

“Faithfulness”

Pastor Grant Williams April 29, 2015

Fruit of the Spirit Week #6

Who is Paul writing? the church

Galatians 5:7-26 (Amplified Bible)

7 **You were** running the race nobly. **Who has interfered** in (hindered and stopped you from) your **heeding and following the Truth?**

8 This [evil] persuasion is not from Him Who called you [Who invited you to freedom in Christ].

9 A little leaven (a slight inclination to error, or a few false teachers) leavens the whole lump [it perverts the whole conception of faith or misleads the whole church].

10 [For my part] I have confidence [toward you] in the Lord that you will take no contrary view of the matter but will come to think with me. But **he who is unsettling you**, whoever he is, will have to bear the penalty.

12 I wish those who unsettle and confuse you would [go all the way and] cut themselves off!

13 For you, brethren, were [indeed] called to freedom; only [do not let your] freedom be an incentive to your flesh and an opportunity or excuse [for selfishness], but through love you should serve one another.

14 For the whole Law [concerning human relationships] is complied with in the one precept, You shall love your neighbor as [you do] yourself.

15 But if you bite and devour one another [in partisan strife], be careful that you [and your whole fellowship] are not consumed by one another.

16 But I say, walk and live [habitually] in the [Holy] Spirit [responsive to and controlled and guided by the Spirit]; then you will certainly not gratify the cravings and desires of the flesh (of human nature without God).

17 For the desires of the flesh are opposed to the [Holy] Spirit, and the [desires of the] Spirit are opposed to the flesh (godless human nature); for these are antagonistic to each other [continually withstanding and in conflict with each other], so that you are not free but are prevented from doing what you desire to do.

18 But if you are guided (led) by the [Holy] Spirit, you are not subject to the Law.

19 Now **the doings (practices) of the flesh are clear (obvious):** they are immorality, impurity, indecency,

20 Idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger (ill temper), **selfishness**, divisions (dissensions), party spirit (factions, sects with peculiar opinions, heresies),

21 Envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like. **I warn you beforehand, just as I did previously, that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.**

22 But the fruit of the [Holy] Spirit [**the work which His presence within accomplishes**] is love, joy (gladness), peace, patience (an even temper, forbearance), kindness, goodness (benevolence), **faithfulness**,

23 Gentleness (meekness, humility), self-control (self-restraint, continence). Against such things there is no law [that can bring a charge].

*24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus (the Messiah) **have crucified the flesh** (the godless human nature) **with its passions and appetites and desires.***

25 If we live by the [Holy] Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. [If by the Holy Spirit we have our life in God, let us go forward walking in line, our conduct controlled by the Spirit.]

26 Let us not become vainglorious and self-conceited, competitive and challenging and provoking and irritating to one another, envying and being jealous of one another.

Noah Webster, the Father of American Christian education, wrote the first American dictionary (1828) and established a system of rules to govern spelling, grammar, and reading. He understood the power of words, their definitions, and the need for precise word usage in communication to maintain independence. He used the Bible as the foundation for his definitions.

No other dictionary compares with the Webster's 1828 dictionary. The English language has changed again and again and in many instances has become corrupt. The 1828 American Dictionary of the English Language is based upon God's written word, for Noah Webster used the Bible as the foundation for his definitions.

Define faithful:

1. Firm in adherence to the truth and to the duties of religion.

*Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.
Rev. 2.*

2. Firmly adhering to duty; of true fidelity; loyal; true to allegiance; as a faithful subject.

3. Constant in the performance of duties or services; exact in attending to commands; as a faithful servant.

4. Observant of compact, treaties, contracts, vows or other engagements; true to one's word. A government should be faithful to its treaties; individuals, to their word.

