

Faithfulness within the Family

Galatians 5:22; 1 Timothy 5:8

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Dear ones, we shame the name of Christ when we show a greater degree of faithfulness in honoring business contracts at work, in paying our bills on time, and in keeping promises we have made with friends than the faithfulness we show in honoring, cherishing, and providing for the material and spiritual needs of those within our own home and under our own roof.

What would you think of a Christian man who reached out to feed the needy in his community while his own family was starving? What would you think of a Christian minister who preached the gospel to others while neglecting to teach his own family the gospel of Christ? What would you think of a Christian woman who offered her time to assist the elderly in her community while her own elderly parents went without her assistance? Dear ones, faithfulness to others begins with those in our own home. How can we not sound like a hypocrite when we speak of being faithful in our commitments to others at work, in the community, or at church, and yet fail to honor our commitments to provide (both materially and spiritually) for those under our own roof? Not only will those in our family see the gross contradiction, but even those who observe us from outside our family will shake their heads at such inconsistency. For even the light of nature within unbelievers teaches them that faithfulness, love, and care for others begin in the home. And if faithfulness to others does not begin in the home, it will be a mere pretense outside the home.

Having begun a study of the seventh fruit of the Spirit, namely, faith or faithfulness, we have noted that the origin of faithfulness is in the very

nature and character of our God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). Our God is ever faithful to His own holy nature, ever faithful to His Covenant with us His people, and ever faithful to His own word. It is impossible for Him to lie. Jesus is called “the faithful witness”, for He is always faithful (*semper fideles—semper fi*—the U.S. Marine Corp may have that as a motto, but Jesus has it as His very nature and character). We may and should implicitly trust the Lord and all that He promises, because He is absolutely trustworthy. And because of His faithfulness to us, the Lord Jesus commands us to be faithful to Him even unto death (in the truth we profess and in the truth we practice and live). As Christians, we are to be characterized by faithfulness, truthfulness; we are to be steadfast and firm in our commitments and promises, holding fast to the biblical attainments of our faithful forefathers, and ever growing in the fruit of the Spirit that are found in Galatians 5:22-23.

The main points from our text this Lord’s Day are: (1) Faithfulness to Extended Family Members (“But if any provide not **for his own** ... he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel” 1 Timothy 5:8); and (2) Faithfulness to Household Family Members (“But if any provide not for his own **and specially for those of his own house**, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel” 1 Timothy 5:8).

I. Faithfulness to Extended Family Members (“But if any provide not for his own ... he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel” 1 Timothy 5:8).

A. The Apostle Paul penned by inspiration of the Holy Spirit this first letter to Timothy (a young faithful minister, who became like a son to Paul). In fact, just as Paul was about to die the martyr’s death for his testimony for Christ, he wanted Timothy beside him because he had been so much like a faithful son to him (2 Timothy 4:6-9). Paul sent this first

letter to Timothy while Timothy was in Ephesus to give Timothy instruction in settling and organizing the church there.

1. One area of concern to Paul was the care of widows, especially those who had no family members to care for them (beginning in 1 Timothy 5:3). Dear ones, biblical Christianity is not mere knowledge, but is being faithful to that knowledge we received from God by ministering in love to one another. You see, dear ones, the church is not only a school that imparts knowledge to students, but is also a hospital that puts that knowledge into practice in caring for one another. The Holy Spirit considered the care of widows to be so important that it is included in the instruction of Paul to Timothy.

2. Paul makes clear that those widows who have children or other family members should be cared for by their family (1 Timothy 5:4,16—children are not to forget their parents as they age, but are to return the care for them which they received while young—godliness and faithfulness to others begin at home). However, those widows who have no family members to provide for them and who are at least 60 years old and devote themselves to serving the needs of the church (“widows indeed” 1 Timothy 5:3,5) are to be provided for by the church (1 Timothy 5:9).

