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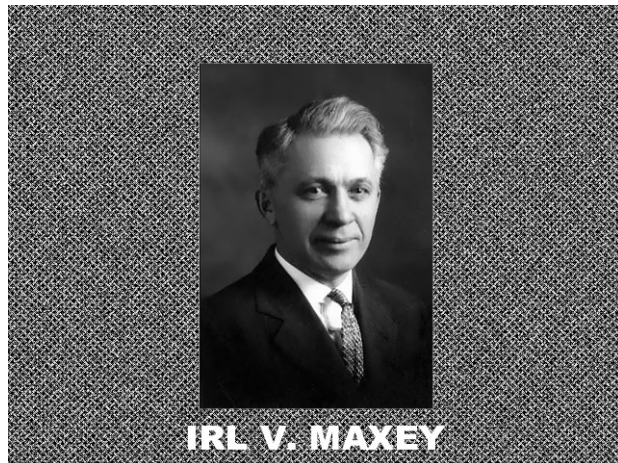
**BE THOU FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH
A Sermon By Irl V. Maxey**

**Digitized and Edited
By Duane V. Maxey**

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INTRODUCTION TO THIS FILE

This sermon was written in Alicel, Oregon on November 7, 1914. I consider it to be one of the best of my father's sermons that I have read and digitized thus far. It is **MOVING!** and holds one's attention from start to finish. Along with his name, the date of writing and the place, papa noted: -- "Scripture 1 Tim. 4:12" and beneath, "Psalm 24." As I began work on this sermon, I pasted those passages above the text papa used. However, after completing the sermon, I think that these passages are not only redundant but also would distract from the poignancy of the message. Thus, I have removed them. Perhaps papa used them some way, at some time, when preaching this sermon, but in what way, I am not sure.

The title is papa's -- while it is I who have outlined the message with what I felt were appropriate subtitles. Again, I say: **IN MY OPINION, THIS IS ONE OF OUR FATHER'S BEST SERMONS** among those I was generously given by my brother, Gale E. Maxey of Boise, Idaho. I am sure that it will be a blessing to all of the saints of God who may read it while Jesus tarries. -- Duane V. Maxey, (Ahwatukee) Phoenix, Arizona, February 9, 2006.

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SERMON TEXT:

Revelation 2:10 -- "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

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INTRODUCTION TO THE SERMON

No one will doubt the extreme persecution that the early church fathers received at the hands of the Jewish zealots and the world. The hardest by far came from the Jewish zealots. The early church fathers were sawn asunder, crucified, and knifed with a sword, but John exhorts them to be faithful to the cause amid all these persecutions -- even till they were killed -- "unto death."

This passage is often misquoted, so I shall call attention to the fact that it is not **FAITHFULNESS UNTIL** death, but **FAITHFULNESS UNTO** death. The exhortation was: When cruel death faces you because you love Christ, still stay true to Him **UNTO** that death.

Unfaithfulness! Ah, how that word rings in our ears and sends a chill through our body which causes our soul to suffer. Oh, the suffering caused by somebody being unfaithful!

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01 -- BEING UNFAITHFUL IN BUSINESS

You borrowed some money in good faith and the money was rightly invested in that stone quarry under the hill. Your partners and yourself worked like two brothers. The profits were honestly made and safely tucked away in the safe -- two thousand and two hundred dollars. That night you lay down upon your pillow and said, Thank God, though the way has been hard we have made it at last! The very house seemed to be full of good cheer. What a great pride swelled in your breast as you thought: Monday the note is due, and we have the money.

Monday came, but to your dismay your partner does not turn up. You turn to the safe to find the money -- gone! Oh! the awfulness of this hour! The responsibility of the note faces you as a grim monster. The awful fact is before you: Your partner has been unfaithful. Oh! unfaithful!

Your family need and your responsibility now faces you. Deep despair settles upon you! Just a few short weeks and your business is gone, and your home. Now the dear wife has shouldered the load, and the cares plow furrows in your face and turn your hair gray. It takes the nervous force, whitens the hair, and dampens your vigor, to see your children hungry and half-fed! All because one man was unfaithful in business.

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02 -- BEING UNFAITHFUL IN MARRIAGE

Oh! what awful wrecks unfaithfulness has made upon the home life! You plucked a beautiful flower from yonder Christian home. Oh, I can see her beautiful face as she stood by your side before the minister. I hear you answer, "I WILL" to the minister's question: "Wilt thou have this woman to be thy wedded wife, to live together after God's ordinance in the holy state of matrimony? Wilt thou love her, honor and keep her, in sickness and in health, and forsaking all others keep thee only unto her as long as you both shall live?"

