

How Does Faithfulness Pay? Luke 2:21-38

ETS: Simeon and Anna were faithful to God as God rewarded them for their faithfulness

ESS: God rewards those who are faithful to Him in their actions and attitude

OSS: I want people to stay faithful to God in action and attitude despite difficulties

UW: faithful

PQ: Are you faithful in your walk with God?

ME

How many wake-up to watch the ball drop at NY Square?

- Revelers began celebrating New Year's Eve in Times Square as early as 1904, but it was in 1907 that the New Year's Eve Ball made its maiden descent from the flagpole atop One Times Square. Seven versions of the Ball have been designed to signal the New Year.
- The first New Year's Eve Ball, made of iron and wood and adorned with one hundred 25-watt light bulbs, was 5 feet in diameter and weighed 700 pounds. It was built by a young immigrant metalworker named Jacob Starr, and for most of the twentieth century

the company he founded, sign maker Artkraft Strauss, was responsible for lowering the Ball.

- As part of the 1907-1908 festivities, waiters in the fabled "lobster palaces" and other deluxe eateries in hotels surrounding Times Square were supplied with battery-powered top hats emblazoned with the numbers "1908" fashioned of tiny light bulbs. At the stroke of midnight, they all "flipped their lids" and the year on their foreheads lit up in conjunction with the numbers "1908" on the parapet of the Times Tower lighting up to signal the arrival of the new year.
- The Ball has been lowered every year since 1907, with the exceptions of 1942 and 1943, when the ceremony was suspended due to the wartime "dimout" of lights in New York City. Nevertheless, the crowds still gathered in Times Square in those years and greeted the New Year with a minute of silence followed by the ringing of chimes from sound trucks parked at the base of the tower—a harkening-back to the earlier celebrations at Trinity Church, where crowds would gather to "ring out the old, ring in the new."

You can count on the New Year being brought in with the iconic ball drop in NY Square!

You can also count on “Year-end” TV shows recapping the previous year’s events

You can count on people shooting off fireworks and terrifying your dogs!

You can count on the traditional toast, the party hats, and the squeakers!

On New Year’s Day, you can count on

- New Year’s resolutions being made
- A day off or work or pay bonuses if you need to work
- People who are hung over from drinking too much the night before
- Football Games
- Parades on TV (Rose Bowl)

There are some things that you can expect to consistently happen in life!

There are benefits to consistency

- You know how to plan
- You know what to expect
- You feel comfortable
- You enjoy the tradition

WE

Did you make any New Year's Resolution regarding your walk with Christ?

- Maybe you resolved to read your Bible through
- Maybe you resolved to memorize Scripture more
- Maybe you resolved to spend more time in prayer
- Maybe you resolved to attend church services

As you were thinking about 2022, did you think about your walk with God?

- How was your walk with God in 2021-was it closer than 2020 or further?
- How do you intend for your walk with God to grow stronger in 2022?

How do you grow stronger in your walk with God?

What is one of the KEY INGREDIENTS to growing in your spiritual growth?

GOD

Turn to Luke 2

FAITHFULNESS to GOD PAYS

Fast forward to *after* the birth of Christ. A little over a month has passed and Mary and Joseph take Jesus the 5 miles north to Jerusalem to go to the temple to “**present Him to the Lord**” (Luke 2:22).

Mary and Joseph are not looking for anybody, but there is somebody at the temple who was looking for them.

Luke 2:21-25 “When the eight days were completed for his circumcision, he was named Jesus—the name given by the angel before he was conceived. 22 And when the days of their purification according to the law of Moses were finished, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord 23 (just as it is written in the law of the Lord, Every firstborn male will be dedicated to the Lord) 24 and to offer a sacrifice (according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons). 25 There was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon (Simeon’s credentials): This man was **righteous** and **devout, looking** forward to Israel’s consolation, and the **Holy Spirit** was on **him**.

WHAT Does Faithfulness to God Look Like?

