealt with him to leave, thus making him responsible for only that which he knew to do at that time – leave. What benefit is there in God dealing with us in a similar fashion by not showing us all of the big picture immediately?
4. When Abram had to leave Egypt because of his deceit regarding



- his wife, why did he feel compelled to go back to Bethel and sacrifice there?
5. When the fowls came down upon the sacrifice, why did Abram drive them away and what attitude did he demonstrate by driving them away? What are some of the “fowls” that could hinder our sacrifice toward the LORD today?
  6. Perhaps the hardest test Abraham faced was being willing to sacrifice his promised son, Isaac. What would have been the result if Abraham had not been faithful to God’s command?
  7. Why didn’t the LORD allow Abraham to see the “ram caught in a thicket” before he raised the knife to slay his son? Is it possible that we may not see the “ram caught in a thicket” in our own tests and trials until *after* we determine, by God’s grace, to be faithful?
  8. How are we blessed today by the faithfulness of Abraham, and what would we be missing if he had not been faithful?

### COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

The example of Abram guarding his sacrifice from the fowls is a great personal challenge to me. We are not told how long he stood watch, but we do know, from Genesis 15:12 that, “...when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him.” This is when the LORD told Abram that the great nation he would make of his descendants would be in bondage for four hundred years.

What would have happened if Abram had been obedient in preparing the sacrificial animals, but not diligent enough to drive the fowls away? Would the LORD have ever come down to honor the sacrifice? As we all know, it’s one thing to make a sacrifice initially, but it can be quite another thing to stick to it and guard it.

During the crucifixion of Jesus, a “horror of darkness” similar to what Abram experienced covered the land. Jesus cried out at this time, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46). Yet, Jesus knew what his mission on earth meant to us, and to himself, so he “set his face like a flint” (Isaiah 50:7) and was diligent all along the way to the cross. He rejected every opportunity to side-step the full sacrifice it would take to redeem you and me.

Just as it was with Abram, and with Jesus, the “fowls of the air”

will attempt to steal our sacrifice. We all have distractions to deal with. The devil has a full arsenal of thoughts, accusations, feelings, and fleshly appetites to get us sidetracked from our eternal purpose.

*“May the God of all grace help me to drive away that which would pollute or steal my sacrifice!”*

## REFLECTIONS

Possibly the biggest trial of faith that Abraham endured was when God tested him by telling him to offer up his son, Isaac, as a burnt offering to Him. How could God ask that of him? Hadn't God confirmed to Abraham multiple times before that Isaac was “THE son of promise” – in whom His covenant would be fulfilled? It *looked* like it might all end here! But Abraham's response was notable. Without arguing with God or trying to delay the inevitable, Abraham rose early the next morning to carry out God's command. As Abraham was about to take the final step with the knife in order to sacrifice his son whom he loved so much, God sent an angel to stop him!

God saw that Abraham was truly committed and willing to follow Him fully—without backing down—even when His command seemed so hard and contrary to reason. Abraham believed God enough to stay faithful to Him regardless. He was convinced God would stay faithful, too, and would still fulfill the promises He had made.

Encouragingly, even though Abraham failed at different times, notably in the instance of telling half-truths about Sarah and then later in the situation with Hagar, his life was not defined by these failures. Yes, there were difficult consequences that came about because of those unwise decisions, but God did not just cut Abraham out of His plans.

Abraham loved God and wanted to follow him. He kept pursuing God even after failure. God's patience with “faithful Abraham” gives me hope and courage to keep trying when I mess up and feel like I failed in God's perfect plan for me. When we turn back to God and trust Him, He can work with our humanity and still accomplish His plans. Thank the Lord!

“So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham” (Galatians 3:9)

—Bro. Ron Cole

OCTOBER 30, 2022

JOSHUA AND CALEB STAND FIRM

**Numbers 13:25** And they returned from searching of the land after forty days.

**27** And they told him, and said, We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this *is* the fruit of it.

**28** Nevertheless the people *be* strong that dwell in the land, and the cities *are* walled, *and* very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there.

**29** The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south: and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites, dwell in the mountains: and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and by the coast of Jordan.

**30** And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.

**31** But the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people; for they *are* stronger than we.

**32** And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, *is* a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it *are* men of a great stature.

**33** And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, *which come* of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.

**Numbers 14:1** And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night.

**2** And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness!

**3** And wherefore hath the LORD brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? were it not better for us to return into Egypt?

**4** And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt.

**5** Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly

of the congregation of the children of Israel.

**6** And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, *which were* of them that searched the land, rent their clothes:

**7** And they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land, which we passed through to search it, *is* an exceeding good land.

**8** If the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey.

**9** Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they *are* bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the LORD *is* with us: fear them not.

**11** And the LORD said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them?

**12** I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they.

**23** Surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it:

**24** But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it.

**29** Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me,

**37** Even those men that did bring up the evil report upon the land, died by the plague before the LORD.

**38** But Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, *which were* of the men that went to search the land, lived *still*.

*(Also read Numbers 14:30-36)*

**MEMORY VERSE:** Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses.

—**Joshua 1:3**

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Ten of the twelve spies sent to search out the land of Canaan brought back an evil report. Only two of the spies, Joshua and Caleb, looked at the situation through eyes of faith. Because of their unbelief, the ten spies, along with all the people

twenty years old and older, never entered Canaan, but died in the wilderness. Joshua and Caleb, however, were promised an inheritance in Canaan, because they held steadfast to their faith that God would help them.

### WORD DEFINITIONS

**Numbers 13:27** “Floweth with milk and honey”: In a literal sense, Canaan had an abundance of pastureland, and crops grew extremely well. This provided an excess of milk from the many herds of cattle. Bees made much honey out of lush vegetation. Paintings depicting large cluster of grapes carried by two spies are mind boggling.

**Numbers 13:33** “Giants”: bully or tyrant (*Strong’s Bible Dictionary*). Genesis 6:4 also tells of giants before the flood, and of the “sons of God” with the “daughters of men” having children which “became mighty men, men of renown.”

### LESSON BACKGROUND

Abraham entered the land of Canaan roughly 430 years before the twelve spies saw the land. It’s interesting we have no record of Abraham meeting giants, but it’s possible he did. The giants Abraham dealt with, however, were actually more formidable than the giants the ten spies of Israel were so terrified of: Abraham had to overcome the fear that he would be killed so that someone else could have his wife. He had to learn to believe God would give him a son, despite the old age of he and his wife. When God gave him the son of promise, Abraham had to be willing to sacrifice him.

### DISCUSSION:

1. Deuteronomy 1:22 points out that the *people* came to Moses saying, “We will send men before us, and they shall bring us word again.” Apparently, it was the idea of the people to send spies, not God’s. With that in mind, what cautions should we take today when we are tempted to verify with our human wisdom that which the LORD has already promised to do for us?
2. The twelve spies gathered information for forty days and brought back a full report. What affect did the report have on most of the

people?

3. Mathematically speaking, how outnumbered were Joshua and Caleb when they tried to encourage the people to trust the LORD for deliverance? How difficult would it have been to stand up against this many people, especially since they seemed to be worked up to a fever pitch?
4. The Bible does not say if Joshua and Caleb were paired up together as spies, but we certainly know they stood by each other when the other ten spies agreed on the evil report. How important was it to Joshua and Caleb individually for them to encourage each other, and to encourage the people to believe that the LORD would deliver Canaan into their hands?
5. How did the ten spies' self-perception affect the way they looked at the giants, seeing them as grasshoppers? How does the way we look at our difficulties today affect us overall?
6. How can believing an evil report be called rebellion against the LORD?
7. How did Joshua and Caleb benefit immediately from bringing their good report? What was the long-range benefit? What would have been their most likely fate if they had started out with a good report but eventually lost courage in the face of the evil report?
8. What did the LORD almost do with the whole nation of Israel when they cried all night after hearing the evil report?

### COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

What an amazing story! Joshua and Caleb saw the same giants and "impossibilities" the other ten spies saw, but they knew it was the LORD's will for them to conquer the land and inherit it. To them, it didn't matter what the obstacle was, God was still bigger. Because they knew God was faithful, they were able to hold on to their own faithfulness in believing God and move forward in the full confidence that God would do what he said he would do.

When it came time for the children of Israel to enter the land of Canaan forty years later, their entrance started with a single step into the flooded banks of Jordan. (Joshua 3:15-16) In the same way, the secret to our faithfulness today in and overcoming our giants and high walled cities starts with a simple, single step of obedience –

deciding to trust God to help us in our battles. It matters not how impossible our obstacle is. God is well able to overthrow it as long as we do our part – that first simple step of saying, “Yes!”

