Faithfulness: The Fruit of the Spirit

Let us open to the Epistle to the Galatians, chapter 5, and read from verse 22, a verse we all know well. On other occasions I have stressed how important it is to know this verse by heart, so that we know the fruit of the Spirit well. If we do not know the fruit of the Spirit, we will not be able to work together with Him to show this fruit in our lives. We read: *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."*

Today I would like us to go deeper into the meaning of **faithfulness**. Perhaps some of us do not pay enough attention to this trait of character, which we see in the Lord Jesus. Before we explore other passages of Scripture, let us define what it means to be faithful and what it means to be unfaithful. We often treat these biblical terms superficially and are too quick to say that we are faithful. But let us not forget: faithfulness is the fruit of the Spirit.

Many people confuse faith with faithfulness, but they are not the same thing. We will look into that too. So let us read the definition: to be faithful means to be devoted and loyal, in our case to God, because we must be faithful to Him. It means to be steadfast and unwavering in a commitment we have made or a covenant we have entered into.

To be devoted to God, whom we look upon as Father and as Master, means to be devoted to the Master. Let us think about what it means to be devoted to the Master, or loyal to God. On the other hand, the term unfaithful refers to the person who does not keep their word, who is not steadfast in their commitments, who is disloyal.

Now let us read in 2 Corinthians to go deeper into this theme. When we read about believers and unbelievers, the faithful and the unfaithful, it is important to keep these definitions in mind and to remember that the fruit of the Spirit is faithfulness. In *2 Corinthians 6:14-15* we are told: *"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?"*

This passage urges us to recognise the difference between the faithful person, steadfast in the covenant, and the unfaithful one, who breaks his word. It is a clear command: *"be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers"*, marking a separation between the faithful and the unfaithful.

This is not about mere belief, but about those who are loyal to God and those who are not. The fruit of the Spirit is faithfulness, and God Himself is the supreme example of faithfulness.

We cannot speak of God's faith, but we can speak of His faithfulness. In Exodus 33, God reveals Himself to Moses. In verse 13, Moses asks God to show him His ways so that he may know Him better, saying: *"Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight."* Amen.

Then, in chapter 34, the Lord reveals Himself to Moses, and reading verses 5 and 6, we learn that *"the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth."* Amen.

So God is described as merciful, gracious, slow to anger, abundant in goodness and faithfulness, and these qualities are reflected in the fruit of the Spirit, which includes, among many other things, faithfulness. God shows His faithfulness toward us human beings. In Deuteronomy chapter 7, God's faithfulness is revealed to us. The passage we are about to look at gives us a definition of God's nature, just as we read in Exodus, where He reveals the traits of His character. One of these traits is faithfulness, and God asks us to show the same loyalty and devotion. We read verse 9: *"Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations."* Amen.

The Gospel confirms this, stressing that He is a faithful God who honours His commitment, His covenant. In Genesis we discover that God wanted to create man in His image and likeness, so that man would be like God, who is faithful.

We will also read from Isaiah chapter 11, verses 1 to 5, which speak about the Lord Jesus. I should mention that it is a prophecy about the coming of the Saviour: "*And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: and the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.*" Amen.

The Lord Jesus is marked by faithfulness and righteousness, and He is called the King of righteousness. In Romans 8 we are told that we were predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, who is faithful.

Faithfulness characterises God and His Son, and it must characterise us as well. The Holy Spirit works together with us, through the Word and through the Church, so that we come to bear this fruit of the Spirit and become like the Lord Jesus.

In Revelation 1, we read verses 4 and 5: *"John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; and from Jesus Christ, who is **the faithful witness**, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth."* Amen. The Lord Jesus is the faithful witness.

Let us also turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 1, which speaks about the Lord, about God. This trait of character, faithfulness, must be firmly impressed on our minds, because we have to work at it, so that we come to bear this fruit of the Spirit. I am reading verses 8 and 9: *"Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. **God is faithful**, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord."*

In 2 Thessalonians chapter 3, verse 3, we find another verse that says: *"But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil."* Amen. He is faithful and fulfils His promises and commitments faithfully. God's Word tells us that His faithfulness endures for ever, from generation to generation; it is eternal, and it calls us to faithfulness too.

