**Why is it so hard to be faithful?**

**Introduction**

1. Jesus said the way to eternal life is difficult – **Matthew 7:13-14**
   1. False prophets make it difficult – **(vv. 15-20)**
   2. Deception makes it difficult – **(vv. 21-23)** – people who thought they went the right way.
   3. The standards are high – **Matthew 5:20**
2. God invites all men to salvation, but very few will lay hold of it **(cf. Matthew 22:14).**
3. However, despite these truths, God offers certainty in salvation. While it is not necessarily easy, it is far from an impossibility – **Matthew 19:25-26** (with God); **Jude 24**
4. Yet, man often becomes his worst enemy. Even though one may know the true way and know that God can help them walk that path successfully, it becomes far more difficult than it has to be. They make it difficult on themselves.
5. Why can it be so hard to be faithful?
6. You are Delaying Full Devotion to God
7. It is not as though you are entirely uninterested, or completely consumed by the world, but you aren’t entirely dedicated to God.
8. You intend to fully invest all your energy toward the service of God eventually, but just not yet.
9. This mindset will fail, and make following God extremely difficult:
   1. More convenient times may never come – **Acts 24:24-27** – Felix never found the more convenient time.
      1. Too busy – work, school, projects, etc.
      2. We don’t know how much time we have – **James 4:14**
      3. There will always be something to deter us.
      4. **2 Corinthians 6:1-2** – now is the day of salvation.
   2. If we aren’t drawing near to God, we are further separating from Him – **James 4:7-8** (failure to draw near logically yields opposite results) (**2 Chronicles 15:1-2** – Azariah to King Asa)
      1. Divided loyalty (or devotion) is in actuality opposition – **Matthew 6:22-24; James 4:4**
      2. Having one foot in the world, and one foot in God’s kingdom will not yield success, and will make faithfulness difficult, and even impossible.
         1. **Matthew 19:20-26** – Rich young ruler was not willing to fully devote himself, and such made it impossible for him to be saved.
         2. **Mark 10:24** – he was trusting in riches, not God.
   3. A delay in devotion means a greater correction will need to be made as each day passes:
      1. Lawlessness compounds upon itself – **Romans 6:18**
      2. When a ship or an airplane needs to make a correction in their direction to meet their destination, the greater the delay the greater the correction. (EX: Titanic)
         1. If it is a correction to evade an object delay has its limits.
         2. If a pilot waits too long, they will not be able to easily miss the object.
      3. As one delays devoting themselves fully to God they are piling up more obstacles to overcome when they finally decide to do so, WHICH CAN LEAD TO FURTHER DELAY.
10. You Count God’s Commands as Burdensome
11. Who made matters more difficult for themselves more than the Israelites?
    1. Had God’s provision, but didn’t make it to the promised land – **1 Corinthians 10:1-5**
    2. The message preached to them was not mixed with faith – **Hebrews 4:2 (Hebrews 3:18-19** – disobedience)
    3. They did not obey as they should have, but complained – **1 Corinthians 10:10**
       1. Despite God’s provisions and blessings, they were reluctant to follow Him.
       2. We are told not to complain as we obey – **Philippians 2:12-16** (directly linked in context to our doing God’s will)
12. In order to make faithfulness less difficult we must stop viewing God’s commands as a burden:
    1. Things we view as burdensome are always more difficult to perform.
       1. EX: work, school, etc.
       2. “If you do what you love you’ll never work a day in your life.”
    2. **1 John 5:3** – they are not a burden. (**Deuteronomy 6:24** – for our good)
    3. **John 8:31-32** – they free us and keep us free from the burden of sin.
    4. **Matthew 11:28-30** – they are light, and lead to rest.
    5. They are our expression of love to God, and the avenue to knowing Him – **John 14:15; 1 John 5:3; 1 John 2:3; John 17:3** (such is eternal life)
13. You are Not Focused on the Goal
14. Our question: Why is it so hard to be faithful?
    1. Also, important: Why do you want to be faithful?
    2. If we lose sight of why we are striving for faithfulness, we will fail in faithfulness.
15. Movement without a goal is sporadic and inconsistent:
    1. Paul concerning running the race – **1 Corinthians 9:24-27**
       1. **(v. 26)** logically follows **(vv. 24-25)**
       2. Because Paul is focused on receiving the crown (GOAL) his movements were not aimless.
    2. Abraham and company were able to follow God in faithful obedience because they looked to the reward – **Hebrews 11:8-10, 13-16**
16. If our focus is not on heaven, we will have difficulty doing heavenly things:
    1. A word intimately connected with “faithfulness” is “righteousness” – righteousness is inseparable from the goal of heaven – **2 Peter 3:13**
       1. If we aren’t focused on the place where righteousness dwells we will struggle to live righteously.
    2. **Matthew 6:19-21** – your treasure is where your heart is.
       1. To value heaven is to live as one who will inhabit heaven.
       2. To value earthly riches is to live as an earthly individual.
    3. Paul continually had the goal of the resurrection to life eternal in heaven in his vision **– Philippians 3:12-14** – this allowed him to “press on.”
       1. Contrasted to those not focused on heaven – **3:17-19**
       2. Those who long for the fulfillment of their citizenship in heaven are able to “stand fast in the Lord” – **3:20-4:1**
    4. The goal of an entrance into heaven pushes one to grow in the knowledge of Jesus as we seek to be transformed into His image – **2 Peter 1:2-11**
       1. **1 John 3:2-3** – purifies self just as He is pure – looking to goal of resurrection/transformation.
          1. God’s word is what purifies and transforms – **John 17:15-17** – set apart from sin/world to service of God.
       2. **(v. 3)** – “divine power” – **cf. Romans 1:16**
       3. **(v. 4)** – partakers of divine nature – sharers (*koinōnos*) (**cf. 1 John 3:3**)
       4. **(vv. 5-8)** – additions to faith as directed by God’s word to make you share in divine nature.
       5. **(v. 9) –** shortsightedness – i.e. only seeing what is right in front of you.
       6. **(vv. 10-11)** – Free from sin, welcome into heaven.
       7. Such leads to the lack of growth because one does not have the goal in mind.

**Conclusion**

1. While it is certainly an everyday challenge to live right before God, and reach the goal of heaven, we sometimes make it more difficult than it has to be.
2. We need to learn to get out of our own way and trust in God – **Proverbs 3:5-8**
3. God has provided us with all we need to be faithful to Him. We simply need to be decisive about devotedly following Him, realize His ways are for our good, and maintain focus on our goal of being with Him for eternity, laying aside all distractions.