*“Heavenly Father, help me to trust you enough to say ,‘Yes!’ When you bring me to a new foe to conquer, help me to take that first little step of obedience in doing what little I know to do and trusting that you will do your part after that. Amen.”*

## REFLECTIONS

The word "faithfulness" often reminds me of the Evening Light (ELS) song #56, "The Faithfulness of God" and the Old Testament patriarch, Caleb. The song speaks of God's faithfulness to mankind, and the patriarch's life portrays man's faithfulness to God. God's faithfulness is summed up in Nehemiah 9:17b, “But thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and forsookest them not.”

Caleb demonstrated faithfulness to God during the entire course of his life. Why do you think Caleb and Joshua saw success when the other ten spies saw defeat? It had to do with the fact that they kept their overall perspective of God’s demonstrated power of the past and their continued belief that the promises God had given regarding entrance to the Canaan land would also be accomplished.

Caleb was an eyewitness of the Israelite’s deliverance from the Egyptians and was aware of the afflictions the ten plagues had caused. He saw the Red Sea waters divided, and he personally walked across on dry land. He experienced being thirsty and hungry in the wilderness and drinking the sweet waters of Marah. He ate the manna that fell from heaven. He remembered the pillar of a cloud that led the Israelites by day and the pillar of fire by night.

Caleb's zeal to be faithful never diminished as he aged. He was blessed with exceptional strength, a keen mind. Later, when Caleb was eighty-five years old, he went to battle and successfully took one of the mountains inhabited with giants, which God had earlier promised to the children of Israel. Caleb’s focus was not in his abilities, but on the proven faithfulness of God's power, wisdom, and presence. Let us "take heart.”

—Anonymous

NOVEMBER 6, 2022

DANIEL AND HIS THREE FRIENDS HOLD TRUE

**Daniel 1:8** But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.

**12** Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink.

**13** Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants.

**15** And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat.

**17** As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.

**20** And in all matters of wisdom *and* understanding, that the king enquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians *and* astrologers that *were* in all his realm.

**21** And Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus.

**Daniel 3:1** Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height *was* threescore cubits, *and* the breadth thereof six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.

**4** Then an herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages,

**5** *That* at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up:

**14** Nebuchadnezzar spake and said unto them, *Is it true*, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up?

**15** Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made; *well*: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of



a burning fiery furnace; and who *is* that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?

**16** Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we *are* not careful to answer thee in this matter.

**17** If it be *so*, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver *us* out of thine hand, O king.

**18** But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

**Daniel 6:3** Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit *was* in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm.

**4** Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he *was* faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him.

**5** Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find *it* against him concerning the law of his God.

**6** Then these presidents and princes assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him, King Darius, live for ever.

**7** All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counsellors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions.

**10** Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforesaid.

*(Please also reference Daniel 1:8-21; Daniel 3:1-27, and Daniel 6:1-22.)*

**MEMORY VERSE:** *It is* good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.  
—**Lamentations 3:27**

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Despite being carried away from their homeland, Daniel and his three friends settled it in their hearts and minds to remain true to God in every way. They agreed to not eat of

the king's meat, even though the rest of their fellow captives apparently partook. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to bow down to the king's golden image, at the threat of being thrown into the fiery furnace. Daniel faced certain death in a den of lions if he went against the king's decree regarding prayer. Not only did all four of these men face extreme peer pressure to veer from their steadfastness, but a painful death awaited if God did not deliver them. Praise God, they chose to remain faithful, and proved God's delivering power!

## WORD DEFINITIONS

**Daniel 1:8** "Daniel purposed in his heart": The three reasons were: 1) The Babylonians ate unclean beasts which were forbidden by the Jewish law. 2) The beasts were strangled, or not properly blooded. 3) The animals that were eaten were first offered to idols.

**Daniel 1:12** "Pulse": healthy vegetarian diet.

**Daniel 1:21** "Daniel continued *even* unto the first year of king Cyrus.": Daniel lived long enough to see his people return to the land of their nativity. (*Matthew Henry*)

**Daniel 3:16** "We *are* not careful to answer thee in this matter.": They needed no time to deliberate how they would answer.

**Daniel 6:3** "Excellent": properly, what hangs over, or which is abundant, or more than enough; anything that is very great or pre-eminent. (Condensed from *Albert Barnes*)

## LESSON BACKGROUND

In the 369<sup>th</sup> year after the ten tribes of Israel revolted from Judah, King Jehoiakim rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar. After three years, Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem and soon secured its surrender. Along with some of the temple furniture, Nebuchadnezzar took some of the young sons of the Hebrew nobles, including Daniel and his three friends. They were taken as probable hostages to ensure the good behavior of King Jehoiakim, who Nebuchadnezzar had put back on the throne as a vassal king. This marks the start of the seventy years of Babylonian captivity. Daniel lived long enough to see the return of some of his people to the land of their nativity at the end of the seventy years.

## **DISCUSSION:**

1. Why did Daniel and his three friends refuse the king's meat and wine, and what principal was involved in their refusal that we can apply to what we face today? What was at risk for Daniel and his three friends in their refusal?
2. Why was the prince of the eunuchs hesitant to give them the food they requested?
3. Referring to the eunuch's fear for his own personal safety, have you ever had a temptation "to go ahead and do something because it might hurt the other person if I don't do it?" If so, how did it add to your battle with the temptation?
4. How could the simple act of abstaining from the king's meat and drink make the four Hebrew youths ten times wiser than the king's wise men? Was it just their diet? Or was there something deeper involved?
5. When Daniel's three friends faced the threat of a fiery furnace heated seven times hotter than normal, how did their past integrity with the LORD help them in their desperate need?
6. In what way did their faithfulness to the LORD affect the king when they chose to be faithful, regardless of the cost?
7. Why did the king promote Daniel as the first of three presidents, and how did he get to the place where the king placed such high confidence in him?
8. What thoughts do you think Daniel was tempted with when he heard of the decree that forbade him to pray to his God?
9. Why do you suppose Daniel chose to continue praying as before, apparently changing absolutely nothing in his manner of praying?
10. In temptations we face today, how does God "close the lion's mouths," and keep us from the power of the flame when we choose to be faithful to God?

## **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

The faithfulness of Daniel and his friends are wonderful examples of ordinary people who chose to be faithful to what they knew to be right, despite not knowing how the last pages of their trial would

read. They had no way of knowing that they would end up ten times wiser than all of the other wise men in the kingdom. Daniel did not know that the LORD would give him understanding of visions and dreams. Daniel's three friends did not anticipate having the Son of Man walking in the flame with them. Daniel did not know he would spend the night in a den of hungry lions – and then live to greet the king at dawn. Little did Daniel know, when he refused the king's meat and drink, that seventy years later he would be instrumental in helping his people return to Jerusalem. It goes without saying, that having three faithful friends helped him remain true.

We are not told ahead of time how our faithfulness will affect our own lives, nor of how it will affect others. Only in eternity will we begin to see the vast reaches of our faithfulness. I am convinced, personally, that the devil knows all too well what it means to him if we remain faithful. That is why he does absolutely everything he possibly can to mar our faithfulness! If we could pull back the curtain of the future just a little, I believe you and I would see more than we could fathom regarding the effects of our faithfulness.

A certain sister, who worshiped in our local congregation years ago, regularly drove by a local farm house on her way to services. She would often see the children who lived there playing in the yard on Sunday mornings. She began to long for the opportunity to take these children to Sunday School. One day, she felt led to stop and ask the parents if she could take their children to Sunday School. The children's parents gave their consent. Over the process of time, some of the older children gave their hearts to the Lord. Naturally, this affected the parents, who eventually got saved as well. In time, all of the family were saved. My father was one of the children. By God's grace, when I reach heaven, I want to say "Thank You" to the sister who was faithful to the little nudge to inquire about taking my father and his siblings to Sunday School.

*"Heavenly Father, please help me be faithful to the end! There is so much at stake – not just my own soul, but countless others who are coming behind me. There are some that could find it more difficult to make it to heaven, if I were not faithful. Help me to die to myself that I might make the run successful, and take many souls with me! Amen."*

## REFLECTIONS

Faithfulness starts in the little things. Daniel and his friends were examples of faithfulness even from their youth. They chose to refuse the king's meat because of a desire to remain faithful to God even in a foreign land. These men prospered because of their hearts toward God and God blessed them with great wisdom. This wisdom elevated them to positions of authority in the land of their captivity.

