

Faithfulness: “Well Done, Good And Faithful Servant”
Lamentations 3:19-24; Matthew 25:14-30

Definitions:

Faithfulness (n)—quality of being faithful; fidelity. Synonyms—loyalty, dependability, reliability, trustworthiness, steadfastness, constancy, trueness, trueheartedness.

Our society is becoming increasingly self-centered. People quickly discard spouses, friends, and promises if they outlive their usefulness. Faithfulness applies to only one person—me. But when the Spirit develops this fruit in our lives, the results are quite different.

Faithfulness is an integral part of human existence—so important that without it society would disintegrate. Every morning of our lives demands an eye-opening act of faith that rushes us into a series of trusting actions and dependent attitudes. We breathe air we cannot see (most of the time), eat food we don't examine, keep appointments with people we trust to be there, and board planes we trust will stay in the air. Truly, we live by faith because we were created to operate in the environment of dependence as surely as fish were made for water.

But faith requires faithfulness, or it will produce only disaster. When you trust a leading pain reliever and get cyanide, trust a banker and get a crook, trust a husband and get an alcoholic, you will understand the importance of faithfulness and the disaster of *faithlessness*. One of life's greatest treasures is the knowledge that with God there is no false advertising, no deceptive business practices, and no broken contracts. He is utterly faithful. Upon this we can build lives set upon a rock; without this we have only sinking sand.

Think about it: In general terms, how have people been unfaithful to you, and how did it make you feel?

When people don't keep promises, fall short of expectations, or miss appointments with no communications, we can feel disappointed, deceived, or lose confidence in the other person.

1. Read Lamentations 3:19-24.

- The writer in this passage had hope in his desperate situation because of God's faithfulness. More specifically, he trusted in the Lord's mercies and compassions (kindness and kind acts) they were new every morning. He could depend on God. We, too, can depend on God!
- God's faithfulness is described as great. The Amplified Bible uses the words, "Great and beyond measure," to describe God's faithfulness.
- Take a moment to think of a way you have seen God's faithfulness. How did or does it make you feel? Reflecting on God's faithfulness in the past, can help to build ones' faith in God for current and future situation. He is the same day after day, after day.

- When we consider faithfulness, our starting point must be God. Faith is built into the fiber of human experience. It is God's way of allowing humanity to experience and exhibit God's faithfulness. We can trust God's love and goodness and faithfulness toward us. This in turn gives us a pushing off point to be faithful in our commitments, in doctrinal purity, and in persecution. We can be reflections of God's faithfulness. God is the basis of the Christian's being faithful.

2. Read Matthew 25:14-30.

- The servants in this parable were rewarded for being good stewards over their master's belongings. They received talents, according to their abilities. They took those talents and traded them and gained a profit.
 - a. The lazy servant was punished because he just buried the talent he had received and did not use, trade, or invest it to gain a profits for the Master.
 - b. We, too, are accountable to God. Look at **2 Corinthians 5:9-10**.
 - c. According to **Revelation 20:11-13**, the dead, small and great, the sea shall give up its dead, and death and hell shall deliver up the dead in them and every man shall be judged according to their works that are written in the books.
 - i. But of greater importance are our names written in the book of life?
- Jesus' main point in this parable is that we need to be faithful with what God has given us (time, terrain, talents, and treasures) and use them wisely. We have to give an account to him of what He has given us.
- It is the Spirit who opens our eyes to Scripture's revelation of God's faithfulness. The Holy Spirit brings to our mind and heart an understanding of our needs—and our needs can only be met by the benefits of God's faithful love. It is the Holy Spirit who stimulates us to responses of faith, expressions of trust, and exclamations of praise based on God's faithfulness.
- This story points out that if we are faithful with what God has entrusted to us, He will give us more. But if we are not faithful with the little, He will even take away what we have.
- What "talents" has God given you?
- We can be faithful in using these gifts (talents) for His glory by prayerfully and actively using them for kingdom building activities.

Scripture also contains numerous examples of men and women who committed themselves to God and to each other and who became faithful friends.

- Joshua worked for years as a friend and aid to Moses.
- Ruth was a faithful companion to Naomi when life seemed filled with death, failure, and hopelessness.
- Jonathan was the friend of David and helped him even at the cost of Saul's anger and Jonathan's own claim to the throne.

The Fruit of the Spirit (Fisherman Bible Study); *Fruit of The Spirit* (Life Guide Bible Studies), *Fruit of The Spirit* (Zondervan); *New American Standard Bible*; *Amplified Holy Bible*; *Open Bible KJV*

- Barnabas was a faithful friend to the apostle Paul and was there to sponsor him when Paul was held in suspicion by the early church.

3. Read Psalm 23

- David's twenty-third psalm expresses God's faithfulness to David. In it David is confident that God is involved in every aspect of his life, both good and bad. David sees God as a shepherd, a guide, a protector, a friend.
- Using your own images and life experiences to express how God has been faithful to you, write your own psalm. Include the names of friends God has brought into your life. Honor God for his faithfulness.

Now or Later:

Read the story of Jehoshaphat's early reign in 2 Chronicles 17—19 to discover how he turned to God and to see where he neglected to seek God's guidance in everyday things.

What are the everyday things in your life which you may be tempted to take for granted but really need God's control? Pray about these, asking God to give you wisdom and practical guidance as you move through the events of the coming week.

Are we faithful with what God has entrusted to us? Let's allow the Holy Spirit to develop this trait of the Fruit of the Spirit in us.

Homework: Read Numbers 12:1-15; Matthew 11:28-30

Topic: Meekness: "I Am Gentle and Humble in Heart"