



Faithfulness

Fruit of the Spirit

August 9, 2020

Hebrews 11:1-2, 11-12, 12:1-3

Faithfulness is one of our favorite attributes of God. It is comforting to know that we serve a God who is faithful and will accomplish what He says He will do. As we study the fruit of the Spirit, it may be natural for us to just try in and of ourselves to be more faithful. Thinking I will just try harder to be faithful this week. But our faithfulness comes from God. **We are faithful because He is faithfulness.**

The wording of that sentence sounds strange, but it is purposefully written this way to emphasize the reality that faithfulness is who God is. It is rooted in His god-ness. His faithfulness is often linked with His truthfulness. God is a promise-making and promise-keeping God. He will always do what He has said. (Number 23:19, 2 Timothy 2:12-13). Since God is faithfulness, He remains faithful even when it appears that our world is in chaos.

Our living out of faithfulness is not easy or comfortable. The author of Hebrews writes to the early church encouraging them to remain faithful to Jesus. They have become weary in the midst of persecution and need the encouragement to remain faithful even though it is not easy. He wants them to know that Jesus is better than their old lives of offering sacrifices at the Temple and is encouraging them to hold fast to their faith in Jesus as the Messiah. He does this by providing examples of those who remained faithful even though it was not easy, “people in days of old who earned a good reputation” (Hebrews 11:2).

Sarah is one of those who earned a good reputation because “she believed that God would keep his promise” (Hebrews 11:11-12). She knew that God was faithful and when He promised that she and Abraham would have descendants that outnumbered the stars in the sky, she knew it would happen. However, her faithfulness to God was not easy or comfortable. She waited decades to see this promise fulfilled! She also did not do it perfectly. After waiting a decade for this promised child, she tries to make God’s faithfulness happen by suggesting that Abraham have a child with her servant. This misstep created quite the mess! Sarah is listed as having earned a good reputation for her faithfulness to God but this was not easy and it was not done perfectly. This is such an encouragement to us who are remaining faithful even though it is not easy and we do not do it perfectly.

Our faithfulness requires endurance and our ability to keep our eyes on Jesus. Jesus is our example of faithfulness and He perfects our faith! Jesus is fully God so Jesus is faithfulness. He demonstrates His faithfulness to us by enduring death on a cross, which was not easy or comfortable! In fact, in the Garden of

Gethsemane He asks if there is any other way. But He endures and is faithful to the point of dying for our sin. If you want to remain faithful to God, remember what Jesus did for you.

The author of Hebrews gives a couple of suggestions to help us fix our eyes on Jesus. He tells us to fix our eyes on Jesus by stripping off any sin that weighs us down. It may be easy to identify what that sin is, since the Holy Spirit helps by convicting us of our sin, but it is even harder to strip that sin away. Perhaps we can do this by confessing our sins to God for forgiveness and then one another for accountability.

We can also fix our eyes on Jesus and remember God's faithfulness by looking at what the writer of Hebrews calls the "huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith." Listen to the testimonies of those who have gone before you. See the ways that they have stripped away the sin in their lives and fixed their eyes on Jesus. I am sure that they have not done it perfectly. But these men and women of faith can be an inspiration and encouragement for us to look higher up to Jesus.

1. God is a promise-making and promise-keeping God. Wayne Grudem writes, "God's faithfulness means that God will always do what He has said and fulfill what He has promised." What would our world look like if God did *not* do what He has said? How would this affect your relationship with God?
2. What promises from Scripture do you hold onto to find strength, encouragement and hope? If none come to mind take a look at these: 1 John 1:9, John 3:16, Revelation 3:5, Philippians 4:6-7, Romans 8:31-35, John 16:33, Matthew 11:28-29.
3. Is there a time in your life when you have been able to say that God is faithful even though it was not easy? What does God's faithfulness look like in 2020?
4. Read Hebrews 12:1-3. Why do you think that the author of Hebrews uses the analogy of a race? How does faithfulness require endurance and what does that look like?
5. Jesus is our example of faithfulness. Our faithfulness to God requires an ability to keep our eyes on Jesus. How can we keep our eyes on Jesus in our daily lives?
6. One way we are encouraged to keep our eyes on Jesus is by stripping away sin that weighs us down. Identifying the sin may be easy but how do we go about stripping it away? The Bible tells us to "confess your sins to each other and pray for each other" (James 5:16). What do you think about confession? Is there someone this week that you need to confess your sin to?
7. We are surrounded by a "huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith" (Hebrews 12:1). Who has been an encouragement and inspiration to a life of faithfulness to God in your life or in the Bible?