

# Faith + Faithfulness = Strength

by Richard E. Bieber

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*Richard E. Bieber emphasizes that true strength in faith comes from both believing and being faithful to God's teachings.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 7:13, Luke 13:22, Luke 16:10, 1 Corinthians 4:2, Hebrews 11:6, James 2:17, Revelation 3:20

**Topics:** "Faithfulness Matters", "Eternal Salvation"

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## Description

Richard E. Bieber challenges the common belief that everyone will ultimately make it to heaven, emphasizing the importance of faithfulness in maintaining a relationship with God. He highlights that while Jesus died for the sins of the whole world, salvation is a gift that requires acceptance and ongoing commitment. Using parables and teachings from Jesus, he stresses the significance of staying faithful to the vision of Christ and living a life that reflects that faithfulness.

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## Transcript

Most people today have the idea  
that in the end  
we're all going to make it.  
Aren't we all God's children?  
Doesn't God love us all?  
So why shouldn't we have the hope that  
in the end  
we'll all be walking on that green grass  
by a crystal stream  
living in peace and joy?  
Didn't Jesus say to that thief on the cross,  
"Today you will be with me in paradise"?

"Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the (whole) world!"

So why sweat it? It's all going to come out right in the end.

Of course, if you drive by St. Vincent de Paul Church or Pope John XXIII Church

Saturday evening or Sunday morning, the parking lot is full

- they're not so sure everybody's going to make it.

But mainline Protestants feel pretty safe. We have an "enlightened" view of God...

He wouldn't hurt a flea. .

Yes, Jesus did say to the thief on the cross,

"Today you will be with me in Paradise."

Indeed, he laid down his life for the sins of the whole world.

But Jesus also made it clear that it's not a guaranteed paradise.

This universe, visible and invisible, is a dangerous place if you choose to move in the wrong direction.

"Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few."

(Matthew 7:13-14)

If Jesus died for all, why should there ever be a road that leads to destruction?

He went on his way through towns and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. And someone said to him, "Lord, will those who are saved be few?" And he said to them, "Strive to enter by the narrow door; for many I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. When once the householder has risen up to shut the door, you will

begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying,  
'Lord, open to us.' He will answer you, 'I do not  
know where you come from.' Then you will begin to  
say, 'We ate and drank in your presence, and you  
taught in our streets.' But he will say, 'I tell you,  
I do not know where you come from; depart from  
me, all you workers of iniquity!' (Luke 13:22-27)

Is this the same Jesus who takes away the sin of the world?

Now he says, "I do not know where you come from.

Depart from me!"

How can this be?

If he saves us by his grace, how could he turn around and reject us?

In Matthew 24, Jesus answers the disciples questions about the end of the age.

He paints a picture we can relate to as we watch the news these days.

Things are going to start falling apart.

With nations in turmoil,

nature in turmoil,

false prophets everywhere,

then the end.

Jesus follows this teaching with three parables. And in each of these parables  
somebody's in for a shock when the end comes:

- Ten maidens go forth to meet the bridegroom.

The bridegroom delays. By the time he arrives  
only five still have lamps burning and go into the  
marriage feast and the other five are shut out.

- Three servants are given money to trade with  
until the Master returns from a journey.

When he returns, two servants are commended for their faithfulness. One is cast into outer darkness.

- The Son of Man comes in his glory. All nations are gathered before him. Suddenly, there is a mass separation. People are divided on the basis of what they did with the mercy they were shown.

The sheep, the merciful ones, go into glory. The goats, the unmerciful ones, end up in the eternal fire.

If Jesus died for all, why does he keep reminding us that some people end up in the Kingdom of Light and some end up in darkness?

According to the highest authority ever to walk the earth, God the Son in human flesh, here's how it works...

Salvation is a gift - we don't earn it. It's given to us.

When Jesus went to Calvary and died - he died for all.

Sooner or later, somewhere, somehow, the life he won for us there, arrives at our door. I don't have to accept the gift if I don't want to.

I can slam the door in his face.

But suppose I do accept it.

"Lord, welcome. Come into my life and enable me to be the person you want me to be."

From that moment, I'm a child of God.

I have God's Spirit in me.

But it's up to me to keep that relationship alive.

I receive salvation by faith.

I keep it by faithfulness.

Faith without faithfulness is useless.

"Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little.

I will set you over much."

"He who is faithful in a very little, is faithful also in much."

"If you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon,  
who will entrust to you the true riches? If you have not been  
faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?"

One hundred people go up to the mountain to worship God.

While they are there, the Lord visits them in a vision of blinding light,  
puts his Spirit in them,  
gives them power.

Every single one of those hundred people  
comes down from the mountain a new person.

Everyone has faith.

Two years go by.

Out of the hundred who received the vision,  
only seven are still inspired by it.

What happened to the ninety-three?

They lost it.

They're living their lives down in the valley  
as if they had never seen what they saw  
up there on the mountain.

You keep the vision if you're faithful to it.

You lose it if you're not.

Faith without faithfulness is useless.

Faith means that you open your heart  
and receive God's mercy in this place today.

You take hold of the word God speaks to you.

Faith means that you come up here

and touch the hem of Christ's garment

as you eat the bread and drink the wine.

Faithfulness means that you keep this blessing alive.

You're faithful to it.

You get up in the morning and remember who you belong to.

You commune with the Lord Jesus as you go about your daily work.

You're faithful to him with money.

You're faithful to him in the way you treat your husband,

your wife, your child,

your neighbor.

You're faithful to him in the fellowship.

"He who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much; and he

who is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much.

If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon,

who will entrust to you the true riches? And if you have not been

faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which

is your own? (Luke 16:10-12)

Yes, Jesus is talking about money, the unrighteous mammon, because

the way we handle money is always an indicator.

But the important thing here is not money.

Not, "What should I be doing with my money?" - Whose money?

The important thing is -

"Am I being faithful to the vision God has given me of his beloved Son?"

"Am I being faithful to my Lord?"

If I am,

the first place it will show is how I use money.

But that's not where I concentrate.

I concentrate on him,  
on the Lord Jesus.  
So today as we sing praises,  
and as we commune with him in the bread and wine,  
the Spirit asks one question,  
"Are you keeping the faith?"  
"Are you being faithful?"  
maintaining your relationship with the Master?  
Talking to him?  
Waiting on him?  
Listening to him?  
Fitting into his Body?  
Obeying him?  
If you are,  
Your faith will stay fresh.  
It will grow.  
If not,  
It's time to remember,  
Faith without faithfulness is useless.  
Now if we look at our lives today,  
and decide that we are lacking in faithfulness, and who of us isn't,  
let's make a new start.  
Let's make a commitment  
as we come up here  
to join ourselves  
to Jesus' broken body and shed blood,  
"Lord, you were faithful to me all the way to the cross.

I want to be faithful to you. Help me!"

"Help me to put you first when I rise in the morning.

Help me to stay with you as I walk through the day.

Help me carry my weight here in the Body.

Help me to be faithful to you in the way I use

Money,

My time,

My mouth."

God will answer that prayer if we give him half a chance.

And our faith will grow as we strive to be faithful

to our vision of Christ

down here in the valley of daily living.

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