



Northside Proclaimer

Proclaiming The Word Of The Lord

1 Thessalonians 1:8

Northside Church Of Christ Welcomes You!

Feb. 15, 2015

“How Can We Judge Someone Faithful?”

Bryan Garlock

Before one can be judged as faithful, one must first demonstrate his or her faith. One does this by hearing the word of God (Rom. 10.17), believing in Jesus (John 8.24), repenting of his or her sins (Acts 17.30), confessing their faith in Christ (Rom. 10.9-10) and being baptized in the name of Jesus for the remission of sin (Acts 2.38).

Luke recorded, “...[o]ne who heard us was a woman named Lydia,...And after she was baptized, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, ‘If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.’ And she prevailed upon us” (Acts 16.14-15).

Since Lydia manifested her faith through her obedience to the gospel, Paul and Silas were able to judge her as being faithful. However, initial obedience did not determine her continued acceptability to God. Hence, Paul taught the Colossians to, “...continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard...” (Col. 1.23). Thus, one must not only obey the gospel as a sinner, but also continue to obey the gospel as a Christian. This inescapably proves that faith is not a point or a mere mental assent, but rather it is a line that must be walked.

Next, in judging one to be faithful, Lydia offered hospitality to those who shared the word with her (cf. Acts 16.40; Gal. 6.6). Thus, we may judge one as faithful by comparing their speech and actions with the word of God. James said, “[w]hat good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and filled,’ without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, ‘You have faith and I have works.’ Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works... You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone... For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.” (James 2.14-26). It is impossible, therefore, to view one's faith without viewing one's actions. Continued on back...

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Private

Chronological Bible Reading Plan

Feb. 15 Lev. 8 - 10

Feb. 16 Lev. 11 - 13

Feb. 17 Lev. 14 - 15

Feb. 18 Lev. 16 - 18

Feb. 19 Lev. 19 - 21

Feb. 20 Lev. 22 - 23

Feb. 21 Lev. 24 - 25

Elsewhere, James penned, “[i]f anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless” (James 1.26). Further, “...the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness...It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so” (James 3.6-10). Thus, too, it is impossible to view one as faithful who has not restrained his or her tongue (see Prov. 12.18; 17.27; 21.23; Matt. 12.36-37). However, if the things one says and does are in the name of the Lord, he may be judged as faithful (Col. 3.17).

Further, Paul delivered to us the qualifications needed to become an elder. Here, we can view a man's characteristics against the list of faithful attributes. Though not all men, and no women, may qualify for the office of the eldership due to the qualifications of a husband of one wife and believing children, every Christian ought to aspire to be what the elder must be. This is an indicator of faithfulness. For instance, an elder is to be knowledgeable in the Scriptures. Paul penned, “[h]e must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it” (Titus 1.9). Thus, a man is eligible for the office if, and only if, he knows the truth thoroughly enough to recognize and refute error.

While it is true that all, male and female, must grow to that knowledge, this raises the questions: “What am I able to do with the word of God now, compared to six months ago, two years ago, five years ago and so on? Am I growing?” If a brother who has an elementary knowledge of the Scriptures causes himself to be ineligible from being appointed an overseer in the church, then it necessarily follows that a person who cannot do as Paul instructed has much growth to do in the Scriptures. Therefore, it also necessarily follows that if we see our brethren not growing spiritually (2 Peter 1.3-11), we can judge that person to be unfaithful in his or her personal Bible study. Even more so, if one is unfaithful in personal Bible study, he or she is unfaithful, period (2 Peter 3.18).

Another indicator of faith is our weekly attendance and participation in the worship services. While it is true that attendance to all three services does not necessarily make one a faithful child of God, it is also true that the one who does not attend is certainly demonstrating faithlessness for “...faith apart from works is dead” (James 2.26). Therefore, the faithful attender must examine his or her participation and motivation for attending just as the one who hardly attends must examine his or her reasons and excuses for not attending. In any case, and there are admitted exceptions, attendance is one of the first signs of spiritual weakness and lukewarmness towards God (Rev. 3.16).

Solomon said, “[m]any a man proclaims his own steadfast love, but a faithful man who can find?” (Prov. 20.6). Yet, Paul was confident in knowing that some may be counted as “faithful men.” First, he listed it among the other qualities a Christian is to practice in the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5.22-23). Second, he made it a prerequisite to teaching others. Notice, “...what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2.2). We too, then, can judge a person whether he is, or is not, in the faith. This raises another question we must ask ourselves: “if everyone was as faithful as me, how faithful would they be?” BG