

Kings Norton Baptist Church

Sunday 21st May 2023 10 am

Faithfulness

Welcome to all.

Opening Scripture and prayer

Hymn MP 41 At the Name of Jesus

Scripture Isaiah 61 (page 748)

Prayer of praise and thanksgiving.

Children's talk

Chorus MP 825 Faithful One so unchanging

Notices Rigtje, Kevin

Missionary slot

Prayer and share time

Reading 2 Peter 1:1-11 (page 1222)

Galatians 5:22

Hymn MP 458 Man of sorrows what a name

Sermon Living a life of *Faithfulness*

Hymn MP 1087 Lord I come before your throne

Closing Prayer



1a

Prayer and Exordium

■ Hold up two pics, one of a straight road, one of a spaghetti mix

Which one more closely resembles your life? Is it Hickledy pickeldy or straight?

When Jesus takes a life over he straightens things out. He straightens out relationships: first with God then with others. He straightens out the bad habits, the old ways are brought round to the new way.

Every area of a person's life is affected.

Today we will look at Faithfulness x2 The fruit of the Spirit is **Faithfulness**.

Faithfulness, Gentleness and self-control. The word **faithfulness** in the original Greek is Pistis and is used 243 times in the NT. It is translated '**believe, faith, trust**'. Prominence is given to one or other of these elements according to the context. So let us first look at some of the ways it is used.

Different usages of 'faith'

The word is used of saving faith - This is the faith that every true believer has, this is common to all, This is the gift of God to every believer and is synonymous with the Holy Spirit, through whom we have faith. Faith is always a *gift from God*, and *never* something that can be produced by people. Some people said this or that happened and 'I lost my faith' - that faith is not true faith, the Faith that comes from God, that is of self.

In short we could describe faith for the believer as "God's *divine persuasion*" – and therefore distinct from human belief (confidence), yet involving it. Eph 2:8 **For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—** The Lord continuously *births faith* in the yielded believer so we can know what He prefers, i.e. the *persuasion of His will* (1 Jn 5:4). **Being certain of what we do not see.... we live by faith and not by sight**, 2 Cor 5:7 Let us remember that **without faith it is impossible to please God**.

The word *pistis* in secular antiquity referred to a *guarantee*. In Scripture, faith is God's guarantee, certifying that the revelation He inbirthed will come to pass (*His way*).

Then we have '**the**' **faith**, we are to **contend for 'the faith'** and if we are to speak we should do so in conformity to '**the**' **faith** Rom 12:6. That is we must have a firm conviction, producing a full acknowledgement of God's revelation of truth, 2 Thess 2:11,12; Some have Paul tells Timothy **wandered away from 'the' faith**.

1b

Then there is living out this faith: “**Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.** Mark 11:24 says Jesus. James says the same “**when you ask you believe and not doubt.**”

Some faith is strong, as Paul said **if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.** 1 Cor 13:2 because strong faith must show in actions. – and there are those with a weak faith, those unsure. **Accept him whose faith is weak,** Rom 14:1

Then there is the ‘gift’ of faith, 1 Cor 12:9 **to another faith by the same Spirit** - this is something that certain people within the Body of Christ especially have, it stands out. **You would say George Muller had this gift of faith. Believing the Lord would provide food for hundreds of children – and he did.** In one sense we should all have this, believing that He will provide all we need as he promises to. And my God will meet all your needs....

Then there ‘faith’ in terms of a relationship, the pledge of fidelity, or faith, Paul speaks of those who **have broken their first pledge** or faith.” 1 Tim 5:12

But here in this passage it is to do with living faithfully. As when Jesus talks to the pharisees, they had missed the main point “**Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness.**” Mat 23:23

✚ **Christian character is not mere moral or legal correctness, but the possession - and manifestation - of these nine graces: of which one is faithfulness.**

He who has been given a charge must prove faithful Paul reminds the Christians at Corinth 1 Cor 4:2 - all who are called of the Lord - are to live faithfully. x2

The fruit of the Spirit is to be seen in all believers. No Spirit of Jesus then no fruit. And if we see no fruit then there’s no Spirit. It is as simple as that. And if there is no Spirit then that person does not belong to Christ. Rom 8.

✚ **This faith is shown in godly conduct. It is a life of surrender, it is to live faithfully.** x2

Faithfulness – is the first in the last group of three. so just to recap....

1. **love, joy, peace** — Here is the essential inward state of someone with the Spirit of Jesus in them. This is what we experience, this is what we enjoy, here are the wonderful blessings of knowing Christ, ... and it is here we like to stay. But the Lord gives us them that they can be displayed to all around and that Christ may have all the Glory.