The days slip by, and you are away from home. Two children have blessed your home. This day, she longs to hear you even say you love her. Very little money you left to supply her needs, but Oh! worst of all -- last night you sat beside another woman and whispered words of love to her ears that you promised to say to your wife!

Unfaithfulness to Marriage Vows! Unfaithful to that dear heart! She is perishing in the desert of loneliness! -- perishing for your affection! -- while you waste your words on a wanton ear!

Oh! God look upon this scene! Can anything be more unbearable!?

But in the other case it holds true. You kissed your wife whom you loved so dearly, and tried in every way to nurture love in your marriage with her. But no sooner had your footsteps died away in the distance than another man crossed over your threshold, and your wife allowed that one to make overtures of love to her. While you worked away in the sweat-shop a stranger robbed your heart and home!

Oh! this is awful to think! What unfaithfulness in home life has caused to hearts and to their children! "Wandering Waifs" ending in drunkards' lives, "Reckless Ruths" ending in houses of prostitution -- are but a small part of the results of this unfaithfulness in home life. Sinners* and the cell, defamation and death -- are also but a small part of the results of unfaithfulness in the business world.

[In spite of repeated efforts, I was unable to discern with certainty the word that papa scrawled here. The word "Sinners" does not seem to fit well in his statement, but it looks as if that could be the word he used. What other word he might have meant here, if such be the case, escapes me. I will only add: -- Papa's handwriting is generally good enough that I have little difficulty making it out, especially from the context. This word is one of those exceptions.]

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03 -- BEING UNFAITHFUL TO GOD

Friends, the preceding is only a small part of unfaithfulness in God's eyes. No doubt a large percent of the unfaithfulness just mentioned is caused by not being true to God. But think of it! souls eternally lost, characters ruined, minds maimed, and the whole world launched into sin because one home was not faithful to God.*

[*I think papa may here be making reference to the home of Adam and Eve.]

You have a wide circle of friends and influence, and when you cease to be true to God you launched that whole circle of influence away from God. The sound of prayer and praise was heard in your home, and the Bible was honored, but today it is not so. You sit down to your table and never ask God to bless your food with thanks for the provisions. You never read the Bible. Your sons even curse God. Oh! how awful!

What is it to be faithful to God?

Surely it is not merely being faithful in church attendance, though that is good. You could come through storm and wind to every service but yet be unfaithful to God. You can even have your prayers and say Thanks for your food, and be unfaithful to God.

Now let me tell you, when you came to Jesus with the load of your sins and he graciously pardoned them, He placed your feet upon a solid rock, putting a new song in your mouth. You started your journey to heaven. The Lamp of Life was in your hand, and Jesus entrusted to you the secrets of a spiritual life, and he depended upon you to help others in the way and unto the way.

Now if you cease to help win others INTO this way, you are unfaithful. Also, if you are not helping others IN the way, you are not faithful. If your lamp has gone out and you have lost the secret, you are unfaithful.

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04 -- THE FAITHFULNESS OF CHRIST

Oh friends! What if Jesus had treated US that way? See that awful hour in the Garden of Gethsemane. Was He not faithful to our needs -- even though all around Him slept? Oh, my brother! though others sleep in the church, do be faithful to that Christ who loved you so much!

See Christ upon the cross. Was he not faithful to our needs? What would we be if He had been as unfaithful as we have been?

There is a story current that, during the great persecution at Rome, Peter started to leave and met Christ. He said, "Where are you going, Master?" Christ replied to Peter, "To Rome to be crucified again."*

[*I found this story online, as from "The Apocryphal Acts of Peter." Papa does not say that this is a true story. He merely used the story to illustrate the point.]

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05 -- EXAMPLES OF FAITHFULNESS

Oh yes, Christ is always faithful to us and to our needs. Should we not be willing to stay by Him, though it means death? Yes, Lord, we will be faithful unto death.*

[*And, papa was indeed "faithful" -- not "unto" death, for that was not required of him, but "until" death. He did not die a martyr, but he died a victorious

saint of God. And, I believe he would have been willing to die for Jesus, had that been required of him. His demise, though perhaps not painful, was brought about by the steady advancement of arterial sclerosis through at least the last six years of his life -- a condition which robbed him of his ability to preach, of his ability to guide and provide for our family, of his mental competence, and finally of his life -- but a condition which did not, could not, rob him of Heaven, where he shall forever be with the Lord he served long and faithfully here on this earth!]