B. As we now turn our attention to our text in 1 Timothy 5:8, there is an “if” near the beginning of the sentence, “But if”. This type of “if” sentence is what is called a condition of reality: “If any are not providing (and it is true that there are some who are not providing)”. The assumption of Paul in addressing Timothy is that there were those within the Church of Ephesus that were not providing for their own (meaning their “own” family who live outside of their immediate family and not under their own roof—like parents or grandparents).

1. The sin that Paul here focuses on is one that was not only in the Church of Ephesus, but is one that is especially prevalent today.

Simply visit care centers and homes for the elderly and ask the staff how many of these elderly people have little to no contact, visits, or assistance from their family members, and one will hear that many of the elderly have been almost forgotten and forsaken by their family. So often in our fast-paced society, the younger generation are too busy with their own lives to be bothered with caring for, visiting, calling, or providing for those who brought them into the world, fed them, taught them, corrected them, loved them, and led them to trust in Jesus Christ (at least such of those as were Christian parents). And now that the elderly are unable to get around very well, unable to care for themselves and to provide for themselves, so many are entirely entrusted to various institutions (where they wither away the remaining days, months, and perhaps years of their lives—separated from their children and grandchildren). And one notices that those who live in elderly care centers and receive regular visits from children and family members are far more likely to get the care needed in those facilities, whereas very often those who are forgotten receive minimal care.

2. No doubt there are illnesses and conditions at times that require more help than children may be able to provide in their own homes, but even when that is the case, does the parent or grandparent feel abandoned and deserted by the children or grandchildren (the Greek word used for “parents” in 1 Timothy 5:4 literally means forefathers, not merely parents)? If you are isolated and have little opportunity to minister to other within the church, there are many in a local elderly care center near you, who have been forgotten and would love to have you visit and bring your children, read the Scripture to them).

3. Paul speaking by inspiration of the Holy Spirit has some of the strongest words for those who care not and provide not for their elderly parents and grandparents. God tells us how grievous and serious is such unfaithfulness when Paul declares that such a one “hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel”. We see here, dear ones, the

necessity of the Christian faith (or doctrine) that is not only believed, but also the necessity of the Christian faith that is practiced (James 1:27).

a. One may not with his/her mouth deny the faith (one may even profess the *Westminster Confession of Faith*), but by one's actions one may practically deny the faith he/she professes to believe (Titus 1:16).

b. How is such a one worse than an infidel/unbeliever? One is worse than an infidel/unbeliever because there are even unbelievers who follow the witness of the light of nature God has revealed within them in caring for, and providing for elderly parents or grandparents. We who trust in Christ and in His Word have far more than the unbeliever to guide us and yet the unbeliever shows more faithfulness to God's light of nature within than we do to the light of revelation in Holy Scripture or to the Holy Spirit that we claim lives and abides within us. We may weep over the sins of our unbelieving neighbors, but when they love and care for their elderly parents and we fail to do so, we condemn ourselves and all of heaven weeps over our sins.

4. We may not be wealthy and able to care for parents and grandparents as we would like to do, but we can certainly keep in contact with them, visit them (if we live near them), and take responsibility for the oversight of their care if they cannot care for themselves (even from a distance). We can pool our small resources with the resources of other family members to meet the needs that our elderly and needy parents/grandparents may have. This is not simply a duty out of faithfulness to our parents and grandparents, this is a duty of faithfulness to Christ, as a follower of Christ (who provided for His mother as He hung upon the cross by entrusting her to the care of the Apostle, John 19:26-27). The care of His mother was of such importance to Jesus that as He suffered as no man has ever suffered upon that cross (the judgment of man, but especially the judgment of God), He forgot not the care of His

beloved mother. Christians follow in the footsteps of Christ and walk in the faithfulness of Christ (and when we fail, we faithfully repent, seek God's forgiveness, and arise to renewed faithfulness). This is faithfulness to the Fifth Commandment: Exodus 20:12; Ephesians 6:2-3. Faithfulness to others begins with our family members (1 Timothy 5:4).