Faithfulness to God is Proven by Actions & Attitude

Aspects of “**Faithfulness**”

- **Righteous** = Following God's commands regarding morality. Loving good and not evil.
- **Devout**: Obedient to God – God has 1st place. Strong prayer life. Waiting on and trusting in God to guide.
- **Looking forward to Israel's consolation**: Believes Scripture is true. Believes the prophecies about the coming Messiah are true.
- **Holy Spirit was on him**: At this point the Holy Spirit DID NOT indwell every believer.
 - The Holy Spirit indwells every believer since Pentecost; however, there is a difference between being INDWELT and FILLED by the Holy Spirit.
 - Being **indwelt** means you are....
 - **Sealed** by God for redemption
 - **Accepted** into God's family
 - Sin is NO LONGER your MASTER
 - **Reconciled** to God
 - Being indwelt means you are in a NEW POSITION with God
- However, being INDWELT is NOT the same as being FILLED by the Holy Spirit
 - **INDWELLING** indicates your new **POSITION/STANDING** with God
 - **FILLING** indicates your **DIRECTION**

FILLING with the HOLY SPIRIT occurs when you LIVE like SIMEON!

- **Gal. 5: 16** “I say, then, walk by the Spirit and you will certainly not carry out the desire of the flesh.”
 - What does Paul mean when he challenged believers to “walk by the Spirit”?
 - “Walk by the Spirit” = being “Righteous” like **Simeon** = Following God’s **commands** regarding morality. Loving good and not evil.
 - **Walk by the Spirit** = being “Devout” like **Simeon: Obedient** to God – God has **1st place**. **Strong prayer** life. **Waiting** on and **trusting** in God to guide.
 - **Walk by the Spirit** = “Looking forward to **Israel’s consolation**” like **Simeon**: Believes Scripture is true. Believes the prophecies about the coming Messiah are true.
- **Paul** says that a person who is “Walking by the Spirit” (i.e., “Filled” with the Holy Spirit) exhibits
 - **love** (for all people and all that is holy),
 - **Joy** despite circumstances
 - **Peace** despite turmoil
 - **Patience** with people and God
 - **Kindness** with people
 - **Goodness** in actions

- Faithfulness in following God,
- Gentleness with people
- self-control in decisions and actions

Why Be Faithful to God?

FAITHFULNESS PAYS

How does Faithfulness pay?

FAITHFULNESS PAYS WITH COMMUNION WITH GOD

Luke 2:26 “It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he saw the Lord’s Messiah.”

- *God rewards faithfulness!*

- **Hebrews 11:6** “Now without faith it is impossible to please God, since the one who draws near to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.”

- God **rewards** those who SEEK Him

IF you want to be “**REWARDED**” by God...then SEEK Him

- How do you **SEEK GOD**? Be like Simeon!

God **rewarded** Simeon for his faithfulness, but “**revealing to him**” that he would “**See the Lord’s Messiah.**”

WHAT Does Faithfulness to God Look Like?

Faithfulness to God is Proven by Actions & Attitude

Simeon's Action: **Luke 2:27** *Guided by the Spirit, he entered the temple. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to perform for him what was customary under the law.*

- Because of Simeon's "*Communion with God*" he was "**Guided by the Holy Spirit**"
- Because Simeon was **faithful** to God, he **followed** the Holy Spirit's impulse to enter the temple

Simeon wasn't the only one who was proving his faithfulness to God by his actions!

- Joseph was faithful in taking Mary as his wife-despite the ridicule and shame
- Mary was faithful in following God despite the shame and ridicule she faced as an unwed pregnant teenager
- Mary and Joseph were faithful in refraining from sexual activity during her pregnancy with Jesus-even after they were official married.

Luke 2:21-24 *"When the eight days were completed for his circumcision, he was named Jesus—the name given by the angel before he was conceived.*

- Mary and Joseph were faithful in following the Old Testament command to have their son circumcised thus identifying Him as a Jew and part of the covenant community as outlined in **Leviticus 12**.
- Mary and Joseph were faithful in giving the baby the name “Jesus” as they had been commanded to do.

Luke 2:22-24 And when the days of their purification according to the law of Moses were finished, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord 23 (just as it is written in the law of the Lord, Every firstborn male will be dedicated to the Lord) 24 and to offer a sacrifice (according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons).

- Mary and Joseph were faithful in following the Old Testament commands regarding ceremonial purification outlined in **Leviticus 12**.
 - According to **Leviticus 12**, when a male child was born, the mother was **unclean** for seven days (i.e., she could not touch sacred things or enter into a sacred space.)
 - To say the mother was “**unclean**” *does not mean* that she **sinned** in giving birth!
 - God instituted “**Clean**” and “**Unclean**” to teach that **God is holy** and that humans—no matter how hard we try—often become

“unclean” and thus need **God’s cleansing** to enjoy communion with God.

