

# Faithful to the Unfaithful

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let's hear the word of the Lord, O children of Israel.

! There is no faithfulness or steadfast love, and no knowledge of God in the land. There is swearing, lying, murder, stealing, and committing adultery.

They break all bounds, and bloodshed follows bloodshed. Therefore the land mourns, and all who dwell in it languish. And also the beasts of the field and the birds of the heaven and even the fish of the sea are taken away.

Yet let no one contend, and let no one accuse, for with you is my contention. O priest, you shall stumble by day, the prophet also shall stumble with you by night, and I will destroy your mother. My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge, because you have rejected knowledge. I reject you from being a priest to me. And since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.

[ 1 : 22 ] May God add a blessing to the reading of his word. Would you please be seated? My favorite passage of scripture, my favorite Bible verse, is Proverbs 3, 5, and 6.

Many of you guys probably know that verse by heart. Like I do, trust in the Lord with all of your heart. I mean, not on your own understanding. In all your ways, acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

I think that's one of the first verses that I committed to memory, because I have so often needed to remind myself of it.

And so, to the point where I know it by heart. One of the first verses I ever memorized. Because I have this problem with wanting to do things my way instead of God's way.

Do any of the rest of you struggle with that problem? Okay, thank you for being honest. I think we could all honestly say that oftentimes we do struggle with that problem. Now, my question would be for you, and I'm probably sure it's true, as it is for me.

[ 2 : 31 ] When you do that, it doesn't go well, does it? Usually does not end up very well. Case in point, I remember a time when Dana and I were still dating. And she had this old Thunderbird.

And it seemed like it constantly had problems. And I'm not mechanical, so I couldn't fix them for her. But there was one thing that happened that I thought that maybe I could fix. And that was her driver's side window stopped about a third of the way up.

It wouldn't go all the way up. It was an electric window, but it wouldn't go all the way up. And so it was wintertime. It was going to be cold. And so, you know, I was concerned that she was going to be cold as she was driving around.

And so I offered to have her bring it to my house where me and my father would fix it for her. And so my dad is like me. He's just a little bit more mechanically skilled than I am.

And so I remember having her car in our garage. And my dad was kind of looking at it. And our objective wasn't really to fix it, just to get it to go up. Just to get it to a point where it could be up so that she wouldn't have to be frozen to death as she drove everywhere.

[ 3 : 37 ] And so what do we do first, men, when we try to fix something like that? Is we use our, well, duct tape. Duct tape or, if that doesn't work, we use our own strength, right?

We try to fix it with our own hands. And so my dad took some pliers and he took a cloth and he bunched it up.

And he put it on the window and he put the pliers and he just very lightly tried to pull it, see if it would give at all. And maybe we could push it up. So I'm watching him do this.

I'm thinking, first of all, Father, you are not using nearly enough strength. And you've got that rag so bunched up that it's just going to slip off. What needs to happen is somebody to come in here with some more brute strength.

So as my dad was looking around in the garage for his next attempt to fix this window, I grabbed the rag, I grabbed the pliers, and I put it on there. And as I'm about to yank up, my dad turns around and he's, he's what I'm doing and he's about to, no, too late.

[ 4 : 41 ] I pulled it up and it shattered. The window shattered into a thousand pieces. And so I remember going up to, uh, to inside the house and telling Danny, well, we didn't fix your window.

We broke it, made it even worse. And she thought I was joking, but, uh, but I wasn't. And so she realized soon enough that she was going to marry a man who had no mechanical skills.

But you know what I'm saying? We like to take matters into our own hands like that, thinking that we're able to fix it, thinking that we're an expert in areas that we're not. And what we end up doing is making things worse.

And, uh, sometimes we think we know better when reality is we don't really have a clue. We see this truth played out over and over again in scripture.

You see it from the very beginning, from the very beginning with Adam and Eve. When Adam and Eve are tempted in the garden of Eden and their decision to disobey God and eat from the tree of knowledge.

[ 5 : 44 ] They thought that they had a better plan. They thought that they knew something more or better than God did. We see it later on with Jesus as he declared to his disciples that he would soon suffer and die.

And Peter takes him aside and he rebukes him, saying, no, you're not going to do this. There's got to be another way. So we see that we have this problem.