2. **Patience, kindness, goodness** — Here is character expressed outwardly towards others; Remember we saw that **patience** is not to grin and bear it, no because the resulting action is one of **kindness**. Where does this kindness come from? A good heart, - “Lord give me a good heart!”
3. The last three **faithfulness, gentleness, Self-control** — are who we now are, these are virtues, character from God – and expressed towards God.

This is not the beautiful body – but the beautiful life, radiating Jesus Christ.

These characteristics taken together present a moral portrait of Christ. – Jesus’ life modelled them.

The life of Jesus

Jesus always did what his father did “**for I always do what pleases him.**” John 8:29

Jesus always said what his father said: “**For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it.**” Joh 12:49

A man or woman living faithfully will have a well-controlled tongue, as James says: **If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless.** Jam 1:26. He goes on, to say that keeping the tongue in check is **to keep his whole body in check** 3:2

■ **Our late Queen, 70 years and no-one could recall a wrong word said!**

Prov 17:27: **A man of knowledge uses words with restraint, and a man of understanding is even-tempered.**

■ **Her Majesty’s approach to being Queen echoes a *Times* editorial of 1937. Successful monarchy, the *Times* suggested, relies ‘not upon intellectual brilliance or superlative talent of any kind, but upon the moral qualities of steadiness, staying power and self-sacrifice’. Last year, in a YouGov survey, the nation voted the Queen as the person who provided the most moral leadership. Even the cynical and critical media, as well as those who oppose the monarchy, have a grudging respect for her character, faithfulness and endurance.**

The Queen said: ‘For me, the life of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, is an inspiration and an anchor in my life.’

Jesus did everything he was to do, he fulfilled all that was said before he would do, all his father willed, the right action, at the right time, in the right place. There were no ‘u’ turns, there were no meanderings, there were no wilderness years. There was no being pulled here and there. Jesus was not led astray, he never had to ‘get back on track’. No his life was always, as we say, “*as straight as an arrow*” or “*on the straight and narrow*”

"My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work." John 4:34. So a Christian in whom Christ dwells to be like Jesus. should also be able to say: "My food, is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work." That is what it is to pick up your cross daily, 'your' cross, to do obediently what the Lord has saved you for - and walk uprightly before Him. Jesus completed His work on the cross so as to redeem those destined for destruction and bring us to Himself. The work of Jesus is the most wonderful work, God in the flesh putting on my dirty rags and carrying my guilt way in his suffering on the cross. There is nothing else like it. Make sure there is no one here who has still to turn from the sinful way. Cast your sins upon him while you can. The moment you step out of this world your state before God is fixed – and when you meet him for many it will be the most dreadful day, with no escape, as Hebrews 2:3 says **how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation?** Many of you hear of it every Sunday, do not ignore it, x2

At the end of his ministry he said to his father: "I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do." John 17:4

✚ May you and I as we lie on our death-bed be able to say the same!

■ I never expected to come to Birmingham, up to coming here I had never stayed in one place for more than five minutes, or so it seemed. Now I have been here wearing out the same pavement for 35 years. I never expected to be in one place for so long, and while the Lord does move his people around we are planted in this life, in this world, in this place by the lord as a tree is planted, for the long term. To grow and bear fruit. To be strong and solid.

Isaiah 60:21 says **Then will all your people be righteous ... they are the shoot I have planted, the work of my hands, for the display of my splendour.** And again in the next chapter that we read earlier — **They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendour.** Isaiah 61:3

■ You are an oak, not the spindly shoots in the pot just outside the door that blow in the wind and if you're not careful set the security lights off.

Think of an Oak tree, so you are to be - strong, solid, dependable, a shelter, with a trunk to anchor to, a landmark to guide people by. Immovable, standing firm in the knocks of life, see a car hit a large Oak and it will be a 'right off' the Oak unmoved, even untouched!

If you are called of the Lord then you are called to bear the fruit of faithfulness.

When someone arrives for work at the Police station and puts on his uniform he ceases to be Joe Bloggs or whoever he is, he is now a Police officer, a man under the authority of his commanding officer, he is an officer of the realm to fulfil the functions of his profession, no more, no less

So it is with a Christian, we have no outward uniform but it should be clear for all to see by the Holy and faithful life you lead.

■ You can spot a Policeman in a room full of people or in a crowd, and that is the point – In the same way people should be able to see that you are the Lord's by the quality of your life, how you act and how you serve others. That is our uniform.

So let us be practical now.