They were placed in positions of influence because God found them faithful. I'm reminded of a statement Mordechai made to Esther: "Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?". God used Daniel's faithfulness to Him in a nationwide exhibition to glorify His name. I wonder how many others gained courage and confidence to stand because of their example?

Their faithfulness began while few were watching and under circumstances that seemed trivial to most. One stand after another built their faithfulness to a point that God used it to glorify His name before all of the nations. Even the king had to admit that there was no God like their God. Those who are faithful in the least will also be faithful in much.

—Bro. Marvin Moles

**NOVEMBER 13, 2022**

### JOSEPH FLEES

**Genesis 37:28** Then there passed by Midianites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmeelites for twenty *pieces* of silver: and they brought Joseph into Egypt.

**Genesis 39:1** And Joseph was brought down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hands of the Ishmeelites, which had brought him down thither.

**2** And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian.

**3** And his master saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand.

**4** And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all *that* he had he put into his hand.

**5** And it came to pass from the time *that* he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the LORD was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field.

**6** And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was *a* goodly *person*, and well favoured.

**7** And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me.

**8** But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what *is* with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand;

**9** *There is* none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou *art* his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?

**10** And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, *or* to be with her.

**11** And it came to pass about this time, that *Joseph* went into the house to do his business; and *there was* none of the men of the house there within.

**12** And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out.

**13** And it came to pass, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand, and was fled forth,

**14** That she called unto the men of her house, and spake unto them, saying, See, he hath brought in an Hebrew unto us to mock us; he came in unto me to lie with me, and I cried with a loud voice:

**15** And it came to pass, when he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled, and got him out.

**16** And she laid up his garment by her, until his lord came home.

**20** And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners *were* bound: and he was there in the prison.

**21** But the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison.

**22** And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the

prisoners that *were* in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer *of it*.

**23** The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing *that was* under his hand; because the LORD was with him, and *that* which he did, the LORD made *it* to prosper.

*(Please also reference Genesis 39:1-17-19, Genesis 40:2-23, and Genesis 41:1-41)*

**MEMORY VERSE:** Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. —**I Corinthians 4:2**

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Joseph proved faithful on about every level a man can face. His brother's jealousy and hatred drove them to sell him as a slave. Joseph rose above the bitterness that could have overwhelmed him and allowed God to bring him into great favor with Potiphar, his Egyptian master. When Potiphar's wife propositioned him, Joseph again proved faithful by fleeing the temptation. Potiphar put Joseph in ward with the king's prisoners where, once again, Joseph chose faithfulness. Joseph was at the right place at the right time and was in the will of God when the world needed someone faithful to help in the coming seven-year famine.

### WORD DEFINITIONS

**Genesis 39:1** "Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh": Equivalent to Provost Marshal, head of the military police. (*Adam Clarke*)

**Genesis 39:6** Goodly person and well favoured.": Adam Clarke points out that the same expressions are used to describe Rachel, Joseph's mother. The Persian poets Jamy and Nizamy wrote the following poem: "I understand, from the daily increasing beauty which Joseph possessed, how love tore away the veil of chastity from Zuleekha [Potiphar's wife]." There are other accounts among eastern historians that elaborate on the comeliness of Joseph.

**Genesis 39:12** "Fled": to flit, vanish away, escape, put to flight, or to hide. (*Strong's*)

**Genesis 41:41** "I have set thee over all the land of Egypt.": Pharaoh made Joseph supreme ruler over his own house and over all Egypt. Only Pharaoh himself was greater. The LORD put Daniel in a similar position years later.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

After Potiphar bought Joseph, the LORD blessed Potiphar's household for the sake of Joseph. Potiphar saw that the LORD was with him and promoted him over everything he had. Eastern historians believe Potiphar and his wife "adopted" Joseph, in a manner of speaking. Whether that is the case or not, Joseph and Potiphar's wife no doubt became very well acquainted since Joseph had charge of everything pertaining to the household. Perhaps being in such close proximity for an extended period of time gave even more reason for the wife of Potiphar to cast her eyes on Joseph and proposition him. The scripture bears out this was a daily occurrence. Joseph was in Potiphar's house a total of eleven years, so it's possible that Joseph faced the situation with Potiphar's wife over an extended period of time. Though Joseph did his best to avoid it, the time finally came when Joseph and Potiphar's wife were alone in the house. She then made her move to force him to be with her. Joseph slipped free of his outer coat, left it in her hand, and fled. The rest is history.

### DISCUSSION:

1. Joseph was sold for twenty pieces of silver by his ten older brothers. Today, twenty Israeli shekels is approximately \$6.00. Assuming they split the twenty pieces evenly among them, each brother received about \$0.60. What are your thoughts of the value Joseph's brothers put on him?
2. What mindset could Joseph have been tempted to have when he was sold by his brothers, then sold again in Egypt to Potiphar?
3. Judging by the way the LORD blessed Joseph in the house of Potiphar, what disposition most likely did Joseph choose to have? Who decides how you and I react to the difficulties we face?
4. Even if we want to have the right attitude in our extreme trials, what makes it possible for us to actually do so?
5. What became Potiphar's view of Joseph when he saw that the LORD was with Joseph in everything he did?
6. What could the prosperity in Potiphar's household done to Joseph if he had allowed it?
7. Potiphar's wife propositioned Joseph daily for quite some time. What can "continual dripping," as mentioned in Proverbs 27:15,



- do to a person over time? Why did Potiphar's wife try so long to get Joseph?
8. What reasons did Joseph give for not agreeing to the advances of Potiphar's wife?
  9. If Joseph could have simply walked away the day Potiphar's wife pulled at his coat, why did he flee [*run*] instead. If he had finally yielded to Potiphar's wife instead of fleeing, what would have become of the LORD's plans to use him later on?
  10. How and why are our greatest tests necessary for the Lord to use us?

### COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

The pivotal moment in Joseph's life was when he slipped out of his coat and fled from Potiphar's wife. Everything that happened to Joseph prior to this event pointed to this event. All that happened afterward pointed back to it. The LORD was faithful to prepare him, but if Joseph had yielded in this one instance, all that the LORD had planned afterward would have been hindered.

God is faithful to prepare us for the times that prove to be so critical. Leading up to these times, we may find ourselves falling short in some of our tests, repenting of our failures, and facing them yet again until we allow the Lord to help us pass through victoriously. These times prepare us for the event, or events, that would "sink our ship," if it wasn't for the grace of God.

The Lord wants to help you and me pass through our crossroads successfully just as much as he wanted to help Joseph, Daniel and his friends, Job, and a host of others. He will see each one of us through, if we only allow him to do so. No, it may not be with high emotion and a giddy step. We might even feel we can't make it at all. The cross we have before us will cause our flesh to shrink back in protest. If, however, we allow God to take our hand and lead us to our cross, and if we allow our flesh to be put under, there will be a resurrection on the other side that will define what victory really means. The Lord wants us to bear much fruit after he helps us face what we feel will surely destroy us. Failure is not an option.

*"Lord, when my flesh recoils from the cross it must die on, help me to say amen to your will! Though I may not understand why it*

*must be so, help me to trust you. When my past failures come up to haunt me during my hour of trial, help me to plead your blood to cover it all. By the grace of God and by the merits of the shed blood of Jesus, I submit and yield – I choose your way, not my own. Thank you for victory, before I can feel victory . Amen.”*

## REFLECTIONS

An old minister used to tell the story of a man who walked the streets of Philadelphia searching for employment. One day he happened to go into the office of a well-known businessman by the name of Girard. When he asked for a job, Mr. Girard answered, “Yes, I can give you work. See that pile of bricks out there? Carry them over to the other end of the yard and stack them up.”

By nightfall the man reported that the project was completed and received his pay. When asked if there would be more work the next day, his employer said, “Yes, come in tomorrow and carry those same bricks back to where you found them.” The following morning, he came in early and got busy without a word. For more than a week he was instructed to carry bricks back and forth until it was evident that he could be trusted to do exactly what he was told.

Then he was given a new and bigger responsibility—to go downtown and bid on a large quantity of sugar. Not recognizing him, the people at the auction were surprised by the bid of this total stranger. When it was accepted, the auctioneer asked who would pay the bill. “Mr. Girard,” the man replied. “I am his agent.” He had earned this position by being faithful in a menial task.

