

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT - FAITH

Galatians 5:22-23

Scripture Reading: Hebrews 11:1-16

Intro: We come today to the seventh of the nine characteristics which make up the fruit of the Spirit. Love was first. Joy was second. Peace was third. Longsuffering was fourth. Gentleness was fifth. Goodness was sixth. And now we come to faith which is seventh. This leaves only two more: meekness, which is eighth; and temperance, or self-control, which is ninth. The nine make up the single fruit of the Spirit. As I have been saying, these characteristics are to be seen in their perfection in Jesus Christ, especially in the Son of God Who became a Man.

The KJV gives the regular translation of the Greek word which is **πίστις**, as simply "faith." The NKJV, the NASB and the NIV all translate it *faithfulness*. But as I have studied this word again I have wondered if we have not lost something of the meaning of the word Paul used by changing faith to faithfulness. Even our English dictionaries define faith as belief in God, or as trusting God. We were saved by faith, that is, faith in God, or more specifically, faith in Christ. We live by faith, that is, we are to live by trusting the Members of the Godhead. And the only way we can do that is by living according to the Word of God. Now if a Christian is a faithful Christian he is going to be living according to the Word, but we often speak of each other as faithful people when we may not mean that they are living in a close relationship with God. We may just mean that he is a faithful person. He can be trusted. If you give him a job, you can be sure that he will do it. We often use the word faithful for people who are not Christians. But if we understand the meaning of faith, the only person who can manifest true faith in God is a child of God. What I am saying is that true faith will produce faithfulness, but faithfulness by itself does not necessarily spring out of faith. It can't, if the person is not a true believer in Christ.

Now I have tried to bring out of these words, and I hope I have succeeded, that we all have a growing relationship with these words. After all, one of the main characteristics of fruit is growth. An apple, or an orange, or a pear, has to be grown. When we are born into the family of God we have eternal life, but the real evidence that we have eternal life, is that we will grow. So when we say that the fruit of the Spirit is love, we mean that the Holy Spirit has planted love in our hearts, but it needs to grow. The Spirit of God gives us joy, but it needs to grow. And we can go through these

The Holy Spirit - #19 (2)

nine characteristics of Christ, and of a child of God, but they all are growing characteristics. You young people who know the Lord should not be discouraged if you don't see all of the evidence of the fruit of the Spirit in your life that you would like to see. Your parents and your elders and deacons are still growing too. Paul names them for us so that we will know how God is working in our lives by His Spirit, but we all need to keep growing.

Now the first thing that you and I need to know is that every one of these characteristics of a true Christian is a gift from God. That is one reason they are called "the fruit of the Spirit." We do not generate them ourselves. They are all gifts from God and together they make up a single fruit of the Spirit.

Let me give you two verses that tells us that our faith is a gift from God. They are two very simple, very well known verses. Some of you already know that I am talking about Ephesians, chapter 2, and verses 8 and 9. Here is what they tell us:

8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.

What is faith? Faith is believing God. Faith is trusting God. We are saved by trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ Who died on the Cross to save us from our sins. We are saved by grace because we don't deserve to be saved. We are saved by faith in Christ because we can't save ourselves, but He can! And it is not by works, it is not by what we do for God because no one could be saved that way. We don't work to be saved, we believe to be saved. It is all a most wonderful gift from God through Christ. And so you and I don't have anything to brag about because we are saved, because all of the glory belongs to God, and to Jesus Christ, and to the Holy Spirit.

But now let me tell you a second thing about our faith.

How did it come to us? Well, a big part of the answer to that question is right in our text this morning: It is a major part of what the Holy Spirit has given to us. "The fruit of the Spirit is . . . faith." It is the Holy Spirit Who gives us our faith. But how does He do it?

Let me read a verse to you that will answer that question for you. And

The Holy Spirit - #19 (3)

now I am referring to some verses in Paul's letter to the church at Rome away back in the first century. But what Paul wrote then is just as true now as it was then. Listen as I read to you from Romans chapter 10, beginning with verse 9. It would be good for you to turn in your Bible to Romans 10 so you can follow me as I read Romans 10, beginning with verse 9:

9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

11 For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

12 For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.

13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

14 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?

15 And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?

17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Let me make two points from this last verse. The first is that "faith cometh by hearing . . . the Word of God." The Word of God according to Ephesians 6:17 is the sword of the Spirit. As we seek to win people to the Lord, we are engaged in spiritual warfare. The most powerful weapon we can use is the Word of God. The Apostle Peter wrote in his first epistle these words concerning the Word of God and salvation:

23 Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

24 For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away:

25 But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you (1 Peter 1:23-25).

I believe that this tells us that no one is ever really saved except for the

way the Word of God is used in giving us faith, and drawing us to Christ.

