Fruit of the Spirit

Lesson 7: FAITHFULNESS

INTRODUCTION

She paced to the right and then to the left on the sidewalk in front of her apartment. He was late. He had promised to pick her up for the movie promptly at 6:45 so they could make it to the theater easily, order their popcorn and soft drinks, and be seated before the film started at 7:15. It was now 6:55 . . . 6:56 . . . 6:57.

Faithfulness demonstrates itself when we keep our promises. Like our faithful God keeps his promises. Moses says of God, "The LORD your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commands" (Deuteronomy 7:9).

The Spirit's faithfulness not only assures us that he will never show up late in our lives, he assures us that he is empowering us to be just as faithful—faithful to God and faithful to the commitments we make to everyone else.

STUDYING GOD'S WORD: Ideal Faithfulness

When we see the Spirit's faithfulness to us we better understand how can demonstrate the same in our lives.

Micah 7:1-7,18-20 What misery is mine! I am like one who gathers summer fruit at the gleaning of the vineyard; there is no cluster of grapes to eat, none of the early figs that I crave. [2] The godly have been swept from the land; not one upright man remains. All men lie in wait to shed blood; each hunts his brother with a net. [3] Both hands are skilled in doing evil; the ruler demands gifts, the judge accepts bribes, the powerful dictate what they desire—they all conspire together. [4] The best of them is like a brier, the most upright worse than a thorn hedge. The day of your watchmen has come, the day God visits you. Now is the time of their confusion.

[5] Do not trust a neighbor; put no confidence in a friend. Even with her who lies in your embrace be careful of your words. [6] For a son dishonors his father, a daughter rises up against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—a man's enemies are the members of his own household. [7] But as for me, I watch in hope for the LORD, I wait for God my Savior; my God will hear me.

[…] [18] Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. [19] You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea. [20] You will be true to Jacob, and show mercy to Abraham, as you pledged on oath to our fathers in days long ago.

1.) In the first six verses of this chapter, Micah mourns the loss of faithfulness among his fellow Jews. How did their lack of faithfulness exhibit itself?

2.) In verse 20, what does Micah say is the basis for believing that God will continue to be true to his faithless people?

3.) According to verses 7, 18, and 19, how does Micah experience God's promise-keeping faithfulness?

4.) The Bible offers us other ways God's faithfulness is a benefit to us. What do the following tell us?

Hebrews 3:1,2; 4:14-16 Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess. [2] He was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all God's house. …[14] Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. [15] For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. [16] Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

1 Corinthians 10:13 No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. [24] The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.

2 Thessalonians 3:3 The Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

REFLECTING FAITHFULNESS TO OUR FAITHFUL GOD

Grateful for God's faithfulness that has brought us forgiveness and salvation, we Christians strive through the Spirit to be faithful in our commitment to Jesus.

1.) How do the following passages encourage faithfulness to our Savior?

Luke 12:4, 8 "I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. …[8] I tell you, whoever acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man will also acknowledge him before the angels of God."

Revelation 14:12-13 [The restlessness of those who worship the (government) beast and his image] calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus. [13] Then I heard a voice from heaven say, "Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Yes," says the Spirit, "they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them."

2 Timothy 4:7-8 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. [8] Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

Revelation 2:10 "Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life."

REFLECTING FAITHFULNESS TO EACH OTHER

Faithfulness "describes the man on whose faithful service we may rely, on whose loyalty we may depend, whose word we can unreservedly accept. . . . It describes the man in whom there is the unswerving and inflexible fidelity of Jesus Christ, and the utter dependability of God" (William Barclay).

1.) Sunday's sermon text, The Parable of the Talents, from Matthew 25:14-30 about our faithful or unfaithful use of the gifts that God gives us. What might have motivated the good servants in using their talents faithfully?

2.) Faithfulness extends beyond directly serving God to serving him through all our vocations. Discuss how our faithfulness will exhibit itself according to the following passages:

Romans 13:1,5-7 Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. …[5] Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience. [6] This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. [7] Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.

Ephesians 5:33–6:4 However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband. [6:1] Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. [2] "Honor your father and mother"—which is the first commandment with a promise— [3] "that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth." [4] Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

1 Timothy 3:2-12 *(abbreviated)* Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, [3] not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. [4] He must manage his own family well… [7] He must also have a good reputation with outsiders[.]

[8] Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. [9] They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. [10] They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons. … [12] A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well.

Hebrews 10:24,25 Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. [25] Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

2 John 4-6 It has given me great joy to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as the Father commanded us. [5] And now, dear lady, I am not writing you a new command but one we have had from the beginning. I ask that we love one another. [6] And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands.

HIS WORD & MY LIFE

1.) Evaluate: In our culture fewer people are choosing to be faithful to their commitments.

2.) Comment: Faithfulness is important because when a congregation can count on its members to keep their word, everyone benefits.

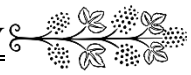
3.) We recognize and appreciate God's faithfulness most in the heat of adversity. Give some Bible examples.

4.) Explain how God demonstrated his promise-keeping faithfulness to Abraham, Hagar, Moses, David, or some other believer mentioned in the Bible.

5.) Which of God's attributes--his faithfulness, grace, mercy, or power—gives you the most comfort?

6.) Agree or disagree: God is always faithful but we can't always depend on him to be faithful at the moment we need his faithfulness.

SUMMARY



There is never a time when God has faltered in faithfulness. Because the Spirit of God inhabits us, we Christians can live out that same failure-free faithfulness. In fact, the Spirit says that when we are tempted to be the least faithful, we have even more reason to be the most faithful. "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything" (James 1:2-4). Be faithful!

PRAYER