5. True; exact; in conformity to the letter and spirit; as a faithful execution of a will.

6. True to the marriage covenant; as a faithful wife or husband.

7. Conformable to truth; as a faithful narrative or representation.

8. Constant; not fickle; as a faithful lover or friend.

9. True; worthy of belief. *2Tim. 2.*

In talking about faithfulness, let's first look at:

I. Its Meaning

We are called to have faith and to be faithful as God is faithful. Pistis in the Greek means faith, and pistos means faithful, and interestingly the words together mean **persuasive and trustworthy**. How often is this not the case? **Often people who are persuasive are not necessarily trustworthy are they?**

Again this is a quality of God, and I know that some people have left the faith because of things that people have done, but here is a great verse for them from Romans 3:3-4 where Paul is talking about the Jews,

Romans 3:3-4 (Amplified Bible)

3 What if some did not believe and were without faith? Does their lack of faith and their faithlessness nullify and make ineffective and void the faithfulness of God and His fidelity [to His Word]?

4 By no means! Let God be found true though every human being is false and a liar, as it is written, That You may be justified and shown to be upright in what You say, and prevail when You are judged [by sinful men].

2 Timothy 2:13 (Amplified Bible)

13 If we are faithless [do not believe and are untrue to Him], He remains true (faithful to His Word and His righteous character), for He cannot deny Himself.

God is never to blame when His people do wrong. Leaving the faith because of people's mistakes shows a lack of faith, or at least putting faith in the wrong place. God is faithful because that is His nature, people and churches may not be.

Look at Matthew 9:22 when the woman touched Jesus' robe and was instantly healed. Jesus said to her...

Matthew 9:22 (Amplified Bible)

22 Jesus turned around and, seeing her, He said, Take courage, daughter! Your faith has made you well. And at once the woman was restored to health.

She was completely persuaded that just by touching Jesus' garment she would be healed. This is one of the great examples of faith.

Also the Roman centurion in Matthew 8 who said to Jesus, don't come to my house to heal my servant, I'm not worthy of that, **just say the word** and he will be healed. Jesus then told His Jewish listeners that He had not found such faith in anyone in Israel.

Just say the word...

Isaiah 55:11 (Amplified Bible)

*11 So shall **My word** be that goes forth out of My mouth: it shall not return to Me void [without producing any effect, useless], but it shall accomplish that which I please and purpose, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.*

You will be hard pressed to find anywhere in the Bible where faith is just words, just belief. Faith is always shown, it must be tested.

The Bible itself gives a good definition of faith in Hebrews 10 and 11.

Hebrews 10:19-11:1 (Amplified Bible)

19 Therefore, brethren, since we have full freedom and confidence to enter into the [Holy of] Holies [by the power and virtue] in the blood of Jesus,

20 By this fresh (new) and living way which He initiated and dedicated and opened for us through the separating curtain (veil of the Holy of Holies), that is, through His flesh,

21 And since we have [such] a great and wonderful and noble Priest [Who rules] over the house of God,

22 Let us all come forward and draw near with true (honest and sincere) hearts in unqualified assurance and absolute conviction engendered by faith (by that leaning of the entire human personality on God in absolute trust and confidence in His power, wisdom, and goodness), having our hearts sprinkled and purified from a guilty (evil) conscience and our bodies cleansed with pure water.

23 So let us seize and hold fast and retain without wavering the hope we cherish and confess and our acknowledgement of it, for He Who promised is reliable (sure) and faithful to His word.

24 *And let us consider and give attentive, continuous care to watching over one another, studying how we may stir up (stimulate and incite) to love and helpful deeds and noble activities,*

25 *Not forsaking or neglecting to assemble together [as believers], as is the habit of some people, but admonishing (warning, urging, and encouraging) one another, and all the more faithfully as you see the day approaching.*

26 *For if we go on deliberately and willingly sinning after once acquiring the knowledge of the Truth, there is no longer any sacrifice left to atone for [our] sins [no further offering to which to look forward].*

27 *[There is nothing left for us then] but a kind of awful and fearful prospect and expectation of divine judgment and the fury of burning wrath and indignation which will consume those who put themselves in opposition [to God].*

28 *Any person who has violated and [thus] rejected and set at naught the Law of Moses is put to death without pity or mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses.*

29 *How much worse (sterner and heavier) punishment do you suppose he will be judged to deserve who has spurned and [thus] trampled underfoot the Son of God, and who has considered the covenant blood by which he was consecrated common and unhallowed, thus profaning it and insulting and outraging the [Holy] Spirit [Who imparts] grace (the unmerited favor and blessing of God)?*

30 For we know Him Who said, Vengeance is Mine [retribution and the meting out of full justice rest with Me]; I will repay [I will exact the compensation], says the Lord. And again, The Lord will judge and determine and solve and settle the cause and the cases of His people.

