

Galatians 5: 22; “The Believer’s Faithfulness”, Message # 48 in the series – “Christ has Set us Free”, a Bible Study conducted on January 20th, 2015, by Pastor Paul Rendall at his home.

The word “faithfulness” is the last word in verse 22, and it is translated “faith” in the King James Version. “The fruit of the Spirit is faith”, it reads in that translation. Now it is true that faith is a grace; a grace which God creates in the heart of a sinner so that they might believe in Christ. Philippians 1: 29 shows us this. “For to you, it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.” Both our initial faith, that is, our ability to believe, a part of our being converted to Christ, and our continuing to have and exercise this saving faith, are something which has been granted to us for Christ’s sake. He is the Author and Perfecter of our faith as it says in Hebrews 12: 2. This is true. But commentators are agreed that the word we are studying tonight should be translated – “Faithfulness” or “Fidelity”. I will quote from some of the commentators a little later on in the study. But, first, let us define the word “fidelity”. “Fidelity is the quality of being faithful or loyal.” “Its original meaning regarded duty in a broader sense than the related concept of fealty.” “Both derive from the Latin word *fidēlis*, meaning “faithful or loyal”. This evening I would like to show you 1st of all - That our faithfulness both to God, and in our dealings with men, is based upon God’s faithfulness to us in Christ. And then 2nd – I want to show you that our faithfulness as Christians will be evidenced in the things that we say and do. So let us apply our hearts, this evening, to this subject so that each of us will make progress in being a faithful man or woman.

1st of all – Our faithfulness in relation to God and man is based upon God’s faithfulness to us in Christ.

Turn over with me over to Deuteronomy chapter 7, verses 6-11. “For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth.” “The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but because the LORD loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.” “Therefore know that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments; and He repays those who hate Him to their face, to destroy them. He will not be slack with him who hates Him; He will repay him to his face.” “Therefore you shall keep the commandment, the statutes, and the judgments which I command you today, to observe them.”

Here we find Moses relating to the children of Israel God’s expectations of them as His special people. He chose them, as it says here to be a people for Himself. He did not set His love on them because they were greater in number, for they were the least. He chose them because He loved them, and because He loved them He would keep the oath that He had sworn to their fathers; that He would be faithful to them as a people. But this did not mean that every single Israelite knew God personally. The Old Covenant had expectations placed within it by God Himself which conditioned the blessing of that people upon the obedience of that people. In this sense it was like a covenant of works given to an entire people. It was like the covenant of works which God gave Adam in the garden, in the beginning. It was – “Do this, and you will live.” In this case it was: “Do this and you will be blessed.” Many of those people did not listen to God’s voice or keep His commandments. Those who did, were as Joshua and Caleb: “of another spirit”. What does it mean to be of another spirit? Well, turn with me over to Numbers chapter 14, verses 19-24. The context here is that Israel has refused to go into the land of Canaan and

fight to overcome the peoples of that land because they were very large and powerful people. Most of the Israelites did not believe that they could fight with them and overcome them. And so, in their talking among themselves they sinned in their unbelief, and refused to go into the land. Most of them fell into unbelief, but Caleb was not one of them.

Listen to the conversation between Moses and God over this matter. Moses says in verse 19 – “Pardon the iniquity of this people, I pray, according to the greatness of Your mercy, just as You have forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now.” “Then the Lord said, ‘I have pardoned, according to your word; but truly, as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord – because all these men who have seen My glory and the signs which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have put Me to the test now these ten times, and have not heeded My voice, they certainly shall not see the land of which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who rejected Me see it.’” “But My servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit in him and has followed Me fully, I will bring into the land where he went, and his descendants shall inherit it.” The spirit of unbelief in most of the Israelites caused them to “reject God”, it says here in verse 23. Caleb’s spirit was different in that He believed God’s word to them. Look at how Caleb stated it to them, in Numbers 13: 30. “Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said ‘Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it.’” Caleb’s “different spirit” was that he was a man who had true and saving faith. Those who rejected God and His word did not.

Let us understand that God is always faithful to His promises. Your Salvation is not based upon your faithfulness to God, but rather God’s faithfulness to you. The redemption of the children of Israel, their being brought out of their bondage in the land of Egypt was meant to be a picture to them, and to us also, of what Christ has done in redeeming us from sin and Satan and the world. God’s redeeming love and grace shown to everyone who believes in His only begotten Son is based upon a covenant which God has made with Christ; the covenant of redemption. He would show mercy to all who would believe in Jesus. But this electing love and mercy are not merited in any sense by those who believe in God’s word, and under the New Covenant come to believe in Jesus for salvation. These covenant mercies are shown simply because God chooses to do these things in order to fulfill His own purposes. He keeps the covenant of redemption on the basis of the covenant of grace. The covenant of grace, it says in our 1689 Confession of Faith, Chapter 7, Paragraph 3, “is revealed in the gospel; first of all to Adam in the promise of salvation by the seed of the woman, and afterwards by father steps, until the full discovery thereof was completed in the New Testament; and it is founded in that eternal covenant transaction that was between the Father and the Son about the redemption of the elect; and it is alone by the grace of this covenant that all the posterity of fallen Adam that ever were saved did obtain life and blessed immortality, man being now utterly incapable of acceptance with God upon those terms on which Adam stood in his state of innocency.” If this was the case with Adam, how much more in regard to the fallen Israelites that we are speaking of.

