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**Presentation Transcript**  
**Fruits of the Spirit – Part 8 – Faithfulness**  
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So far in our series on the *Fruits of the Spirit*, we have seen from the context that Paul is emphasizing actions and attitudes that grow in us because the Father and Jesus have these traits, and They live in people who have converted from their old ways to learning God's. Another way to say this, since God is love, is that these traits are fruits – that is, growth items – of the Spirit in us.

Another thing that helps me to understand what Paul is driving at is this: If we look at the context of the scripture containing the fruits of the Spirit, he says in verse 13 of Galatians 5:

**Galatians 5:13-15** – *For your were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. But, if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.*

So, he's talking to them about a problem in the congregation. People are sniping at one another – or, maybe even worse. He tells them that snipers get sniped. And then, he offers them a solution – different way to behave around each other, if they're having trouble with them – or, when they're not, for that matter.

In verse 16 of Galatians 5, he says:

**V-16-17** – *But I say, walk in the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other – to keep you from doing the things you want to do.*

So, he assumes that they all want to do the right thing – which is a form of encouragement – and appealing to them to step up to the next level of spirituality. And then in verse 18, he says:

**V-18-21** – *But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law – or, under the law’s penalty. Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy – and then he adds in – drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

So he puts his finger on the issue – enmity, strife, jealousy fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions and envy – and then mixes them in with other issues as well, making their bickering as bad as drunken orgies. Then here comes the solution. And I say, “He makes them as bad....” They *are* as bad. A sin is a sin.

**V-22-26** – *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness – the one we’re going to work on today – gentleness, self-control – against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires – and the others, etcetera. If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another or envying one another.*

So, what does this mean for us today? Well, his exposition of these traits is a lesson with how to get along with people when we don’t always see eye to eye with them. And, as I said, the element in this progression that we’re going to work on today is *faithfulness*.

I usually start with the definition of the term as used in the Bible, so I will – out of Louw & Nida. The word in the Greek is *pistas* – P-I-S-T-I-S. And it’s translated *faith* in *The King James*, and *faithfulness* in most other translations. So, there’s a difference between those two. Louw & Nida says the word means *the state of being someone in whom complete confidence can be placed; trustworthiness, dependability, faithfulness*. And Louw & Nida *Lexicon* gives an example of it in *Romans 3:3*, where it says, “*That doesn’t mean that their lack of faithfulness annuls the faithfulness of God.*” From there, it’s clear that Paul was talking about *faithfulness*, rather than *faith* in God. He covered that in *1 Corinthians 13*, to some degree, and *Hebrews 11* – so, more about that soon – *but God’s faithfulness* – important, because that’s the example for us.

So, let’s go to a scripture we looked at earlier in *Romans 3:1* through *4*. He’s asked this question:

**Romans 3:1-4** – *Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? – since that was an issue in the church then. Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God. What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God? By no means! Let God be true though everyone were a liar, as it is written, “That you may be justified in your words, and prevail when you are judged.”*

So, I know many people who, over the years, have become offended by the behavior of some that they knew in the church, only to give up on God as well. And their giving up on the One being in heaven and on earth, who is completely faithful all the time, because of the weaknesses

of fellow human beings just really doesn't make sense. There is something else going on there – like, maybe, they wanted to quit, or something like that.

So, God is truthful to us. When He promises something, He delivers it without fail. And there are many, many promises He makes to us in the scriptures. And there are so many scriptures about His faithfulness. “Grace and truth come by Jesus Christ” is one of them. Here's another in 1 John 5:20:

**1 John 5:20** – *And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and He is eternal life.*

So that is the model for us – to be truthful and faithful to other people. One aspect of faithfulness of God is that He's dependable. In the scripture, He's called the Ancient of Days. I mean, that's an indicator that He's been around forever. And He's *always* been there, so we can depend on Him being there.

In Psalms 139, beginning in verse 1, David said:

**Psalms 139:1** – *O LORD, You have searched me and known me! You know when I sit down and when I rise up. You discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O LORD, you know it altogether. You know me in, behind and before, and lay Your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me. It is high, I cannot attain it. So, it was just too much to take in – what God knows about us. Where shall I go from Your Spirit? Or, where shall I flee from Your presence? If I ascend to heaven, You are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, You are there! If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me.*

David is expounding on how ever-present God is. God has *always* had us in mind, even before a single human was created, because His plan is eternal. We have been and are always on His mind. So, we can depend on that. God has always had us in mind, even before a single human was created. His plan for us is eternal. We have been and always are on His mind – *always*. It's what He lives for – what He thinks about. Because of these things, He's dependable. He doesn't lie and He's ever-present.

