

The Fruit of the Spirit – Faithfulness (Galatians 5:22-23)

Let this MIND be in you! - Philippians 2:5-11

INTRODUCTION

1. In discussing "the fruit of the Spirit", the nine graces listed in Ga 5:22-23 are often divided into three groups:

- a. The first group contains those graces which turns one's thought toward God...
 - 1) Love
 - 2) Joy
 - 3) Peace
- b. The second group contains those graces that direct our attention to our fellow man...
 - 4) Longsuffering
 - 5) Kindness
 - 6) Goodness
- c. The third group of graces refers more directly to oneself...
 - 7) Faithfulness
 - 8) Gentleness (meekness)
 - 9) Self-control

2. Having examined those graces in the first and second group (love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness), we now come to the first one in the third group...

3. The seventh quality which Paul lists as the fruit of the Spirit is "faithfulness"...

- a. The Greek word is pistis {pis'-tis}
 - b. In the NT, it is often used of a conviction or belief in respect to God and Christ
 - c. But it also is used to describe the quality of "fidelity, faithfulness"
 - 1) "the character of one who can be relied on..." (THAYER)
 - 2) "faithful, to be trusted, reliable..." (VINE)
 - d. William Barclay calls it "the virtue of reliability"
4. This virtue, unfortunately, is not too common...
- a. While many may claim it, the wise man declared it hard to find - Pr 20:6
 - b. The Psalmist decried the lack of "faithfulness" in his day, describing a condition that sounds much like our situation today - Ps 12:1-2
- Yet, faithfulness is essential for those who would receive the crown of life - Re 2:10

5. To encourage the development of this virtue in our lives, in this study we shall...

- a. Look to Jesus and God as examples of faithfulness
- b. Suggest a few areas in which we need greater faithfulness

[Anyone who is led by the Spirit of God, will certainly be motivated to produce the virtue of faithfulness in their own lives as they contemplate...]

I. THE FAITHFULNESS OF JESUS AND GOD

A. THE FAITHFULNESS OF JESUS...

1. Jesus was faithful in fulfilling His role as the Son of God
 - a. Just as Moses was faithful as a servant - He 3:1-2
 - b. Jesus was faithful in carrying out the work given Him - Jn 4:34; 5:30; 6:38; 8:29
 2. He is also faithful in the role of being our high priest - He 2:17-18
 - a. Faithful, because He understands our weaknesses - cf. He 4:14-15
 - b. Faithful, because He richly supplies us with grace and mercy - cf. He 4:16
- Isn't it wonderful to have a Savior upon Whom we can rely?

B. THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD...

1. God has always been known as a God of faithfulness - Deu 7:9
 2. And toward those who are His children, He is faithful (reliable, trustworthy)...
 - a. Not to allow us to be tempted beyond that we are able to bear - 1 Co 10:13
 - b. To protect us from the evil one - 2 Th 3:3
 - c. To complete His work of salvation in us - 1 Th 5:23-24
- Isn't it wonderful to know that God can be trusted in these and many other ways?

[But to fully benefit from the faithfulness of Jesus and God, we must be faithful as well! - cf. Re 2:10-11,25-26; 3:11-12. With that in mind, consider some...]

II. AREAS IN WHICH WE NEED GREATER FAITHFULNESS

A. WE NEED TO BE MORE FAITHFUL TO GOD AND CHRIST...

1. In the way we use our "talents" (abilities and opportunities) - cf. Mt 25:21
2. Too often, people are like the one talent man, burying their talent; this greatly displeases the Lord - cf. Mt 25:24-26
 - a. Like Moses at the burning bush, they make excuses
 - b. But for every excuse man can devise, God can provide a way for us to be faithful!
3. We begin by being faithful in small things...
 - a. As indicated in Jesus' comments in Lk 16:10
 - b. If we can't be counted upon for the small things, how can we be expected to be considered reliable when the going gets tough? - cf. Jer 12:5

B. WE NEED TO BE FAITHFUL TO THE CHURCH...

1. The family of God always has need of people who are truly faithful (i.e., reliable, trustworthy, loyal)
2. Lack of faithfulness to God's people can be seen in several ways:
 - a. Forsaking the assembling of ourselves together - He 10:24-25
 - b. Lack of participation in the family life of the church
 - 1) Neglecting opportunities to learn and grow together in God's Word
 - 2) Leaving it to others to carry out the work of the church
 - 3) Not concerned about the welfare of your brothers and sisters in Christ
 - c. We cannot take such unfaithfulness lightly!

- 1) We will be of little value to those who need us - cf. Pr 25:19
- 2) We actually undermine the work of the Lord! - cf. Pr 18:9; Mt 12:30
3. Do you need to have more faithfulness to the church?
 - a. Ask yourself: "If everyone were as faithful as I am, what kind of church would this be?"
 - 1) Would anyone be here, except for Sunday morning worship?
 - 2) Would there be any teachers for our children's classes?
 - 3) Would the church be growing, both numerically and spiritually?
 - 4) Would the church even exist?
 - b. Consider this example of "faithfulness" to the church...

Grandma Taw Bow, a resident of Thailand, does not impress strangers. She is small of stature, bent with age, her hands and fingers gnarled with arthritis. She often stands quietly to one side. Her name translated into English means "Always." Despite her unimpressive physical appearance, Grandma Always has inspired her missionary friends and Thai Christians by her faithfulness. A widow and over ninety years of age, she lives as a servant in a Thai home. Every Sunday she walks two miles to church. Out of her income of five cents a day, she regularly gives one day's wages to the Lord every week. When her missionary friends drive her home from church services, she gets out, and bows her head in an audible prayer for the missionaries and the work of Christ in Thailand. One missionary says, "The thought of Grandma Always' faithfulness humbles and deepens us." (A Dictionary Of Christian Illustrations, p. 121)

-- What the church needs are more "Grandma Always", both young and old!

C. WE NEED TO BE MORE FAITHFUL TO OUR FAMILIES...

1. Fathers need to be faithful in fulfilling their spiritual roles - cf. Ep 6:4
 2. Mothers need to be faithful in fulfilling their family responsibilities - Ti 2:3-5
 3. Of course, husbands and wives need to be faithful to one another in their respective duties - Ep 5:22-33
 4. Children, you also have a need to be faithful - cf. Ep 6:1-3
- Do not our families deserve faithful spouses, parents and children?

D. FINALLY, WE NEED TO BE MORE FAITHFUL TO OURSELVES...

1. Shakespeare once described a man: "He wears his faith as the fashion of his hat."
 - a. Too often, some Christians are like that
 - b. If it is fashionable to be a faithful Christian, then they are; if not, then they are not
2. Those who are this way are only committing spiritual suicide and manslaughter
 - a. That is, they are harming themselves
 - b. And they are harming those who cannot rely upon them
3. But for those who are faithful to themselves as well as to God...
 - a. Will be preserved by the Lord: "for the Lord preserves the faithful" - Ps 31:23
 - b. And blessed by the Lord: "A faithful man will abound with blessings..." - Pr 28:20

-- Do we not owe it to ourselves to be faithful?

CONCLUSION

1. William Barclay ended his examination of this word in this way:
 - a. "Pistos is indeed a great word. It describes the man on whose faithful service we may rely, on whose loyalty we may depend, whose word we can unreservedly accept."
 - b. "It describes the man in whom there is the unswerving and inflexible fidelity of Jesus Christ, and the utter dependability of God."
2. Yes, the one who is being led by the Spirit of God, to produce the fruit of the Spirit...
 - a. Will follow in the footsteps of the God and Savior he serves
 - b. Those footsteps include the virtue of faithfulness, the virtue of reliability!

Will you not strive to be faithful, in your service to God, the church, your family, even to yourself?