

your life. Yes, we must make resolves to be more faithful, but don't look to yourself for this fruit of faithfulness, for nothing will come of it then, and what seems like a new start will simply sputter to nothing very quickly again. I guarantee you, however, come empty-handed, as an undeserving, unreliable person in yourself before God every day, asking repeatedly also for this fruit of faithfulness from God Triune Himself, and it will be found in your life.

The fruit of the Spirit is FAITHfulness, and is freely given in and through Christ Jesus, who was faithful even unto the death of the cross in all His saving work on behalf of sinners. In gracious faithfulness the Saviour promises and pledges to give us all that we ask from Him, yes, also when we ask for this fruit of the Spirit, faithfulness. Over and over the Bible proclaims, and history proves, God is faithful in all His Word and works and ways, and we read in II Corinthians 1:20 how that *"all the promises of God in Him [Christ] are Yea, and in Him[Christ] Amen, unto the glory of God by [through] us."* And Paul writes in II Timothy 2:13 even, *"If we believe not [are faithless], yet He abides faithful: He cannot deny Himself."*

The fruit of the Spirit is faithfulness. Is it a fruit you need in any way, big or small, and is it a fruit you will receive, graciously and freely from God's hand, asking daily for it, from His bountiful supply? The last three points about this fruit of the Spirit, which I don't have time to expand on, are how this fruit is such a positive fruit, an attractive fruit, and a promising fruit. Yet though I cannot develop that further, even if this message to the extent you have it only will bring this result, that you pray more truly and repeatedly for the fruit of the Spirit FAITHfulness, this trusting in Christ and showing Christ-like trustworthiness in all your life, then it will be a message with grand results that will be so noticeable, to God's praise and our neighbor's good. Will you pray personally today for yourself, "Lord, for Jesus' sake, please give me too, truly and increasingly, every day again, this fruit of the Spirit, faith in the way of FAITHfulness?" Amen.

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Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee that it may be displayed because of the truth. (Psalm 60:4)



THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS FAITHFULNESS

We have thought about the fruit of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, longsuffering, and gentleness in the sense of kindness, and goodness. The three remaining graces of the fruit of the Spirit are faith, in the sense of faithfulness, meekness, and temperance or self control. The subject of this message is the fruit of the Spirit, faith, and particularly the living out of faith in the way of faithfulness. I speak now, not in the name of the serpent promoting forbidden fruit, but in the Name of Christ promoting Christian fruit. I pray God so to bless His Word by His Holy Spirit, that all would, as it were, take and eat, and that this fruit of faith in the way of faithfulness be so much an unmistakable and blessed reality in each of our lives.

In the King James Version this fruit is listed as the fruit of the Spirit, faith. However, many other versions translate it as faithfulness which is also the way it can be translated here, especially in its context. Someone said it well, saying the word "faith" here refers not only to trusting in Christ, but also in living in Christ-like trustworthiness. The point is, where there is true faith, there will be faithfulness also....and now, says our text, the fruit of the Spirit is this faith in the sense of living faith shown in faithfulness. This faithfulness is never separated from faith in Christ, but always linked to Christ and something that is drawn from Christ. Faith is "an acknowledging of divine things and of the claims of Christianity" which shows itself in our lives in the way of honesty, integrity, uprightness, faithfulness, and trustworthiness. It is all about being a person of your word because you are living in the light of God's Word. When you have this fruit of the Spirit, you are a person who lives trusting Christ and reflecting Christ-like trustworthiness in all your ways before God and man, at home, at work, at school, in the community, and in the church. The fruit of the Spirit is FAITHfulness. I will speak of this fruit then further as the fruit of the Spirit, FAITHfulness.

We will look at five grand truths about this fruit that I trust will leave us all reaching out for it, by God's grace. Do you agree with me that this is such a needed fruit? How much and how often this fruit is lacking in people's lives and in our times. We live in a world where there is so much unfaithfulness on so many fronts. Unfaithfulness in marriage and family, in work matters and contracts, in school responsibilities, in church life, in promises made, and in the roles we have is a sad fact in our day. All too

many in our world don't live in true faith before God, and too many who say they do, don't live lives that reflect Christ-like trustworthiness and faithfulness in everyday life. When a certain commitment and promise made doesn't suit a person anymore, people seem not to hesitate at all at just breaking from their commitments and promises made, and do their own thing. Unfaithfulness in family life, society life, work life, and church life is disruptive and distressful, dismaying and hurtful, troublesome and discouraging. Unfaithfulness is a blot, a curse as a result of sin and so much self-centered thinking and living. It contributes to the breaking down and weakening of family, church, and society on every front. People who won't be honest, who don't follow through on their word, who are not trustworthy, who don't say what they mean nor mean what they say, people you can't count on or rely on. It is so sad, so wrong, and so God-dishonoring. FAITHfulness is something so needed in our lives, for real and lasting blessings in life.

