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Keeping Faith Bright

“What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,’ but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.” James 2:14-17

The story is told of a woman who was showing a beautiful, massive piece of family

silver to some visitors. She apologized as she took it from the cupboard where she kept it. “Dreadfully tarnished,” she said. “I can’t keep it bright unless I use it.” That is just as true of faith as it is of silver. Tucked away in the Sunday closet of the soul, and only brought out for show, our faith needs apology. It is bound to be tarnished! We cannot keep faith bright unless we use it.

James describes what a living faith looks like. It is active and vibrant. It is not tucked away in a closet, and it does not have to apologize for being inactive. A living faith is guided by God’s word and it takes action based on God’s leading.

Ray White explores what the Bible says being faithful. If this were the last word that could be given, being faithful until death is a message that the Bible enjoins upon us. There are things we must do to be saved, and there are things we must do to remain faithful until death.

Alan Langford writes about people, books, and things that have helped to shape his life. Alan has been writing an autobiography and he shares some things that have influenced his philosophy of life, the most important being God, his Word, and faithful Christian friends.

Be prayerful and keep your faith bright!

...lsg

A living faith is guided by God’s word and it takes action based on God’s leading.



Be Faithful

“If you had one last word of comfort and hope to give the Lord's people, what would it be?” That is an interesting question! I would encourage you to “remain faithful until death!”

Revelation 2:10, “Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.”

What does it mean to “be faithful until death”? On the day of Pentecost some 3000 asked Peter and the rest of the apostles, “What shall we do?” (Acts 2) The question “What shall we do?” refers to what shall we do to make things right with God. I understand the question refers to what must we do to be saved. Peter answered, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.” (Acts 2:38-39)

My point is that just as there are things we must do to be saved there are things we must do to remain faithful until death.

James 1:12, “Blessed are those who are tempted and remain faithful! When they have been approved, God will give them the crown of eternal life. God promised this to all those who love Him.” (Easy To Read Version)

How can we remain faithful if we do not know how? We must “Study to show ourselves approved unto God, a workman that does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” (2 Timothy 2:15) The psalmist told God, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” (Psalm 1 19:105)

Jesus said, “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.” (John 8:12) Study God's Word and let His Word be a lamp unto our feet and a light to our path. Always remember that Jesus said He is the light of the world and Jesus said, “If you

love Me, you will keep My commandments.” (John 14:15, NASV)

A scribe asked Jesus “‘Which is the first commandment of all?’ Jesus answered, ‘The first of all the commandments is: ‘Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment. And the second, is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” (Mark 12:28-31)

What does it mean to “be faithful until death”?

God has always expected His people to keep His commandments. “God said to Abraham: ‘As for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations.’” (Genesis 17:9) And King David admonished God's people, “Remember His covenant forever, the word which He commanded, for a thousand generations.” (1 Chronicles 16:15) Joshua set us a good example when he said to Israel, “Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.” (Joshua 24:15)

Another example of faithfulness and commitment in the Old Testament is found in the book of Ruth. Ruth said to Naomi her mother-in-law, “Entreat me not to leave you, or to turn back from following after you; for wherever you go, I will go; And wherever you lodge, I will lodge: your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and there will I be buried. The LORD do so to me, and more also, if anything but death parts you and me.” (Ruth 1: 16-17)

Paul said, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to

me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.” (2 Timothy 4:7-8) We are to remain faithful until death and we will receive a crown of life which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give us when He returns.

2 Tim 3:16-17 tells us what we need to remain faithful. “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

God's Word is profitable for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness; it completely equips us “for every good work.” God's Word teaches us how to live according to His will. “All Scripture” contains “every good work” that God wants us to do! God's Word tells us how to be saved and how to live.

A few things in which we are to be faithful:

Our Love for God, “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God.” (Romans 8:28); and 1 John 5:2 in the NKJV says, “when we love God and keep His commandments.”

Our Love for Jesus. Jesus said, “If you love me, you will obey what I command.” (John 14:15)

Our Love for our parents, spouse, and children.

Our Love one another, the church. John 13:34-35, “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

We must be faithful to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. (Mark 12:31)

We must be faithful to the church. Hebrews 10:24-25, “Let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.”

Christians are to assemble themselves together. Acts 20:7, “On the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and contin-

ued his message until midnight.” The reason they came together was to “break bread.”

We are to be faithful to preach the Gospel to the lost. Jesus commanded His disciples to “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20) And in Mark 16:15-16, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but does not believe will be condemned.”

In the New Testament it was not just the apostles who preached the Gospel to the lost. In Acts 8 the disciples were scattered and went everywhere preaching the Word. (Acts 8:4) Philip went to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. (Acts 8:5) It was the disciples that were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria and the apostles remained in Jerusalem.

All Christians, not just “Preachers” or “Evangelists,” should be faithful in preaching to or teaching the lost the Gospel. “My beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” (1 Corinthians 15:58)

In Acts 5:29, “Peter and the other apostles answered and said: ‘We ought to obey God rather than men.’”

Remember: Revelation 2:10, “Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.”