- According to **Leviticus 12**, when a male child was born, the mother was **unclean** for seven days. On the **8th day** the child was to be **circumcised**.
 - For the **first 7 days** of “**Uncleanness**” the mother’s uncleanness was considered **contagious**. Any person or object she touched would become unclean!
 - On the **8th day** she was **no longer contagious** and **could touch people and things** without making them **unclean**. So, she could *witness her baby’s circumcision in the presence of other people without making them unclean*.
 - After the **8th day**, the mother had **33 days** of **purification**.
 - **During these** days she would be **washing all the clothes** and **objects** in the house because anything she touched during her 7 days of “**uncleanness**” were considered unclean.

After a **TOTAL of 40 days** had passed since Jesus' birth, "they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord... 24 and to offer a sacrifice.

- Notice that **3x's** Luke points out that what they did was "according to the law of Moses or according to the law of Lord."
 - Mary and Joseph were FAITHFUL and it they're faithfulness was **PROVEN** by their **ACTIONS!**
- Based on their sacrifice, "a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons" they were POOR—According to **Lev. 12** this sacrifice was **acceptable** only if they "Did not have sufficient means for a sheep."
 - Despite their **poverty**, they **stayed faithful** to God!

FAITHFULNESS PAYS

How does Faithfulness pay?

FAITHFULNESS PAYS WITH BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF GOD'S WORK

Back to **Simeon**....

Luke 2:27-32 Guided by the Spirit, he entered the temple. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to perform for him what was customary under the law, 28

Simeon took him up in his arms, praised God, and said,
29 Now, Master, you can dismiss your servant in peace,
as you promised. 30 For my eyes have seen your
salvation. 31 You have prepared it in the presence of all
peoples—32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles and
glory to your people Israel.

Simeon spent his life **looking to God**; faithful to God.
Because he spent his life looking to God, Simeon saw
what Herod and the **religious leaders** did not—God
working.

- Simeon is at the temple where all the religious
leaders are located—this is the CENTER of Judaism.
- The place is **bustling** with **religious leaders** going
through their **daily prayer rituals, teaching the
Torah, and administering the sacrifices**; *YET, not
one religious leader knew what was happening
right before their eyes!*
 - WHY did they not realize what was
happening?
 - Could it be that they were engage in
the practice of religion but they were
not walking in communion with God?
 - Being **religious** and actually
walking in **relationship** with God
are two different things!

Faithfulness Pays!

- Because Simeon was “filled with the Holy Spirit” he saw what others did not see!
 - The baby from this Poor couple was God’s “Salvation”
 - “a light for revelation to the Gentiles *and* glory to your people Israel”
 - Reminder: God’s gift of salvation is for ALL people!
- Simeon not only was able to “see” the long-awaited Messiah, he actually got to hold the **baby Jesus** in his arms.

Faithfulness Pays!

- Simeon not only “saw” God’s salvation, but he got to **HOLD** Jesus in his arms!
 - God “Rewards those who diligently seek Him”

Luke 2:33-35 “His father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and told his mother Mary, “Indeed, this child is destined to cause the fall and rise of many in Israel and to be a sign that will be opposed— 35 and a sword will pierce your own soul—that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.”

Mary and Joseph were “amazed at what was being said about him”

- Think about the random things that have happened to them!
 - The Angel Gabriel unexpectedly appears to both of them
 - Shepherds show up on the night Jesus is born to adore the child
 - Now, a man named Simeon approaches them and asks to hold the baby and then he gives this prophecy about Jesus.

Until Simeon, Mary knew that her son

- “will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David. 33 He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and his kingdom will have no end.”
(**Luke 1:32-33**)
- “the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God” (**Luke 1:35**)

Because of her and Joseph’s faithfulness, they are getting more understanding about God’s working—this time through a man named Simeon. Because Simeon was FAITHFULLY walking in communion with God, the Holy Spirit revealed to him, that Jesus would

- cause the fall and rise of many in Israel
- be a sign that will be opposed
- reveal the “thoughts of many hearts”
 - I believe the “many” are specifically the religious leaders!

One thing about understanding God’s working is that it prepares you for when God takes action!

- Simeon tells Mary that “a sword will pierce your own soul”
 - Notice he doesn’t tell that to Joseph!
 - WHEN did this happen to Mary? At the cross!

I think one of the things that **sustained Mary** as she watched her son be crucified was Simeon’s prophecy rang through her head—She knew that something TERRIBLE was going to happen to her son.