Another thing about God: David called Him his rock and His fortress. God is one to be depended upon because He does not change His mind about us. He isn't wishy-washy. In James 1:17, James said:

**James 1:17** – *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.* The King James says, “shadow of turning.”

So, what is this about? What does it mean? Well, God is not fickle or wishy-washy. He doesn't change His mind all the time on a whim. Sometimes God, because we have free will, He has to wait to see what we're going to do, I think, in some cases. But He always knows what to do about that. Being fickle or wishy-washy, those are human traits, not God's. And because He has all knowledge and all power, He is always able to stick to His choices, which each of us in one – He chooses us. He makes careful decisions and then He sticks to them. Granted, it's harder for us to do that than it is for Him. But, since we're going to be where He is someday, He wants us to practice being that way now.

The final thing to talk about related to what makes God dependable is God loves us steadfastly – continuously. He's not going to go to the prom with somebody else, if He said He would go with you. You might think that's funny, or sort of colloquial, but it's not really. We have all been invited to a wedding – our own with Jesus. And He won't leave us standing at the altar. His mind is made up, and He knows who He loves. He knows who He wants to spend eternity with. Perhaps the most important, or lovable thing, about God is His faithful love for us. John said the reason we love Him is that He loved us first. We can count on that. So He's dependable in that way.

That's the easy part. It's not hard to understand faithfulness. When I first used that word – or you first read it in Galatians 5 – faithful and faithfulness – immediately everybody knows what those words mean. They come to our mind – it's not hard to understand faithfulness. What's hard is *being* faithful. And it's important.

Let's look in Revelation 17:13. This is shooting out into the future after we have been changed into God beings. It's talking about the end time. It says in Revelation 17:13 – John saw some beings and said:

**Revelation 17:13** – *These are of one mind, and they hand over their power and authority to the beast. Talking about the people who are going to bring about the end of the world. They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for He is the Lord of Lords and King of kings, and those with Him – and we all hope to be those, right? – are called and chosen and faithful.*

So faithfulness is a quality of those who make it. We've spoken often, at LifeResource, about being faithful to God. So let's spend the rest of the time on this scripture dealing with being faithful to each other, which it seems is what Paul had in mind when he wrote it. So, faithfulness to others.

That term, *faithfulness*, brings up another term – *commitment*. Some people...they don't want to make any plans. They don't want to commit to anybody. They just want to float with the breeze. That's not what God's about. And it's not how we need to be either.

I have a client right now who is faithful to her therapy, and because I'm the one doing the therapy, she's faithful to me. At the beginning, we agreed that she would attend a session every other week. Well, she's not missed one of them. Sometimes, people who come every other week miss one, they just want to skip another too. She wants to make it up the following week. She's committed to doing the therapy. And when I send her a text reminder, as I do the day before each session for all my clients, she always sends something back so that I know that she got my reminder and plans to be present at the appointed time. The reason she started therapy was because her weight loss coach told her something was sabotaging her efforts to lose weight. She wasn't doing it. It wasn't happening. And when I first met her, she looked unhappy and worried and down. She done fourteen sessions right now, if I recall – she does one every other week, so that's somewhat over six months – and two weeks ago, I asked her if she had lost any weight, because it seemed to me that her cheeks were a little thinner. She told me that she had lost all the weight she had gained back, which is what caused her weight coach to tell her she was being self-sabotaged. That was twenty pounds and she'd lost ten more. So she'd lost thirty pounds in all. When I'm working with people on Skype, I can't see the whole person, so it's hard to tell if they've lost weight or not. But I was guessing that she had. As the weeks have passed, I see that she's smiling more, her face is beginning to radiate. It seems that she's dressing nicer, and taking care of herself better, and looking more healthy, and much prettier. And all that because she has been faithful to herself, her therapy and to me, as her therapist. Even the communication back to me tells me that she's in it for the duration.

Now, this hasn't been easy for her. She's done her share of crying and having to feel negative feelings from the past, but she has hung in there in spite of that. And now, she's reaping the rewards of her own faithfulness. The reason I mention her example is because it brings up a word that we all need to connect to faithfulness – I just mentioned it – *commitment*. There is no faithfulness among people unless there is a commitment. Commitment is what allows us to be faithful.

Now, friendship is not necessarily a committed relationship. Friends and interests come and go in our lives. We all, I think, understand that. Sometimes we have to move and we move away from friends – sometimes still communicate with them, but sometimes not, too, and that's okay. So, where's the commitment there? Well, to be faithful in friendship, that means we're faithful to a number of friendship-related principles. That's committing to treat people according to the principles of relationship laid down in scripture. Paul mentioned it there in Galatians earlier there in the chapter about how the whole law is summed up in love your neighbor as yourself and love God. There's a commitment to treat people according to the principles that God has laid down in the Bible.

Just a simple one – besides love your neighbor as yourself – is being polite to people, including our family.

In Titus 3:1 and 2, Paul said:

**Titus 3:1-2** – *Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, to show perfect courtesy to all people* – so being thoughtful of other people.