We also see that we aren't able to see all that God sees. And we're incapable of knowing all the things that God knows. His mind is infinite. Ours is finite.

But the thing about God is that he hasn't left us to guess what his will is. He hasn't left us to guess what way it is that we should take.

He's given us his word. And we see that his word acts as a guide for us in this life. Psalm 119, 105, your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

[ 6 : 44 ] Easy enough lesson to understand, right? God's word is a lamp and it lights my way and it lets me know where to go. But too often, as it has been the case for me, as I'm sure it's been the case for you, as I know it's the case for the children of Israel right now in the book of Hosea, is that we neglect God's word.

And we instead lean on our own understanding because our understanding of a situation seems to be right. It seems to be right. But there's a Bible verse about that too.

Proverbs 14, 12. There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death. So God has given us his word to light our way in this world and to keep our paths straight.

He's given us commandments that he expects us to obey. Not because he loves to give rules, but because he loves us.

And so these commandments that he's given us are because he loves us and they're commandments that are restrictive. Often we think of restrictions as a bad thing.

[ 7 : 57 ] We don't like to be restrictive. One day recently, Hazel, our three-year-old daughter, went into our kitchen and she pulled out a kitchen knife.

And she came and she showed it to Danny and she was impressed by what she had found. Right? Look at this bright, sharp, shiny, stabby thing. And so Danny, you know, grabbed it, took it from her.

And guess what? Now in our house, the knives are up in the cabinet. They are restricted access.

Not because we want to take joy from Hazel, but because we want to give her joy.

So that she doesn't hurt herself. So that she doesn't hurt somebody else. Because she'd probably stab one of our cats if she was able to get her hands on one of those for too long. Yes, pray for her.

So God's restrictions aren't meant to rob us of joy. I hope you see that. But to give us joy. By protecting us from sin and the consequences of sin.

[ 8 : 55 ] That's why God has given us these commandments. Think about a fish. A fish absorbs oxygen from the water, not from air like we do. So it is free only if it is restricted to water.

If a fish is freed from the river, if it's freed from the water and put on grass to explore, guess what? Its freedom to move and soon to live is destroyed completely.

Because it cannot survive in that environment. By trusting in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, we choose, right, to be obedient to Him.

We are called to be obedient to Him. And we have these restrictions because He loves us. And we trust that He knows what's best for us. When we are born again, we receive a new nature. But that old nature still remains. And will so until that time where we go to be with the Lord. But as we walk with the Lord in this life, we should be becoming more like Christ.

[ 9 : 55 ] We should be growing in Christ-likeness until we die. All this to say that as Christians, we have been set free from sin. We don't have to sin.

Sin is no longer our master. We are no longer enslaved to it. We don't have to sin, but we still choose to do so. That old sin nature still remains.

And so we must be putting sin to death in our life. God will and God has forgiven us of our sins. But not always will He release us from the consequences of those sins.

For example, the Chiefs are playing tonight in a very important game against the New England Patriots, Sunday Night Football. I will be here doing something more important, preaching to you. But let's just say that I decided, you know what, I really want to see this game. And so I skipped church tonight. And you guys are here and I am not. You don't know where I'm at, but you come to find out later that I went to a sports bar downtown.

[ 10 : 56 ] And I got all liquored up. And I drove home. And I got pulled over. And I got arrested for that. Wouldn't you agree that there would be consequences for those sinful decisions, right?

Well, rest assured that's not going to happen. But all that to say that there are consequences for our sin. And God will forgive me if I was to do all those things.

But there would be consequences that I would have to face for doing those things. So here's the main point of this message. And the main point of chapter 4 and 5.

Which is it is always better to obey God than to disobey Him. When we disobey God, we will face the consequences of our sin. It's always better to obey God than to disobey Him.

When we disobey God, we will face the consequences of our sin. So if you remember at this point in the history of Israel, Israel as a nation for some time now has neglected God and has gone their own way.

[ 11 : 57 ] They have traveled their own path. They have sinned much and they have obeyed very little. So Hosea knew from his bitter experience with Gomer, his wife, that sin not only breaks the heart of God, but it also offends the holiness of God.

God wanted to forgive the sins of His people. He wanted to restore their fellowship with Him. But they weren't ready for those things yet. Not only were they not repentant, but they wouldn't even admit that they had done anything wrong.