Spiritually too, in the Christian life, how needed is this fruit of FAITHfulness. Doesn't every true believer know and realize the call to be faithful in our ways, in all our thoughts, words, and deeds, before God and man. How urgent constant faithfulness is! How easy for anyone of us to begin going down the road of unfaithfulness. It can start in a small way, unfaithful in prayer, unfaithful in Bible reading, unfaithful in keeping a promise, and before you know it, you become unfaithful in all kinds of other ways as well. Jesus teaches in Luke 16:10 what we all know is so true, "*He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.*" Unfaithfulness in different ways and various degrees is characteristic of us by nature. The Bible teaches and history proves, it is our natural inclination not to be faithful in the long run, but unfaithful, time and again. If I should ask you if you have reason to confess unfaithfulness in any respect towards anyone in any matter, is there anyone who honestly could say, "Indeed, I am not unfaithful in any respect regarding anything or anyone?" The answer is, "No, not one!"

Are you convinced and convicted too of what a needed fruit this fruit of the Spirit is? Does that fact also draw you to our text, and make you reach out for, and call out to God for, and follow after also this fruit of the Spirit, faith, in the way of faithfulness? In Psalm 12:1 the psalmist cries out to God, "*Help, LORD, for the godly man ceases; for the faithful fail [disappear] from among the children of men.*" That is true of our times, faithfulness is so needed in our times and in our lives, and too often lacking, even in the Christian church. Will you in your life, whether younger or older, be one who adds to the plague of unfaithfulness in this world, or will you be one shining as a gem, by God's grace, in the way of faithfulness before God and men?

The fruit of the Spirit is FAITHfulness, a fruit so needed! Is it needed by you and is it something you care about, pray about, and pursue after? It is

the crying need of our day, especially also in the Christian church in regards to doctrine and life!

A second reason to be so drawn to this fruit of the Spirit, FAITHfulness, is that it is something given, graciously given by God as Saviour and Lord. In coming to this fruit of faithfulness, the last thing I should do, and I praise God I don't have to do it, is admonish all of you and urge all of you to realize your duty more to be faithful and to show faithfulness in all your life. God's Word is not saying now to us, as it were, "Please, every one get with it! 'Pull up your socks' as the expression goes and you just be more faithful!" No, to urge for more faithfulness on our part in our own strength with our own resolve is something that, time and again, proves so fruitless and vain and disappointing. Human resolutions to be faithful and more faithful in the way the Bible means it is something that falls flat and goes nowhere from the start, for the natural man born in sin is incapable of a life of Christian faith and faithfulness before God and man.

Here is where our text is so precious, for it tells the gospel, declaring the fruit of the Spirit is FAITHfulness. This fruit is a given fruit for all who ask and humbly and genuinely rely on God for. And you know how the Spirit works this fruit in our lives? He does so by showing us all our unfaithfulness by nature before God and man and the great sinfulness and shamefulness of that, and then He does so by pointing us to Christ and all God's faithfulness in and through Him, even for sinners like us.

What a mighty stream of unfaithfulness before God and man flows from each of our lives! When the Holy Spirit works this fruit of faithfulness in your life, you become sorry for any and all unfaithfulness in your life, you stop lamely excusing it always, and you begin to cry out for and long for true faithfulness and more and more faithfulness, pleasing to God and good for our neighbour. When the Holy Spirit shows us from God's Word, especially in the light of Jesus Christ, the once crucified and now risen and exalted Saviour of sinners, all the sparkling, steadfast, unending, superb faithfulness of God towards sinners like us becomes something amazing and attractive, and you say "Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father, even for an undeserving sinner like me". And you pray, "O God, not only be merciful to me a sinner, but please, O Lord, sanctify me, that I may be like You, holy as You are holy, faithful as you are faithful." The Holy Spirit works this fruit of faithfulness in His people's lives even as we feed on Christ and ever look to Him and depend on Him for all our salvation and sanctification and glorification.

FAITHfulness is a free gift that God gives and works in our lives by His transforming power through His Word and Spirit even as we ask for this fruit and abide in Him and His Word. The more anyone looks to Christ and genuinely depends on Him, and calls to Him for His saving transforming sin-removing power, the more this fruit of faithfulness will become evident in