Now while we are thinking of the word “faith” at it is used in the Bible, let me remind you that there are times when you read in the Bible, especially in the NT, where we read about “the faith.” In many of these passages this is what we might call a technical term. It refers specifically to the doctrines of the Bible, and especially of the NT.

For example, after Saul of Tarsus was saved, Paul wrote in this letter to the church of Galatia, that the churches in Judea were saying “that he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed” (Gal. 1:23).

Paul in Ephesians was speaking of the leadership of the early Church, and he wrote these words in Ephesians 4:11-15:

11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.

And to cite one more example Paul told the Colossian church how they could tell if a person had really been saved. Listen to what Paul wrote in Colossians 1:21-23a:

21 And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled

22 In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight:

23 If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel . . .

A person may claim to be a Christian, but if he does not hold steadfastly to the doctrine of the NT, *i.e.*, *the faith*, his claim to be a Christian is a false claim.

So when we say that the fruit of the Spirit is . . . faith, we mean that there

The Holy Spirit - #19 (5)

will be an unwavering and growing conviction in the heart of the child of God that the Bible, all of it, is, and always will be the infallible and unchanging Word of God.

And we are, even as older, mature Christians, to desire the sincere milk of the Word, the way a newborn baby loves its mother's milk. Why? "That ye may grow thereby" (1 Pet. 2:2).

God has given us faith, but our faith needs to grow. How do we grow as Christians? Our faith grows by reading the Word of God. Our faith grows as we obey the Word of God. We grow by doing what we are doing this morning: by hearing the Word of God. We need to be growing in the way we trust the Lord. Our faith is going to be tested, tested by circumstances, tested by people, tested by the Devil, and always tested by the Lord, not to destroy our faith, but to make us stronger and stronger in the way we trust the Lord, walking by faith in Him.

But let me make one more point before I close. I asked Pastor Will to read for us a portion of the faith chapter of the Bible. It probably would have been better if I had asked him to read the whole chapter. It is a chapter which tells us how people from the beginning of time have walked with God. But did you notice what the writer of Hebrews said in verse 6? Let me read it to you again. It gets my vote for being one of the most important verses in the Bible. Listen to it again.

6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him (Heb. 11:6).

That verse is worth a whole sermon, or better, a series of sermons. The most important thing that we have to do is to please the Lord. And it is amazing that the Lord has made it possible to please Him. We are so different from the Lord, especially when we are first saved, but that difference will be seen throughout our lives. But what He want us to do is simply to trust Him, to trust Him more than we trust anyone else. He wants us to trust Him more than we trust ourselves. And how do we trust Him? By believing what He has told us in His Word, and by trusting Him to make us faithful, and to keep us faithful, in living to please Him.

But what is really the key to a life of faith. Go on through Hebrews 11, and enjoy every word of it, but don't let the chapter division when you get to chapter 12 make you think that the writer was moving on to a new subject. He was still talking about living by faith. Let me read to you just

The Holy Spirit - #19 (6)

verses 1 and 2 and 3, and maybe you will read the rest of the chapter some time this afternoon. Here is what we all need to read and to remember if we are to live a life of faith in order to please all Three Members of the Godhead – the Father, our Savior, and the blessed Holy Spirit:

1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

3 For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds (Heb. 12:1-3).

Concl: We could spend another hour just talking about these two verses.

But we are not going to do that. I just want to emphasize one point in closing. And it is in those words, “Looking unto Jesus.”

The verb “looking” is very interesting from several standpoints. It is a present participle in Greek just like it is in English. And so it means looking and looking and looking and looking not just at Him, but “unto” Him. To look “unto” Him means with an attitude of dependence upon Him. We walk by faith in our dear Jesus, knowing how right and secure we are when we are trusting Him. But let me tell you what that verb “looking” really means. By definition it means *to turn our eyes away from everyone else and everything else and fix them exclusively and continuously upon Jesus.*

Jesus wants us to learn of Him. He said so while He was here on earth. When we read our Bibles are we looking for Him. And when we see Him, do we find it hard to leave Him? He is our Life. He is our Lord. He is the Almighty One. He is the Sufficient One. When you learn about Him as you can see Him in the Word, you know that you can rest in Him and you find all that you need to take you through those trials which can be so heavy and unbearable without Him. The person who wrote those simple lines which have been put to music, knew what he or she was saying when he wrote,

Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face;
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
in the light of His glory and grace.

Where do we see Him? We see Him in the Word. So let us keep looking for Him day after day that we may find our rest and our hope in Him.