Some things are visible and some are not. Timekeeping is an obvious one, some who have been Christians for years still haven't got the basic disciplines sorted out and regularly arrive late.

If this is the case then it is likely that the less visible things also need attention. Sloppiness in one area will be sloppiness in another. How well do you manage your finances? are you careful - and frugal towards self – but generous towards others, the Lord sees it.

✚ Christ dwelling inside a man or a woman, a boy or girl by His Spirit, will produce a change, a huge change affecting every area of our lives.

The basic discipline of replying to messages, always responding, my father used to say 'by return' when contacted. Keeping your word, doing what you say, being where you say you will be, at the right time, and able to be relied upon. Not to be so is means you are not yet ready to be entrusted with anything

How we as Christians live is to be quite different to how a worldling lives. We should not be 'here and there', like those wiggly lines, where you never quite know which direction they are going in next, you cannot assume they will be around to help, or to join in prayer, or the have an area of responsibility.

The Bible describes then as a faulty bow, you don't have a bow so the modern equivalent would be of something that only works sometimes, a car that often lets you down. I have had a few of those. I wouldn't venture far in some of them.

Being wise and discerning about doctrine is important – but the purpose of doctrine – and wisdom - is to live a Godly life. That is what we were made for.

Creation pattern

The way God created everything in Genesis 1 is a pattern for how he recreates His people. Our recreated life is to pattern the created life.

When God created he made it new. So when someone is born again he or she is made new. **If anyone is in Christ Jesus he is a new creation** 2 Cor 5:17 and Gal 6:15

When God created the world he did two things, the first is separation, x2 that is he separated light from darkness, ... water and sky, ... land and sea.

So the Christian life is one of separation separating out from what we used to do. This is particularly true towards the beginning, soon after a Christians is converted. We stop swearing, we stop being dishonest, we stop being immoral, we stop those bad practices. As God's Holy people we separate from those old unholy practices.

Are there still things you have not separated from? Watching the soaps? Indulging in worldliness? Gossipy language, talking about others, gambling?

The next thing God does is beautify

We have been doing a bit of that in the garden, and it is a great time of year to see how beautiful it all looks.

So God beautified his world with flowers, trees, bushes, hills, streams, birds, fish, animals all to bring glory to God. Despite its corruption we live in a world of evident beauty.

So the Lord seeks to beautiful His people, to adorn us with graces, with kindness, gentleness, goodness, and faithfulness.

There is the attractive, adorned life, a Godly life is an attractive life.

Have you been following the Lord for a while? Have you built in those qualities that display the beauty of the Lord?

- When there's a young believer, they will be looking to you for their example.
- So also others who attend here will look to you as they consider Jesus Christ.

Faithfulness cannot be hid, for a faithful man or woman is always looking out for the interest of others, that is love in action which **always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.** 1 Cor 13:7 Yes 'trustfulness, reliance,' is seen in one's dealings with others. A man or woman of God will have gracious speech, a generosity of heart, a disposition towards others, be reliable, steady, helpful.

Faithful men and women are reliable, You can set your clock by them, they are always there at the gathering of the Lord's people as we have agreed to do so together. At the time of prayer, regular in worship. They are steady and dependable. Always going in the same direction. Not blown around but faithful to your calling; first to the Lord, and then as a Christian mother or father, grandparent, brother or sister, etc.

- ✚ It is a life that stands out against what is natural seen in this world.
- That is why it is necessary to read Christian biographies, Robert Murray McCheyne, William Carey, Adoniram Judson, Hudson Taylor, Mary Slessor, Brother Andrew, Helen Rosevere, Jim and Elisabeth Elliot, Corrie Ten Boom and so on.
- Warwick was a man who displayed faithfulness in his life. I had known him for thirty years, - you get to know someone well after working with them for thirty years - I never saw him lose his temper, issue a harsh word, he was always concerned for others, conscientious, disciplined in his Bible reading, regular at worship and times of prayer, with an evident prayer life, a list of people he prayed for was found by his bed..

What an example of the Christian life, 250 people at the funeral said 'Amen' to that. Are you similarly reliable, dependable? Let us also be faithful in Bible reading and Bible study. Let us also be faithful in praying and encourage others by always there when we are due to meet together. Gweno comes to mind!

He could say with Paul: **I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.** 2 Timothy 4:7]

So Jesus at the end of his ministry could say " **I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.**" John 17:4

- ✚ Christ wants to see his people grow in faith and faithfulness.

Let us, as professors of faith be those seen to be faithful in the Lord's high calling on our lives.

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