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Faithful is He

#1212-A

Series: The Fruit of the Spirit

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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A VANISHING BREED

The sands of time have slowly etched their way into life's hidden crevices, and that almost unseen diamond known as "character" appears to have suffered in the process. No longer are employers searching the inner sanctum of a man's values to find his real qualifications; but rather, those sparkling jewels of honesty, integrity, steadfastness, and loyalty, seem to have vanished in a quest for degrees, experience, intellect, and innovation. An employee no longer searches for a place where he can contribute using the qualities of life he possesses, but rather he wants to know, before he even considers the job, how much vacation time does he get, how many days off, what kind of insurance plan there is, and can they guarantee him a job no matter what?

Not only is this the case where jobs are concerned, but people also no longer, for the most part, search for a church where they can serve; but often are looking for a church where they can best be served. Children have picked up their parents' values, and will "go on strike" if conditions don't match their desires. It's a world where selfishness and greed have overcome integrity and commitment as a way of life. It's a world where the guy who stays at one job too long is considered unmotivated. After all, the world surmises, if he's going to get ahead, he ought to be looking around for something better.

Of course, the institution of marriage has fallen prey to the same set of standards. You only "hang in there" if it is in your best interests. You only remain true to that person if nothing better comes along. If things get tough, you "split-up" and try again with someone else. After all, it's your life, they say, and you only go around once in life, so do what meets your needs. It's the same lie Satan fed Eve in the garden, and it still works.

In short, there is no longer any obvious benefit to being faithful. No longer is it "in" to remain in place no matter what. No

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longer is it considered a mark of excellence to remain with your spouse “till death do you part”. No longer is it “in” to stay with one job because you’re needed, or because you are grateful to have that job. Now the question is: “Where will that kind of blind loyalty get you?” The answer is found in the Word of God. That kind of loyalty will get you...everywhere. It will demonstrate to a searching, often ungrateful world as well, the amazing difference Jesus Christ makes in a life. It will demonstrate, at the same time, that quality of the character of God that actually makes it possible for us to know we are bound for heaven.

The attribute is God’s faithfulness. When we allow that quality to manifest itself in us, amazing things happen; things too wonderful for man to grasp; things so wonderful a watching world wants to know just what it is in us that makes us so faithful. Then we can tell them just who it is in us that does.

Faithfulness. The word has lost its meaning. We call dogs faithful, if they come when we call. We call our car “old faithful” if it lasts a long time. But the word in our day needs clarification. When Jesus used it, I believe there was a ring of awesomeness about it. Today, it’s a “ho-hummer”.

The Bible has a lot to say about faithfulness. Galatians 5:22 tells us that the fruit the Spirit produces in us includes faithfulness. The King James Bible, in many places, including Galatians 5, translates it “faith”. In fact, throughout the New Testament, the same basic word is used for both, and for good reason. The good reason is that they are inseparable. Faith is confidence and trust that defies the senses. It is the evidence of things not seen. That means you believe something is happening, or something will happen, not because you see it, but because someone whose word is faithful has said it’s so. So the faithfulness of his word generates faith in you, and you act on that faith. As you act on that faith, you become faithful. If that other person’s word proves to be trustworthy, it generates more faith; you rest your weight more fully on what that person said and remain in place and rest. Your agitation is gone, because you trust. Your desire to seek to flee disappears, because you have found a resting place. So you remain faithful.

Faithfulness, then, is steadfastness and dependability based on confidence in one who is faithful. It is that lost art of remaining in place no matter what, because the one who promised never to

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leave you or forsake you lives in you, and He will remain faithful to the end. The faithful man or woman is not trusting in his circumstances to determine what to do, but is trusting only in the word of the one in whom he has faith.

You say, “but I can’t put the weight of my trust in my boss, so I can’t be faithful”. “My husband isn’t to be trusted, so I won’t be faithful.” Well, here’s where it all comes together. If you are not a Christian, you cannot be faithful in the Scriptural sense, because faithfulness is an attribute of God, and unless God lives in you, it is impossible for you to be faithful. The Christian has a unique responsibility. He or she must demonstrate to the world, once again, a quality of life that they do not yet possess, in order to introduce them to a person who does not yet possess them. The literal meaning of the word is “sure, and thus steady” or “certain in belief, and thus established”. The Hebrew word “amen” or “verily” actually indicates that which is certain, and thus is established.

So the Christian’s faithfulness is predicated on only one thing, the nature of God. You are not faithful to your wife because she is worthy. She may or may not be. You are faithful, because God told you to be faithful based on a promise that by being faithful you are expressing His relationship to the church. He further guaranteed you spiritual rewards for doing so, rewards that moth and rust cannot corrupt, and thieves cannot break through and steal.