Let me read one more verse about the Lord and this trait of character, which we must engrave on our minds. From 1 Corinthians 10, verse 13: *"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but **God is faithful**, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."* Amen.

God is faithful. Let us think about this work of God. God, who is faithful, has promised that He will strengthen us and keep us from the evil one.

We have read that He will keep us and will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we can bear. When the devil comes to tempt us, God is there; He is not asleep and He is not away on a journey. Because He is faithful, He is present and attentive to keep His promise, the commitment He has made. Faithful means loyal, steadfast in a commitment, unwavering. God's faithfulness is complete; there is nothing at all that would prove Him unfaithful.

As for us, let us read from Matthew chapter 23, which is both a rebuke and a warning. We can do many things and yet not pay attention to faithfulness. We must be faithful not only to God but also toward other people. The words *"faithful"* and *"unfaithful"* must be properly understood. If we are faithful, we must be so in every commitment we make, just as God is, who is faithful not only to the Lord Jesus but also to us. He asks us, in turn, to be faithful to Him.

From Matthew 23, verse 23, let us note that this chapter is devoted to rebuking the scribes and Pharisees, but it is also a warning for us: *"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and **faith**: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."* Amen.

Among the weightier matters of the law is faithfulness. In the book of Hosea, mercy is often linked with goodness; in Hosea chapter 6, verse 6, there is a rebuke connected with these qualities: *"For I desired mercy."* God is full of goodness, and He calls us to the same thing.

This rebuke is addressed to those who were not loyal and true to God, and it underlines the importance of faithfulness. To reinforce this idea, a few verses speak of faithfulness, such as Psalm 146, which says: *"Which made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that therein is: **which keepeth truth for ever**."* Likewise, Psalm 50, verse 5, is a call addressed to the faithful:

"Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice." This verse invites us to reflect: if God is faithful and keeps His covenant, we too must keep our covenant with Him.

Next, let us look at the parable of the talents in the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 25, which shows how each of us must make good use of the gifts we have received from God. In this parable, a man entrusts his wealth to his servants before travelling to another country. To one he gives five talents, to another two, and to another one, *"to every man according to his several ability"*, and then he leaves. The servants who received five and two talents traded with them and gained other talents, while the one who received a single talent buried the money in the ground. When the master returns, those who invested are praised: *"Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."*

This parable underlines the importance of being faithful and of using what has been entrusted to us in a way that brings growth and benefit. "*He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*" Amen.

In verse 23, the master said to him: *"Well done, good and **faithful** servant; **thou hast been faithful** over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."* He does not scold him; he praises him for his faithfulness, even though he had only a little to manage. What was first entrusted was five talents, and yet the master says: *"Thou hast been faithful over a few things."* This underlines how important it is to be faithful in every responsibility, whatever its size. Faithfulness truly is the fruit of the Spirit.

Let us go on reading from Matthew, from verse 45: *"Who then is a **faithful** and wise **servant**, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods."* Amen.

In these parables, we meet servants who receive different responsibilities from their master. The faithful and wise servant is the one who does his duty in managing what has been entrusted to him, including giving the household their food at the proper time. Let us think about a

practical illustration: if we entrust someone in the church with a responsibility, what do we expect of that person? That they carry out the task, or that they leave it undone?

In Matthew 25, through the parable of the talents, the Lord Jesus shows that two of the servants brought their master more than had been entrusted to them. They did not just bring back what they had been given, but more. At the start, the master gave five talents to one, two to another, and a single talent to the third. And there was one servant who handed back to his master exactly the talent he had received, without having increased it.

The text does not say explicitly that the master told them to do anything in particular with his wealth, only that he entrusted it to them. Nothing is said about him asking them to multiply it. So who took the initiative? One of the servants chose to keep the master's wealth just as it was. But is he considered faithful in the master's eyes?