Similarly, it was in Potiphar's house where Joseph began to exhibit his faithfulness, starting with little tasks and working his way up to overseer. While the false accusations of Potiphar's wife were a definite--and likely disheartening--setback, Joseph remained faithful to God above all, and God eventually rewarded him by placing him as second only to Pharaoh in Egypt. This applies to all who follow after God; faithfully passing the tests placed before us prepares us for greater use in His kingdom. Jesus said, "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much." May we remember this as we face each test God sends our way!

—Bro. Fari Matthews

NOVEMBER 20, 2022

## JOHN THE BAPTIST STAYS TRUE TO GOD'S WORD

**Luke 7:19** And John [*from prison*] calling unto him two of his disciples sent them to Jesus, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?

**20** When the men were come unto him, they said, John Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?

**21** And in that same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight.

**22** Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached.

**23** And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.

**24** And when the messengers of John were departed, he began to speak unto the people concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? A reed shaken with the wind?

**25** But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they which are gorgeously apparelled, and live delicately, are in kings' courts.

**26** But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet.

**27** This is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

**28** For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.

**Mark 6:14** And king Herod heard of him; (for his name was spread abroad:) and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him.

**15** Others said, That it is Elias. And others said, That it is a prophet, or as one of the prophets.

**16** But when Herod heard thereof, he said, It is John, whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead.

**17** For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her.

**18** For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife.

**19** Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not:

**20** For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.

**21** And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee;

**22** And when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee.

**23** And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom.

**24** And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist.

**25** And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist.

**26** And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her.

**27** And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison,

**28** And brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel: and the damsel gave it to her mother.

**29** And when his disciples heard of it, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb.

*(Read also Matthew 3:1-9)*

**MEMORY VERSE:** For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he. —**Luke 7:28**

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** John the Baptist never minced words during his short time of preparing the way for the ministry of Jesus.

This got him into trouble with Herod's wife Herodias. Herod imprisoned John but was hesitant to do him any further harm. Rather, he "observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly." The impact John had on Herod was truly great. John, on the other hand, began to struggle while he languished in prison. He sent two of his disciples to ask Jesus if he really was who he claimed to be. Jesus understood John's struggles and sent reassurance back to John by example and deed.

## WORD DEFINITIONS

**Mark 6:17** "Bound him in prison": According to Josephus, the Jewish historian, Herod put John the Baptist in prison in his palace-fortress of Machaerus on the east side of the Dead Sea in modern Jordan. Herod must have spent some of his time there but did not live there full time. Some scholars believe John the Baptist was in prison for about ten months.

**Mark 6:21** "Herod on his birthday": Herod's birthday occurred while he was on the way to do battle with his former father-in-law. His palace-fortress of Machaerus was along the route. This is where he stopped to celebrate, and where Salome, Herodias' daughter, danced before him and his lords and high captains.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

John was filled with the Holy Spirit before he was even born, according to Luke 1:15 "For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb." John was six months older than his cousin, Jesus. It is unclear exactly how long John prepared the way for Jesus, but it is possible his ministry may have only lasted around six months, possibly a little longer, before he was imprisoned by Herod Antipas. John baptized Jesus at the beginning of Jesus' ministry. It probably wasn't too long afterward that John got in trouble with Herod Antipas and his wife Herodias for speaking so plainly about their ill-gotten marriage.

## DISCUSSION:

1. What did John have to say about the marriage of Herod Antipas and Herodias?
2. Why didn't John choose his words differently, in the hope of not angering Herod or Herodias?
3. Judging by John's request to ask Jesus if he really was the Messiah, what effect did imprisonment have on John, and why did John send his disciples to ask Jesus if he was really Jesus, or if they should look for another?
4. How did Jesus satisfy John?
5. What did Jesus say about John after Jesus sent word back to John?
6. What did Jesus say about, "He that is least in the kingdom of God?"
7. Since John the Baptist was sanctified before birth, how could he have feelings of loneliness, despair, and even battle weakened faith?
8. What does it mean to be "faithful" in the face of human feelings and frailties?
9. How does God help us today in our unique battles of faith, and in our desire to be faithful to the end?

## COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

You and I do not have the privilege, nor the responsibility, of choosing how the Lord uses us in his kingdom. We would choose differently, most likely, than God's infinite wisdom sees best. John had no say in his manner of birth, his relationship with Jesus, nor his calling to be the forerunner of Jesus. It is right and good that we trust God for his unique calling on our lives. He will prepare us and enable us to fill **our** calling – but not someone else's calling.

John's ministry saw glorious times, as well as dreary times. His preaching attracted large crowds, convinced many of their sinful ways, and he even had the immense respect of Herod Antipas. Herod's wife, however, behaved much like Jezebel by forcing Herod to imprison John. Our path of faithfulness will also have ups and downs – with many of the highs and lows beyond our control. The important thing is to remain faithful through these vacillations.

When John sent his inquiry to Jesus, the last part of the answer back to John was, “Blessed is *he*, whosoever shall not be offended in me.” Jesus knew that the greatest threat to John being faithful, was if he ever became offended in Jesus. Thankfully, Jesus was able to reassure John so that he would not become offended and lose faith and hope. When we face our greatest trials, the danger lies not in the circumstance, but in the devil’s efforts to cause us to be offended in Jesus because of the circumstance.

Jesus’ comment to the people when he sent word back to John gives us great hope in our present difficulties. “...Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.” Even though we may feel we are not very important, Jesus regards those who seem to be the least as greater than John the Baptist. In the economy of the grace of God, there are no favorites. Each one of us can obtain help to be faithful to the end, no matter what we may feel about it. Just ask Jesus for reassurance. He will send his answer.

*“Dear Lord, help me to not shun your calling on my life, but help me to remain faithful! When the good times help me to not grow careless or self-sufficient. When the difficulties arise, help me to not become disenchanted because of the circumstances. Above all, help me to not be offended in you when I don’t understand. Amen!”*

## REFLECTIONS

I was driving one day when the bumper sticker on a car ahead of me caught my attention. It said simply “MORALLY FLEXIBLE.” Though its meaning seemed clear, I puzzled over it. Why would someone boast of a lack of principles and values that consistently guide their life? Who would want a friend or spouse whose belief system, or lack thereof, would permit them to betray you for their own convenience? Or a contractor who might gladly claim costly repairs had been completed when they hadn’t, simply to pocket the profit at your expense? It was sobering to think how this world would be if everyone was “morally flexible.” Perhaps it’s a glimpse into what Lot experienced in Sodom and Gomorrah. Or a glimpse into Noah’s time, when the imaginations of men’s hearts had become continually evil. Yet, sadly, we need not peer into the distant past, or the darkest corners of heathen cultures to see this playing out. Perhaps it’s a glimpse into the heart of a nation, such as ours, whose

long-held Biblical principles of right and wrong are being bartered away in the name of inclusivity and tolerance. Where once society held in esteem the man or woman of noble character, many now place higher value upon freedom of thought and the “courage” to embrace the trendiest ungodliness of the day.

It is against this backdrop of our modern day that a camel-hair clothed man from an age past emerges in such stark relief. His mission as the forerunner of the Messiah was clear, as was his message of repentance, without respect of person or consequence. He was called to herald truth and point this darkened world to the hope of all mankind: Jesus Christ. Whether unto peasant, rabbi, or king, the message was consistent and without calculation of political expediency or popularity. “How can you believe,” Jesus asked the Jewish leaders, who “receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?” Like Moses, John the Baptist had respect unto a greater recompense of reward than the fleeting approval and honor of man for which the leaders of his day clambered. How shallow their reward compared to the endorsement Jesus gave unto John and the eternal weight of glory, just on the other side of this thin veil. When Jesus asked the people what they had followed after John expecting to see, whether “a reed shaken with the wind,” it was as if the faithful steadfastness of John through the winds of opposition and persecution condemned their own “moral flexibility.” John’s questions reinforcing his faith in the face of impending execution were in no wise condemned. John’s steadfastness was born not of personal fortitude alone, but by faith in God. It should come as no surprise when a man dies as he has lived; and so, John the Baptist died: steadfast, unwavering, and faithful to the end.

—Bro. Clint Doolittle

**NOVEMBER 27, 2022**

**STEPHEN, THE FIRST MARTYR**

**Act 6:1** And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily



ministration.

**2** Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples *unto them*, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.

**3** Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

**4** But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.

**5** And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch:

**6** Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid *their* hands on them.

**7** And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

**8** And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.

**9** Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called *the synagogue* of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen.