A FAITHFUL GOD

Our study of faithfulness, then, must be predicated on, and prefaced by, a look at the faithfulness of God. It is that element of His Divine Nature operative in us that, in fact, allows us to be faithful. If faithfulness is a fruit of God’s Spirit, then it cannot be produced apart from Him, and if we want to see it in action so we will recognize it in practice, we must see it in Him. We read these words:

The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people:

But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

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Know (recognize, and understand) therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations;

(Deuteronomy 7:7-9)

God's faithfulness to His people is based on his character, not on their worthiness. He is faithful to us, because He loves us, and because He always keeps His Word. He promised to be faithful; therefore, it is settled. He will do what He said He would, whether it looks like He's doing it now or not. That allows us the freedom to live faithful lives. We are to be faithful to Him; faithful to His Word; faithful to His church; faithful to those authorities He places over us...our country and its laws, our leaders (spiritual, vocational, and governmental); faithful to our mates; faithful to our calling; faithful to His purposes for our lives.

In fact, His very name is Faithful.

And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

(Revelation 19:11)

WHAT HE WILL DO

God, then, is the Faithful One. He, in us, will demonstrate qualities of faithfulness that are measurable. Our measuring stick must be the Scriptures. The Bible has a clear-cut set of guidelines to tell us how the faithfulness reveals itself, and it tells us how we should behave, as well. There are more evidences of faithfulness than we can possibly cover, but we'll take the most prominent ones for this study.

The Faithful Man is Always True to his Word

Perhaps the most tell-tale evidence of faithfulness is the integrity of your word. Can what you say always be counted on? The best way to find out is to ask your family and those you work alongside. If you say to the kids, "I'll take you to that game on Friday," but on Friday make light of it, and go to the golf course instead, your word becomes suspect. If you say to your wife, "I'll be home by five," and don't show up until six (without calling), why should she believe you the next time you tell her you'll be home at a certain time? Faithfulness is measured, first and foremost, by the integrity of your word. Two questions must always be asked: "Is what you say always true?" and "Do you

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always do what you promised?” Faithful is He who lives in you. The Word claims,

Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.

My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. (Psalm 89:33,34)

For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.

Thy faithfulness is unto all generations: thou hast established the earth, and it abideth. (Psalm 119:89,90)

The Word of your God is the most trustworthy thing you own,

The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away:

But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

(I Peter 1:24b,25)

Never will one word of God’s promises be annulled. Never will one thing He has said He will do be left undone. Never. The believer who is letting God be God will be a man or woman of his or her word. It will be characteristic of the Christ-filled life. That means that if you charge something and promise to pay for it by a certain time, or borrow something and promise to return it, do it! The reputation of your God is at stake, and Faithful is He.

In the same vein, do you always tell the truth? God does, and so does God in you.

A faithful witness will not lie: but a false witness will utter lies. (Proverbs 14:5)

Now truth is truth to God. Unfortunately, truth is relative to man. But with God it is an absolute. It is not plastic, so that it can be bent, squeezed, manipulated, or melted. It is hardened steel. Whatever hits it, knows it is. We live in an age where Christians bend the truth to fit life’s circumstances and justify it in the name of “love”. True love gently tells it like it is. In fact, the faithful man is described this way,

Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful. (Proverbs 27:6)

In other words, a faithful man will tell it like it is, even if it hurts, and it hurts less in the long run than words of praise from someone who is not sincere.

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The Faithful Man Keeps Confidences

A second tell-tale sign of a faithful man or woman is the manner in which they keep confidences. By keeping confidences, I mean that if someone tells you something that is personal in nature, that is potentially damaging, or that is not meant to be shared, is it stored away in a locked file in the computer of your mind, where it cannot be accessed? Or are you known as “Bobby Big Mouth”? Proverbs says,

A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter. (Proverbs 11:13)

As always, the Word says it all.

The Faithful Man Forgives

A third aspect of faithfulness is its forgiving spirit. The one who would be faithful must remain in place regardless of the worth of those over him and alongside, unless or until God ordains change. In order to do that, he or she cannot hold grudges. Again, God is our example. He reminds us,

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (I John 1:9)

...his compassions fail not.

They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. (Lamentations 3:22b,23)

In I Timothy Paul sensed that forgiveness as he wrote,

And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious (an insolent man): but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. (I Timothy 1:12,13)

A faithful, forgiving God counted Paul as faithful, not because His behavior justified it, but because the Faithful One, even Jesus Christ, had come to live in this man who once blasphemed God’s name, persecuted God’s people, and insulted God’s reputation. Forgiveness. It is a sign of the faithful man or woman, because Faithful is He...who lives in them.

The Faithful Man Is a Real Candidate for Leadership

Looking for leaders? Look for faithful men. Paul did. In II Timothy 2:2, that well-used passage on discipleship, he gave

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us this key quality for a man who is to be trained to lead. He has first been found faithful.

