

April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2023  
Pinecrest Baptist Church  
p.m.

Sermon Title: Fair-Weather Faithfulness  
Sermon Text: (1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 3:1-5; Acts 14:21-23)

If there has been any common problem that has haunted me in the ministry, any one issue that has been a burr in my heart, these two issues are it.

1.) The revolving door of the church.

- as more people come in, inevitably others move out.

(not that they move on to other churches per se; but they come in, flame on, burn out, and fade into the background.)

- every church I know, every pastor I've ever met, every minister I've ever spoken to; always told me that this was the common experience of the church in our age.

(The ocean of "Used to Be's" is deep and wide, and gets deeper and wider.)

\*Note – BUT – that's not the worst issue.

2.) The Worst issue is the attitude and answer I get from people that, "Preacher, that's just the way that it is!"

- in so saying, they are saying:
  - #1 – You can't change it.
  - #2 – We won't try
  - #3 – Get real and go on!

In so doing, every attitude every answer every heart that thinks that way is forgetting one thing:

The entire work of the ministry is to *"change the way things are!"*

- To accept the revolving door, is to give up on the Ministry!

The Entirety of Ephesians chapter 4 is a chapter explaining to us that our ministry is never to accept, the cooling off, wondering around, deflated, and distracted Christians – Our ministry IS to help keep their spiritual fire burning.

Ephesians 4:11-16 – "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and

compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”

Furthermore, the Apostle Paul dealt with this issue concerning the church at Thessalonica.

In 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 2:14, He reminded them that they had become **“Followers of the churches of God.”**

In chapter 3, He told them of His worries – 3:1-5 **“Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone;**

**2 And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith:**

**3 That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto.**

**4 For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know.**

**5 For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain.”**

In the first 5 verses of 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 3, Paul wrote about three things that caused him concern as to whether or not the Thessalonians would cease to be faithful.

His concern was whether or not they would continue faithfully in the presence of these things.

~ **Afflictions** - It is the word for “troubles” and or “anguish” that comes from pressure.

- the fact of the word in and of itself speaks of being in distressed or under a feeling of oppression.

~ **Tribulations** - This word is the cousin of the word for afflictions.

- it speaks of troubles that are intentionally caused by someone else.
- this is deliberate persecution

~ **Temptations** - Tempted you –

- to scrutinize, to test, or to entice.

\*Note – This is when the devil will make you choose between the desires of the flesh, and the revelation of God’s Word, and conviction of God’s Spirit.

\*Note – This is when the devil will put you in a spot to choose between what you do want, and what you know you should want.

- It is an effort to appeal to the worst in you to bring out the flesh in you.

\*Note – Now all of that being said, Paul said I am worried that any of these things will prove that your faith is not what it should be.

- When someone lets afflictions turn their heart

- When someone lets persecutions turn their heart
- When someone lets the will of their flesh turn their heart

- those things are a thermometer that says the fire in your faith is going out, and the strength of your commitment is weakening.

\*Note – Here is why when people cool off we cannot just say, “That’s just the way things are!”

- The way things are, is what we are trying to change, and the things that Paul was concerned about.

Remember this:

- “The way things are” is what men are Under their own influence.
- The Way things are, is the way men behave, believe, and function, were there no Christ!

Being a Follower of the Churches of God, is the way things should be! – Not being a follower of the churches of God is the way things are!

Now all of that being said, we turn to Acts 14:21-23 look at the problem of Fair-Weather Faithfulness, and learn some things about it.

3 Things to notice about the Problem of Fair-Weather Faithfulness.

### I. It is a Cause Worthy of Concern

\*Note – The first thing that we need to notice is the fact that this was no small issue for the Apostle Paul. The integrity of a believer’s loyalty to the Lord and His church was a constant concern of the Apostle.

### A. It is Worthy of Risk

1.) “And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many they returned again to Lystra . . .”

a.) When Paul finished preaching at Derbe, he turned around and went to Lystra.

(1.) They had just stoned him in verse 19 and now he was afraid that his stoning might scare the loyalty right out of them.

\*Note – He was worried his troubles might cause those people to deem Christianity not worth the risk. – And in going back, he taught us that just the question of their loyalty was worth the risk.