I am thinking now of those faithful Swiss men who gave their lives for Louis, the Bourbon king. They stood guard till the last ones gave their lives. Above the Swiss city you will see a statue hewn out of the solid rock. It is a lion, to represent their strength, an arrow pierces his body, but one paw rests on the Bourbon Lily and the other on the Swiss shield. Above this is the motto: "To The Courage and Faithfulness of the Swiss."

We recall the faithfulness of Phillip, the wireless operator on the Titanic while in the very face of death. And, I believe it was off the coast of Africa that the steamer "Birkenhead" ran onto a rock. A company of soldiers was aboard. The captain ordered them to form a squad upon the upper deck and stay there. They obeyed, though it meant to drown in a body. The boats were lowered by the crew for all women and passengers and the crew, but the soldiers sank as a squad with the ship. They let others be saved, but obeyed -- even unto death.*

[*One web site says of this act of heroism: -- "On 26th February 1852, the bravery of the soldiers aboard the troopship HM Transport Birkenhead made history and set the precedent of 'Women and Children First' as naval protocol throughout the world."]

Oh, I tell you Jesus wants today men and women who will stay by Him under all conditions, who, though death stares them in the face, will move onward and upward with the cause of Christ's salvation for the world.

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06 -- THE POEM "EXCELSIOR" ILLUSTRATES FAITHFULNESS

Longfellow's poem "Excelsior"* illustrates this because the thought was taken from the sacrificing lives of the monks of the St. Bernard Pass Hospice.

[*My Webster's computer dictionary defines "Excelsior" as meaning: "Higher; always upward: used as a motto (as on the New York State seal)"]

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"EXCELSIOR"

By Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

The shades of night were falling fast,
As through an Alpine village passed
A youth, who bore, 'mid snow and ice,
A banner with the strange device,
Excelsior!

His brow was sad; his eye beneath,
Flashed like a falchion* from its sheath,
And like a silver clarion rung
The accents of that unknown tongue,
Excelsior!

In happy homes he saw the light
Of household fires gleam warm and bright;
Above, the spectral glaciers shone,
And from his lips escaped a groan,
Excelsior!

"Try not the Pass!" the old man said:
"Dark lowers the tempest overhead,
The roaring torrent is deep and wide!
And loud that clarion voice replied,
Excelsior!"

"Oh stay," the maiden said, "and rest
Thy weary head upon this breast!"
A tear stood in his bright blue eye,
But still he answered, with a sigh,
Excelsior!

"Beware the pine-tree's withered branch!
Beware the awful avalanche!"
This was the peasant's last Good-night,
A voice replied, far up the height,
Excelsior!

At break of day, as heavenward
The pious monks of Saint Bernard
Uttered the oft-repeated prayer,
A voice cried through the startled air,
Excelsior!

A traveler, by the faithful hound,
Half-buried in the snow was found,
Still grasping in his hand of ice

**That banner with the strange device,
Excelsior!**

**There in the twilight cold and gray,
Lifeless, but beautiful, he lay,
And from the sky, serene and far,
A voice fell, like a falling star,
Excelsior!**

***Falchion -- A short, broad sword with a convex cutting edge and a sharp point,
used in medieval times.**

*** * ***

**Oh yes, he who bare the banner stayed by his motto till death! What was
death to him?**

**"There in the twilight cold and gray,
Lifeless, but beautiful, he lay,
And from the sky, serene and far,
A voice fell, like a falling star,
Excelsior!"**

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07 -- THE CLOSING EXHORTATION

**Do you get the idea? He was faithful unto death, and though his life went out,
still his spirit went onward and upward as another poet* says:**

**"Or, if on joyful wing,
Cleaving the sky,
Sun, moon, and stars forgot,
Upward I fly--
Still, all my song shall be,
Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee."**

[*Sarah F. Adams]

**Glory to God! If you are faithful UNTO death and UNTIL death, God the Father,
through His Son, will crown your efforts with eternal life, and for all eternity you will
be near the Great White Throne -- near the Jasper Sea.**

Oh, be faithful, brethren! and sisters! and you will wear a crown!

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THE END OF THIS SERMON