Now, the covenant which God made with these Jewish fathers was called the Old Covenant. This Old Covenant was not founded upon the kind of promises that would actually bring the Jews eternal life by itself. There were many stipulations of faithfulness directed to the Jews which were intended to show them how much they needed God’s grace; the kind of saving and keeping grace that could only be found in our Lord Jesus Christ. Turn with me over to Hebrews 8, verses 6-13. But now He (that is Christ) has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.” “For that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have sought for a second.” “Because finding fault with them, He says, ‘Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah – not according to the

covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord.” “For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel : I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” “None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord’; for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them.” “For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.”

You can see here what the problem was, with the Old Covenant. Even though they were given the law by God, through Moses, and even though God was very gracious to them in terms of His faithfulness, and what He would do for them if they were faithful to Him, still, they were not able to keep His commandments. This, He knew, needed to be proved to them, and it still needs to be proved to us today. These people who were God’s ancient people, the people of His choice, did not follow Him in a way that was pleasing to Him. They were given great promises such as in Deuteronomy 7, verses 12 and 13 – “Then it shall come to pass, because you listen to these judgments, and keep and do them, that the Lord your God will keep with you the covenant and the mercy which He swore to your fathers.” “And He will love you and bless you and multiply you; He will also bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your land, your grain and your new wine and your oil, the increase of your cattle and the off-spring of your flock, in the land of which He swore to your fathers to give you.”

You see, God chose the Jewish people to be His own special people but none of them measured up to all that He had called them to, except those who were shown grace, and then acted upon what they were shown. God was faithful to them. But with most of them, God was not well pleased. And so we should be able to see why a New Covenant was needed. A New Covenant was needed which would not only have promises of blessing to those who were obedient. But a New Covenant was needed that would have promises to those who were disobedient and sinners, and yet would still by God’s free grace believe and repent. They would believe and be changed. These would have a New Heart given to them by God, a heart where God would write His laws on their hearts, and a mind where His laws would be placed. This is what every person needs if they are to be saved and learn to be faithful to God. Faithfulness in a believer is based upon their first having learned of, and experienced in the gospel, the faithfulness of God. He is a covenant-keeping God who will always keep His word.

Now, 2nd – I want to show you that our faithfulness as Christians will be evidenced in things that we say and do, as a response to the grace of Christ at work in our hearts.

“The fruit of the Spirit” is faithfulness. Listen to what some of the commentators say about this word “faith” or “faithfulness”. Joseph Benson says – “Or rather fidelity, as the word here evidently signifies, namely, in engagements, promises, and trusts, or what we call good faith and uprightness in men’s dealings, neither, in any instance, imposing upon others, nor failing in any of those engagements which it is in our power to fulfil.” William Burkitt says it means: “fidelity towards men, in our promises, and in all our actions, speaking exact truth.” Matthew Henry says it means: “fidelity, justice, and honesty, in what we profess and promise to others.” Thomas Coke says of it: “Fidelity; which the word πιστις undoubtedly signifies in many places. So that in one place we may understand it of the faithfulness of God, or his fidelity to his promises, Romans 3:3 and where it is applied to servants, we expressly render it fidelity: Titus 2:10. And though it generally signifies the grace of faith, or the confidence reposed in another; yet, where we find it joined, as in the place before us, with other graces, or moral virtues, it may be rather taken to denote fidelity.”

Turn with me over to Hosea chapter 11, verse 12. “Ephraim has encircled Me with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit; but Judah still walks with God, even with the Holy One who is

faithful.” Here we see the grace of faithfulness exhibited in the Old Testament believer; it was to walk with God by faith realizing that God Himself is perfectly faithful.

In closing turn with me over to Matthew chapter 25, and verse 14. “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 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 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 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 I 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.”

You can see here that a faithful servant is a profitable servant. And a profitable servant is one who has taken what he has been given, and he uses it for his Master’s service. Even the person who has only received a small amount of grace and gifts in comparison with others who have received more, still should be using what he has been given to profit his Master. Each of us should ask ourselves in closing – Am I using all that the Lord has given to me in service to Him. Or am I hiding it in the ground where no one can see it, not even me myself? I trust that each of us will know the answer to that question by answering another question. Have I received through Jesus Christ my Lord, grace upon grace, so that I conceive that I have an abundance? And do I consider the Lord Jesus as a hard Master or a good Master? Am I His faithful servant? Do I live speak and live and labor as a servant who is hoping to hear – “Well done, good and faithful servant?”