

7. The Fruit of Faithfulness

2 Timothy 4:6-8 & Galatians 5:22

Intro

Today we are going to continue our series of messages with the seventh of the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit—Faithfulness.

Throughout this series on the fruit of the Spirit, I have defined and described in practical terms each fruit, but let me say that each fruit is an expression of love. Love is the all encompassing fruit. The fruit of the Spirit begins and ends with love.

- Joy is love rejoicing.
- Patience is love enduring.
- Peace is love trusting - resting.
- Kindness is love serving.
- Goodness is love extending.
- Faithfulness is love proving.
- Gentleness is love touching.
- Self-control is love restraining.

Faithfulness is love proving. Faithfulness is love that hangs on to the end; it's love that won't quit. Faithfulness is not just a one-time display; faithfulness proves itself over and over again. Faithfulness is a lifestyle of consistent dependability; it's the superglue of the heart that won't let go.

Hallmark has a card that fits the mood of our time by saying, "*I can't promise you forever, but I can promise you today.*" That's about as deep a commitment as some are willing to make. That's not true faithfulness.

In our society faithfulness and commitment to anything is hard to find. It is hard to find people willing to be faithful in their relationships, to their families, to their responsibilities and even to their faith. It seems that whenever things get a little difficult or when things don't go the way one wants them to go the best response they can come up with is giving up or quitting.

We are called to persevere and be faithful regardless of our circumstances. We have a duty and an obligation to be faithful to the end. However, there are many things, which can cause us to get off track, but we need to commit ourselves to being faithful.

God is Faithful

But in contrast to that God exhibits and honours faithfulness.

Psalm 100:5 says, "*The Lord is good and His love endures forever; His faithfulness continues through all generations.*"

Every time you see a rainbow, remember that God is faithful - He keeps His promises. Every time you pick up a Bible, remember that He said, "*Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away*" (Matthew 24:35).

Every time you gather to worship with brothers and sisters in Christ, remember that He said, "*Where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them*" (Matthew 18:20).

Jesus is described as faithful. In Hebrews 3:1-2 we read, "*Therefore, holy brothers and sisters, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, whom we acknowledge as our apostle and high priest. He was faithful to the one who appointed him.*"

The faithfulness of Jesus was in the fact that He fulfilled what He was called to do - to die for our sins - and He continues to be faithful to His call - to pray and intercede for us.

Defining Faithfulness

The dictionary defines “faithfulness” as: “To follow through with a commitment regardless of difficulty.” That’s a good definition.

The fruit of the Spirit – Faithfulness (Greek: *Pistis*) means “trustworthiness, loyalty, or steadfastness.

But let me make it easier to remember, “*Faithfulness is love hanging on.*” It is love saying, “*I will not quit. There may be misunderstandings, there may be disappointments, there may be discouragements, but I will not quit.*” Faithfulness is love hanging on.

Example: If a husband says, “I really love my wife,” and then he goes out and has an affair, you may call him a liar. You may call him a cheat. But most of all, you will say, “He is unfaithful.” Because that is what he has been. And no matter how strong his arguments may be, no matter how loudly he proclaims his love for his wife, you will not believe him because his unfaithfulness negates his proclamation of love.

Example: And if someone says, “I really love the Lord,” or “I really love the church,” and then is unfaithful, then it’s hard to believe that they really do love the Lord. Because, you see, faithfulness and love always go hand in hand. Faithfulness is love hanging on. If you are faithful you never give up.

That reminds me of the story of George Muller who began praying for 5 of his friends. He prayed 5 years before the first one was converted; for the next one he prayed 10 years; for the third one 25 years; for the fourth nearly 50 years. The last one was converted after 52 years, at George Muller’s funeral. George Muller was faithful, even unto death.

The Extent of Faithfulness

Here are some Scriptures that encourage and challenge us to be faithful:

Romans 12:12 says we are to be faithful in prayer.

1 Corinthians 4:1-2 challenges us to be faithful in stewardship.

Ephesians 6:21 talks about being faithful in service.

Colossians 1:7 speaks of being faithful in ministry.

1 Timothy 5:9 speaks of being faithful in our marriage.

3 John 3 says we are to be faithful in the truth.

Revelation 13:10 speaks of faithfulness even in times of persecution.

Revelation 2:10 says we are to be faithful unto death and then we’ll receive the crown of life.

Revelation 2:15 speaks of being faithful in witnessing.

Through these Scriptures we see that faithfulness extends into every facet of our lives.

So there are certain things that we need to be careful about. We need to realize that temptations will come. Just as surely as Jesus was tempted to be unfaithful, we will be tempted to be unfaithful - in our marriage, in our relationship with the Lord, and in the church. That’s what Satan does. He will tempt us to be unfaithful. We must be on our guard and remain faithful to the end.

Faithful Men Greatly Needed

In Psalm 12:1-2, David prayed, “*Help, LORD, for no one is faithful anymore; those who are loyal have vanished from the human race.*”

In Proverbs 20:6 God's Word also asked, "*Many claim to have unfailing love, but a faithful person who can find?*"

When we talk about the fruit of faithfulness, then, we realize that this is no ordinary fruit. Indeed, it is a rare fruit that can only be produced by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Faithfulness of Adoniram Judson

Our Baptist heritage in missions traces back to Adoniram Judson who lived from 1788-1850. Years ago I read his biography. Judson lived the suffering life of a true faithful disciple of Christ. He was one of the first to bring the Christian message to the Burma (now known as Myanmar). When war broke out with England, the Burmese arrested Judson because being light-skinned and English-speaking, he looked and talked like the enemy.

He was force-marched barefoot for eight miles to prison where each night the guards passed a bamboo pole between his heavily shackled legs and hoisted the lower part of his body high off the ground. Blood rushed to his head, preventing sleep and causing fierce cramps in his shoulders and back. Clouds of mosquitoes feasted on the raw flesh of his feet and legs. Treatment like this went on for almost two years, and Judson managed to endure only because his devoted wife brought him food each day and pled with the guards for better treatment.

A few months after his release, Judson's wife, weakened by smallpox, died of fever, and shortly after that their baby daughter also died. Judson nearly had a breakdown. He would kneel by his wife's grave for hours each day, regardless of weather. He built a one-room hut in the jungle, morosely dug his own grave in case it might prove necessary, and worked in solitude on a translation of the Bible in the Burmese language.

Only a handful of Burmese had shown any interest in the Christian message. Yet he stayed on, 34 years in all, and because of his faithfulness more than 1 million Burmese Christians today trace their spiritual roots to Adoniram Judson. The dictionary he compiled, about 200 years old, remains the official dictionary of Myanmar (Formerly Burma).

Conclusion

Being faithful is a conscious choice that we make. Each day we make decisions about what we are going to do and how we are going to live our lives. We make choices of either giving into temptations that we face or standing strong against those temptations.

We must make conscious choices in order to remain faithful though. We can see those choices naturally displayed in the life of the Apostle Paul near the end of His life. Paul wrote many of his letters that we have in our Bibles while he was in prison.

The last known thing Paul ever wrote was his second letter to his young disciple, Timothy. As Paul wrote this letter he was in prison awaiting his execution, he knew without a doubt that his time on this Earth was running out, and we read of this faith filled encouragement and faithfulness:

In 2 Timothy 4:6-8, Paul writes, "*For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.*"

The faithfulness, which we are called to, is faithfulness to the Lord in every aspect of life. This also means we need to be committed to the church and its mission. We need to be committed and faithful in the way we live our lives even outside of the church.