

PP Root to Fruit! *Going Deep, Growing Up*

Part 9-Galatians 5:22, *Faithfulness*

3/3-4/2018

Doesn't it seem that nowadays many products are designed to fail after a certain point?

There is what is called *Planned obsolescence* where a product is engineered to have a limited life, so that it will generate re-purchasing

This is common in the publishing world, and you feel it painfully when buying college textbooks

The information really has not changed much, but its presentation has, forcing a new version

Did you know one of Thomas Edison's earliest light bulbs is still glowing...125 years later?

How long have the bulbs in your house been working?

Cell phones with built-in batteries, that cannot be changed unless you break your warranty

Clothing that doesn't hold together like it used to, ink cartridges with microchips and light sensors that disable printing before the ink is used

Reliability and dependability are coveted commodities that are in short supply!

Those two words can be fused together to form the virtue that we are going to look at today called '*faithfulness*'

Let's look understand what it is, how Jesus exemplified it, and how it can look in our lives

PP 1-'*faithfulness*' defined

***"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control"* Galatians 5:22**

There are none characteristics in the bowl of fruit Paul gives us

There are many more found in the bible, but Paul deliberately lists these, for the churches of Galatia were struggling, they were biting and devouring one another (**5:15**)

The nine can be put into 3 groups of 3, with the first group being virtues that the Spirit produces that shape our hearts toward God

The second are those that shape us toward others, while the final group chiefly impacts our hearts without ourselves

'faithfulness' leads the final group and it's is a slightly tricky word to really define for one main reason, it's used in a couple of different ways in the New Testament

In fact, Paul uses it some 20 times in a different way than faithfulness in the book of Galatians alone, which illustrates the care needed when studying deeply the Scriptures

Years ago, I was mentoring someone in preparing to preach, and he would look up a word in Strong's Greek or Hebrew dictionary, and then just list all the meanings in his sermon

It's not quite that easy, for context plays a role in determining which meaning the biblical writer had in mind

Have you ever heard of homonyms?

Those are English words that have the same spelling and pronunciation, but different meanings

'Crane' can be a bird, or large construction equipment, or movement of your neck to see

'Date' can be a piece of fruit, a calendar event, or a romantic evening with someone you love

'Type' is something you can do with a keyboard, or the label your blood gets when you donate

What determines the correct meaning is often the context

PP '*faithfulness*' is often translated as '*faith*', 20 times in this way in Galatians alone

By that definition it means the act of believing in someone or something
 But virtually all experts agree that listed in the company of kindness and goodness warrants a second meaning which is *'faithfulness'*

PP It's focus is on firmness, steadiness, and certainty

It's the same root that gives us the word 'amen', which means truthful

PP *'faithfulness'* is the character of one you can rely on, whose word is firm and trustworthy

It is the virtue of dependability, reliability, steadfast friendship and allegiance

It's rare in this world as Solomon complained, **PP** *"Many a man proclaims his own steadfast love, but a faithful man who can find?"* Proverbs 20:6

His father David commiserated over the same problem:

PP *"Save, O LORD, for the godly one is gone; for the faithful have vanished from among the children of man. Everyone utters lies to his neighbor; with flattering lips and a double heart they speak."* Psalm 12:1-2

Where are all the faithful, reliable, dependable, true to their Word people?

We begin by looking at the most faithful Person to ever live...Jesus

PP 2-The example of Jesus

Where would we be if it wasn't for the faithfulness of God?

It is one of His perfect attributes, and if you recall what we have been teaching through this series, it is the attributes, virtues of Jesus that the Holy Spirit is cultivating in us

He is transforming our hearts to live like Jesus!

Not only does God display faithfulness, but Jeremiah said, *"The steadfast love of the LORD*

PP *never ceases; His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness."* Lamentations 3:22-23

PP *"Christ is faithful over all God's house as a Son."* Hebrews 3:6

To really understand *'faithfulness'*, you need to see it as being utterly true to your word, and it's here that Jesus shines perfectly

Consider this incredible scriptural declaration:

PP *"For all the promises of God find their Yes in [Jesus]. That is why it is through Him that we utter our Amen to God for His glory."* 2 Corinthians 1:20

Jesus Christ was faithful to fulfill all the promises God made to His people

In October, 1940, presidential candidate Franklin Roosevelt promised America, *"I have said this before, but I shall say it again and again: Your boys are not going to be sent into any foreign wars."* But then came WW2

In October, 1964, candidate Lyndon Johnson promised, *"We are not about to send American boys nine or ten thousand miles away from home to do what Asian boys ought to be doing for themselves"* But then came the Vietnam War

But think on this...God has never made a promise He has not perfectly kept!

