



Faith

"The fruit of the Spirit is ... faith."

(Gal. 5:22)

If you have ever picked fruit from a tree or bush, you will know that while some of the fruit is easy to spot, there is also fruit that is in the shadows, hidden behind leaves. In some ways, the fruit of the Spirit before us is such a fruit. Faith is not usually the first fruit people think of from Galatians 5. Why is this so? Perhaps it is because of a misconception. When we come to this fruit, we must be clear about something. This faith should not be confused with justifying, true saving faith toward God and Christ. While saving faith is certainly necessary for the fruit of the Spirit to be present, it is not what is meant here. The faith of Galatians 5:22 refers to faithfulness, loyalty and fidelity. It describes a person who is *"faithful in all things"* (1 Tim. 3:11). It may surprise you to learn that the Bible records many such people. Moses was faithful (Num. 12:7); David was faithful (1 Sam. 22:14). Nehemiah writes of many faithful friends. Lydia was judged to be faithful (Acts 16:15); Timothy, Tychicus, and Epaphras were all faithful men (1 Cor. 4:17; Eph. 6:21; Col. 1:7); Onesimus and Sylvanus were called faithful brothers (Col. 4:9; 1 Pet. 5:12); Paul was counted faithful by the Lord (1 Tim. 1:12). Isn't it amazing how prominent this fruit of faithfulness actually is? It wasn't hidden in the shadows in these people! And that doesn't even include Paul's descriptions of the Ephesian and Colossian believers collectively (Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:2). Yes, Christians are called to be faithful. This fruit, though perhaps not the most famous in the list, is indeed very important.

But how does this fruit function in our lives? First, it is shown through faithfulness to God and the Gospel. This fruit is seen by putting God and His cause first in your life. *"Seek ye first the kingdom of God"* (Matt.6:33). Do you seek to follow His commandments? Do you remember to hallow His day? Are you faithful in your tithing? Are you faithful to the doctrines of the church, the confessions and creeds? These questions are little "litmus tests" that help us discern our faithfulness to God. Second, it is also reflected through faithfulness to other people. Showing such faithfulness is actually a way of showing faithfulness unto God. This means that you manifest in your walk, your words, and your attitude that you are trustworthy and faithful. All of life is impacted by the way we walk and talk.

- Being faithful means keeping your curfew, respecting your parents' wishes, and obeying their requests.
- Being faithful applies to your relationships. Faithfulness is a word we often hear in relation to marriage, but it also applies before marriage. Faithfulness to your boy/girlfriend means respecting their persons and living in purity. Faithfulness in friendships means not talking bad about them behind their backs.
- Being faithful means keeping your promises, your appointments, and your word. And, remember, those who are not faithful reflect those ugly, faithless works of the flesh found in verses 19-21. But *"a faithful man shall abound with blessings"* (Prov. 28:20).

Many people try to do these things without having true faith. They try to produce this fruit to earn some credit with God. But that will never do. You cannot produce this fruit of yourself. Rather, this fruit is present as an effect of the Spirit's work in your heart.

Maybe as you're reading, you see so little faithfulness in your own life. What should you do? Despair or grow indifferent? No! This realization ought to drive you out to the Spirit of the fruit! You need the Holy Spirit to dispense this fruit into your life. When you are discouraged over faithlessness, look to God's faithfulness. God is faithful above all: *"faithful is he that calleth you,*

who also will do it" (1 Thess. 5:24). When you fail (and you will), turn to your faithful God for help. He will provide, by His grace, what you need to be faithful for Jesus' sake. Yes, that is where we should end, in Christ, because ultimately, what is the fruit of being faithful, or any of the fruit of the Spirit, for that matter? They are reflections of the image of Christ. As the Spirit works these fruits in His people's lives, He is making them to be Christ-like. Look at *His* faithfulness! He is a faithful high priest (Heb. 2:17). He was faithful even unto death. He was (and remains) faithful to His Father (Heb. 3:2). He is also faithful to His people, for "*He abideth faithful*" (2 Tim. 2:13).

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