II. Faithfulness to Household Family Members (“and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel” 1 Timothy 5:8).

A. Paul now moves from faithfulness in providing for extended family members (“his own”) to especially those of our immediate family living under our own roof (“his own house”). In other words, if it is a faithful obligation to care for and to provide for elderly parents or grandparents who do not live under your roof, it is especially a faithful obligation to care for and to provide for your spouse and your children who do live under your roof to whom you are especially bound by covenant. And once again, to not do so is practically to deny the Christian faith (Biblical Christianity) and makes us worse than those unbelievers who follow the dictates of the light of nature within. I plan to address faithfulness to one another within the family and household in sermons to come (which will be a further exposition of 1 Timothy 5:8), but I want to briefly lay the covenantal foundation for that faithfulness we especially owe to those within our own household.

B. The covenantal foundation of the family is firmly established in Genesis 2:24, where the divine institution of marriage is revealed. Dear ones, marriage is a divine institution not a man-made social convention or a mere social compact that gradually evolved over thousands and thousands of years through trial and error. Why are we especially to be faithful in our marriages and homes?

1. **Because Marriage Forms a New Family** (“Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother” Genesis 2:24).

a. These are most likely the words of Moses (not of Adam from the previous verse).

b. This verse begins with “therefore”, which indicates that a conclusion is being drawn by Moses based upon what was previously stated in Chapter 2 of Genesis. Genesis 2 relates the apex of God’s creation—man (or Adam, *adam* in Hebrew means man).

(1) God having created Adam upright, having placed him in the Garden of Eden to care for it and to protect it, having condescended to enter into a covenant with Adam that would bring everlasting life for obedience and death (in all its forms) for disobedience, and having brought the animals to Adam to name, it was clear that the animals had fit partners, but Adam was all alone—he was incomplete.

(2) And God said that it was not good that Adam was alone, and thus caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam at which time God took a rib from Adam’s side and formed for Adam a helper (namely, Eve) who was meet and compatible to him.

(3) Whereupon God (as the father of the bride) presented Eve to Adam as his wife, and Adam to Eve as her husband. There in the Garden of Eden before the fall of man into sin was marriage instituted by God—one man for one woman, and one woman for one man.

(4) Dear ones, Eve was created for Adam in order to help and support him in his calling to subdue the earth to God by means of mutual help and companionship and by means of propagation of a holy seed to the glory of God. She was not created to be his mistress (as if physical intimacy were the only interest he had in her). No, she was created to be his wife. Nor was she created to be his bond servant (as if marriage is just another term for slavery). No, she was created to be his helper and his companion for life. Adam was created as head of his wife,

but a head that was to lead her in humility and love, and to whom Eve was to submit for her good.

(5) Because God made woman from the rib of Adam (and not from the dust of the ground), God not only emphasized the headship of man by virtue of his prior existence, but also emphasized the mutual affection a husband and a wife are to have for one another. For she is bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh—she is his flesh and he is her flesh. They are part of one another. And she was created from a part of Adam’s body that is close to his heart—not from his feet to be trodden upon as an enemy or from his head to be a rival leader in the home.

(6) “Therefore”, in light of what God did in creating the man and the woman, in light of the goodness of God in establishing a covenant with man, in light of God bringing man and woman into marital union—“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother.” Therefore we are to be especially faithful in our marriages because when a man and a woman leave father and mother, they form a new family (that basic building block of all society).