Ray White
Sand Springs, OK

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Last Words to Honor God and to Encourage and Inspire His People

My Prayer for All: My Lord and God, of the past, present and tomorrow. I have such fond memories of our times of grace, mercy, and strength. You have given me life that has been filled with unforgettable times of joy and happiness, with parents who loved you, a family who worshiped you, and with friends who knew you. Father, you have brought me a partner with my own family of children with hopes and dreams. I pray they may rejoice in your presence and holiness and with your guidance let them know it is you and your unfailing love who can give wisdom, truth, life. I long for them to know the way they should go to have real security, wealth, and happiness that come not from this temporary world. Looking to heaven for the eternal gift and promise is worth the living, sharing, and knowing for a lifetime. Through Jesus the redeemer and savior I pray. Amen

“Fear of the LORD is the foundation of true knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.” (Proverbs 1:7)

“God never said that the journey would be easy, but He did say that the arrival would be worthwhile.” (Max Lucado)

As a tribute to my beloved Uncle William Eugene “Buddy” Lovell on July 31, 2019, I wrote: “I have so many memories that I’m encouraged to write about them so they might be shared with the family. Uncle Gene, a man of sufficient means, was one who knew the King of his Hope, who was destined for glorious riches. His character and walk demonstrated he knew the Lord, he trusted in His promises, and simply, there was no other way to live than by the truth he had known, believed and embraced.”

Reflecting upon my family’s two years living in Seattle, we had a good experience to become close to new Christians, a loving church family devoted to serving and teaching them. My wife and I learned good lessons and God used us as well. Why did everything go so well while living there: we were picked up at the airport by Christians welcoming us; the hospitality of a young new Christian couple in their home; getting into a house so soon after arrival; realtor amazed that we closed with all our requirements met; a huge house where

our church family met for several months; studying and observing a loving minister enjoying teaching a first generation of Christians; finding a church building within a month from our departure; selling our house so quickly, that again amazed the same realtor, “the house didn’t cost you anything” and said, “God has been in this all along”; unable to find a job in the Seattle area; my new employer said, “Yes, I’m offering you a job!” All this leaves no doubt that God had a plan for us in the Northwest, but he also wanted us to return to Huntsville. On October 31, 1988 I retired from the Army and we committed to see what else the Lord had in store for us.

God is all, the Bible reveals His purpose, we are in his plan, he promised!

Everybody has special moments and favorite occasions that inspire the feelings and thinking of the day and of the past. These things also give me insights and direction or leadings. God is all, the Bible reveals His purpose, we are in his plan, he promised! And so, God has a plan for us. Scripture and wise statements are inspirational to underscore and anchor us in life through experiences.

“For everything comes from God alone. Everything lives by his power, and everything is for his glory.” (Romans 11:36 TLB)

"The purpose of the Bible is to bring men to Christ, to make them holy and prepare them for heaven. In this it is unique among books, it always fulfills its purpose." (A. W. Tozer)

The Bible teaches us to “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind. This is the first and greatest commandment.” (Matthew 22:37-38)

God’s Word and our memorial today remind us of His great love for us. God's son, Christ, lived, died, and was raised up by God's power. It is by this sacrifice, of life and shed blood, that we believe and trust God's promise that it is by His power we will also be resurrected one day to be with our Savior and Father God.

I have read through the Bible at least twice with a resolve to stay on a daily routine to complete the whole book in a year. There were usually challenges by the church leadership to do this. My prayer life has improved and, as well, great knowledge, inspiration, joy, and love for the scriptures all have resulted. I have pushed myself only to gain the wisdom and deeper meaning from the daily reading rather than just to complete it.

While completing a daily blog called “My Daily Prayer” on January 31, 2020 reading from Esther Chapter 5, I summarized: With Kindness, Approach Life’s Tenuous Situations with Wholeheartedness and Reap Generously. I formed this as my prayer for the day:

...we believe and trust God's promise that it is by His power we will also be resurrected one day...

Lord, my God, today a lesson of humility, kindness, and boldness was given an outcome that was feared but with your favor, was shown to be a blessing beyond belief. Help me that in life’s tenuous circumstances that I should with faith, honor, and kindness, pursue what is right and wait for your hand to provide something that is more miraculous and wonderful than humanly expected. I thank you for your mighty and amazing word, your Holy Spirit that gives me strength, and the hope that gives me confidence to act wholeheartedly, no matter what others think of me or are doing. In Christ alone I serve you. In the name of Jesus, I pray. Amen

Complimenting the reading of God’s Word on that day were these two devotional thoughts with short titles, scriptures, and credits to their authors.

“Whatever You Need More of, Give It Away”
If you sow kindness, you reap kindness. If you sow generosity, you reap generosity. If you sow energy, you reap energy. This is called the principle of sowing and reaping.
But when you give it away, God multiplies it in ways that bless you and bring him glory.
“Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously” (2 Corinthians 9:6 NIV).

