

GALATIANS 5:22-23
(OT: Gen 3:14-15; NT: Gal 5:22-23)

INTRODUCTION

In a faithless world, part of God's design for your life is for you to be faithful.

- Am I a faithful person? Are you a faithful person? Are we a faithful people?
- I think we all want to say YES!
- But what does it mean to be faithful → How would we know?

Transition: Get into it using outline familiar with by now: **Definition:** What is faithfulness? → **Gospel:** How is Jesus the source of our faithfulness? → **Application:** How can we be faithful?

DEFINITION: What is faithfulness?

State:

- Term used in Gal 5 is Greek word *pistis*.
 - Appears all over NT → 243x.
 - Often translated as “**faith**” but sometimes translated as “**faithfulness**.”
- Intriguing to me bc in English we tend to use those terms quite differently.
 - Tend to think of “**faith**” as cognitive thing that involves the mind → Believe something is true, even if it seems improbable.
 - “**Faithfulness**” on other hand tends to make us think of commitment:
 - Something that’s lived out in concrete/real-life way.
 - To be loyal/steadfast → No matter what comes our way.
- But in Bible, this one Greek word captures both ideas.
 - One Bible encyclopedia explains it this way: “*The major words for faith in both Testaments also connote the concept of ‘faithfulness.’ This indicates that faith is more than momentary assent to the truth of God. It is commitment to that truth, and it manifests itself in continued obedience.*”¹
 - In the biblical understanding, you can’t separate one from the other.
 - “**Faith**” is expressed in “**faithfulness**.”
 - What we believe in our minds is lived out in our lives.
- For this reason, one scholar says best translation of Grk term may be “**embodied trust**.”²
 - And that’s a great definition for us today → What is faithfulness?
 - **Embodied trust** → Belief that is lived out in action.

Illustrate:

- **Abraham** is one of best examples of **embodied trust**:³
 - He had “**faith**” → He believed God’s promises.
 - And he had “**faithfulness**” → Acted on those beliefs – left home, settled in a foreign land, even offered up his son Isaac at God’s command.

Embodied trust: Belief that was lived out in action.

- Another example is a classic with preachers → Ever heard of **The Great Blondin**?⁴
 - Born in 1824, Charles Blondin went on to become an acrobat/tightrope walker.
 - Shot to fame in the 1860s by crossing over Niagara Falls dozens of times.
 - To make money off gamblers, attempted increasingly risky challenges.
 - Made crossing with wheelbarrow → Blindfolded → On stilts!
 - One day, in front of a large and raucous crowd, Blondin asked, “*Who thinks I can make the crossing with someone on my back?*”
 - Everyone went wild in affirmation.
 - Whooping and hollering to see this great feat.
 - But, The Great Blondin asked, “*Who will volunteer to get on and make the trip?*”
 - Everyone fell silent → No one stepped up.
 - No one was ready to embody *that* → Everyone’s faith fell flat.
 - Everyone, that is, except Blondin’s manager → Man named Harry Colcord.
 - Colcord had said Blondin “*could walk the rope as a bird cleaves to air.*”⁵
 - Now he put his money where his mouth was → Hopped on Blondin’s back and together the two of them made it to the other side.

Embodied trust: Belief that was lived out in action.

Apply:

- Biblical “**faithfulness**” more than right belief → Like crowd believed Blondin could carry someone else.
- Instead, biblical “**faithfulness**” is right belief in action → Hopping on that back yourself.
- Challenge when we think of the Xn life: How do we trust Jesus?
 - Like the crowd or like the manager?
 - Trust him with other people or trust when we calls us to jump on his back?

That’s what faithfulness is → Embodied trust.

Transition: If that’s the case, let’s move from **Definition** → **Gospel**.

GOSPEL: How is Jesus the source of faithfulness in the Xn life?

State: Here’s the short gospel answer: We can be faithful to Jesus bc Jesus is faithful to us.

- Immediately takes focus off us:
 - Faithfulness isn’t something we can work up within ourselves.
 - Instead, it’s a fruit of the Spirit that grows as we fix our eyes on Christ.
- You see the distinction here:
 - Colcord didn’t jump on Blondin’s back bc he was confident in himself...
 - He jumped on bc he thought The Great Blondin was safe.
- Well, when we look at Jesus, what do we see? **His faithfulness to us.**

Illustrate:

- As soon as sin entered the world, God **promised** to send a Savior.
 - **Gen 3:15:** Descendant of Adam/Eve would crush Satan at great cost to himself.
 - I love that this happens right after the fall: Everyone who's ever lived has been offered gospel hope.
- But as story progresses, God's people find the **promise** hard to believe...
 - As slaves in **Egypt** it seemed improbable...
 - Facing giants in **PL** it seemed implausible...
 - Carried into **exile** it seemed impossible...
- But then, in first book of NT, **promise** made all way back in first book of OT comes true.
 - Jesus comes to save the world from sin.
 - The promises of God find their Yes in him (**2 Cor 1:20**).