2. Why are we especially to be faithful in our marriages?

Because Marriage is Permanent (“and shall cleave unto his wife” Genesis 2:24).

a. Not only does God instruct us to “leave”, but He also teaches us to “cleave.” He continues in Genesis 2:24 by saying, “and shall cleave unto his wife.” Literally, “he shall be glued with his wife.” You are not to view your marriage as though you were taped or stapled to one another in some temporary fashion for the time being, but rather that you are permanently glued to one another with the strongest glue known to man: a binding covenant made to one another in the presence of God and human witnesses.

b. “Till death do us part” are the words (if not explicitly stated certainly implied) that we pledged to our spouse on the day in which we were married. We have promised before the everlasting God in

the marriage covenant to be faithful to our spouse till the day we die. Although God permit's the dissolution of a marriage for adultery and willful desertion that cannot be remedied (as taught by Christ in Matthew 19:9 and by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:15), no marriage must be entered with divorce as some kind of escape hatch. We enter marriage and continue in our marriage with the words, "till death do us part" ("be thou faithful unto death" Revelation 2:10).

3. Why are we especially to be faithful in our marriages?

Because Marriage is a Covenant Union ("and they shall be one flesh" Genesis 2:24).

a. We are not only to understand this language as signifying the intimate relationship that lawfully exists within marriage, but I would also submit that a husband and wife become one flesh even before physical intimacy occurs in marriage. It is because they are one flesh BY COVENANT that they demonstrate their being one flesh in their physical union.

b. We find this marriage covenant explicitly mentioned in Malachi 2:14 (God's anger is kindled because of this broken covenant; see also 1 Peter 3:7). The marriage covenant is a mutual promise made on the part of a man and woman before God and witnesses to be united in the bond of marriage until death should part them. This promise is for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health.

c. There are two sinful extremes that must be avoided in discussion of this marriage covenant:

(1) The first sinful extreme to be avoided is that the civil magistrate has the right to alter or change the law of God so as to establish "no fault" divorces or same sex unions or incestuous unions as lawful marriages. The civil magistrate is obligated to uphold only those grounds given by God for marriage, divorce, and remarriage.

(2) The second extreme to be avoided is that marriage is a sacrament (as taught by the Romish Church). Perhaps Rick

Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life*, has forgotten such error in uniting with the pope in a “common mission” to promote the sanctity of life, marriage, and sex.

“Pastor Rick Warren has called on non-Catholic Christians to join with Pope Francis and the Catholic Church in pursuit of their common goals.... Rick Warren continues his quest for common ground, propelling Catholics and all Christians toward fulfillment of Christ's priestly prayer "that all may be one, even as I and the Father are one."
<http://www.Newsmax.com/Newsfront/warren-megachurch-pope-francis/2014/12/20/id/614231/#ixzz3MY7bCgHb>.

Dear ones, marriage is ordained by God and blessed by Christ, but it is not and cannot be a sacrament. For all people (whether Christian or non-Christian) may marry (Hebrews 13:4), whereas only members of the Visible Church may receive the sacraments.

d. Dear ones, the greatest motivation given by God for faithfulness within our marriages as Christians is that it is a picture of our union with Jesus Christ (as taught by Paul in Ephesians 5:32).

(1) What is the picture of Christ and His Church that we are reflecting to our children and to others by our marriage? Men, are our children learning about the love of Christ for His bride, His willingness to sacrifice all to save her, His blessing her with all spiritual benefits, and His loving leadership through our own instruction and example? Ladies, are your children learning about the love and submission of the Church to Christ as they observe your respect and desire to obey your husband in all lawful commands, and your desire to be a faithful helper and companion to him?

(2) The covenant of grace wherein we are united to Christ is likened in Scripture to a marriage covenant. Jesus Christ has redeemed us from our adulterous relationship with other gods by giving His life in exchange for ours. He has wooed us to Himself. We have been betrothed to Him by covenant. He has gone to prepare an eternal home for us. One day He will return to gather us to Himself that we may be

with Him forever. Dear ones, let us not distort that marvelous picture of Christ and His Church by our willful rebellion against the covenant of marriage. Let us rather seek Christ and His grace that we might grow in ever greater conformity to that heavenly marriage into which He has brought us—not an everlasting marriage to our wife or husband (as the Mormons teach, but our everlasting marriage and union to Jesus Christ).

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