



## Church of God Ministries

Spanish Fort, Alabama

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### **What Does it Take to Remain Faithful?**

Warm hellos friends, brethren, co-workers, spiritual family, and scattered children of God, from our offices here on the Gulf Coast. My wife and I pray and hope this finds you all doing well, and that again your week has been blessed.

Here in the U.S. we are just about to begin summer. This year, the June solstice occurs on Sunday, June 20, marking the start of summer in the Northern Hemisphere. Several parts of the U.S. have already been under a drought with above normal temperatures. It's been very hot even here in Alabama, which reminds me of when we've been in Monteria or Cartagena Colombia. This drought is going to affect the fall harvest in a number of areas. One of the regular news items are the above normal temperatures being experienced in many states. One of the things I learned growing up in Nebraska was that it takes endurance and perseverance to be a farmer and deal with the various adversities of weather, insects and fluctuating markets.

Some of you either farm, or have done so, and understand the struggles when it comes to depending on adequate water, good soil, and sunshine. Most farmers know they must faithfully keep working to take care of that which supplies their needs.

So let's ask the question, what does it take to remain faithful?

I was reflecting recently, that in 2013, the church area I grew up in as a child celebrated its 50th anniversary of being a congregation. The congregation held its first official meetings and Bible Studies in the summer of 1963 with official founding of the Omaha congregation on October 17, 1964 as part of the *Radio Church of God*. There are a number of pioneer members who are still part of the Omaha, NE church of God and holding on to the basic truths. Many of the original members have died and are resting in the grave. However, many others have left the body of believers and abandoned the basic Bible truths that identify the true church. It's sobering, but sad.

What does it take then, to go a step further, to remain faithful to Christ and His Father and hold to God's way of life for mankind?

First, it takes an investment of time, prayer and commitment to make a successful beginning on which to build. In Luke 14 Jesus made some important statements about this. "*If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and*

*his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.*" (Luke 14:26-27) Jesus was using hyperbole to make the point about establishing right priorities. One must make being a disciple of Christ above other relationships. He was not telling us to neglect our relationships with family and friends, but to not let them stand in the way of following God and practicing the way of life He reveals.

Then Jesus goes on to admonish a disciple to count the cost and to realize the kind of investment God requires of one who would respond to becoming a lifelong disciple. "*So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.*" (Luke 14:33) The priority is "*But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness . . .*" (Matthew 6:33) Understanding what that Kingdom is must be paramount. Seeking God first is a tall order but we must make the determination to apply this mandate!

We must be prepared to endure and to stay on the journey to the kingdom to the end. In spite of lawlessness, deception and betrayal we must endure! Jesus warned of the challenges at the end of the age. "*And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.*" (Matthew 24:10-13)

The apostle Paul warned Timothy about challenges in his day and these same dynamics have continued down through the ages of the church. "*Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.*" (2 Timothy 3:12-15)

The church and its members are always in the figurative "cross hairs" of the Adversary, Satan the Devil. He works through human instruments to foment deception, animosity and confusion. Paul points out the importance of knowing the Scriptures and applying them. We are admonished to use Godly wisdom with their application. They reveal God's instructions and how to respond to our calling and prepare for the Kingdom of God. We must be on guard to protect the basic truths we have been given and rightly use God's precious Word. "*Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*" (2 Timothy 2:15) We must be committed to a lifetime of overcoming the three "S's"- Satan, this world (Society) and our human nature (Self). This is referred to 7 times in the messages to the churches in Revelation 2-3.

Let us determine to overcome, endure, and remain faithful to the end!

As we enter His Sabbath, reflect, pray and meditate on these thoughts with me will you?

Arms up friends! Our prayers and thoughts are with you daily. Please do pray for us as well.

**-Scott Hoefker**

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