Personally, I have noticed something, and I urge you to consider it too: when you give a worldly person a task in exchange for a wage or for profit, they may well carry it out diligently, working more than the standard eight hours, perhaps even ten or eleven, because they know they will be rewarded.

That person has been motivated by the first reward they received and has seen that the place where they work rewards initiative and effort that bring gain. We too have a reward at the end. It is written: *"I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."* Isn't that a good deal?

I have noticed that religious people, and we count ourselves among them, often do the tasks entrusted to us half-heartedly. You know the expression *"slapdash"*? What does it mean? It's an everyday way of describing a careless, just-get-it-over-with approach. When we act in a *"slapdash"* way, how are we seen: as faithful or as unfaithful? In the case of the wicked and slothful servant, he handed back to his master exactly the talent he had received, without losing any of it or adding anything to it.

Nowadays we have to take inflation into account. If you entrust someone with a talent today and come back five years later to collect it, its value will no longer be the same because of inflation. I recently heard from my wife that the price of the jars she bought a few years ago has changed significantly. Four or five years ago, maybe even three, a one-litre jar cost one leu, and now the same jar costs four lei. (The leu is the Romanian currency.) This shows how the value of things can change over time. If I had given you one leu four years ago and you had done nothing with it, today you could no longer buy the same jar with it.

This brings to mind the *"faithful and wise servant"*, whom the Master made ruler over his household, to give them their food in due season. It is not enough to be faithful; we must also be wise. *"Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods."* Amen.

That is a good deal. If we are faithful even in a few things, we are promised that we will be made rulers over many things. We do not serve without hope of a reward, and even if we did, we

should still remain faithful and loyal to our Master.

It is important to remember that we are not born with faithfulness; it is a fruit of the Spirit that we must cultivate so that it grows in us. Before we read from Luke, let us recall the words of Matthew 6: *"Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?"* We must strive to grow in faithfulness.

In Luke 16, we come across the parable of the *"unjust steward"*. This steward was caught by his master wasting his goods. When we waste God's goods, we cannot be considered faithful. Remembering the parable of the talents, if we hand back only the one talent, it is as though we have wasted it, because its value goes down over time.

So we must invest what we have, whether by putting it with the exchangers or in the bank, so that its value is preserved through the interest. Let us read carefully from verse 10 to verse 13: *"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. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own? No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."* Amen.

These verses give us the opportunity to reflect on the way we live and to examine our faithfulness. The Lord Jesus is the supreme example of faithfulness, as it is written: *"He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much."* On the other hand, God's Word warns us: *"He that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much."* We are also told: *"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers."* This counsel urges us to think about the influences we allow into our lives and how important it is not to take on the unfaithfulness of others.

In the Gospel of Matthew we are given a parable that urges us to be aware that the Master may come at any time and that we must be ready, not behave as though He were delaying His coming or as though we would never be called to account.

The personal example I want to share comes from my experience as a manager at a transport company. I had a gatekeeper who would tell me how the employees behaved: when I went out into the yard, they all sprang into action and pretended to be working, wanting to impress me with how hard-working they were. But the moment I went back into the office, they would drop their work and get on with their own business. This illustrates the idea that true faithfulness does not depend on a supervisor being present; it is constant and sincere, whatever the circumstances.

Have you ever noticed that you work harder when the boss turns up? Or that we show more zeal when someone comes along who can see and appreciate our work? We are often tempted to be lazy and, if possible, to hide our lack of faithfulness. But when should our faithfulness be

visible? When the boss comes to see us? When the master comes to see me, what do I do?

Or what do I do when the master is away? The talents were multiplied in the master's absence, not in his presence. The master went away to a far country and set this faithful and wise servant as steward over his household and his goods.

But if this servant begins to behave as though he were the owner and to beat his fellow servants, what will happen to him? On the other hand, if the master comes unexpectedly and finds him doing his duty, he will make him ruler over all his goods. The fruit of the Spirit is faithfulness even in the smallest things, being faithful with only God watching.