- While the crucifixion was a HORRIFIC day for Mary, she also found strength to carry through it knowing that God was in control and this was part of His play (although she did not understand HOW God’s plan was going to work out until after Jesus’ resurrection)

FAITHFULNESS PAYS

The world seems to be growing crazy AND I don't have any reason to believe that 2022 is going to be any better.

- We can cower in fear or take comfort that God's plan is being carried out.
 - That **doesn't mean** it will be **easy**; it **doesn't mean** we may not **suffer**, *but it means that we can rest assured God is in control.*

I'm afraid that you will see Jesus as a "Sign that will be opposed" more in 2022 than ever before.

- You will see the "Thoughts of many religious leaders" exposed as more and more relegate Jesus to as a "God among other equal gods."

WHAT Does Faithfulness to God Look Like?

Faithfulness to God is Proven by Actions & Attitude

As Simeon was speaking to Mary and Joseph another person (**Anna**) came up to them.

- She was like Simeon in that she was FAITHFUL to God

Luke 2:36-38 "There was also a prophetess, Anna, a daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was well along in years, having lived with her husband seven years

after her marriage, 37 and was a widow for eighty-four years. She did not leave the temple, serving God night and day with fasting and prayers. 38 At that very moment, she came up and began to thank God and to speak about him to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

Anna's Faithfulness: "serving God night and day with fasting and prayers."

- She had been doing this for years!

RESULT: Anna was recognized as a Prophetess!

- A prophet in the Bible is a person who proclaims God's Word and therefore speaks for God—a spokesman for God.
 - A prophetess was a spokeswoman for God.¹

God has used women to speak for Him throughout the Scriptures:

- **Miriam**, the sister of Aaron and Moses, who was a prophetess (Exodus 15:20).
- **Deborah** was another prophetess, and she was also the only woman that we know of to judge Israel (Judges 4:4).

¹ <https://www.gotquestions.org/prophetess-Bible.html>

- **Huldah**, who lived in Jerusalem during the reign of King Josiah (2 Kings 22:14; 2 Chronicles 34:22).
- An **unnamed prophetess** is mentioned in Isaiah 8:1–4.
- **Anna** was a prophetess
- **Four** more **prophetesses** are mentioned in Acts 21:9. The four virgin daughters of Philip the evangelist were known for their prophecies.

Faithfulness Pays!

We don't have anything to suggest that God had given her the same promise He had given to Simeon—that he would not see death until he had seen the Messiah—but **the moment Anna saw the baby and heard Simeon's words she knew she was looking at the Savior.**

For Anna, looking at the Savior meant:

- Breaking out in Thanksgiving to God
- Telling others about Jesus Christ and what He brings

There in the temple was Simeon, Anna, Mary, Joseph and apparently a **crowd** had gathered and they were all looking at the Savior. For the crowd, looking at Jesus was:

- Looking at the promised redemption of Israel

For **Mary** and **Joseph**, looking at the Savior meant:

- Amazement **Luke 2:33** “**And His father and mother were amazed at the things which were being said about Him.**”
 - Amazed at the *reaction* to their son
 - Amazed at what God had done—sent His Son and put Him in their care
 - Amazed at the *predicted future* about their son.

WE

It is safe to assume that **Simeon** died before Christ began His ministry.

It is safe to assume that **Anna** died before Christ began His ministry.

- For all we know this may have been the **only time Anna and Simeon** actually **saw** the Savior.

What about those of us who have never actually seen the Savior?

- The nativity scenes are nice, but they go into storage soon after the Christmas season ends.
- The choir cantatas and Christmas services are nice, but they come to an end at the end of the Christmas season.

After Jesus died on the cross for our sins and after His resurrection, one of His disciples was skeptical of those who said Jesus was no longer dead but alive.

- Jesus appeared to **Thomas**, the doubting disciple and Thomas believed that Jesus did indeed rise from the dead because Thomas was able to touch Him.
- Like Thomas, Simeon, Anna, Mary, and Joseph were able to touch Jesus, but we are not!

Yet, Jesus said this to Thomas in **John 20:29** “....**Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed.**” NASB95

- Those of us who have never seen Christ, but who are looking to Him are “**blessed.**”

What does it mean to be “**blessed**” when we believe on Jesus Christ by looking to Him? It means a life of:

- *Amazement* at what God is doing, has done and will do.
- *Peace* that God is in *control*
- *Peace* because God keeps His *promises*
- *Salvation*
- A life of Thanksgiving
- Telling others about Jesus Christ and what He brings

The way WE will experience those things is to be FAITHFUL to God!

YOU

PQ: Are you going to be faithful in your walk with God?