

## The Fruit of the Spirit

### Part 6 – Faithfulness

A newspaper article in 2005 reported that Will Smith came up with a very unconventional way of trying to keep his marriage on track. His solution was to ask for permission first before cheating with your co-star. He and his wife, Jada Pinkett Smith, apparently agreed it's okay to sleep with someone else provided it isn't behind the back of the one you love. Will Smith said, "Our perspective is, you don't avoid what's natural. You're going to be attracted to people. In our marriage vows, we didn't say 'forsaking all others'. The vow that we made was that you will never hear that I did something after the fact. If it came down to it, then one can say to the other, 'Look, I need to have sex with somebody. I'm not going to if you don't approve of it – but please approve of it.'"

#### **Galatians 5:22-23**

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

#### **Matthew 25:14-30**

For *the kingdom of heaven* is like a man traveling to a far country, *who* called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. And likewise he who *had received* two gained two more also. But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money. After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.' His lord said to him, 'Well *done*, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' He also who had received two talents came and said, 'Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.' His lord said to him, 'Well *done*, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, *there* you have *what is yours*.'

But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. Therefore take the talent from him, and give *it* to him who has ten talents. For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

This is the sixth message in this series on The Fruit of the Spirit, and we're talking about faithfulness.

### 1. Faithfulness begins with God

#### **Psalm 36:5**

Your mercy, O LORD, is in the heavens; Your faithfulness reaches to the clouds.

In today's world, we lose the impact of this statement.

Because if you've ever been in a plane, like I have on numerous occasions, you take off, get higher and higher, and there comes a point where you break through the clouds.

And now you've got an open blue sky, and you're looking down on the clouds.

But thousands of years ago, in ancient Israel, the clouds were ridiculously high.

Way beyond human reach.

This is why the psalmist likened the reach of God's faithfulness to reaching beyond the clouds.

In other words, God's faithfulness is huge.

He is a God of faithfulness.

Faithful to His promises; faithful to His covenant; faithful to His Word.

What this means is that you can trust Him.

His faithfulness is the basis of trust.

The reason we can trust God is because He is faithful.

Even when He corrects / disciplines us, it's because of His faithfulness.

### **Psalm 119:75**

I know, O LORD, that Your judgments are right, and that in faithfulness You have afflicted me.

Because God is faithful, and because He wants us to be like Him, He wants us to be faithful too.

Let's take a look at what that means.

## **2. Faithfulness is fruitfulness**

To see this, we need to look at a story Jesus told.

He told this story about Himself and about us.

In this story, a man went to a distant country.

And before He left, He called together His servants.

And according to their abilities, he entrusted one with five talents, one with two talents, and one with one talent.

A talent was how they measured the weight of gold, silver and copper.

In this case, it's most likely to be silver.

If that's the case, then one talent was about twenty years wages for a day labourer.

So the meaning here is that Jesus has entrusted us with a lot.

When the Lord returned, there was a day of accountability.

The five-talent guy had made another five talents of silver.

The two-talent guy had made another two talents of silver.

And the one-talent guy had made nothing at all.

He'd buried his silver in the ground.

The five-talent guy, and the two-talent guy, both received the same commendation from the Lord.

### **Matthew 25:21**

His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'

Here are some important truths Jesus teaches us in this parable:

1. If we are truly faithful, we will be fruitful.

The way that Jesus assessed their faithfulness was by their fruitfulness.

We are judged on our fruitfulness, because fruitfulness is evidence of our faithfulness.

2. We are not expected to produce less than our capabilities

The guy with five talents produced five more.

The guy with two talents produced two more.

**Luke 12:48**

For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.

3. We are not expected to produce more than our capabilities.

Jesus didn't say to the guy with five talents, "How come you didn't produce ten?"

Or to the guy with 2, "How come you weren't more like your friend? You could have worked harder."

God isn't unreasonable.

Some people are high-capacity, and others aren't.

And if we are faithful, we will be fruitful, according to the measure of ability God has given us.

**3. Trustworthiness is the result of faithfulness**

Back in the '80s a guy in our church was stealing money from the offering.

The offering was collected in offering bags.

The collectors stood at the front while the money was prayed for.

Then the collectors walked up behind the stage, down a narrow, dimly-lit corridor, to the room where it was counted.

Unknown to anyone, while they walked down that corridor, one of the men regularly put his hand into the bag he held, grabbed a handful of cash, and stuffed it in his pockets.

Nobody knew.

Until one day, a lady went to the pastor.

She said, "God gave me a vision. I saw Peter stealing from the offering."

They set him up; and they caught him in the act.

Praise God for His Holy Spirit.

Here's a question: should they forgive him?

Absolutely.

Here's another question:

Should they let him take up the offering again the following week?

I don't think so!

Trustworthiness is the result of faithfulness.

Here's another scenario:

A woman is about to leave her husband because of his adulteries.

He says, "Wait, It'll never happen again."

She says, "Fine, I'll give you one more chance. As long as I can check your emails and text messages any time."

He says, "But baby, don't you trust me?"

Should she forgive him?

Of course. Jesus commands it.

Should she trust him?

I don't think so.

Trustworthiness is the result of faithfulness.

Listen to the level of trust that was put in faithful people in the Bible:

### **2 Kings 12:13-15**

However there were not made for the house of the LORD basins of silver, trimmers, sprinkling-bowls, trumpets, any articles of gold or articles of silver, from the money brought into the house of the LORD. But they gave that to the workmen, and they repaired the house of the LORD with it. Moreover they did not require an account from the men into whose hand they delivered the money to be paid to workmen, for they dealt faithfully.

Do you want to be trusted?

Be faithful in all your dealings.

### **4. Faithfulness relates to every aspect of life**

So be faithful in how you handle your finances.

Be faithful in the commitments you make to others.

Turn up when you say you will.

Do what you say you'll do.

Be faithful in prayer.

Be faithful in reading God's word.

And since the Greek word for faithful can also be translated "trustworthy," be a trustworthy person.

Even when it's hard.

Joseph is a perfect example of this.

Sold into slavery; but he was a faithful slave.

Unjustly imprisoned, but he faithfully served the prison keeper.

Then he served Pharaoh faithfully.

A lot of that must have been really tough, but he did it anyway.

So what happens to unfaithful people?

Let's go back to the story Jesus told.

There were two faithful servants who received the Lord's commendation.

Then there was number three.

He didn't trade with his silver.

He didn't invest it.

He just buried it in the ground.

The Lord called him a wicked and lazy servant.

He said, "Cast [him] into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

That doesn't sound good.

There is reward for faithfulness.

And there is punishment for unfaithfulness.

If you want to be a faithful person, allow the Holy Spirit to do His work in your life.

Faithfulness is part of the fruit that He produces.

Let me finish with this story of Charles Spurgeon's grandfather, James.

James had a large family and not much money coming in.

But he loved the Lord.

The Spurgeons had a cow which they needed to provide milk for the children.

One day the cow died.

Spurgeon's wife was very concerned about that.

Spurgeon said, "God said He would provide, and I believe He could send us fifty cows if He pleased."

That very day, in London, a group Spurgeon didn't know, met to help poor pastors.

They'd raised a lot of money and had a list of pastors to send it to.

When they got to the end of the list, they still had five pounds left.

Someone suggested that they send it to James Spurgeon.

But they each added more money.

So the day after the cow died, Spurgeon received twenty pounds in the mail.

Quite a considerable sum in the early 1800s.

God is always faithful.

We should be too.

If you're not experiencing God's faithfulness, it begins with a relationship with Him...