

Faithfulness



Fruit of the Spirit (Part 8)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again. Last week and this week also I have been sharing with you about the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Yesterday I dealt with the fruit of goodness. Today I'm going to speak about the fruit of faithfulness.

A little while back in my talk on the gifts of the Spirit, I explained about the three forms of faith that we find in the New Testament. I'll just recapitulate briefly. The first kind of faith I call "Faith to Live By." It's the kind of faith that enables us to live the Christian life. It's based on a permanent and personal relationship with God that supplies both the motivation and the power for Christian life.

The second kind of faith is the gift of faith, listed with the other gifts of the Spirit. This is God's own faith, supernatural faith, sovereignly imparted to us in a situation of need by the Holy Spirit.

The third kind of faith is the fruit of faith, an aspect of character, something that has to be carefully cultivated. Now it's the fruit of faith that I'm talking about today.

There are two different ways of translating this particular fruit. In some versions it's translated "faith," in others it's translated "faithfulness." The Greek word is actually the normal New Testament word for "faith," which occurs probably well over 100 times in the New Testament. Either translation is legitimate, neither is complete. The word means, actually, both faith and faithfulness. In fact, the division in our thinking between faith and faithfulness is somewhat artificial. Because in the original language of Scripture faith includes faithfulness and faithfulness is impossible without faith.

In either case, the key thought is in the word "to depend." I suggest that you think of it like a single coin with two sides. One side is faith, the other side is faithfulness. But in either case, the key is in the word "depend."

Let's take one side first, the side that we'll call "faith." Faith is learning to depend on God in every situation and circumstance. On the other hand, the other side, "faithfulness" is being dependable, being the kind of person others can depend on and that includes both God and

people. Let me, therefore, say a little bit about faith first.

Faith is a quiet, steady, continuing trust in God's faithfulness. The fruit of faith does not panic, does not get flustered, does not lose the victory, does not think of turning back and giving up. It's a quiet, steady, unruffled and continuing trust in God. There is one sufficient scriptural basis for this attitude of trust. It's found in Romans 8:28:

> "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." (NAS)

All right. If we know that all things are working together for good for us, than there never is any reason to do anything but trust. The important thing is that we know we are meeting God's conditions. Now God's conditions are that we are committed to Him and flowing in His purpose for our life. If we know with a certainty that we are committed to God and flowing in His purpose for our life then no matter what happens, we know that God is going to cause it to work together for our good. So there's never any reason to panic or to give up your trust.

Now the key to this is commitment. I want to read from 2 Timothy 1:12. Let me, first of all, paint in the background. This letter was written right near the end of Paul's life. He was a prisoner in a Roman jail, he was elderly, he was suffering some sort of pain, he didn't have enough warm clothing (he was writing to Timothy to bring him his winter cloak), he was awaiting trial and probable execution at the hands of a tyrant named Nero. Some of his faithful friends had forsaken him. There was absolutely nothing in his circumstances to encourage him. And yet this is what he writes:

> "For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day." (NAS)

The key word there is "entrusted." The King James Version says "committed," but either word is equally good. The key to trust is entrusting. If you really know that you have put your life without reservation, totally in the hands of God, that's entrusting, that's committing. Then you know for sure that everything that follows is God working out the best for you. So trust comes from entrusting.

Now I'm going to consider the opposite side of the coin: "faithfulness," being dependable. We need to lay hold of one fact that is stated over and over again in Scripture. God is faithful. I believe that if I had one testimony to leave behind me when I quit this earth and God calls me home, if there was one simple message that I'd like to leave to my family and those that follow me, I could sum it up in those three words: God is faithful.

I have proved His faithfulness over and over and over again in my life. I am absolutely convinced that God is faithfulness. Now the fruit of faithfulness is letting God work out His faithfulness in you. And I want to tell you that that takes practice. It doesn't just happen. All fruit, you remember I told you, has to be cultivated. There's no fruit that requires more cultivating than the fruit of faithfulness and it starts with small things. Listen to what Jesus says in Luke 16:10:

> "He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much." (NAS)

Faithfulness starts in the very little things. So many people have got a wrong impression. They have some comparatively small responsibility assigned to them—it may be at work, or it may be in their family—their attitude is, "Well, this is such a small thing that it's really not worthwhile giving much attention to. Now, if something big and important were committed to me, then I'd really show what kind of person I am." Let me correct you. You show what kind of a person you are most clearly when you're taking charge of small and apparently unimportant responsibility. That's where your character is tested. And in God's kingdom, if you're not faithful in small things you never will be promoted to the big things. So perhaps you need to check of yourself right now. How faithful are you? How dependable are you?