They wouldn't admit that they had sinned. So God would show them, like a detective who brings in a murder suspect, and he's been caught on videotape, he's been caught on surveillance, being at the scene of the crime.

And he comes in and he confesses that he hasn't done anything wrong, and then that detective plays back the tape, and he knows he's been caught. And so here in these chapters, chapter 4 really through chapter 10, that's what God is doing.

He's calling them to court, the nation of Israel. He's bringing them into his courtroom, and he's playing back that video for him, going through all their history, going through what is going on now for them as a nation. And he is showing to them that they have gone their own way, that they have sinned against Him, and that there's going to be consequences for that.

[ 13 : 11 ] So now the question becomes, well, what does this have to do with us? Right here, right now, at this time, in this day. Well, first of all, on a large scale, on a broad scope, there is application for us as a nation.

In his notes to the state of Virginia in 1781, 1781, Thomas Jefferson, who was not a Christian, who was an agnostic, wrote this, though, Indeed, I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just. He trembled for his country when he reflected on the fact that God is just. Now listen, that was 240 years ago. Okay, we've got 240 years worth of things that have happened in this nation, that we have done, that we have swept under the rug, right?

And God is just. If he trembled then, how much more should we tremble now? Now, I love my country. I'm so glad to be back, but we know that things are not the way that they should be here. So as a people of God, we have a responsibility to be the people of God to our community, to our nation. So these chapters help us to understand how we should live.

[ 14 : 24 ] How we should live in our times, like Hosea did, as a witness for Jesus Christ to a nation that has chosen to go its own way. We have the same responsibility.

We have the same calling. Second, on a more smaller scale, a microscopic look at this passage, there's application for us as individuals.

Each one of us as individuals. The Bible frequently calls us to examine ourselves, to pay close attention to our own lives and our own devotion to the Lord.

If you've gone your own way, then the Bible says, God's word says to us, it's time to go back to do things God's way.

If you've gone your own way, it's time to turn back. That's what true progress is. C.S. Lewis, I think, said it very well. He said, progress means getting near to the place where you want to be.

[ 15 : 26 ] And if you have taken a wrong turn, then to go forward does not get you any nearer. If you are on the wrong road, progress means doing an about turn and walking back to the right road.

And in that case, the man who turns back soonest is the most progressive man. And so if that's you today, if you've gone your own way, then God's word says, it's time to go back and do things God's way, to walk the path that he has called you to walk.

And so maybe that's you today. Maybe you need to be reminded of that truth. Maybe you need to be reminded of the consequences of what it means when you do things your own way instead of God's way.

Maybe you've taken matters into your own hands and you've been neglecting God and you're in danger of reaping the consequences of that. So this chapter serves as a warning to us to not go our own way, but to go God's way.

So in these chapters, God conducts a trial and his purpose in doing so is to convict the people so that they will repent and be restored. So in verses four, chapter four, verse one, all the way through verse five, we see that God here makes the indictment against the people.

[ 16 : 39 ] They're in the courtroom and now he is making the indictment against them. This is what they are guilty of doing. First of all, he indicts the nation as a whole. God begins by indicting the nation as a whole, just as Gomer hadn't taken her marriage vow seriously to Hosea, but went on to live with another man.

So Israel had broken their promise to God and worshiped other idols. There was no faithfulness in this land during this time. There was no loyalty to God whatsoever. The God who had freed them from slavery, the God who had given them this nation as a possession.

They didn't care about him at all. There in verse one, it says there that God says there was no knowledge of him in the land. They didn't know him. They knew of him, but they didn't really know him.

The word in the Hebrew there describes a personal, intimate knowledge. These people didn't know God anymore. They didn't care to know him anymore.

They didn't care to teach their children about him. They didn't care to teach their children or even care to encourage one another to walk in his ways.

[ 17 : 47 ] Each man was doing his own thing. And because they didn't acknowledge God and did not walk in his ways, they began to have interpersonal conflicts with one another.

Their society was crumbling as a result of their lack of knowledge of God and his word. When people reject God's covenant, they begin to exploit one another. As a result, they have brought suffering on themselves and to the land.

