

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS ... FAITHFULNESS

Selected Scripture

Introduction:

If we were to try to summarize the fruit of the Spirit in one word, I believe it would have to be “Christ-like.” A life characterized by these Christian graces and virtues is indeed a Christ-like life. Christ himself is our best example of each of these character qualities.

Love, joy, peace, patience (long-suffering), kindness, goodness... He is all of these. He is also ... faithful.

This morning we have come to the seventh of the nine qualities Paul lists under the fruit of the Spirit. It is faithfulness. Let’s take a moment to look at the word that is used.

- πιστις - pistis (noun) – faith, fidelity
- πιστος - pistos (adjective) – faithful
- πιστευω - pisteow (verb) – to believe
- πειθω - peitho (root) – persuaded, trust, assurance

The word that is used here is the noun form, which carries with it the idea of fidelity, being trustworthy, faithful. The KJV translates it simply as “faith” but the idea is not the faith that is exercised by believers, but the fidelity or faithfulness that is produced by the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer. In speaking of a slave’s responsibility to his master, Paul writes these words to Titus,

*“...not pilfering, but showing all good **faith**, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.” (Titus 2:10 ESV)*

The word there is the same noun form that Paul uses in Gal. 5:22, but the NKJV translates it as “fidelity” – in other words, being faithful. Think of the phrase, “...bargain in good faith.” By that we mean being honest, reliable, dependable, and trustworthy in what is said.

So having seen the meaning of the word—faithfulness—let us look for the next few minutes at the faithfulness of God and then at what is expected of us in terms of faithfulness or fidelity.

The Faithfulness of God

The word faithful perfectly describes the trustworthy nature of God. He is available, accessible, and always dependable. The truth is, our very life, both present and future, depends on the reliability and faithfulness of God to keep and honor His promises.

“He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.” (1 Thess. 5:24 ESV)

We sing the hymn, “Great is Thy Faithfulness.” That faithfulness is seen in everything God does. It is seen in nature, in the consistency of the seasons. It is demonstrated in the person of the Son, Jesus Christ.

A. Christ is faithful in His character...

The apostle John, in the book of Revelation, describes the visions he sees of the future. In the second half of chapter 19 he records the vision he is given of the coming of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, to make war against all the forces of evil in the great final battle. He records these words, found in Rev. 19:11-13 – read them.

The description is of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The idea of faithfulness and dependability is a part of His very nature. So much so that His name is “Faithful and true.” He is dependable and honest in his character.

B. Christ is faithful in his witness...

Read Revelation 1:4-5 – Jesus Christ is the faithful witness. What does it mean to be a faithful witness? A faithful witness is one who tells the truth. It means that his testimony is true, reliable. You can count on what he says. In any court case, the authorities are looking for faithful witnesses, people who can be counted on to speak the truth.

Jesus Christ is such a witness. What He says is reliable and true. In fact, I can stake my life on his promises.

→ Illustration: Two young girls were talking and one of them said she had ten dimes. The other girl looked in her hand and said, “But you only have five dimes.” The first girl replied, “I have five here and my father told me he would give me five more tonight. So I have ten dimes.” She knew that her father’s word was good and that his promise was as good as done.

Jesus Christ is even more faithful than that in his witness...

C. Christ is faithful in His ministry...

The writer to the Hebrews describes for us the ministry of Jesus Christ as a merciful and faithful high priest. Listen to these words – read Heb. 2:17-3:2.

As our high priest, we can depend on Him to bring us into the presence of God. That never changes – He is faithful and dependable. And his ministry on earth was faithful to the very end (3:2). In his prayer in the garden, just before his arrest and crucifixion, Jesus said to his heavenly Father, “I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.”

His Father could count on Him. And we can count on Him to faithfully carry out his ministry – Philippians 1:6 – “...he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.”

Now, what about us? What is expected of us?

Faithfulness in Human Relationships

A. God’s expectations regarding faithfulness...

Just a few areas where the Word calls us to fidelity in the Christian life:

1. Faithfulness in stewardship – God has given us resources, that he expects us to use carefully, with faithfulness and fidelity.
“Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy (faithful).” (1 Corinthians 4:2 ESV)
Matthew 25:14-30 – the parable of the talents. Here is what the master said to the servant who invested his resources wisely:
“...Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.” (Matthew 25:21 ESV)
God expects us to be faithful stewards of the resources He has entrusted to our care.
2. Faithfulness in marriage – In 1 Timothy Paul speaks to the marriage relationship, particularly when it comes to the roles of elders and deacons in the church. But I don’t think we can expect it to be any different for anyone else. He says of deacons:
“Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. Let deacons each be the husband of

one wife, managing their children and their own households well.” (1 Timothy 3:11-12 ESV)

Faithfulness in the marriage relationship—fidelity, trust. A partner who cannot be trusted will destroy a marriage.

3. Faithfulness in service, even to death if necessary – in the book of Revelation Jesus sends a message to the churches of Asia Minor. To the church in Smyrna he gave this word:
“Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.” (Revelation 2:10 ESV)
The reference here, because of the context, could very well refer to martyrdom—remaining faithful to Jesus Christ in faith and service, even if it costs their life.
But I believe that it is equally correct to say simply that we are to be faithful until death, whenever and however that comes. God expects us to be faithful in service, so long as we are in this life.

Those are just a few expectations regarding faithfulness. But we need to look for a moment at:

B. The Problem of Human Frailty...

The problem we have is that mankind is, by very nature, unfaithful. We tend to be fickle in our commitment and fidelity. We tend not to be naturally faithful.

Jer. 17:9 – “The heart is deceitful above all things...”

Romans 1:28-32 probes the depths of man’s sin-darkened heart and finds that it is untrustworthy – read it. Verse 31 – faithless – untrustworthy.

No one is instinctively faithful. We are, by nature, unfaithful. Even as believers, we can sometimes lose interest, get distracted, lose faith. We can be tempted to give up, to quit.

But we are called to faithfulness – it is a fruit of the Spirit. It is only as we surrender to the Spirit of God that we see the kind of faithfulness and fidelity that God desires in our life.

C. The Fruit of Faithfulness...

Well what are the results of faithfulness? When we open up to the Holy Spirit and he begins to produce His fruit in us, how does it

show in our lives? Certainly it means that I will be dependable, trustworthy, and reliable. But let me suggest a few practical ways that will be demonstrated.

- I complete my assignments, done properly and on time...
- I keep my promises...
- I pay my bills...
- I keep my appointments, on time...
- I do my work – that which is expected of me, and more...

It means that I will be a better teacher, parent, employer, employee, committee member, because I am faithful, reliable, dependable. But this kind of goal, true faithfulness will never be accomplished by our own human efforts. It goes against the grain of human nature. It can only occur as it is implanted in us by the Spirit of God. We can be dependable people—there are many such people in our world—but true faithfulness is a fruit of the Spirit. As we crucify the flesh and walk in the Spirit, he will produce the fruit of faithfulness in us.

Conclusion:

Well, God is faithful. Faithfulness means reliability, dependability. It means you know that He will never let you down. He is always there.

Have you ever put your bank card in the ATM, entered your PIN and seen a message something like, “Sorry, transaction cannot be completed at this time. Out of service.” You never have to worry about that when you are seeking God. God is never out of service. He is faithful.

And as we walk with Him and grow in Him and walk in step with the Spirit, He will make us faithful too.