**10** And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.

**11** Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and *against* God.

**12** And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon *him*, and caught him, and brought *him* to the council,

**15** And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.

**Act 7:51** Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers *did*, so *do* ye.

**52** Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers:

**53** Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept *it*.

**54** When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with *their* teeth.

**55** But he [*Stephen*], being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,

**56** And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.

**57** Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord,

**58** And cast *him* out of the city, and stoned *him*: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.

**59** And they stoned Stephen, calling upon *God*, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

**MEMORY VERSE:** And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep. —**Acts 7:60**

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Stephen, one of the original seven appointed to oversee the distribution of goods to the widows, was also active in spreading the gospel among the people. After seeing the great wonders and miracles done among the people, and being unable to resist the wisdom by which he, Stephen, spoke, the elders of the synagogue frequented by Jews from other parts of the world (*see Word Definitions*) set up false witnesses to trap Stephen in his words. This attempt, failing miserably, further enraged the elders. While they gnashed on him with their teeth, Stephen looked up toward heaven, saw the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. They stoned him, laying their clothes at the feet of Saul. Stephen's last words were, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."

## WORD DEFINITIONS

**Acts 6:8** "Full of faith and power": While not a preacher, Stephen's strong faith enabled the Holy Spirit to manifest itself in remarkable and miraculous ways. One of the gifts of the Spirit is the "working of miracles." This is a distinct gift and office of the Holy Spirit. (Condensed from *Matthew Henry's* commentary)

**Acts 6:9** "*The synagogue* of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and

Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia”: Jews and proselytes from various countries which had come to Jerusalem to attend the feast of Pentecost. They had a synagogue peculiar to themselves at Jerusalem. (*Adam Clarke*)

**Acts 7:54** “Gnashed”: grate the teeth in pain or rage. (*Strong’s*)

## LESSON BACKGROUND

After the numbers of believers swelled into the thousands, it became necessary to appoint those who could help in the daily administration of food and money to those who needed financial support. Some of the widows from other parts of the world, now living in Jerusalem, felt that the native Jewish widows were unfairly favored in the distributions. Stephen was among the first seven appointed to oversee the impartial distribution of food and money to the needy, thus freeing the apostles to give themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word.

### DISCUSSION:

1. Stephen was not given the gift of pulpit ministry, yet he was “a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost.” Why does the Holy Spirit give everyone gifts in the body of Christ instead of concentrating these gifts on just a few?”
2. It seems that the gifts Stephen was given also had the necessary grace given along with it. What would happen if the LORD did not give an equal measure of grace to go with the gift or calling?
3. Did Stephen purposefully stir up the crowds, and intentionally create trouble? Why then, did some folks accuse Stephen of doing just that?
4. What does Acts 6:10 mean, “And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake?”
5. When Stephen was brought before the council of religious leaders, he could have chosen his words a little differently, in hopes of getting himself “out of trouble.” Why didn’t he?
6. Stephen was able to “look into heaven, saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God.” What did this tell Stephen?
7. When we face extreme circumstances, what assurance do we

have that “Jesus is standing on the right hand of God” on our behalf?

8. What could have possibly been the result if Stephen had not prayed his final prayer?
9. Who all was possibly affected by the martyrdom of Stephen and how might they have been affected?
10. What do you think ran through the mind of Saul, later known as Paul, as he witnessed the stoning of Stephen?

### COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Stephen’s work among the people was of short duration compared to others who lived much longer. On contrast, the apostle John lived to be quite old and died of natural causes years later. One might wonder why Stephen’s life had to be cut so short. Could it possibly be that God’s timing for the “untimely” death of Stephen was carefully calculated to affect Saul of Tarsus at the best time possible? While the stoning of Stephen might have been the first time Saul witnessed a follower of Jesus suffering for the sake of the gospel, it was certainly not the last. A few years later Paul (*Saul*) wrote of the many times he had persecuted the followers of Jesus. The LORD told Paul, while on the road to Damascus, “It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.”

How would it have affected Saul if Stephen had lashed out at his accusers? Suppose that Stephen had submitted to his ill treatment outwardly, yet failed to forgive his accusers and hadn't prayed for the Lord to “lay not this sin to their charge”? The ultimate test of Stephen’s faithfulness was when he found the grace to forgive and pray for those who wrongfully accused him and stoned him. Our hardest test of faithfulness may well be when we find it necessary to forgive an unjust deed, or to be wrongfully accused when our motives are pure.

Rest assured, our faithfulness will hit its intended mark with the unerring, pin-point accuracy of the Holy Spirit. Just as Stephen never saw the effects of his faithfulness, we may not see the **full** effects of our faithfulness in this life. Perhaps it is best that way, in order to help us not think too highly of ourselves.

Another important aspect of our faithfulness is the precedent it

sets for those who follow after us. Stephen was the very first of a vast host of martyrs that would soon start following his example. There are Christians today still giving their lives, perhaps at this very moment. They are all following the example of Stephen.

My Grandma on my mother's side of the family told us of the time her father confided to her his feelings of "not doing much good in life." After considering his comment, my Grandma Carrie McMillian told him, "Mother left you when we were young. You chose to live for God despite your pain and rejection. You were faithful to us, provided for us, cared for us, and loved us. Because you chose to live for the Lord, your children, grandchildren, and your great-grandchildren have an example to follow. Think of the affect your faithfulness to the Lord has had on your family. You may not feel you have done much, but you really have!" Later, when nearing the end of life, my Great Grandma, the one who left her husband when their children were young, got saved. Her eventual salvation was in large part due to the faithfulness of my Great Grandpa. His choice of taking the path of forgiveness and faithfulness eventually provided an environment that fostered her turning to the Lord.

## REFLECTIONS

*"For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake" (Philippians 1:29).*

*"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12).*

In Fox's Book of Martyrs, it says, "About two thousand Christians, with Nicanor, one of the seven deacons, suffered martyrdom during the 'persecution that arose about Stephen'" (– St. Stephen, Page 2).

One must wonder how many of those two thousand Christians Saul of Tarsus may have been responsible for having put to death. But after he encountered Jesus on the road to Damascus, Jesus told Ananias, "I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake" (Acts 9:16). Truly, Saul (*afterward Paul*) got a hold of that revelation. He too joined the great host of Christian martyrs during the great persecution that arose against the church under the Roman Emperor, Nero, A.D. 67.

Cath Martin writes, "The data, attributed to the late researcher

David B. Barrett, puts the number of Christians martyred since the time of Jesus at 70 million.” Around the year 2017, Samuel Smith wrote: “According to Open Doors, Christian persecution across the world has steadily increased over the last three years and 2016 was ‘the worst year of persecution on record.’ Center for the Study of Global Christianity also found that Christians are the most persecuted religious group throughout the world.”

Need we think that is going to change? It will not because the carnal nature of man is what it is. Jesus taught His followers, “If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you” (John 15:38). “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10:28). “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel’s, the same shall save it” (Mark 8:35).

Just think what a host of martyrs are going to be rewarded on that last great day, when Jesus returns! Will we be found worthy to stand among that number? Oh, let us be among those who “reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18)! The Apostle Peter, who also suffered martyrdom by crucifixion in A.D. 67, under the cruel emperor Nero, exhorted us, “Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind ...” (1 Peter 4:1a). May we be counted among those who overcome by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of our testimony, and love not our lives unto the death (Revelations 1:11).

—Bro. Harlan Sorrell

**DECEMBER 4, 2022**

**PAUL, A CHANGED MAN**

**Acts 8:3** As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed *them* to prison.

**Acts 9:1** And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,

**2** And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

**3** And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:

**4** And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

**5** And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: *it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.*

**6** And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord *said* unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

**17** And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, *even* Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.

**18** And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.

**19** And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.

**20** And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.

**21** But all that heard *him* were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?

**22** But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.

**2 Corinthians 11:23** Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I *am* more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.

**24** Of the Jews five times received I forty *stripes* save one.

**25** Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;

**26** *In* journeyings often, *in* perils of waters, *in* perils of robbers, *in* perils by *mine own* countrymen, *in* perils by the heathen, *in* perils in the city, *in* perils in the wilderness, *in* perils in the sea, *in* perils among false brethren;

**27** In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.

**28** Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

**2 Corinthians 12:7** And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

**8** For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

**9** And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

**10** Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

**2 Timothy 4:7** I have fought a good fight, I have finished *my* course, I have kept the faith:

**8** Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

*(Read also Acts 9:10-16; 23-31; Acts 13:1-3; 1 Corinthians 9:16-27; 2 Timothy 4:10-11)*

**MEMORY VERSE:** But I keep under my body, and bring *it* into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway. — **1 Corinthians 9:27**

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** The story of Saul, later known as Paul, is one of the most remarkable examples of the Lord turning someone around completely. Saul persecuted the church with great zeal in his early years. After his conversion, however, he was even more fervent in the opposite direction. Paul suffered as much as any other missionary recorded in history. Paul's life is one of great contrasts, proving that "nothing is impossible with God"!