And that's the same case for us in our nation. It's the same case for us as a church. If we aren't walking with the Lord and paying attention to ourselves, there will be conflict because we lack knowledge of God and his ways.

So God indicts the nation. Next on, he moves on to indict the priests and the rulers of the nation. After Solomon's death, if you remember the history of the northern kingdom of Israel, after Solomon died, the nation split in two.

The northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. And so here we're dealing with the northern kingdom of Israel. And Jeroboam was their first king. And Jeroboam became king and he brought in a bunch of idol worship.

[ 18 : 59 ] And not only that, did the priests who worshiped the ones who were God leave, run away to go to Judah. So Jeroboam presented, he brought forth his own priests. He put his own guys in charge.

You see a conflict of interest there? And so these priests didn't really care about God. They were worthless. They didn't really even care about their people. Their primary concern was just to keep their job.

To keep that comfy position that they've been given. So they permitted all kinds of sin. Not only did they permit it, but they participated in it as well. Leading others astray.

Worldly and ignorant spiritual leaders produce worldly and ignorant people. Worldly and ignorant spiritual leaders produce worldly and ignorant people. In chapter 5, verses 1 through 7, we are given a summation of the evidence that the judge has brought against the accused.

He condemned the leaders for trapping the people and for exploiting them. They were sinking deeper and deeper into sin and it was paralyzing them as a nation. So why don't we ask you this?

[ 20 : 03 ] Would you agree that this same indictment could be applied to our nation today? Towards our churches? Towards many of our pastors?

Towards our leaders in Washington, D.C.? I think so. And like I said, I think it could be brought against many of our churches. Churches that declare Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Because unfortunately, we live in a time where many pastors think their primary job is to entertain people. Just to keep them coming back in the door.

Or they run their church like a business and they act like their CEOs. Not ministers of the gospel.

Our leaders in government, many of them care about the acquisition of power and the keeping, the possession of power and they'll do whatever it takes.

Whatever is necessary to keep it. Both Democrat and Republican. In both cases, the primary concern isn't truly for others and it certainly isn't for God and there's no concern whatsoever for His glory.

[ 21 : 08 ] Maybe a few, but for the most part, not. So what should we do? This is the case for us. What should we do? What should our response be?

Well, the Apostle Paul tells us in Romans 12, verses 14-21, this is what we should do. Bless those who persecute you. Bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice.

Weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to what is honorable in the sight of all.

If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God.

For it is written, vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord. To the contrary, if your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him something to drink.

[ 22 : 09 ] For by so doing, you will heap burning coals on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. Man, how we at times wish those words said something different.

Don't. I think a lot of times if we're honest, we wish those words said something like this. From God to us. Vengeance is yours. Get them back.

Make them pay. Show them. Show them that you're right. Use whatever force necessary. Get the job done. But here's the thing.

We aren't God. We don't get to play God. We don't get to act as judge, jury, and executioner. It's his wrath.

And it doesn't belong to us. But could you imagine if it did? Could you imagine if you possessed the ability that God has to execute his holy wrath?

[ 23 : 17 ] And so as I was thinking about this, I was thinking about Lloyd-El. Lloyd-El Sawyer who was a gym teacher for many years and I love one of the things that she used to do to the kids when they acted up in her class.

Instead of just kicking them out, she knew what, they knew what she did, what it meant. She would go up to him and say, poof, poof, you're gone. And so that meant that they had to go sit out.

And so I could imagine if I had that ability as I went throughout my week, right, and somebody gave me a hard time, even if somebody called me like a telemarketer and I'd say, you know what? Poof. Poof, you're gone.

Poof, you're gone.

You're out of my life. You're out of this world. You can't give me any more problems. Could you imagine if we had possession of God's wrath, what we would do to each other?

Thank God that his wrath belongs to him and not to us. Additionally, we are not in a position to act as God's judge. We are not to act as judge in God's place and we are not to act as the judge of God

himself, telling him what he should do, telling him what he shouldn't do with his wrath.

[ 24 : 24 ] That's not our place. So what can we do? Well, what we should do and what we can do is set the example for others to follow in our churches, in our homes, at our places of work, in our neighborhoods, wherever the Lord would have our feet go.

Set the example. Israel, as you may recall, was supposed to do this. God called them to be a light to the nations.