I was in the Home Depot a few weeks ago, wrestling around with something heavy – I forgot now what it is – and this young girl came up to me with a big smile and said, “Let me get the other end of that.” That never used to happen to me, but I have discovered that quite a few young people who are younger are committed to helping those who are older. It seems it’s women mostly that do this – at least, for me. Maybe that’s because I’m a man. I don’t know. But it was sort of a wake-up call to me. I think I’m still twenty-five, but I present a different picture to some other people. And all these young women help me know that I’m not really twenty-five anymore.

So, these are part of treating our neighbor as we would like to be treated. When we think about getting along with others at church, here are two other really important principles. When we get done with these things, I’m going to tell you I will have left out way more than I’ve included, because this is such an all-encompassing thing. But I’m hoping you’ll get the point.

What is the first one of these two really important additional features? The right to a different opinion than our own. Give people the freedom to have their own opinion. This goes back to the scripture we just read – being gentle with other people and not judging them.

Paul was talking to the Romans in chapter 14, verse 1, about a problem they were having in their congregation. Let’s read about it.

**Romans 14:1-4** – *As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but do not quarrel over opinions.* In other words, you can have your opinion. He can have his. Just because you don’t agree, doesn’t mean you can’t be brothers. *One person believes* – now he’s going to get specific – *he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables.* So, “by eat anything,” Paul isn’t talking about eating poisonous foods, or unclean things, but somebody that eats more than vegetables, like this “weak” person. *Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats. For God has welcomed him* – that is, both of them. So, *who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand.*

So, here Paul assumes the listener is in the right and the other is in the wrong, because that’s how we all think about it. Every time I have been involved in some sort of difference over religious things with other people, I thought the other person was the weaker, because they didn’t understand what I thought to be simple truth – while they were thinking the very same thing about me.

Another thing: For some of us, being open-minded is all well and good, but we draw the line between us and others who are not more like us. You know, we Sabbath keepers..., we holy day observers..., we abstainers from unclean foods..., etcetera. Since I have been a therapist, I've had some clients – I've allowed some clients – to know I am a Christian. And I have heard all kinds of faith stories about miracles, and healings, and callings, and all sorts of other good things from all kinds of Christian people. For example, did you know that God does miracles for Mormons? And Jehovah's Witnesses? And Jews? And Messianics? And even Catholics? And sometimes even for people of other races and cultures, as well as for us COG people? I've seen it! All people are God's children, so the instruction is: Don't judge them! Let them live and you live. Let them have their opinion, you have yours. Just because someone has a different opinion doesn't mean that we have to believe it or follow it. We don't have to be threatened by it. Now, if they're hurtful with their beliefs, then we try to avoid the difficult part. That's true. Some people do try to press their ideas upon us.

In the awesome play and movie, *The Fiddler on the Roof*, one of the young men asked their rabbi, "Rabbi, is there a proper blessing for the czar?" And the old rabbi scratched his chin, and said, "Let's see...proper blessing for the czar... May God bless and keep the czar far away from us." There was no way to be around the czar and be happy or healthy.

Now, in the end – let's think about this – Jesus is going to explain His opinion to us all – if He hasn't already in the Bible. And when we hear it, we are going to all say, at the same time, "Yes, Lord!" And when that happens, we will all be on the same page together. So, relax! Any differences are temporary.

Here's the other thing that's really important for us to know. There is an incredible variation in types of Christian groups. And even in these varying groups, the members of them have varying ideas about what is true. It's almost like every single Christian has his own set of doctrines and beliefs. But, in talking with Catholics, and Mormons, and Protestants, and evangelicals, and every other permutation that you can conceive, they all have the most important things firmly in place.

Let's read something Paul said. He said to the Corinthians:

**1 Corinthians 2:1-2** – *And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.*

And if we are all faithful in that, then we're all together in that, aren't we? And that has to be the most important thing for us, because without that, we wouldn't even be having this discussion. We wouldn't even be converted. We would just be on death row. So, if we show respect and are faithful to God's principles of relationship, we're also showing respect by respecting His other children, and so being faithful to them as well.

Now, while I was preparing this presentation, I came across a scripture that kind of sums it up for me. It's in Hebrews 10:23 – Paul again. He says:

**Hebrews 10:23** – *Let us hold fast* – so that means faithfully, right? – *the confession of our hope without wavering* – there is more faithfulness there, right? – *for He who promised in faithful.*

So, that's the Bible approach. We're faithful because God is faithful. Everything always goes back to God. We love Him because He loved us first. And we're faithful to others because He is faithful to us.

Don't forget to check out our Website There are some real tools there on our Series page, so hope you'll look at that.

Until next time, this is Bill Jacobs for LifeResource Ministries, serving children, families and the Church of God.