## WORD DEFINITIONS

**Acts 9:30** "Sent him forth to Tarsus": Paul was sent back to his



home town of Tarsus. It was simply too dangerous for him to remain at Jerusalem any longer, given the reaction to his preaching Christ.

**2 Corinthians 11:24** “Forty *stripes* save one.”: The scourge was made of three thongs. The victim was struck with the scourge thirteen times, yielding thirty-nine stripes. Jewish law prohibited inflicting more than forty stripes. Thirty-nine was considered “humane” treatment.

**2 Corinthians 11:25** “Thrice was I beaten with rods”: This was punishment inflicted by Roman soldiers. Some believe that Paul suffered more from the rods than the scourge, since the number of lashes by the rod was not limited to thirty-nine.

**2 Corinthians 12:7** “Abundance of the revelations”: It is thought that this supreme revelation happened during Paul’s stoning at Lystra. (*F.B. Meyer*)

**2 Corinthians 12:7** “Thorn in the flesh”: Some believe it was eye trouble or some other physical deformity. Others wonder if it was the suffering Paul endured, as the church at Corinth suffered under the false teacher that was later removed. (Condensed from *Adam Clarke* and *F.B. Meyer*)

## LESSON BACKGROUND

Saul learned the ways of the Pharisee’s at the feet of Gamaliel, the president of the council. Gamaliel is thought to be the son of Simeon, the one who took Jesus in his arms and blessed him as a child . This is the same Gamaliel who cautioned the council to be careful in how they handled the apostles, saying, “Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God” (Acts 5: 17-42).

Bible scholars feel that Gamaliel was moderate and fair in his dealings with the believers, compared to some of the others on the council. It’s curious how Saul, his pupil, became so zealous fighting against the followers of Jesus. By the time Saul met Jesus on the road to Damascus, he had earned a reputation as “Persecutor.”

## DISCUSSION:

1. To what degree of zeal did Saul persecute the followers of Jesus?

2. What importance did the faithfulness of Ananias play in Saul's story?
3. After Saul's conversion, why would he be interested in preaching for Jesus, when before he had persecuted the followers of Jesus so ardently? (Acts 9:20-21)
4. What did the LORD see in Saul that He wanted to use for the sake of the gospel?
5. When the Jews in Damascus plotted to seize Saul, how did Saul escape? How can it be said that "living for God is not very exciting?"
6. The disciples in Jerusalem were afraid of Saul, doubting his conversion. However, Barnabas stepped forward and formally introduced Saul to the disciples. Barnabas could have remained silent, but instead stood in the gap between the disciples' fears and Saul's claim to now be one of them. How important is it for us to "bridge the gap" today when the necessity arises?
7. After a short time preaching the gospel in Jerusalem, Saul had to again be hustled out of town. The disciples sent him to his native city, Tarsus. Why do you think Saul encountered so much resistance everywhere he went?
8. Saul seemed to have a very direct approach in his method of ministry, even from the start. Having the advantage of looking back on history, instead of looking forward like Saul had to do, what can we say about the way the LORD inspired Saul/Paul to preach the gospel, despite the hardships he suffered?
9. How compelled did Paul feel to preach the gospel of Christ and what did he suffer?
10. If we were Paul and placed in his exact circumstances, what would we need from the Lord to be able to endure with gladness the same things he went through?
11. What do you think Paul felt about his ministry, when he looked back on it toward the end of his life?
12. What does Paul's faithfulness mean to us now?

### **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

Historians say that Paul preached the gospel to anyone who would listen while he was a prisoner in Rome. Claudia Acte, Nero's wife, is said by some to have gotten saved, either by the example of

some of the earlier converts, or by the direct preaching of Paul. Some of Claudia's slaves became Christians, and up to 50 percent of the enslaved populace in Rome became Christians during the period of the early morning church. Read her story at [earlychurchhistory.org](http://earlychurchhistory.org).

In reflecting over his life, Paul said, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished *my* course, I have kept the faith." He knew he was about to receive his reward. Paul ran hard, never regretting the sacrifice and suffering he endured for the sake of the gospel. Compare Paul's difficulties and final reward with what others suffer for such inferior crowns of achievements! Mankind tends to applaud those who endure hardness for the sake of politics, business, sports, science, humanitarianism, war, etc. After the heroes of these great efforts are gone, though, someone else eventually usurps their position of "the greatest" in that particular field of endeavor. How vain, when cast in the light of eternity!

If you have ever been near a sporting event, a political event, or even a humanitarian fund raiser, you will probably recall the fervor that goes into what is said and done. I have to ask myself this question, "How vigorous am I in my daily worship, my daily life, and in my attendance at public places of worship? Am I as likely to praise the Lord as my counterparts are to cheer on their favorite teams? Do I sing as loudly as those who make themselves hoarse at football games? I don't believe the Lord expects, or even wants, us to carry on in an unseemly manner, but I can behave myself in a way that lets the Lord, and others, know that I am serious about my salvation.

*"Dear Lord, help me to run as hard for you as those who run after the things of this world. While I can't neglect my daily duties, help me, above all, to not neglect my soul. Help me to be just as serious about the souls of my family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, and any you cause to cross my path. I want to be who you want me to be for your kingdom!"*

## REFLECTIONS

We first encounter Saul as he is persecuting the church. Not only is he not saved, but he also is in direct opposition to God. It is such a wondrous thing that God can save the vilest of sinners as he did with Saul.

We think of the song that states, "Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious

blood shall never lose its power, till all the ransomed church of God are safe, to sin no more.” Mary Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, showed forth the power of God. Most likely all the works of the flesh were prevalent in her life and yet she was set free. Christ said, “I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” People today who are bound by habits, drugs, drinking, smoking, etc., can be set free by the power of God.

Sis. Inez Beisly said, “God can bless faithfulness, but He cannot bless unfaithfulness.” I seem to hear dear Bro. Waldo Eck singing, “I counted on Adam, I counted on Cain.” Later in the song it says, “Oh go tell the world, Paul, I’m counting on you.” Another song says, “May all who come behind us find us faithful.” Just as God counted on Paul to prove faithful and fulfil the mission He had for him; God is counting on us to do the same.

One of my favorite scriptures is I Corinthians 15:58; “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” God is still looking for faithful, steadfast, unmovable men and women who are willing, like Paul, to abound in the work of the Lord.

The apostle Paul comes to the end of his journey with grace, stating in II Timothy 4:6-8; “For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them that love his appearing.” Let us, by the grace of God, go forward and do likewise.

—Bro E. E. Gracey

**DECEMBER 11, 2022**

## **THE CALL TO FAITHFULNESS TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA**

### *To the Angel of the Church of Ephesus*

**Revelation 2:2** I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast

found them liars:

**3** And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.

**4** Nevertheless I have *somewhat* against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

**5** Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

**6** But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

**7** He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

#### To the Angel of the Church in *Smyrna*

**Revelation 2:9** I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and *I know* the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but *are* the synagogue of Satan.

**10** Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast *some* of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

**11** He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

#### To the Angel of the Church in *Pergamos*

**Revelation 2:13** I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, *even* where Satan's seat *is*: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas *was* my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.

**14** But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

**15** So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.

**17** He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name

written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth *it*.

To the Angel of the Church in **Thyatira**

**Revelation 2:19** I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last *to be* more than the first.

**20** Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.

**24** But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden.

**25** But that which ye have *already* hold fast till I come.

**26** And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:

**28** And I will give him the morning star.

To the Angel of the church in **Sardis**

**Revelation 3:1** These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.

**2** Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.

**5** He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

To the Angel of the Church in **Philadelphia**

**Revelation 3:8** I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

**10** Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

**11** Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

**12** Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of

my God, and the name of the city of my God, *which is* new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and *I will write upon him* my new name.

To the Angel of the Church of the **Laodiceans**

**Revelation 3:15** I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

**16** So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

**17** Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

**19** As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

**20** Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

**21** To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

**MEMORY VERSE:** And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward *is* with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

—**Revelation 22:12**

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** The LORD had a unique message for each of the seven churches of Asia. While the LORD's message to each congregation differed, the common theme was, "Be faithful! If you overcome what is trying to overtake you, the reward will be wonderful!"