Setting the example. Testifying to the rest of the world the truth of God and leading them to walk in his ways. But instead, they became less like God and they became more like the rest of the world. I like this quote by Kevin DeYoung. He said, Worldliness is whatever makes sin look normal and righteousness look strange. Read that again. Worldliness is whatever makes sin look normal and righteousness look strange.

And as I read that quote, you know what I thought? Jesus Christ was a strange guy. Wasn't he? Think about it. He gave up the pleasures of heaven to be born in a stable.

[ 25 : 42 ] That's strange. He didn't spend his life accumulating possessions. When he died, all that he had was the clothes that he was stripped of that were gambled for. He didn't suck up to the social elites of the time, but he associated with the kinds of people that they despised.

Strange. But when he developed a large following, if you remember, he had the crowds they were eager to see him perform miracles. And he turned them away with his teachings that they couldn't accept.

That's strange. the greatest of all became the least of these. Dying a criminal's death for sins that he did not commit.

And he did it willingly. Aren't you glad that Jesus Christ is strange? And so we are to be like him in our lives in the very same way.

When we go out and we do engage events in our community, my hope and my prayer is that people see that we're strange people. We're investing our time. We're investing our talents.

[ 26 : 57 ] We're investing our treasures into them because we truly see how much, because we truly care about them. We care about who they are. We care about their eternal souls. We hope that they will know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

We hope that we can make a difference in their lives and that God will be glorified by it. We hope that they will see Jesus in us. Christians that stick out in this way to the rest of the world.

When we were, when I was in Latvia, when we were traveling together as a group, you know, that nation is very much like, in many ways, our nation.

As far as the culture, as far as when you walk around, you see a lot of people who look, I think, I thought, that look like we look. You know, there's McDonald's, there's TGI Fridays, there's American places in the heart of their city.

But it was interesting to me because I didn't have any, like, you know, a big American flag t-shirt or anything like that. I didn't have anything written on my person in English. I thought I looked just like all the rest of them.

[ 28 : 02 ] But over and over again when I would go to buy something, when I would go to interact with somebody, they didn't speak to me in Latvian. They spoke to me in English. And so I got to the point, I was like, how do these people know that I'm not from their country?

I don't know what it was, but there was something, something about us that was strange to them and they realized that we weren't native to their land.

In the same way, when we go out in our world, people should see something different about us, that we don't quite fit in.

And the reason why is because we belong to another kingdom. We belong to another kingdom. We are different because we've been made different by Jesus Christ. His Holy Spirit is living inside of us.

And we can't help but be strange from the world. People need to see that in us. So, what does this mean? Well, I think this is what it looks like. We share the gospel with our words and with our lives.

[ 29 : 12 ] Not just with our words, but the way that we live every day. The people in your workplace, people in your neighborhood know that you're a Christian. They should know that you're a Christian.

They should know by your life that you're different. And you should want them to know those things. So, this means that, like Hosea, we are going to warn people about the consequences of sin.

Just as Hosea speaks for God in warning the nation of Israel, we are to share that same hope of salvation in Jesus Christ with our world. Just as Hosea spoke for God urging the people to repent that they might be restored to God, so do we.

If our church is going to be that city on a hill that points people to Jesus Christ, then we must not, then we must, I should say, be going out of our way to make Him known to them.

We must all be trusting in the Lord, not leaning on our own understanding, and encouraging each other to do the very same thing. I want to close with a story that I heard some time ago about a region in Africa and a tribe.

[ 30 : 32 ] The gospel had been brought to this tribe and there was a revival right there in this place. They were saved in droves. And what this community of people like to do is they like to go out from their village and pray out in the more, the less crowded areas and so each person would kind of take their own path out to their spot where they would pray.

And they would do this frequently, so much so that the paths that they would walk out from their village would be worn. So everybody knew each other's path that they would take out to their place of prayer.

And because of that, they also knew when somebody was far from the Lord because grass would grow on their path. And so what they would do is they would go to that brother or sister in Christ and they would say to them, brother or sister, grass grows on your path.

Encouraging them to seek the Lord once again as they ought to do. We need to be doing that the same way for us as a church. If things are going to change in our community, if things are going to change in our nation, I believe it's got to begin with the church and our devotion to the Lord.

Are you walking your own path or are you going God's way?