31 It is a fearful (formidable and terrible) thing to incur the divine penalties and be cast into the hands of the living God!

32 But be ever mindful of the days gone by in which, after you were first spiritually enlightened, you endured a great and painful struggle,

33 Sometimes being yourselves a gazingstock, publicly exposed to insults and abuse and distress, and sometimes claiming fellowship and making common cause with others who were so treated.

34 For you did sympathize and suffer along with those who were imprisoned, and you bore cheerfully the plundering of your belongings and the confiscation of your property, in the knowledge and consciousness that you yourselves had a better and lasting possession.

35 Do not, therefore, fling away your fearless confidence, for it carries a great and glorious compensation of reward.

36 For you have need of steadfast patience and endurance, so that you may perform and fully accomplish the will of God, and thus receive and carry away [and enjoy to the full] what is promised.

37 For still a little while (a very little while), and the Coming One will come and He will not delay.

38 But the just shall live by faith [My righteous servant shall live by his conviction respecting man's relationship to God and divine things, and holy fervor born of faith and conjoined with it]; and if he draws back and shrinks in fear, My soul has no delight or pleasure in him.

39 But our way is not that of those who draw back to eternal misery (perdition) and are utterly destroyed, but we are of those who believe [who cleave to and trust in and rely on God through Jesus Christ, the Messiah] and by faith preserve the soul.

Hebrews 11:1 (AMP)

1 NOW FAITH is the assurance (the confirmation, the title deed) of the things [we] hope for, being the proof of things [we] do not see and the conviction of their reality [faith perceiving as real fact what is not revealed to the senses].

So faithfulness is a constant, unwavering commitment, “stick to itness” that comes from our sustainer who is perfectly faithful. Romans 10:17 says faith comes from hearing the Word of Christ or God.

That’s important, spiritual faith doesn’t initially come from experience, but from hearing the Word of God. He, (God) is faithful, if as it says in 1 John 1:9, we confess our sins, and are obedient according to His grace.

Let's now look at:

II. Models of Faithfulness in the Bible

Here is the famous “hall of fame of faith” and what the writer of Hebrews says about their faith.

Hebrews 11:1-39 (AMP)

1 NOW FAITH is the assurance (the confirmation, the title deed) of the things [we] hope for, being the proof of things [we] do not see and the conviction of their reality [faith perceiving as real fact what is not revealed to the senses].

2 For by [faith--trust and holy fervor born of faith] the men of old had divine testimony borne to them and obtained a good report.

3 By faith we understand that the worlds [during the successive ages] were framed (fashioned, put in order, and equipped for their intended purpose) by the word of God, so that what we see was not made out of things which are visible.

4 [Prompted, actuated] by faith Abel brought God a better and more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, because of which it was testified of him that he was righteous [that he was upright and in right standing with God], and God bore witness by accepting and acknowledging his gifts. And though he died, yet [through the incident] he is still speaking.

5 *Because of faith Enoch was caught up and transferred to heaven, so that he did not have a glimpse of death; and he was not found, because God had translated him. For even before he was taken to heaven, he received testimony [still on record] that he had pleased and been satisfactory to God.*

6 *But without faith it is impossible to please and be satisfactory to Him. For whoever would come near to God must [necessarily] believe that God exists and that He is the rewarder of those who earnestly and diligently seek Him [out].*

7 *[Prompted] by faith Noah, being forewarned by God concerning events of which as yet there was no visible sign, took heed and diligently and reverently constructed and prepared an ark for the deliverance of his own family. By this [his faith which relied on God] he passed judgment and sentence on the world's unbelief and became an heir and possessor of righteousness (that relation of being right into which God puts the person who has faith).*

8 *[Urged on] by faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed and went forth to a place which he was destined to receive as an inheritance; and he went, although he did not know or trouble his mind about where he was to go.*

9 *[Prompted] by faith he dwelt as a temporary resident in the land which was designated in the promise [of God, though he was like a stranger] in a strange country, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs with him of the same promise.*