**WORD DEFINITIONS**

**Revelation 2:1, 8, 12, 18** and **3:1, 7, 14** "Angel": the messenger or person sent by God to preside over this church. (*Adam Clarke*); pastor (*Strong's*)

**Revelation 2:2, 3, 19** and **3:10** "Patience": steadfastness, constancy, endurance (*Strong-Lite: G5281*)

**Revelation 2:6** "Nicolaitans": The Nicolaitans were promiscuous and mixed several pagan rites with their worship.

**Revelation 2:14** “Doctrine of Balaam”: to place stumbling blocks in the way of believers to cause them to stumble and fall into sin, as Balaam taught Balac [*Balak*] to do to the children of Israel. (Condensed from *Albert Barnes* and *Adam Clarke*)

**Revelation 2:20** “that woman Jezebel”: Some believe that this evil woman of influence may have been the wife of the pastor of the church in Thyatira. Her manner of evil earned her the name, “Jezebel.” (*Adam Clarke*)

## LESSON BACKGROUND

Jesus appeared to John on the LORD’s day, Sunday, while John was in the Spirit [*meditating and praying, and under the influence of the Holy Spirit*]. The visions that John saw and was commanded to write down started with the message to the seven churches of Asia. It seems that John received the whole book of Revelation at one time, all in one day, or possibly a few days.

The messages to the seven churches of Asia must have been urgent for Jesus to personally dictate the exact words to each one. This raises the question: What happened to the churches? All seven congregations were located in what is now modern-day Turkey, which is now 99 percent Muslim. There are a few Christians scattered throughout Turkey, but they are a definite minority.

## DISCUSSION:

1. In what way did the LORD hold the pastors and congregations responsible for the wrong conduct he pointed out and why would He do so?
2. What doctrines and practices did the LORD condemn among the seven churches of Asia?
3. How is it possible that the church at Ephesus could leave their first love, despite the many things they were doing right?
4. What are some of the things that could hinder our first love for the Lord today?
5. How could the church at Smyrna be poor, yet be called rich by the LORD?
6. How does being rich temporally and lukewarm spiritually relate



to each other, and what did the LORD have to say to the Laodiceans?

7. What message is repeated to all the churches?
8. Do you feel the LORD's knowledge of His people is the same today as it was then? How can we apply the admonitions and encouragements to the churches of Asia to ourselves today?
9. What price could we possibly pay for either ignoring, or minimalizing the messages to the seven churches?

### **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

Considering the messages to the seven churches of Asia, the LORD was aware of several things that needed to be addressed. The things He told them of would cause ultimate failure if they did not heed the warning. For some of the churches, the LORD knew that if they continued to harbor those who promoted false doctrines, the doctrines would cause a chain reaction of rebellion and unbelief. Another congregation did many things right but had lost their first love. The LORD knew this would be spiritually fatal if not corrected. Affluence was a problem for yet another congregation. They felt they had need of nothing, resulting in them becoming lukewarm – something God hates.

Apollo 13 suffered a catastrophic and almost fatal, outcome due to small errors in an oxygen tank. A full accounting of this incident can be found online at [www.churchofgodeveninglight.com/bible-lessons/](http://www.churchofgodeveninglight.com/bible-lessons/).

*“Lord, I know you love me, and understand me completely, inside and out. You want me to make a successful trip through life and make Heaven my eternal home. Bring to my attention the areas in my life that need correction. Help me to not only understand what you say to me, but to value your insight enough to make the necessary adjustments. Amen!”*

### **REFLECTIONS**

The seven churches of Asia were each favored with a letter. They are like love letters from “The Lover of Souls.” The letters are tailored to the condition and needs of each congregation. These seven letters fall into three categories but all contain an appeal for them to be

faithful and overcome.

The letters to Smyrna and Philadelphia are like typical love letters, full of complimentary words and encouragement. The sweetness of fellowship is unbroken because there is no question of these two congregations' faithfulness to Christ.

Ephesus, Pergamos, and Thyatira also received many compliments, but He also chides and corrects them for where they are failing to be faithful and true to Him, the Lover of their souls. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend," says Proverbs 27:6.

The tone of the love letters to Sardis and Laodicea are completely different from all the others. The relationship is almost broken. They are not worthy of any compliments, only chastisement; but, "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth."

"The Lover of Souls" is always faithful and steadfast in His love to us even when we are not. All seven, no matter the condition of their relationship, received encouraging words and precious promises. These love letters contain a strong appeal to be faithful and true to the end.

—Sis. Sarah Herron

**DECEMBER 18, 2022**

**BEING FAITHFUL IN OUR SPIRIT AND OUR THOUGHTS  
FAITHFULNESS TOWARD GOD, OURSELVES, AND OTHERS.**

**Job 31:1** I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?

**Psalms 31:23** O love the LORD, all ye his saints: for the LORD preserveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer.

**Proverbs 11:13** A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter.

**Proverbs 13:17** A wicked messenger falleth into mischief: but a faithful ambassador is health.

**Proverbs 14:5** A faithful witness will not lie: but a false witness will utter lies.

**Proverbs 20:6** Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find?

**Proverbs 25:13** As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, so is a

faithful messenger to them that send him: for he refresheth the soul of his masters.

**Proverbs 27:6** Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.

**Proverbs 28:20** A faithful man shall abound with blessings: but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent.

**Mark 14:8** She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying.

**Luke 16:10** He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.

**Colossians 1:21** And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled  
**22** In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight:

**Colossians 4:2** Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;

**1Timothy 3:8** Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre;  
**9** Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.

**10** And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless.

**11** Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things.

**12** Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.

**13** For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

**MEMORY VERSE:** Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed.

—**John 8:31**

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Faithfulness is desperately necessary in every aspect of our lives. Without faithfulness, chaos and destruction on every level ensues. Lives are destroyed, souls are shipwrecked, relationships are shattered, businesses implode, governments fail – the list goes on and on. With faithfulness, however, peace and order prevail in all of these areas.

## WORD DEFINITIONS

**Proverbs 11:13** “Talebearer”: the walking busybody; the trader in scandal. (*Adam Clarke*)

**Colossians 1:22** “Unblameable”: unblemished, without spot, faultless. (*Strong’s*)

**1 Timothy 3:8** “Double-tongued”: equivocal, telling a different story. [Telling one person one thing, and the other person another thing.] (*Strong’s*)

**1 Timothy 3:10** “Proved”: tested, examined, tried. (Condensed from *Strong’s*)

**1 Timothy 3:11** “Slanderers”: false accusers. (*Strong’s*)

## LESSON BACKGROUND

“And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse” (Malachi 4:6). This is the last verse of the Old Testament. It speaks of a worldwide problem of unfaithful fathers who do not consider their children as they should, and shows the resulting devastation in their children’s lives. The LORD knew that the light of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ could and would turn the course of this world around. The only other option was to “smite the earth with a curse.”

## DISCUSSION:

1. Why did Job find it necessary to “make a covenant with his eyes”?
2. What reward does the LORD promise to those who hold up their end of the bargain?
3. Describe some of the attributes of a faithful person, as well as an unfaithful person.
4. In what way does faithfulness toward God affect our faithfulness toward ourselves and toward others?
5. How much room is there for selfishness in being faithful?
6. How faithful are spiritual leaders and their companions to be?
7. How have you have been affected by others faithfulness?

## COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

There are countless examples of heroes and heroines that greatly inspire us with their faithfulness in extreme adversity. Other stories, however, that speak of unfaithfulness, are depressing and very un-inspiring. What a marked difference!

It's also interesting that small acts of faithfulness enable greater acts of faithfulness later on. The shepherd boy David, desiring to protect his flock, was inspired to kill the lion and the bear. God enabled him to be faithful, but David had to exert himself. Faithfulness with his flock later enabled David to face Goliath, and then greater battles later on. Faithfulness builds upon itself, especially when anchored with the cornerstone of Jesus Christ.