- Paul’s heart for those people was the same for all the people that he ministered to; He wanted them gathered in, to never be fading out.

- He wanted them Saved yes. He wanted them Saved and Loyal to the Lord. He wanted them saved, loyal to the Lord, and loyal to the churches that he had established.

### B. It Saturates the Scriptures

\*Note – This is not merely the example we see in Paul it is a statute that saturates the scriptures.

1.) 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 14:12 – “**Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual**

gifts, seek ye that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.”

2.) Hebrews 3:13 – “Exhort one another daily, while it is called today lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.”

3.) John 8:31 – “If ye continue in my word, then are ye My disciples.”

4.) Hebrews 10:25 – “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another and so much the more as you see the day approaching.”

5.) Paul told pastor Timothy in 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 4:13 – ‘Till I come give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.”

\*Note – Just because some seed falls by the wayside, no saint is to be satisfied with wayside walkers.

\*Note – Paul’s attitude was always plain and simple

1 Corinthians 9:22 “To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.”

- I give all to gain some. – It wasn’t necessarily about how many gained, but how much he gave, and how concerned he lived.

## II. It is a Labor Worthy of Love

\*note – There is no greater help for a sliding saint, than to help strengthen their soul.

### A. The Strengthening of the Soul

1.) What did Paul do at Lystra? He

“strengthened the souls.”

a.) To reestablish and make certain!

\*Note – Certainty, and confidence are catchy! – There is nothing more I can do for someone else than to give them my own certainty, my own security.

2.) When Paul went back to those towns, his first goal was to make sure, they were sure.

- not that they were saved, but that they were STRONG.

\*Note – It is not an attitude of the scripture or the Spirit to say, “Well at least they’re saved.”

Remember this about believers with weak faith and weak loyalty . . .

~ They are a detriment to themselves. – To know to do good and doeth it not, to them it is sin . . . and when someone gets content in sin, they are in danger of the Lord’s hand.

~ They are a detriment to the ministry . . . they themselves become stumbling blocks for those outside of the kingdom of God.

~ They become contagious to those around them.

*(Yes – Fire will melt ice, but the water may put out the fire.)*

\*Note – Weak willed, fair-weather believers, are not something saints should sigh about, they are souls saints should be concerned about.

\*Note – Jesus said to the people of the church at Laodoea, “I am about to vomit because of you.” – it was no small thing!

Strengthening Souls is a Labor worthy of Love

### ***B. The Fostering of the Faith***

1.) Exhorting them to Continue in the Faith

a.) “the faith” throughout scripture is considered the body of revealed truth; the body of revealed doctrine.

\*Note – This is our great commission ministry!

b.) To spur one another on to faithfulness and loyalty, and learning, and growing, and knowing.  
(trusting the Lord)

III. It is a Message Worthy of the Ministry

### ***A. Foul Weather Faith is Necessary Faith.***

1.) “We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.” – vs 22

\*Note – Here is the goal

- To Live under the authority of God

- Getting there requires that we pass through the gates of trouble, turmoil, and temptation! - You will not live under God’s authority until, you have passed the test of dilemmas and difficulties that we face in this world.

Why do people cool off?

- Demas loved this present world – and left Paul

- Disciples left Jesus because His doctrine was hard

- Some of the seeds were choked by the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches.

- Those who will live under the authority of God will be the ones who . . .

Choose obedience – over distraction

Choose loyalty – in the middle of difficulty

Choose Jesus – in the face of ridicule

Fair Weather Faithfulness is a Problem – and when we see it in others, we should never give up! Never concede, never let it go!

While attending a university in London, Mahatma Gandhi became almost convinced that the Christian religion was the one true, supernatural religion in the world. Upon graduation, and still seeking evidence that would make him a committed Christian, young Gandhi accepted employment in East Africa and for seven months lived in the home of a family who were members of an evangelical Christian church. As soon as he discovered that fact he decided that here would be the place to find the evidence he sought.

But as the months passed and he saw the casualness of their attitude toward the cause of God, heard them complain when they were called upon to make sacrifice for the kingdom of God and sensed their general religious apathy, Gandhi’s interest turned to disappointment. He said in his heart, “No, it is not the one true, supernatural religion I had hoped to find. A good religion, but just one more of the many religions in the world.”