

**February 5, 2012**  
**Faithfulness**  
**Galatians 5:22**

In his letter to the Galatians, the Apostle Paul writes,

**Galatians 5:22 "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness & self-control." And this morning we're going to focus on "faithfulness."**

Today I believe we are to focus our attention on Faithfulness. On their first anniversary: tabloids on stands everywhere proclaimed a headline: **"And they said it wouldn't last!"** The papers were celebrating the first wedding anniversary of a very well-known couple whose marriage many had predicted wouldn't last. **The tabloid was gleefully proclaiming that the predictions were all wrong, & that the marriage was healthy & strong.**

Who were they talking about? Who was this famous couple? It was **Michael Jackson & Lisa Marie Presley, whose marriage ended soon afterwards.**

Now not only was the tabloid absolutely wrong about the state of their marriage, but it also revealed the concept of modern society -- suggesting that if a marriage lasts one year, it has done really well.

Hallmark has a card that fits the mood of our time by saying, **"I can't promise you forever, but I can promise you today." That's about as deep a commitment as many are willing to make.**

But in contrast to that, God exhibits & honors faithfulness.

**Psalm 100:5 says, "The Lord is good & His love endures forever; His faithfulness continues through all generations."**

Every time you see a rainbow, remember that God is faithful - He keeps His promises. Every time you pick up a Bible, remember that He said, "Heaven & earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away" [Matthew 24:35].

Every time you gather to worship with brothers & sisters in Christ, remember that He said, "Where 2 or 3 come together in my name, there am I with them" [Matthew 18:20].

**Every time you have the opportunity to share in Holy Communion, every time someone answers the invitation to come to Christ, we are to remember that Jesus said, "I will be with you always, even to the end of the world."**

The Old Hymn is right:

**"Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father...**

**Morning by morning new mercies I see.**

**All I have needed Thy hand hath provided.**

**Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me."**

**If we allow The Spirit of the Living God, to work within us, then the fruit of faithfulness will be real & evident in our lives.** The more we yield to **God's guidance**, the less fickle, the less vulnerable, the less discouragement we'll face.

**BUT What is faithfulness**

**A DEFINITION OF FAITHFULNESS**

The technical definition that says, **"To follow through with a commitment regardless of difficulty."** That's good isn't it --.

But let me give you one that may be easier to remember, "Faithfulness is love hanging on." It is love saying, "I will not quit. There may be misunderstandings, there may be disappointments, there may be discouragements, but I will not quit." It is love hanging on.

If someone says to their spouse, "I love you," & then he goes out & has an affair, you may call them a liar. A cheat. But most of all, you will say, **"He or she is unfaithful."** And no matter how strong the arguments may be, no matter how loudly they proclaims their love for their spouse, it will hard to believe him/her because their unfaithfulness negates their proclamation of love. It will take time for trust to be gain – and their love to be believable.

**Likewise --** If someone says, "I really love the Lord," or "I really love the church," & but is unfaithful, in their prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness of Christ and His Church .... then it's hard to believe that they really does love the Lord. They may give the argument that they can be a Christian without attending Church or doing those things – but if the Church is the body of Christ – it's hard to believe someone can be part of Christ, without being joined to His body.

**Faithfulness & love always go hand in hand. Faithfulness is love hanging on.**

You may get discouraged. You may be disappointed. But faithfulness says, "Even though there is discouragement & disappointment, I will not let go, I will not quit. I will keep on praying, attending, giving, serving and being a witness for Christ, because God has called me to be faithful."

Here are some of the scriptures that challenge us to be faithful.

**1 Corinthians 4:2 challenges us to be faithful in stewardship.** "Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful."

**1 Timothy 3:2** Speaks of being faithful in service “Now the overseer is to be above reproach, **faithful** to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach”

**Titus 1:6** speaks of being faithful in our home life: “An elder must be blameless, **faithful to his wife**, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient.”

**Hebrews 3:5** speaks of being faithful in witnessing. “Moses was faithful as a servant in all God’s house,” bearing **witness** to what would be spoken by God in the future.”

**Romans 12:12** says we are to be faithful in prayer. “Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.”

I could go on and on – but you get the point, don’t you? God calls us to be faithful as children who are in line to inherit the Kingdom of God. This faithfulness is nothing found in the world. It is reserved for those who have given themselves to Christ.

**You see, this world really doesn’t understand faithfulness. It doesn’t even have a clue as to what Paul is talking about when he says the fruit of the Spirit is "faithfulness."**

To help us better understand it, let’s look at a demonstration of faithfulness in the Bible. Once again, the example is Jesus, & it is found in the 16th chapter of Matthew.

**Matthew 16:21** “From that time on Jesus began to explain to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that He must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.” tells us that Jesus brings His disciples together, & tells them, **"I know what will happen there. I’m going to be arrested, & beaten, & crucified. But I’m going anyway."**

You may remember that in the next verse Peter tries to stop Him. He said, "Lord, don’t go!" But Jesus says, **"Get thee behind me, Satan."**

**Now here’s the reason that He called Peter "Satan" - because Satan was using Peter to try to get Jesus to quit, to be unfaithful.**

You may remember that Peter tried to talk Jesus out of going to Jerusalem. But, Jesus was determined that no matter what happened, He would be faithful to the mission God had for Him to do. So "steadfastly" He goes to Jerusalem.

Even while He was hanging on the cross, the people below Him were mocking Him, saying, "If you really are the Son of God, come down from the cross." That’s what Satan was saying, too. "Quit! Come down. It’s not worth it. The pain is too intense. The people don’t care anyway. Just

quit!"

But He continued to hang there because He was faithful to the ministry to save you and I.

**And the faithfulness of Jesus has inspired the faithfulness of others down through the ages, those who hung in there, through the good & the bad, through times of plenty & times of want.**

When George Muller surrender his life to Christ, he began praying for 5 of his friends. He prayed 5 years before the first one came to Christ; for the next one he prayed 10 years; for the third one 25 years; for the fourth nearly 50 years. The last one was converted after 52 years, One of them testified at his funeral saying; **George Muller was faithful, even unto death.**

Finally, let's ask the question, "**How do we develop faithfulness?**"

**1. we need to realize that temptations will come.**

Just as surely as Jesus was tempted to be unfaithful, we will be tempted to be unfaithful - in our marriage, in our relationship with the Lord, & in the church. That's what Satan does. He will tempt us to be unfaithful.

**2. we need to seek the Holy Spirit's reinforcement & develop regular, positive, spiritual habits.** This world is not a Christian world. This nation is not a Christian nation. And we're being pressured on every side to develop negative habits, tempting us to be unfaithful in church attendance, to be unfaithful in prayer, & in studying the Word of God.

**3. we need to get back up when we fall or are knocked down.** There is great value in having a spiritual companion who is trustworthy. We all need someone to confide in – who is like minded concerning the things of Christ.

Today there may be someone here going through a painful experience? Or Someone feel that you've been knocked down, or maybe that you've fallen? There may be someone who has been fickle & irresponsible? There could be someone tempted to quit?

God says; BE Faithful; Don't stop. Keep pressing on. Hang in there, because **faithfulness is love hanging on.**

Maybe you've never invited Jesus into your life – today you can – and from this day forward, walk faithfully with Him.