Desmond Doss, a conscientious objector who enlisted as an unarmed medic in WWII, was ridiculed by his fellow soldiers in boot camp for his convictions on non-aggression. Desmond refused to give in to the pressure and remained faithful in his belief that God would protect him while he tended to the needs of others. During the battle of Hacksaw Ridge, in Okinawa, "...less than one third of the men in the company made it back down. The rest lay wounded, scattered across enemy soil—abandoned and left for dead, if they weren't already. One lone soldier, Desmond Doss, disobeyed orders and charged back into the firefight to rescue as many of his men as he could, before he either collapsed or died trying. His iron determination and unflagging courage resulted in at least 75 lives saved that day, May 5, 1945. "...I just kept prayin', 'Lord, please help me get more and more, one more, until there was none left....'" (*The Northwest Connection, an online community newspaper – published October 21, 2019 – Helen Maguire*) <https://nw-connection.com/the-battle-of-hacksaw-ridge-one-more-lord-just-one-more/>

*"Dear Lord, help me to be just as determined today to be faithful toward you, myself, and others, as Desmond was to help his wounded comrades!"*

## REFLECTIONS

I had the privilege of growing up in a home with faithful parents. When I was a young man, I probably wouldn't have labeled them as such; all I knew was their way of life. We had a time of family

worship before we went to bed every night—every night except when we had an evening service at church. Church services were something we never skipped, although I grew up in a small congregation without a pastor. There was always Sunday morning, Sunday evening, and Wednesday night services, even if it was just our family. My father took vacation time to take his family to camp meeting. We attended the camp meetings at Monark and Myrtle as a family every year.

I can count on one hand, and have fingers left over, the times I came home from school and my mother wasn't at home. As she did her work around the house, she sang the songs from the "Evening Light Songs" hymnal. When we snapped beans and shucked corn together, she told us stories about her childhood and what she admired in her Daddy (my grandpa that passed away before I was born). She told us about his favorite songs, how much he loved her mother, how he liked to tease and how he quit the tobacco habit. My Dad never did anything without us except go to his job. He worked at the same place for over 30 years. If you got up early enough, you would find him reading his Bible or the "Faith and Victory" before he went to work. When my dad needed counsel he turned to God's people every time.

As I reflect on my childhood and my parents' way of life, I realize that it is very difficult for me to stray away from their way of life and feel clear in my soul. Many times I ask myself, "Have I been faithful enough to impact others the way I have been impacted?"

The challenge to each one of us is that we would live in a manner that those that come behind us would consider us faithful. May we apply Psalm 139:23-24 to ourselves on a regular basis. Job 13:15a says: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." The Apostle Paul said; "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (II Timothy 4:7). Faithfulness and glamorous don't rhyme and certainly are not synonymous, but the dividends of "faithfulness" will always far outpace "glamorous" at the finish line.

—Bro. Dan Adams

DECEMBER 25, 2022

THE “DOMINO” AND “DOWNLINE” EFFECT OF FAITHFULNESS –  
IMMEDIATE AND FUTURE RESULTS

**1Chronicles 11:10** These also are the chief of the mighty men whom David had, who strengthened themselves with him in his kingdom, and with all Israel, to make him king, according to the word of the LORD concerning Israel.

**11** And this is the number of the mighty men whom David had; Jashobeam, an Hachmonite, the chief of the captains: he lifted up his spear against three hundred slain by him at one time.

**12** And after him was Eleazar the son of Dodo, the Ahohite, who was one of the three mighties.

**13** He was with David at Pasdammim, and there the Philistines were gathered together to battle, where was a parcel of ground full of barley; and the people fled from before the Philistines.

**14** And they set themselves in the midst of that parcel, and delivered it, and slew the Philistines; and the LORD saved them by a great deliverance.

**15** Now three of the thirty captains went down to the rock to David, into the cave of Adullam; and the host of the Philistines encamped in the valley of Rephaim.

**16** And David was then in the hold, and the Philistines' garrison was then at Bethlehem.

**17** And David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, that is at the gate!

**18** And the three brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, that was by the gate, and took it, and brought it to David: but David would not drink of it, but poured it out to the LORD,

**19** And said, My God forbid it me, that I should do this thing: shall I drink the blood of these men that have put their lives in jeopardy? for with the jeopardy of their lives they brought it. Therefore he would not drink it. These things did these three mightiest.

**MEMORY VERSE:** Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find? —**Proverbs 20:6**

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** At the time of David’s ascension to the throne of Israel, many faithful men accompanied him – men who had proven faithful in battle, and who hazarded their lives for the good of others. Three of the thirty most honorable are mentioned here.

### WORD DEFINITIONS

**1 Chronicles 11:16** “The Philistines’ garrison was then at Bethlehem”: Due to the outrageous preoccupation of king Saul trying to find and kill David, the Philistines had advanced their outposts as far as Bethlehem.

**1 Chronicles 11:17** “The well of Bethlehem”: David grew up in the area of Bethlehem and was acquainted with how good the water was from this particular well.

### LESSON BACKGROUND

After the death of king Saul and Jonathan, David reigned over Judah seven and a half years in Hebron. After seven and a half years had expired, all Israel gathered together in Hebron to anoint David king over the whole realm.

David and his army then went to Jerusalem to overthrow the Jebusites that lived there. The Jebusites mocked David by putting blind and lame men on top of the wall and said, “Except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shalt not come in hither: thinking, David cannot come in hither” (2 Samuel 5:6). Joab volunteered to climb up through the secret water source of the city, enter the city, and open the gates from the inside. By this means, David and his army conquered Jerusalem, calling it the City of David.

This brings us up to the time where the catalogue of David’s mighty men are listed. The first three mentioned in the verses above give a brief overview of the kind of men that called David friend and king.

### DISCUSSION:

1. God “took David from the sheepfold,” anointed him king over Israel, then allowed king Saul to be his adversary for several



- years. In what ways did this challenge David's faithfulness.
2. David's mighty men "strengthened themselves with him in his kingdom." Describe the effect a good and godly leader has on those who are with him.
  3. David proved his faithfulness as a shepherd boy by defending his father's sheep from the lion and the bear. He later killed Goliath when the rest of the army was too afraid to face the giant. How motivated do you think David's mighty men would have been to defend the parcel of ground full of barley if David had not been faithful against the lion, bear, and Goliath?
  4. These same three mighty men broke through the ranks of the Philistines to get David a drink of water from the well at Bethlehem. What does this tell us about the level of love and respect these men had for David?
  5. When David realized what his friends had gone through to bring him the water from the well at Bethlehem, he poured it out as an offering. How do you think this affected his men?
  6. When you consider all of the things David endured—how he looked to God for guidance and strength as well as how he behaved himself in front of his men—what kind of leader do you believe David was?
  7. How does the "domino effect" work in faithfulness? How important is it for "our domino" to be lined up correctly so we are affected in the right manner, and those after us are affected likewise?
  8. Describe the "downline effect" of faithfulness in David's leadership and in other godly leaders.

### **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

The LORD referred to David as, "a man after God's own heart." Understanding that "God is love" gives us a little clue as to what David's heart must have been like. He loved his men. His men loved him in return – to the point of risking their own lives just to get him a drink of water from behind enemy lines.

As it always does, David's faithfulness inspired greatness in others. It mattered not how high nor how far his men went, David did not become "less great" or "less faithful" as a result, but rather, there were mutual benefit enjoyed by all. This fact is a hallmark of

faithfulness – there are no losers involved, only winners.

Jealousy did not belong in David’s vocabulary. He felt secure in God’s love and in his lot in life. Faithfulness brings security and leaves no room at all for jealousy. We see in stark contrast the effect unfaithfulness had on king Saul. He was driven to the point of insanity by his insecurity and in his jealousy of David.

When David did err, he never blamed others but took full responsibility for his own actions. He made full confession to God and accepted the consequences of his mistakes. Faithfulness helps us make our way back to God after failure.

All great men and women throughout history have one thing in common – faithfulness. True faithfulness belongs to God, and He is eager to bestow it on all who love him.

*“Dear Heavenly Father, we love you for who you are, and for the ultimate faithfulness you embody. Help us to love you as we ought. May those who come behind us find us faithful! Amen.”*

## REFLECTIONS

His name was Arthur Levi Gentry. He was born on the 17th day of April, 1905, to Charley and Annie Leach Gentry in the hilly country of eastern Missouri. Life was difficult in those hills, but Arthur was not afraid of hard work. As a young adult, he worked at the sawmill, as well as on the family farm. At the age of 22, he married a young girl named Dollie Mary Ella Elder. The Lord blessed their home with three daughters followed by three sons. Arthur provided for the needs of his family wherever he could find work. Sometimes he had to move his family to the city for factory work and sometimes to the cotton fields to work in the gins. He was a fearless man and seemed to have strength that defied his age. He was a good man, but more importantly, he was a godly man. He was faithful to raise his family in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

I never met Arthur Levi Gentry, as he died before I was born, but I thank the Lord for him. You see, Arthur Levi Gentry was the maternal grandfather of my husband, and his faithfulness made a difference in our lives. Our home and marriage have been blessed because of ‘Grandpa Gentry.’ This is proof that a faithful life can positively influence generations following; those seen and unseen.

—Sis LaDawna Adams