And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. (II Timothy 2:2,3)

Train them in the trenches, before you promote them to the boardroom. Let them sweep the floors before you let them sweep men off their feet. If they can't be faithful with a mop, they can't be faithful at the top. Leaders and disciple-makers (and they are one and the same) ought to be men and women who, through the test of time, have proved themselves to be...faithful.

Read such passages as Nehemiah 7:2, 9:8, 13:13, I Corinthians 4:2, and Isaiah 49:7. They confirm that when God is looking for leaders, He does not gravitate to the center stage of life where floodlights beam upon the brow of those whose talents have won the world's acclaim, but rather to the back roads of life where men and women are laboring quietly in the shade, just doing what they've been told to do for the Glory of God, day after day after day. God's testing ground for greatness is framed by shadows, surrounded by silence, and void of applause. It is a place where God's eye constantly scans those who labor there for faithful men, and for faithful women. They are His candidates for tomorrow's giants.

The Faithful Man Is Attentive to Life's Details

Perhaps one of the most convicting qualities of a faithful man is found in these next passages. They really contain three basic truths that are of the utmost importance when you are looking at this subject. Let's read the first passage, then look at the issues.

He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. (Luke 16:10)

There is your next plumb line. You will know how a man will handle life's great responsibilities by how he handles life's insignificant ones. If he promises to wash the dishes and then doesn't, don't count on him in the million dollar deal. If he doesn't display integrity as PTA treasurer, don't think he'll change when he becomes Chairman of the Board. The job may change, but his character will only be magnified for what it is. Responsibility

doesn't change people, nor does it train people. It exposes people for what they are.

Teach your children to take seriously the seemingly meaningless tasks you give them, for how they handle those will tell you how they will handle marriage, a family, a job, and a ministry. If they are not faithful in life's little things, don't count on them to change when the price tag is higher.

Spiritual Faithfulness Mirrors How We Handle Things

The passage goes on:

If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?

And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?

(Luke 16:11,12)

Two thoughts immediately vie for our attention. How we handle possessions and money is a good indicator of how we will handle spiritual truth. If we are careless with material things, we will be careless with the things of God. If we are selfish with our possessions, we will be selfish with our spiritual experience. If we are presumptuous with God where finances are concerned, we will be presumptuous with God with the True Riches of the Kingdom. Your checkbook will tell you a lot about how faithful you are. If in life's visible, tangible responsibilities you are not consistent, what makes you think you'll be faithful in things unseen? The second truth is this: If you can't be faithful with your employer's time, what makes you think you will be faithful with the time God gives you? Aren't they one and the same?

Faithful Men Remain Faithful to the End

In Luke 12:42, we read still another definition of a faithful man. It is, perhaps, the most convicting of all, for many of us have learned to "hang in there" for the short haul, until we see results. Few of us have turned from sprinters to long-distance runners in the race of life. It reads,

And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season?

Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.

(Luke 12:42,43)

In other words, the issue isn't that you've been faithful thus

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far, the issue is...if nothing changes, will you be faithful right up until the Lord's return? Or do you expect a medal at the halfway point? Medals are given at the finish line. If you're not a finisher, don't plan on being rewarded. God's not in the partial business. He finishes what he starts. He who does a good work in us finishes it. He who is faithful in us is faithful to the end. So if you're getting tired and think you have earned a respite from responsibility, be careful. Your respite will come, when Jesus comes.

Faithfulness ought to be Proportionate to Knowledge

One final thought, and it's a tough one. That same passage continues:

And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.

But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.
(Luke 12:47,48)

If you are always seeking knowledge, but cannot be faithful in the details of life, you just might want to memorize this passage. What it basically says is: The more you know, the more accountable you are to be...faithful. An unwillingness to learn is no excuse. We are commanded to become skillful handlers of the Word of Truth, but learning is no substitute for being faithful. The more you learn, either by instruction or experience, the more faithful you ought to become. Make no mistake about it, you will be measured by a progressive scale that intensifies judgment as it appropriates knowledge, for God is not after living encyclopedias. He is looking for faithful men.

Faithful men and women are those who are true to their word; who keep confidences; who readily forgive; who are attentive to details; who handle life's possessions responsibly; and who remain utterly faithful to the end. They will be candidates for real leadership in the kingdom.

So there you have a God's-eye view of the faithful man or woman. You say, "But that's not me." No, it's not. But it is an adequate description of the One who lives in you. It is a perfect portrait drawn on the canvas of Scripture of the life of God in man. He is...faithful. In I Corinthians, we read these words:

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God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship
of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. (I Corinthians 1:9)

No, you aren't faithful apart from God. You can't be, but then,
you don't need to be. For:

Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.
(I Thessalonians 5:24)

Faithful is He. Oh, blessed Christ,
The faithful one who paid the price;
Yours is the life I want men to see
That they may of Jesus, say: "Faithful is He."

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(10.30.12)