

“Faithfulness in a Time of Compromise”

July 10, 2022

Hey, I’m Jake if I haven’t met you yet. A fun fact about me: I am not much of a sports guy. For a number of reasons, I grew up as an indoor kid. And yet, even I admit, there’s something pretty incredible when every couple of years the Olympics comes on TV - and you’re watching the best in the world do something that they’ve been training their entire lives for. There’s something inspirational behind that. They’ve put in the work and now we’re seeing the fruit of it.

Or take it out of the sports world and think about someone you admire. Maybe it’s someone in your line of work who is a bit ahead of you in that career, and they’re successful and they’ve managed to still stay grounded through it all. Maybe it’s an older couple with a solid marriage that over the course of a lifetime they still love each other and like to be around one another. Maybe it’s someone who is a bit further along than you in their faith, who has been walking with Jesus for decades and exudes the fruit of the Spirit.

I know I’ve mentioned him a bit in my sermons, but in college and starting out in ministry I had a guy who mentored me for about 10 years named Thomas Weakley. Our son’s middle name is from this guy. And Thomas has been in ministry now for a little over 30 years at this point, he’s raised three awesome kids who all love Jesus, he’s a professor on the side - AND for whatever reason he poured into my life when I was really naive and arrogant and shot off at the mouth - I’d like to think I’ve grown in at least some of those areas. But, he’s someone I have and still look up to.

And yet, in all these examples, what you often don’t see is the perseverance it required to get those people to where they are now. Whether it’s the athlete, or the employee, or the marriage, or the parent, or the person of faith you admire - what we don’t often tend to notice is the blood, sweat, and more often than not, the literal tears that were shed to get them to that place. And sometimes those setbacks they experienced were pretty normal and expected, but there are often the times when the setbacks happened that they didn’t expect at all. And yet, through it all, they managed to stick it out to become the people we see and admire and celebrate.

And what you’re seeing in those glimpses is the byproduct of faithfulness. That no matter what is thrown at you, you persevere to the very end.

We’re midway through our Fruit of the Spirit series exploring the types of people we are becoming, to look more like Jesus. This week, we’re on the fruit of faithfulness. **How do we become the sort of people who are faithful and resilient? Who are loyal and persevere?**

If you have a Bible, we’re going to be in **Luke 4**, so I’d invite you to turn there. (And just a heads up, I need to do a bit of set up first before I get there, so bear with me.)

Now as we’ve mentioned before, the fruit of the Spirit is pulled from Galatians 5. And what’s interesting is this word “faithfulness” here in **Galatians 5:22** - in the Greek is actually the same word for “faith” - *pistis*. The way we’ve said it before, is that faith means **trust** or allegiance or loyalty to someone or something. It’s the orientation of the heart to rely on something **outside of you**. And the second way that it is being used right here is about how this trust in something outside of us is producing now something **inside of us** - to become a people who are trustworthy, loyal, and committed together towards a common goal.

So, in Scripture our call is to place our faith, our loyalty towards the person and work of Jesus. And, through us working out our faith in Him, He produces faithfulness in us. And he does this through the context of what is called a covenant. And this was the ancient way people kept their word. A covenant was the means by which to say, “I promise you, I am loyal to you to the end. I will remain faithful to this relationship.”

Marriage Covenant - Traditionally speaking, when you get married, you enter into what's called a marriage covenant. You make promises to each other to be loyal to one another. To be faithful to each other no matter what. To pursue this common goal together.

Member Covenant - For members of our church, when you become a member, you enter what's called here a member covenant. Where we collectively commit ourselves to one another and to Jesus through keeping certain spiritual practices.

But, all that to say, when the Bible talks about faithfulness, it often talks about it in this covenant language. Where we sign up for the long haul of obedience. Where we commit ourselves to the long, slow, tedious, painful path of discipleship to Jesus. A life of faithfulness marked by honesty, dependability, and loyalty to God that then works its way down into our other relationships and callings. What Eugene Peterson calls a "stick-with-it-ness."

We sign up for this because we want to be those beautiful types of people, who Lord willing, will grow old together in our church family and not let the world turn us into bitter cynics; but, instead, to be the types of people that even as we age - we can still smile and laugh together because the Spirit has been actively working in us for decades and decades.

