

April 14, 2021 | Wholly Living

Week 8 | Gal. 5:22-26 | Faithfulness

When the God of the universe takes up residence in a person's heart, some significant/obvious/undeniable changes will occur. Paul called these changes the 'Fruit of the Spirit.

READ: Galatians 5:22-26 (ESV)

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

Now, as I've said each week in this study, we cannot cultivate nor can we produce these virtues on our own. Paul is insistent that each of these divine attributes *already* indwells the believer as they keep "in step" with the Spirit. They do not need to be worked on; instead, they need to be discovered.

In week 2, we tackled the first attribute of the Spirit: love. Love is that place from which all of the other graces flow. Without love, there are no fruits of the Spirit.

In week 3, we studied joy. Joy cannot exist without grace. The believer has joy and can rejoice precisely because they do not have to earn their way into God's good graces. God's graces are freely offered, and this truth, in turn, makes our hearts glad.

In week 4, Bob was kind enough to tackle peace. And as he eloquently pointed out, "No Jesus, no peace. Know Jesus, know peace."

In week 5, we dove into the concept of patience. Patience is simply the capacity to accept delay without losing one's temper; or, as one commentator put it, patience is "waiting with the *right* attitude."¹

In week 6, we looked at the word kindness. More than any other, the Christian ought to be kind because we, more than any other, have been shown the kindness of God.

¹ Guthrie, George E., *James*, The Expositor's Bible Commentary, editors Tremper Longman III & David E. Garland, (Grand Rapids; Zondervan Academic, 2006), p. 266.

Last week, we dove into what Paul called “goodness.” Given that it is such a nonspecific term, we would’ve struggled to nail down what Paul talked about if we hadn't considered that a lack of specificity was precisely his point. Like a painter, Paul not only drew fine lines and added intricate details to his canvas when he painted the fruits of the Spirit, he also used a wide brush with broad strokes to fill in the majority of the landscape and define the outer edges of his work. Generally speaking, all that the Spirit does is good.

Today, we’ll tackle a much more specific word: faithfulness. The Greek word Paul employs is **πίστις** (pístis), which clocks in a whopping two hundred and forty-four times in the NT. Generally speaking, pístis has two uses in our bibles. The first is when it refers to conviction, belief, and trust (i.e., the faith). The second is when it relates to fidelity, dependability, and reliability (i.e., faithful). Of those two uses, Paul employs the latter meaning here in Gal 5. So, when Paul says that a characteristic of the Spirit isn't our faith (though that is clearly implied), instead, he is explaining that the Spirit itself is trustworthy and dependable. And those who have the Spirit dwelling within will likewise be individuals who are tried-and-true. If you are a faithful person, your word is as good as your bond. And, according to Theodore Roosevelt, “It is better to be faithful than famous.”

This characteristic is prime for those who would be in ministry.

READ: 2 Timothy 2:2 (ESV)

¹You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, ²and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.

Men who stand before others without a track record of faithfulness and dependability are not worthy of teaching others. If you cannot first lead yourself, you will be incapable of leading others.

Example: **Hudson Taylor** – Arrived in China 1853. Immediately changed his dress to match the Chinese. At the time of Hudson Taylor’s death 52 years later, in 1905, the China Inland Mission was an international body with 825 missionaries living in all eighteen provinces of China with more than 300 mission stations, more than 500 local Chinese helpers, and 25,000 Christian converts. Now, while there were other Protestant missionaries in China, none had the reach that Hudson did. Today, of China’s 1.4 billion people, 38 million are practicing Christians. That number is probably quite higher as

many converts practice their faith “underground.” Christianity is the fastest-growing religion in the country, with more Christians than even France and Germany.²

God is faithful.

READ: Deuteronomy 32:1-4 (ESV)

¹ “Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak, and let the earth hear the words of my mouth. May ² my teaching drop as the rain, my speech distill as the dew, like gentle rain upon the tender grass, and like showers upon the herb. ³ For I will proclaim the name of the Lord; ascribe greatness to our God!

⁴ “The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he.

READ: Lamentations 3:22-24 (ESV)

²² The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; ²³ they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. ²⁴ “The Lord is my portion,” says my soul, “therefore I will hope in him.”

READ: 1 Corinthians 1:9 (ESV)

God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

READ: 1 Corinthians 10:13 (ESV)

No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

READ: 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 (ESV)

² “Protestant Christianity is booming in China: President Xi does not approve,” September 15, 2020, *The Economist*, <https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2020/09/15/protestant-christianity-is-booming-in-china>, [accessed, April 11, 2021].

²³ Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.

READ: Revelations 19:11-13 (ESV)

¹¹ Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. ¹² His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. ¹³ He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God.

SO, WHAT'S THE TAKEAWAY?

Under the watchful care of a faithful God, we become faithful.

Spurgeon famously said, "The glory of God's faithfulness is that no sin of ours has ever made Him unfaithful." So though we fail, God remains faithful. Nothing can separate us from the love of God, not even our own poor choices. It boggles the mind, to be sure, but it also secures the heart when God's faithfulness takes root. And we see and understand how genuinely faithful God has been to us; we, in turn, choose to be loyal to him.

VIDEO DESCRIPTION

Wednesday Night Live | Wholly Living | Week 8

TITLE: Faithfulness

TEXT: Galatians 5:22-26

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Pastor’s manuscript can be found here: