

### Galatians 5:22-26

Gal 5:22 (NKJV) **But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,** <sup>23</sup> **gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.** <sup>24</sup> **And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.** <sup>25</sup> **If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.** <sup>26</sup> **Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.**

The next spiritual “**fruit**” is that of “**faithfulness**” which is the Greek word “*pistis*”. It is a word that is used nearly 240 times in the New Testament and in almost every case in the KJV, the NKJV, and the Greek Interlinears it is translated as “**faith**”. Without any question, this is one of the most critical of all New Testament words to understand, and what makes it difficult in a listing like this is that it has multiple meanings and is used in several key ways in the New Testament. Of all of the nine fruits of the Spirit that are identified, this is the only word that for some reason seems to present a problem in interpretation. It is because of the strong connotation that it has relative to the Christian life and how someone comes to Christ. One of the most important meanings of “*pistis*” is its broader theological meaning of trusting in Christ for salvation, of placing one’s faith in God for salvation. Many times it simply refers to that objective body of truth that Christians adhere to, what is often called the Christian faith and all that Christianity stands for as a governing reality of life.

However, that clearly is not the connotation or implication of the word in this passage simply because the word also carries the idea of being faithful and of possessing the virtue of faithfulness - and that is the key idea in this passage. All of the other eight qualities that Paul provides are ethical in nature, so there is no reason to think that the word “**faith**” would have a different connotation than the other eight words. So, in this context “**faith**” refers to that sense in which someone is faithful, someone in whom others can place their complete confidence. It refers specifically to that virtue in a believer where other people can depend on them, where they know that the person will keep the commitments that they have made. This is that quality where if a believer gave their word to someone to do something, then the person that they promised that to could completely depend on them to perform that responsibility. It is a terrible thing to be working with someone that is not faithful in performing their duties and responsibilities. It just makes life difficult for everyone involved.

This particular word could actually be translated as “**dependability**”, or even “**reliability**” in this context. The idea is that this attribute is predicated on the faithfulness, on the trustworthiness, and on the dependability of God. The believer sees and understands that virtue in God and he wants to simply imitate that same characteristic in his personal life. The individual with this attribute in their life is someone who is dependable when you give them something very important to do. They will be there for you if there is an emergency in your life and you need some immediate help, or if you experience some sudden change in your plans where you need their help.

As with all of these fruits of the Spirit, this virtue is simply a part of God’s divine nature – to be faithful, to be trustworthy, to be dependable.<sup>1</sup> The believer with this quality is someone that you can always rely

<sup>1</sup> Precept, *Galatians 5:22, pistis*, ep.

on and have confidence in doing whatever they tell you that they are going to do. [Proverbs 25:19](#) says this about the individual who is not faithful.

**Pr 25:19 (NKJV) Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a bad tooth and a foot out of joint.**

It is not a good thing to have confidence in an unfaithful man when things are going good, but to try and place confidence in them in times of trouble is a horrible option.

With the faithful man, if you give them certain responsibilities, you know that they can be trusted to complete those responsibilities in a very conscientious and timely manner. They are going to be extremely faithful in performing everything that they have been given to accomplish, even if at times it may cost them personally and cause them to change some of their personal goals and priorities. Here is the fundamental foundation of this quality in a person. If their life has a genuine commitment to and a genuine confidence in both God and His Word, then that believer will also manifest that same quality and faithfulness in their own life in honoring their duties and responsibilities to others. When we see someone who is not faithful in the small things, it should be obvious that they cannot be trusted in the greater things. [Luke 16:11](#) says,

**Lk 16:11 (NKJV) Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?**

The following is the way that Jesus expressed this in [Luke 19:17](#) in His parable of the unfaithful steward. This is what He said about the one who was faithful to fulfilling what his master had asked him to do.

**Lk 19:17 (NKJV) And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.'**

Notice, however, what he said to the servant who had not been faithful with his responsibilities in [Luke 19:20-26](#),

**Lk 19:20 (NKJV) Then another came, saying, 'Master, here is your mina, which I have kept put away in a handkerchief. <sup>21</sup> For I feared you, because you are an austere man. You collect what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.' <sup>22</sup> And he said to him, 'Out of your own mouth I will judge you, you wicked servant. You knew that I was an austere man, collecting what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow. <sup>23</sup> Why then did you not put my money in the bank, that at my coming I might have collected it with interest?' <sup>24</sup> And he said to those who stood by, 'Take the mina from him, and give it to him who has ten minas.' <sup>25</sup> (But they said to him, 'Master, he has ten minas.')** <sup>26</sup> **For I say to you, that to everyone who has will be given; and from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.**

This same principle is repeated in [Matthew 25:14-30](#) in the Parable of the Talents. The principle here is simple. Someone who is not faithful in the lesser things of life cannot be trusted with the deeper things of God. Unfortunately, churches are notorious for giving important responsibilities to people who have not demonstrated faithfulness in the smaller things. It always hurts the church.