(Extracted from Daily Hope with Rick Warren: <https://pastorrick.com>)

“WHOLEHEARTED WORSHIP”

God wants us to serve Him alone, regardless of what others are doing or what people will think of us. "I will praise you, Lord my God, with all my heart; I will glorify your name forever. For great is your love toward me; you have delivered me from the depths, from the realm of the dead" (Psalm 86:12-13).

(Extracted from Dr. Michael Youssef with Leading the Way: <https://www.ltw.org/read/my-devotional>)

I started reading more at about the age of thirty-four when I went to Cameron University in 1982. I took literature and Oklahoma history classes which required reading. Having grown up without reading classics in high school it was not only a good time, but it was required that I select several. Some books I counted for both classes; “Grapes of Wrath” was one. There were two books that I think changed my thinking when I was in my sixties. Max Lucado’s book “It’s Not About Me” and Rick Warren’s book “The Purpose Driven Life.” Both have the message that I am here for His purpose and not mine and I am here to declare His Glory and do His Will.

God wants us to serve Him alone, regardless of what others are doing or what people will think of us.

I enjoy Christian songs when I can hear the words. Michael W. Smith and the Gaither Vocal Band, Lauren Daigle, and Acappella. Some of my secular favorites are Barbara Streisand, Andrew Lloyd Webber (Phantom of the Opera), and Elvis Presley although Elvis is a favorite gospel singer as well. I also love opera and the demonstration of the beauty of the voice in it. I enjoy “Ava Maria” written by Franz Schubert sung by Luciano Pavarotti an Italian Operatic Tenor who died on 6 September 2007 (aged 71).

Finally, there are many wonderful influences that tend to shape a person’s way of not only voting but believing how the government should be run. Government is important to protect our freedom from enemies (foreign and domestic) as well as to give us liberty to express ourselves in public. Our

country's political representatives (both House of Representatives and Senate) have become very partisan charged as republicans and democrats. Far left and right so much that some seem to cross lines except for key issues of abortion or sanctity of life, immigration or legal rights of citizens, and religious liberties or church vs. state separation. I tend to be conservative in my opinions and interpretations of law and morality. I like to see the correlation between God's Law and Promises, and Man's Law and Rights. These two principles help to mold my understanding and life philosophy. Of course, there are many other foundations of privileges as a Christian and Citizen of the USA in the Bible and Constitution.

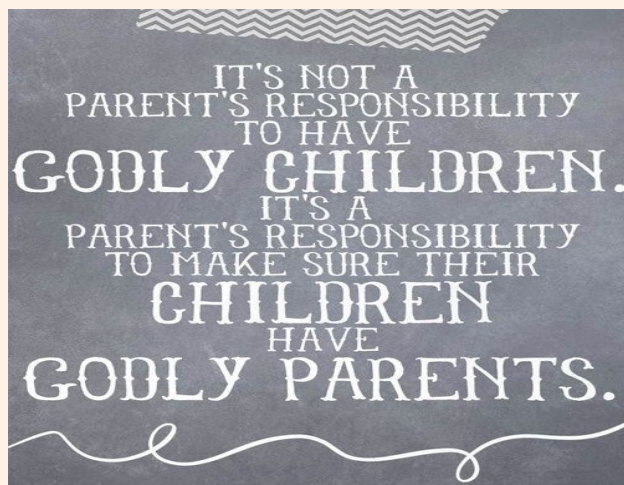
There is a correlation between God's Word and The Founding Father's Declaration.

"For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on Christ, like putting on new clothes. There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male, and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. And now that you belong to Christ, you are the true children of Abraham. You are his heirs, and God's promise to Abraham belongs to you." (Galatians 3:26-29 – NLT)

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of happiness." Preamble of Declaration

I pray these words were encouraging and that they honor our Lord for His glory.

Alan Langford
Huntsville, Alabama



Marketing the Gospel

I found this in some archived material. I believe this was originally written in 2002. It is a portion of an article on the marketing of the Gospel. It seems churches today have moved further on down this road of "have it your way." (lsg)

(James 2:1-6). But our main point here has nothing to do with fashion whether it be formal or casual. It is the approach to marketing the gospel that accommodates man and offers promises that nothing needs to be changed in order to follow Jesus. Just take it easy. There are no crosses to bear here.

Here is the text of the advertisement. We have changed the name of the church to Lake Easy. It is very likely that this same advertising copy has been used by numerous churches around the country and our intention is not to single out any particular church. We offer it simply as an example of what we refer to when we talk about the marketing of the gospel:

If you've ever hesitated to go to church because you didn't feel like getting all dressed up, we have Good News for you! At Lake Easy we try to remember that part of the Bible that says, "Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." (1 Samuel 16:7) At Lake Easy you can relax. We've discovered that church doesn't have to be judgmental or formal. We believe you ought to feel better when you go home than when you got there.

"I came in sneakers," said a recent newcomer, "I found my mind free to get in touch not having to worry about the way I was dressed. I wear a necktie all week; that's the last thing I want to do on Sunday. I found everyone warm and friendly but not pushy."

Source Unknown

"Then He said to them all, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.'" Jesus, Luke 9:23



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