God's faithfulness is embodied in his son.
- Though we have been unfaithful, he loved us to the end (**Jn 13:1**).
 - Now we have forgiveness in this life.
 - And hope for the life to come.

Apply: Bc Jesus has done this – bc he has been faithful to us – we can be faithful to him.

We have embodied trust bc of what he did in his body for us.

- We believe he has what it takes to get us to the other side.
- We hop on his back and trust him with our lives...

Transition:

- What does it look like to hop on his back? What does it look like to embody trust?
- Let's move from **Definition:** Faithfulness as embodied trust → **Gospel:** Jesus's faithfulness to us → **Application:** How can we be faithful in this life?

APPLICATION: How can we be faithful?

State:

- I suppose there's lots of things we could say, but let's keep it simple and say this:

Be faithful with whatever God has put in front of you today...
- Don't want to get so caught up in Greek definitions/sweep of redemptive history/19C acrobats that we miss a beautifully simple point:
 - Jesus loves you → He proved that in his life and death...
 - And now – today – he is with us → Inviting us to embody trust.

Illustrate: Last week a member asked me if I'd heard of **Thérèse of Lisieux**.

- I told him I hadn't – bc I hadn't – but I did read up on her this week.
- Catholic Saint who coincidentally died the same year as The Great Blondin.
 - But that's pretty much the only thing they had in common.
 - While Blondin was making money with his flair for the dramatic, Thérèse was practicing what she called *The Little Way*.⁶
- Comparing herself with her spiritual heroes, Thérèse concluded her life was very ordinary → A grain of sand, she said, when compared to their mighty mountains.

- But instead of resenting that, Thérèse committed to simple life where sought to do ordinary things with extraordinary love.

That's The Little Way...

Apply: Wonder what it would look like if we approached faithfulness to Jesus like that?

If we sought to be faithful with what God's put in front of us today?

What is in front of you?

- Maybe, God's calling you to faithfulness – embodied trust – in **ordinary/mundane**:
 - Be faithful as study for exams → Remembering he holds your future in his hands.
 - Be faithful as make yet another dinner for kids → Remembering he is pleased with your unseen love.
 - Be faithful as meet monthly deadlines at work → Remembering he is honored when you work with all your heart.

The Little Way → Be faithful with whatever God has put in front of you today.

- Maybe what's in front of you isn't ordinary/mundane → Maybe calling you to faithfulness – embodied trust – in a **difficult situation**.
 - Each week we post Live Deeply story on social media... This week:
 - Jeanette George shared how she loved her **mother** – who she'd had a difficult relationship with – to her death.
 - Then how she loved her **husband** – who she had a beautiful relationship with – to his death.
 - Now she's walking faithfully looking after her **grandkids**.
 - She's hero of the faith → Faithful no matter what.
 - She'll be embarrassed I celebrate her this way...
 - Bc if you ask her, she gives the credit to X.
 - Reflecting on the death of her husband, she wrote: *"This is hard stuff. Nobody wants to feel alone. And no one who's following Christ is."*
 - Maybe God is calling you to be faithful through something difficult?
 - If so, you can do it...
 - Bc the Jesus Jeanette has is the Jesus you have too.

The Little Way → Be faithful with whatever God has put in front of you today.

CONCLUSION

- Whatever it is – the ordinary/mundane, the difficult/painful – embody trust:

Be faithful to Jesus as he is faithful to us.
- Like The Great Blondin, Jesus will carry you to other side.

Let's be faithful with whatever he's put in front of us today.

RESOURCES AND ENDNOTES

Resources

This list contains some of the resources that were used to prepare this sermon series. Check them out if you want to dig a little deeper.

- Luke Bretherton, *A Primer in Christian Ethics: Christ and the Struggle to Live Well*.
- Jay Kim, *Analog Christian: Cultivating Contentment, Resilience, and Wisdom in the Digital Age*.
- C. S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*.
- C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*.
- Martin Luther, *Galatians*.
- Donald MacLeod, *The Person of Christ*.
- Douglas Moo, *Galatians*.
- Redeemer Presbyterian Church, *Paul's Letter to the Galatians*.
- John Stott, *The Message of Galatians*.
- B. B. Warfield, *The Emotional Life of Our Lord*.

Endnotes

¹ Stuart D. Sacks, "Faithfulness," *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 765. I came across the majority of this quote in Jay Kim, *Analog Christian: Cultivating Contentment, Resilience, and Wisdom in the Digital Age*, 104-105.

² Jay Kim attributes this definition to Tim Mackie in *Analog Christian*, 105. See also the study notes for the Bible Project's word study on "faithfulness," accessed [here](#) on 5/16/24.

³ See Sacks, 765.

⁴ I have heard this illustration from more preachers than I can remember. One usage can be found in Kim, 103-104.

⁵ See *The Daredevil of Niagara Falls*, accessed [here](#) on 5/16/24.

⁶ See *What is the Little Way of St. Thérèse of Lisieux?*, accessed [here](#) on 5/16/24.