10 *For he was [waiting expectantly and confidently] looking forward to the city which has fixed and firm foundations, whose Architect and Builder is God.*

11 *Because of faith also Sarah herself received physical power to conceive a child, even when she was long past the age for it, because she considered [God] Who had given her the promise to be reliable and trustworthy and true to His word.*

12 *So from one man, though he was physically as good as dead, there have sprung descendants whose number is as the stars of heaven and as countless as the innumerable sands on the seashore.*

13 *These people all died controlled and sustained by their faith, but not having received the tangible fulfillment of [God's] promises, only having seen it and greeted it from a great distance by faith, and all the while acknowledging and confessing that they were strangers and temporary residents and exiles upon the earth.*

14 *Now those people who talk as they did show plainly that they are in search of a fatherland (their own country).*

15 *If they had been thinking with [homesick] remembrance of that country from which they were emigrants, they would have found constant opportunity to return to it.*

16 *But the truth is that they were yearning for and aspiring to a better and more desirable country, that is, a heavenly [one]. For that reason God is not ashamed to be called their God [even to be surnamed their God--the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob], for He has prepared a city for them.*

17 *By faith Abraham, when he was put to the test [while the testing of his faith was still in progress], had already brought Isaac for an offering; he who had gladly received and welcomed [God's] promises was ready to sacrifice his only son,*

18 *Of whom it was said, Through Isaac shall your descendants be reckoned.*

19 *For he reasoned that God was able to raise [him] up even from among the dead. Indeed in the sense that Isaac was figuratively dead [potentially sacrificed], he did [actually] receive him back from the dead.*

20 *[With eyes of] faith Isaac, looking far into the future, invoked blessings upon Jacob and Esau.*

21 *[Prompted] by faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons and bowed in prayer over the top of his staff.*

22 *[Actuated] by faith Joseph, when nearing the end of his life, referred to [the promise of God for] the departure of the Israelites out of Egypt and gave instructions concerning the burial of his own bones.*

23 *[Prompted] by faith Moses, after his birth, was kept concealed for three months by his parents, because they saw how comely the child was; and they were not overawed and terrified by the king's decree.*

24 *[Aroused] by faith Moses, when he had grown to maturity and become great, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter,*

25 *Because he preferred to share the oppression [suffer the hardships] and bear the shame of the people of God rather than to have the fleeting enjoyment of a sinful life.*

26 *He considered the contempt and abuse and shame [borne for] the Christ (the Messiah Who was to come) to be greater wealth than all the treasures of Egypt, for he looked forward and away to the reward (recompense).*

27 *[Motivated] by faith he left Egypt behind him, being unawed and undismayed by the wrath of the king; for he never flinched but held staunchly to his purpose and endured steadfastly as one who gazed on Him Who is invisible.*

28 *By faith (simple trust and confidence in God) he instituted and carried out the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood [on the doorposts], so that the destroyer of the firstborn (the angel) might not touch those [of the children of Israel].*

29 *[Urged on] by faith the people crossed the Red Sea as [though] on dry land, but when the Egyptians tried to do the same thing they were swallowed up [by the sea].*

30 *Because of faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encompassed for seven days [by the Israelites].*

31 *[Prompted] by faith Rahab the prostitute was not destroyed along with those who refused to believe and obey, because she had received the spies in peace [without enmity].*

32 *And what shall I say further? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets,*

33 *Who by [the help of] faith subdued kingdoms, administered justice, obtained promised blessings, closed the mouths of lions,*

34 *Extinguished the power of raging fire, escaped the devourings of the sword, out of frailty and weakness won strength and became stalwart, even mighty and resistless in battle, routing alien hosts.*

35 [Some] women received again their dead by a resurrection. Others were tortured to death with clubs, refusing to accept release [offered on the terms of denying their faith], so that they might be resurrected to a better life. [I Kings 17:17-24; II Kings 4:25-37.]