PP *"The LORD is faithful in all his words and kind in all his works."* Psalm 145:13

PP The entire Bible is a story of God's faithfulness

Yet it is this very belief that is under fierce attack in our day and age

Our denomination holds to the infallibility of God's Word which teaches that all of God's Word is true, trustworthy and reliable

Yet studies show that the majority of Christians today, especially as you trend younger, no longer believe the Bible is without error or fully trustworthy in its original manuscripts. The faithfulness Jesus perfectly lived began with utterly trusting the Words of His Father, holding to them completely all the days of His life.

PP John the Baptist said of Jesus, *“For He whom God has sent utters the words of God, for He gives the Spirit without measure.”* **John 3:34**

Faithfulness is a distinctly Christian virtue because it begins and ends with holding fast to the Words of God by the power of the Spirit. And from that foundation, it displays itself in utter trustworthiness, reliability.

PP *“I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.”*
John 17:4

After declaring His faithfulness to His Father, He said this:

PP *“While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.”* **John 17:12**

Jesus Christ is faithful to God, His Father, and proves His total reliability and trustworthiness to all Who place their trust and hope in Him.

PP 3-How we can live out faithfulness

A faithful friend is an oasis in this world’s desert of deceitful relationships. And when God gives you a faithful friend, or spouse, or child, or parent, that person is treasured most dearly.

PP *Faithful Christians are utterly dependable

PP *“Who may worship in your sanctuary, LORD? Who may enter your presence on your holy hill? Those who lead blameless lives and do what is right, speaking the truth from sincere hearts. Those who refuse to gossip or harm their neighbors or speak evil of their friends. Those who despise flagrant sinners, and honor the faithful followers of the LORD, and keep their promises even when it hurts.”* **Psalms 15:1-4 (NLT)**

Have you ever committed to something but then a better opportunity presented itself?

Maybe a more profitable opportunity, or more desirous opportunity...faithful people keep their word.

Maybe a teenage girl agrees to babysit, but then gets asked out on a date...faithful people keep their word.

PP *Faithful Christians are utterly honest

Have you ever been put into a situation where telling the truth would bring embarrassing or negative consequences to yourself?

You doctor the truth, give the fictional tiny, harmless ‘white lie’ with fingers crossed.

Before you know it, those white lies become a way of handling dicey situations, and they grow. Being honest in the little things will lead to honesty in the bigger things.

Daniel was accused of breaking the king’s command, and when he was brought before the king he was utterly honest, and though God persevered him, he suffered the consequences.

PP *Faithful Christians are utterly loyal in friendship

There is no such thing as a fair-weather friend

PP *“A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.”* Proverbs 17:17

This is not blind loyalty that refuses to confront and address the mistakes of a friend

PP *“Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy.”* Proverbs 27:6

Faithfulness always has the greatest good of a friend as the highest priority

PP *Faithful Christians are utterly committed to serve God

Mother Theresa once answered Senator Mark Hatfield’s question as to how she could bear the load of the sick and dying without being crushed by it. Here beautiful response was: *“My dear Senator, I am not called to be successful, I am called to be faithful.”*

PP *“Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful.”* 1 Corinthians 4:2

It’s not success that we are encouraged to seek, but faithfulness

PP *Finally, faithful Christians will be utterly blessed

PP *“A faithful man will abound with blessings, but whoever hastens to be rich will not go unpunished.”* Proverbs 28:20

Billy Graham shared about a friend who was looking for a place to retire where he could have a woodworking shop

Graham asked him his favorite wood to work with, and his friend told him his favorite was the kind of tree that grew along the ridgetops of the Appalachian Mountains

He explained it was because the harsh climate, fierce wind and storms that causes those trees to grow slowly, and to create a wood that is tough and close-grained

It’s harder to carve, but anything made from it is incredibly durable and beautiful

Billy asked if he could see a piece of this rough-cut wood

His friend said he didn’t have any, because he never cuts these old trees down

He waits until one falls, and then brings it home to make it into something beautiful

Christian, one day you and I will fall, death will come

And it will be after a life of struggle, hardship, battles and temptations

But when that day comes, our Lord will bring us home, and what He transforms us into, will be not only eternally endurable, it will be superbly beautiful

Walk with the Spirit, let Him cultivate faithfulness in you

Staying true to God’s Word, being dependable and reliable to the people around you

Amen?

Pray