There are so many different words that speak of this quality in someone. It is words like trustworthiness, loyalty, reliability, dependability, being devoted to someone. It includes the idea of an unwavering

honesty in the person. It is seen as fidelity, or as someone who will perform their obligations and promises. Someone who has fidelity in their life is someone who has fidelity to the truth, fidelity to biblical standards.<sup>2</sup> They are unwavering in that commitment. That is the heart of this word. [Titus 2:9-10](#), speaking of servants, says,

**Tit 2:9 (NKJV) Exhort bondservants to be obedient to their own masters, to be well pleasing in all things, not answering back,<sup>10</sup> not pilfering, but showing all good fidelity (“*pistis*”), that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things.**

The HCSB says “**demonstrating utter faithfulness**”. The NASB and ESV say “**showing all good faith**”. The AMP says “**to prove themselves truly loyal and entirely reliable and faithful throughout**”. The NIV says “**to show that they can be fully trusted**”. The ISV says “**to show complete and perfect loyalty**”. All of these are great translations of this word “**fidelity**” (“*pistis*”).

In [Matthew 23:23](#), Jesus scolded the Pharisees for lacking this quality of faithfulness when he said,

**Mt 23:23 (NKJV) Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier *matters* of the law: justice and mercy and faith (*pistis*). These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.**

Listen to what Paul told Timothy in [2 Timothy 2:1-2](#),

**2Ti 2:1 (NKJV) You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.<sup>2</sup> And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.**

I would much rather have a faithful man to minister with than a successful man. The last thing that is needed in the ministry is to have men in leadership or teaching positions who are not faithful – not faithful to handling the Word and not faithful in their commitment to the church. Nothing is more disappointing or disheartening than to be yoked in ministry with people who simply are not faithful. I love what William Carey said. He was a long time missionary to India, but after eight long years of ministry with no visible results for all of his efforts, he wrote this to one of his friends – “*Pray for us that we may be faithful to the end.*”<sup>3</sup> That is it right there – faithful to the end no matter the cost. That is what this word “*pistis*” is addressing – that kind of faithfulness, that kind of spiritual perspective on our life and what we see as important. I love [Proverbs 18:24](#) when it says,

**Pr 18:24 (NKJV) A man *who has* friends must himself be friendly, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.**

I.e., this friend is more faithful than actual blood relatives. You can depend on this person to simply keep their word. If you tell them something in private and with confidentiality, you can be assured that they will not tell anyone what you may have talked about with them. This person is faithful to their word, someone who can be trusted, and someone in whom you know that you can confide about very serious and sensitive issues that often arise. In a very practical sense, faithfulness simply means that we are going to be careful and vigilant with everything that has been entrusted to us by God and by others.

<sup>2</sup> Guthrie, 140.

<sup>3</sup> George, 404.

Would not it be great if all of the Christians that you knew had this quality of faithfulness in their life? The longer I study and pastor, the greater becomes the reality of the Laodicean church age to me, and maybe one of the key words to describe this age is the simple word “faithlessness”, or simply not being faithful to God. In my own mind and heart, it seems that there are many more professing believers who are actually more unfaithful to the things of God than they are faithful to the things of God. Unfaithfulness to God will manifest itself in unfaithfulness to others. Listen carefully to [2 Timothy 3:1-5](#) and Paul’s description of the kind of ungodly spirit that people possess in the last days.

**2Ti 3:1 (NKJV) But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: <sup>2</sup> For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, <sup>3</sup> unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, <sup>4</sup> traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, <sup>5</sup> having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!**

The obvious question that is raised in a passage like this is simple – how can a person be faithful to God when they love themselves more than God and when their own personal gratification means more to them than pleasing God? The answer is that they cannot be faithful under those circumstances. Here is the key, and this is very critical to understanding this word in the [Galatians 5](#) context – faithfulness hinges on what we value as important in life. Whatever someone deems to be important is that to which they will be faithful. The engulfing characteristic of this church age is simple. It is one that has many alluring, appealing, and tempting distractions that are all vying for our time and our attention. It makes itself attractive and enticing, almost irresistible, and in that process it is constantly contending for our attention.<sup>4</sup> For the uncommitted and the unfaithful, it generally wins.

It should be obvious that Jesus never said that the Christian life would be easy, but to the contrary He said that it was very narrow and would be extremely difficult. So, for that individual who has been allured away by the world with all of its technicolor Hollywood movies and all of the emotion stirring music that parade fornication and adultery and self-centered living as its badge of honor, no wonder they become unfaithful, and not dependable. The idea of self-centeredness is being promoted to its greatest extent in history through the internet and all of the appealing media streams that everyone seems to tap into on a daily basis.<sup>5</sup> Sunday and church have almost become a byword to some.

As a believer, the goal is to always know that side on which we are willing to stand. I love how Paul expressed his convictions about this when in [2 Timothy 1:12](#) he said the following,

**2Ti 1:12 (NKJV) For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.**

He said this in [2 Timothy 2:13](#),

**2Ti 2:13 (NKJV) If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.**

There are many different ways to evaluate faithfulness, and doing so is important as a kind of self-test of where we may be in this area. The following is just a short list of where someone can begin. It

<sup>4</sup> Ritenbaugh, ep.

<sup>5</sup> Ritenbaugh, ep.

certainly is not exhaustive in any way, but just a beginning. First, can we be trusted? Can someone confide in us with confidence that we will not disclose what they have told us? Secondly, are we allowing the Holy Spirit to develop these nine fruits of the Spirit in our life, or have we been prone to simply ignore His work in our life? Thirdly, is our life a model and a testimony before unbelievers and before those who are always watching how we live? Fourthly, do we break the vows and promises that we make to people? Fifthly, do we really care about other people, or are we so self-absorbed in our own life that we rarely have time to even consider other people and their needs? These are the kinds of questions that should mark our life and that we should be able to positively answer with a deep conviction that we will always be demonstrating faithfulness in our life.

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