36 Others had to suffer the trial of mocking and scourging and even chains and imprisonment.

37 They were stoned to death; they were lured with tempting offers [to renounce their faith]; they were sawn asunder; they were slaughtered by the sword; [while they were alive] they had to go about wrapped in the skins of sheep and goats, utterly destitute, oppressed, cruelly treated--

38 [Men] of whom the world was not worthy--roaming over the desolate places and the mountains, and [living] in caves and caverns and holes of the earth.

39 And all of these, though they won divine approval by [means of] their faith, did not receive the fulfillment of what was promised,

They did not get to see the Messiah in their lifetime. Of course in the New Testament, Christ was the epitome (perfect example) of faith and we also see in Paul and Timothy great faith in Jesus, and faithfulness to each other.

Here are some of the qualities of this faith that are commended and they can be summarized in this way:

1. Giving good sacrifices to God,
2. Believing God exists and seeking Him,
3. Believing what God says and obeying as Noah did,
4. Going where God tells you,
5. Sarah believing in a miracle,
6. Being more focused on heaven than earth,
7. Allowing oneself to be mistreated for standing up for the faith.

None of those people who lived before Christ came, received the ultimate promise of the Messiah. **We know the Messiah has come, so how much more should our faith be?**

Do we believe that God is faithful? Have we had experiences that have made us wonder if He exists, or if He does, if He cares about us? The Bible continually speaks of His faithfulness but have we experienced the truth of this? How can we be sure?

If we look at what is common in all the qualities of those who were commended for their faith, **it is unquestioning belief and obedience that stand out. The Bible tells us constantly that we will experience God when we are obedient to what He says.**

Let me give you a real life example. A child dies and the parents wonder why, they're angry at God, they don't understand how a loving God could let this happen.

Before turning away, they ask God what He wants, they negotiate, they ask “what have they done to displease Him”. But no answer comes in their prayers. Do they continue to believe in God’s faithfulness? This is where we need to look at the Word of God to see what He wants us to do in these circumstances.

First of all, we read that God does not want anyone to perish eternally. The death of a child (temporal) is hard, but is the reality of a fallen world in which we chose to rebel and bring death into the world. So we can’t blame Him. **The wages of sin is death, not necessarily even our specific sin, but sin that came into the world in the beginning.**

Matthew 19:14 (Amplified Bible)

14 But He said, Leave the children alone! Allow the little ones to come to Me, and do not forbid or restrain or hinder them, for of such [as these] is the kingdom of heaven composed

He says let the little children come, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. The children are never ours, but His, and we must believe that He will take better care of them than we can, when they die, they have not truly perished, they are just not in our care anymore, but His.

I counted 46 verses in the Bible, many of them in the Psalms, that comment on grief, and they all pretty much say that God is there for our comfort, so what is the implication?

We are to seek God, not answers. But seek him. He promises to comfort us in our afflictions, but He doesn't promise to explain things. He wants our surrender to Him so He can take care of us like his children, like the infant surrenders to its mother or father.

When the parent loses a child they seek answers and beg to have things reversed, often rather than seeking God himself and His comfort. We are to try and look at things from His perspective, but most importantly we are to strengthen our faith in the fact that God uses all things for good, for everyone.

But is that really true? No. Romans 8:28 says, it's only for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose.

Romans 8:28 (Amplified Bible)

28 We are assured and know that [God being a partner in their labor] all things work together and are [fitting into a plan] for good to and for those who love God and are called according to [His] design and purpose.

We are to love Him more when tragedy strikes, and we are to look for what His purpose is for us in the tragedy. Remember grief is usually selfish, it's not about the other person, it's about us and our pain.

Of course nobody will judge us if we grieve a great loss, but God is only concerned about one thing, eternal life, our eternal life, which requires faith in God and a relationship with Him.

God doesn't grieve the death of a child, they're with Him, but He does grieve for the people left behind, and in His grief, He always wants us to come closer and be obedient so He can be there for us in our grief, and ultimately enjoy us in heaven.

Now this doesn't mean that a parent who loses a child does not have enough faith. It doesn't say that anywhere. But it does mean that at that time, He is calling them to come closer to Him so He can reveal His purpose for them. When we can look at it that way, perhaps we can see the "big picture" in the tragedy, and be comforted by His truth.

