



The tribe of Issachar understood the times and knew what Israel should do

Issachar Ministries UK seeks to be a people who understand the times, listen to the Lord and know what should be done

Resourcing for Prayer Network

Spiritual Guidelines

The Fruit of the Spirit (viii)

'the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.' (Galatians 5:22-23)

Walking Faithfully with God

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April 2016

There appear to be many occasions in our society today when faithfulness is rather more derided, ridiculed or belittled than valued, whether it is in marriage, in employment or as valued customers, but deep down there is a recognition that this is a value to which we aspire. It is a fruit of the spirit that develops fully in Christians when the gifts are rightly used and the believer is walking faithfully with God and abiding in His Spirit. Walking with God means studying, abiding and praying which in return bring blessings for each one of us (Psalm 1:1-2; Ephesians 6:18).

God's Faithfulness

Faithfulness is one of the greatest attributes we see in God's nature - reliable, steadfast and unwavering. It is part of his character manifested in fulfilling his promises, in executing his judgments, in keeping his covenant and it is unconditional!

Faithfulness is an essential part of who God is (Psalm 89:8; Hebrews 13:8). In his faithfulness, God protects us from evil (2 Thessalonians 3:3), sets limits on our temptations (1 Corinthians 10:13), forgives us when we sin (1 John 1:9), and sanctifies us (1 Corinthians 1:9; Philippians 1:6). *'He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he'* (Deuteronomy 32:4). *'His love endures for ever'* (Psalm 100:5; Psalm 117:2). *'Not one word has failed of all the good promises he gave'* (1 Kings 8:56).

Testimonies to his Faithfulness

Throughout the Bible there are testimonies to the faithfulness of God. The Psalms are full of praises to God for his faithfulness. Kings were judged by their faithfulness to God - or not; it became the epitaph for Enoch (Genesis 5:24; Hebrews 11:5), and Joseph (Genesis 47:29) expected his sons to be faithful in carrying out his wishes not to be buried in Egypt (which they respected!) and there were many final greetings in Paul's letters where we only have the names of the faithful.

Hebrews 11 gives a long list of faithful men and women in the Old Testament such as Abel, Noah, Abraham and Sarah, Rahab etc who trusted God some of whom did not see the fruits in their lifetime but trusted just the same - Abraham never saw his descendants become *'as numerous as the stars in the sky.'* Moses never entered the Promised Land. And none of the Old Testament saints lived to see their Messiah. But they were faithful. They believed God would do as He promised. They lived by faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7).

Walking with God is basic to a faithful commitment to who God says He is. Faith in individuals is essential and enables us to have a close relationship with God - Jesus responded to people's faith and curtailed his involvement where there was no faith (Mark 6:1-6).

Reflecting this Faithfulness to Others

'I will sing of the Lord's great love for ever; with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known through all generations' (Psalm 89:1). Deuteronomy 7:9 tells us that he will *'keep his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments'* and we need to impart this good news to others.

We are called to emulate this faithfulness and proclaim it to others as unflinching, everlasting, incomparable, established, infinite. It gives confidence and security to know that God is unchanging in his faithfulness to his word and in his relationship with us. One of the great hymns brought to prominence at the present Queen's coronation was 'Great is Thy Faithfulness'. The 20th Century writer Thomas O. Chisholm was a sick man and yet he gloried in the faithfulness of God. Based on Lamentations 3 and especially verses 20 - 25 he was able to pronounce '*Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father; morning by morning new mercies I see; all I have needed thy hand hath provided; great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!*'. Not only was God's faithfulness to him his own lifeline but its proclamation has inspired others to show that dedication in their lives too.

What is faith and faithfulness?

Faith is linked with faithfulness - faith is a gift of the spirit which enables us to believe that God is who he says he is and trust him. We know God is reliable, steadfast, and true and we trust he will work out everything for good and we trust he will work his will in us.

Faithfulness is the fruit of the spirit which with his help enables us to have or be full of faith. It means that we can be trustworthy, upright, loyal, reliable, conscientious, dependable, devoted, dutiful, obedient, patriotic and resolute and so we could go on. It shows a steadfastness, constancy, or allegiance and a carefulness in keeping what we are entrusted with.

Faithfulness is not just the concept of blind loyalty without understanding and appreciation of other factors but the right concept of faithfulness does grow in us as we mature which is why it is a fruit of the spirit rather than a gift. The more we understand God's nature the more we can appreciate his faithfulness which is an essential part of his nature and purposes.

What does Faithfulness mean to us?

Each one of us is made in the image of God and we should aspire to be like him. What we do should always reflect this faithfulness alongside justice and mercy (Matthew 23:23). In fact Psalm 85:10 tells us that '*Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other*'. Isaiah 11:5 tells us '*Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash round his waist*'.

Faithfulness is concerned with right relationships - with God and with each other and the two are often inextricably linked. Those who have been given a trust must prove faithful (1 Corinthians 4:2). The Epistles major on relationships for an overseer (1 Timothy 3:2), deacons (1 Timothy 3:12), elders (Titus 1:6) and widows (1 Timothy 5:9).

His faithfulness to us as individuals or as a nation - and even the nation Israel - is not because we are favourites but because he believes we can understand his purposes. He will be constantly reminding us of the way in which we fall short of his wishes and he will be patient and faithful to show us the right way - and his concepts do not change.

Outcome of Faith

The parable of the Talents is an example of faithfulness (Matthew 25:21) and God promises in 1 Corinthians 10:13 '*he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it*'.

Faithfulness does not mean that we will always be physically protected. Many members of the early church suffered persecution - and overcame it. We only have to read the letters to the seven churches in Revelation (Revelation 2 and 3) and as Tertullian said at the time '*the blood of the martyrs became the seed of the church*'. But '*a scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the Lord and honoured his name*' (Malachi 3:16).

Finally

We are called to '*love the Lord your God and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul*' (Deuteronomy 10:13) and to '*serve him with all faithfulness*' Joshua 24:14).

'Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them round your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart' (Proverbs 3:3).

Great is Thy Faithfulness

Refrain:

***Great is thy faithfulness! Great is thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
all I have needed thy hand hath provided;
great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!***

***Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father;
there is no shadow of turning with thee;
thou changest not, thy compassions, they fail not;
as thou hast been thou forever will be. Refrain:***

***Summer and winter and springtime and harvest,
sun, moon and stars in their courses above
join with all nature in manifold witness
to thy great faithfulness, mercy and love. Refrain***

***Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth
thy own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside! Refrain***

*This paper comes to you as part of the Issachar Ministries Resourcing for Prayer e-mail in April 2016
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