I want to ask you four rather personal questions. First, Do you make promises, maybe to your children or your wife, and then break them? You know, one thing I've noticed about some of my Christian friends is they're more faithful to keep their commitments to their employees than they are to their wives. Well, that's not faithfulness.

Question Number 2: Do you turn up late for appointments? One thing you'll notice is God is never late. God's sun never rises late, never sets late. It's always on time. Everything that God is responsible for in this universe is punctual. You are not displaying God's faithfulness if you are unpunctual.

Question Number 3: Do you let your bills become overdue? You say, "Well, I was so pressed. I had so many other things to look after." But what about your creditors? Maybe they were pressed, too. It's not displaying God's faithfulness to be slow and slack in paying your bills. I have, in the past, retailed some of my books through various Christian bookstores. Some of them had very fancy names, usually with Jesus

somewhere in them. But you know, some of those bookstores with those fancy religious names were frequently three and four months overdue in paying their account. That's not faithfulness.

Fourth Question: Do you borrow money and not repay it? Do you know what it says in Psalm 37:21?

> "The wicked borrows and does not pay back..." (NAS)

Now, don't get indignant. I'm not telling you you're wicked. But I'm just saying if you're a Christian and you borrow money and do not repay it, there's an area in your life which is not reflecting the faithfulness of God. You might say to me, "Well, you're talking too much about money. Money isn't important. Money isn't spiritual." Money may not be spiritual but let me tell you it is very important. It really is the acid test of our faithfulness how we deal with money. Listen to what Jesus says in Luke 16:11:

> "If therefore you have not been faithful in the use of unrighteous mammon [and that's a biblical name for money], who will entrust the true riches to you?" (NAS)

You see, faithfulness begins in the small things, not the big things. It begins in the material things, not in the spiritual things. If you're faithful in the small things, God will commit to you the big things. If you're faithful in the material—in money, in finance, in honoring God with your finance, with your tithes and offerings—then God will commit to you the true spiritual riches.

But, whether it's faith or faithfulness, remember, the key is commitment.

All right. Our time is up for today but I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. I'll be continuing with this theme of spiritual fruit. Tomorrow I'll be dealing with the fruit of gentleness.

Radio Program

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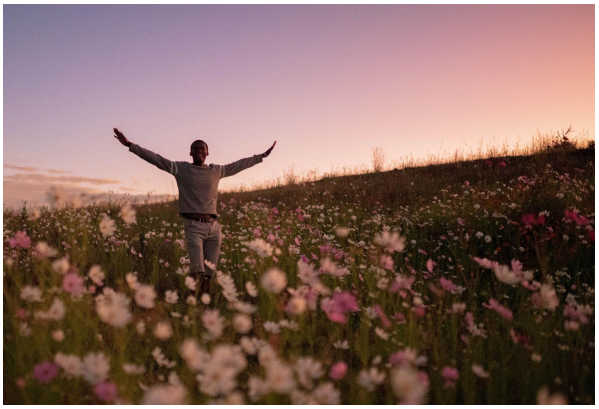

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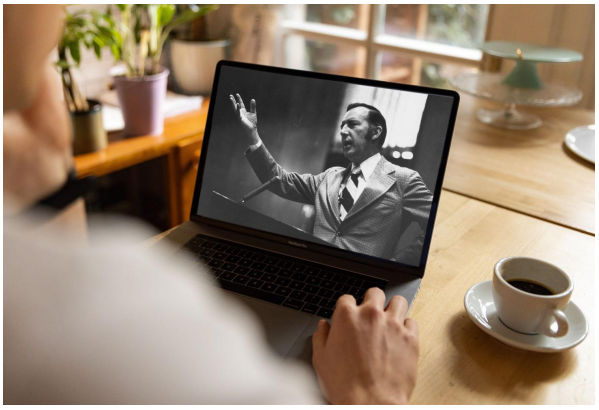

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