When my dad passed away - I know from Gods Words that I was created for such a time as this. God knew my dad wasn't going to be here. I miss him, but I understand that although I wanted him here, God said it's time to come home.

This is just one example of why it's so important for us to share examples of God's faithfulness in our lives with our brothers and sisters, and our children. Tell people about the blessings of our obedience, how God has taken a terrible time in our lives and used it for our good and the good of others. We must not be afraid to share these experiences with others, it might make the difference for someone.

Finally let's look at the:

III. The Mandate

I know I have kind of bounced between faith and faithfulness tonight. Is there a difference?

1. Faith is trust and obedience,
2. Faithfulness is a character trait, or fruit, that shows faith over the long run.

In many ways it is like talking about the difference between “being good” and “doing good deeds”. **Our faith shows that we trust, faithfulness shows that we can be trusted.**

This is what Jesus said...

Matthew 25:14-32(Amplified)

14 For it is like a man who was about to take a long journey, and he called his servants together and entrusted them with his property.

15 To one he gave five talents [probably about \$5,000], to another two, to another one--to each in proportion to his own personal ability. Then he departed and left the country.

16 He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he gained five talents more.

17 *And likewise he who had received the two talents--he also gained two talents more.*

18 *But he who had received the one talent went and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.*

19 *Now after a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them.*

20 *And he who had received the five talents came and brought him five more, saying, Master, you entrusted to me five talents; see, here I have gained five talents more.*

21 *His master said to him, Well done, you upright (honorable, admirable) and faithful servant! You have been faithful and trustworthy over a little; I will put you in charge of much. Enter into and share the joy (the delight, the [c]blessedness) which your master enjoys.*

22 *And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, Master, you entrusted two talents to me; here I have gained two talents more.*

23 *His master said to him, Well done, you upright (honorable, admirable) and faithful servant! You have been faithful and trustworthy over a little; I will put you in charge of much. Enter into and share the joy (the delight, the blessedness) which your master enjoys.*

24 *He who had received one talent also came forward, saying, Master, I knew you to be a harsh and hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you had not winnowed [the grain].*

25 *So I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is your own.*

26 But his master answered him, You wicked and lazy and idle servant! Did you indeed know that I reap where I have not sowed and gather [grain] where I have not winnowed?

27 Then you should have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received what was my own with interest.

28 So take the talent away from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents.

29 For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will be furnished richly so that he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have will be taken away.

30 And throw the good-for-nothing servant into the outer darkness; there will be weeping and grinding of teeth.

31 When the Son of Man comes in His glory (His majesty and splendor), and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory.

32 All nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them [the people] from one another as a shepherd separates his sheep from the goats;

According to Matthew 25, the mandate from God is for us to be good and faithful servants for Him. “Well done good and faithful **servant**, you have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.” What does it mean here to be faithful? In this context of the parable of the talents, **it is obedience.**

This parable not just about financial stewardship. Jesus is letting us know that we are supposed to use what God has given us for His purposes, including our gifts and potential, to produce fruit.

Of course the greatest gift we have received is salvation, and this parable is telling us that we must use what we have and make it multiply.

So the question we have to ask ourselves here is “how has what God has given me benefited others?” Or, have we buried our salvation in a safe place just waiting for Him to come back?

Is that your greatest goal in this life, to stay faithful over everything, even the little things, so that you can hear those words from Jesus? “Good and faithful servant.”

Our blessings come from faithfulness, and our empowerment from the Holy Spirit is proportionate to our faithfulness.

We need to be convinced to be committed. Are we convinced? Have we been persuaded so as to be completely convinced that the Word of God is the truth, and His promises are set in stone because of His faithfulness?

I am convinced that if we are convinced, there will be no holding back in our Christian walk. Maybe that’s where we all need to look. Maybe it’s that simple.

If we are not showing that extreme commitment, maybe it's because we haven't even gotten past the convinced part, we still have doubts, a lack of faith. We need to ask for help in our unbelief. Ask to be persuaded by God in his Word, not by people.

"The essential thing 'in heaven and earth' is. . . that there should be a long obedience in the same direction; something which has made life worth living."

That is faithfulness, a long obedience in the same direction. No changing direction, no giving up, but absolute conviction.