When we make a commitment to someone, we must be careful to keep it. It is not enough to behave differently from a pagan who works only for money. In the Epistle to Titus, chapter 2, verses 9 and 10, we read: *"Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again; not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things."* Amen.

It is not only servants who must show perfect faithfulness. At a time when slaves were members of the church and had a different status outside it, the Apostle Paul, through Titus, urged them to show faithfulness to their masters, who in theory were regarded as enemies.

Paul was teaching them how to live in their relationship with these masters. In the Apostle Peter's teaching, we are urged to serve even those who are hard to please, to be faithful always. The word *"always"* suggests consistency in behaviour, a constant proof of faithfulness. *"Always showing **all good fidelity** toward their masters, toward what their masters require, toward whatever they are asked to be faithful in."* The word *"faithful"* means being loyal, true and devoted, showing all good fidelity, so as to adorn the teaching of God our Saviour. It is the Lord who teaches us about faithfulness.

In the setting of the church, the congregation, faithfulness is also essential, but the Apostle Paul does not stop there. He stresses the need to show all good fidelity in the secular world as well, before our employers. The Apostle Paul teaches the brothers and sisters in the faith to bring honour to God and to come to bear the fruit of the Spirit, which is faithfulness, a trait of the Lord Jesus' character.

In *1 Corinthians 4*, the Apostle Paul reminds us that we must be regarded as ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. It is required of every steward that he be found faithful in what has been entrusted to him. Amen. We ask ourselves how many of us can say that we are truly servants of Christ. All of us ought to be servants and stewards of the mysteries of God. What is expected of stewards? Not that they bury the talent they received in the ground, but that they be found faithful in managing what has been entrusted to them. Amen.

I will read from chapter 4, verse 17: *"For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord."* Amen.

I have often reflected on this verse, and the phrase *"my beloved son, **and faithful**"* has caught my attention in a special way. The Apostle Paul could simply have said that Timothy was faithful. God is faithful, Timothy is faithful. But what about the Apostle Paul? He was faithful too. Timothy was faithful, just as his spiritual father was.

Timothy was sent by Paul to carry out a mission; he accepted it and saw it through to the end. We know that Paul appointed Timothy to act on his behalf in various places. Timothy was found faithful in carrying out the tasks entrusted to him.

Let us think more deeply about this. Many responsibilities are entrusted to us, including by our parents. How should we be found? Careless or faithful? If we are unfaithful in small things, will we really be entrusted with greater ones?

The unjust steward had a rich master who had nothing to do with God. He was not required to be faithful to God, but to his master. How was he found? The Lord Jesus uses him as a negative example, because he was found unfaithful in managing the goods entrusted to him. He was wasting his master's wealth.

What does it mean to waste someone's wealth? To be called by God and not to care. It is even worse when some actually steal from their master. We don't steal, but we waste. We are given work, we are entrusted with a task, and we try to avoid it, to dodge it.

May God help us understand what faithfulness means. Three values of great importance are justice, goodness **and faithfulness.** Let us strive to cultivate these values and to be found faithful by God. When He examines us, may He find us faithful in what has been entrusted to us.

He is faithful and steadfast in the commitments He makes, true and loyal to all His promises. He calls us to be the same, to strive to become like Him. In this process He works with us, teaches us and guides us through the various stages of life. If we find ourselves at times unfaithful in the responsibilities entrusted to us, we must not lose hope or think that all is lost; let us entrust ourselves to the Lord and He will work, for faithfulness *is the fruit of the Spirit*.

It is essential that we remove from our lives the attitudes that could make us like the *wicked servant*, who was not only wicked but also slothful. He looked for a way to get out of work. May God help us to be attentive and responsible in carrying out the tasks others entrust to us. Amen.

Source: *Faithfulness: The Fruit of the Spirit* — Unmodified Word
unmodifiedword.com/written-sermons/faithfulness-the-fruit-of-the-spirit