Like, I've said this before, but I love to be a fly on the wall at our Gatherings and sort of watch how y'all interact on Sundays. To hear you sing. To see you all hug one another. To bring your kids with you. And my dream for us is that we get to do that together until we're all old and gray. And I know I'm already gray, but you get it. Where our singing, and our hugs are going to be all the more sweeter because we've been fighting alongside each other in every season, in every trial, for years and years. Where, Lord willing, one day our kids will be fully grown and bringing us to church.

But here's the thing with that - is that to be these sorts of people is going to require of us a determination to get there. It will require - as much as I wish it wasn't true - to withstand the setbacks, and the difficulties; to persevere when things get hard and difficult.

And, is it just me, or does it seem like there's a million and one different reasons to back out? Think about it, Satan would love nothing more than for you to back out of your commitments to God and to others. Your flesh wants so much to gratify your immediate desires rather than persevere for the long haul. Our world is all about maximizing your comfort and your happiness in the here and now. And when you add all those things up, it's a pretty powerful combination.

I mean, after all:

- Why stick to a commitment, and why keep your word if it makes your life more difficult?
- Why tell the truth and be a person of character if it's going to come at great cost to you?
- Why stick with your job, or friends, or church, or spouse if your needs aren't being met and you're not being fulfilled?

Dallas Willard, *Spirit of the Disciplines*

"The general human failing is to want what is right and important, but at the same time not to commit to the kind of life that will produce the action we know to be right and the condition we want to enjoy. This is the feature of human character that explains why the road to hell is paved with good intentions. We intend what is right, but we avoid the life that would make it reality."

In other words, if we are striving to be a people of faithfulness, we need to sober up to the reality that we live in an age that goes against this - that wants us to compromise or break from our commitments altogether.

But the thing is, generally speaking, to have anything that is worthwhile and admirable necessitates that you put in hard work. Without faithfulness over the long haul, you will rarely, if at all, build anything that is truly wonderful.

Without faithfulness...

- You won't be a part of a group that accomplishes something beautiful together because you don't want to commit yourself.
- You won't have deep and lasting friendships because inevitably one of you will sin against the other, or seasons of life may change; but, if you're not already committed to fight for the friendship, then it will dissolve away.
- You won't have a marriage that becomes wonderful through the years because you're not willing to withstand sometimes the heavier and harder seasons that all marriages will more than likely go through.
- You won't exude any fruit of the Spirit or exhibit any traits of godliness and character because you're more committed to your immediate happiness and comfort.

So, how do we live out becoming a people of faithfulness in an age of compromise? How do we press into becoming covenant people when all our flesh wants to do is give in to what this world has to offer? To answer that, we'll go to Luke 4.

Luke 4:1-12

1 And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness **2** for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry.

Biggest understatement of all time. The Bible is funny y'all.

3 The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." **4** And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone.'" **5** And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, **6** and said to him, "To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. **7** If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours." **8** And Jesus answered him, "It is written,

"You shall worship the Lord your God,
and him only shall you serve."

9 And he took him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, **10** for it is written,

"He will command his angels concerning you,
to guard you,"

11 and

"On their hands they will bear you up,
lest you strike your foot against a stone."

12 And Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" **13** And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.

So Jesus' mission, His end goal in His life and ministry, is to be faithful to His Father. To carry out His will and mission. To usher in the Kingdom of God here on planet Earth through His life.

But here, when He's at His weakest state physically, He's tempted by Satan. He hasn't had anything to eat for 40 days straight - if he were anyone else, he'd be hungry right about now - and what Satan does is tempts Jesus with shortcuts and compromises - to break His faithfulness to God so that Jesus can get what He wants. There's three things Satan tempts Him with; and, you'll notice they all start with the letter P, so you know it's good:

The temptation of Provision (vv. 3-4). At that moment, Jesus' body desired a bite to eat. And so Satan tempts Jesus to use his power to satisfy his own desires in the moment. Just say yes. Just give in to what your body wants right here and right now.

The temptation of Power (vv. 5-8). Jesus is on a mission to win the world to Himself, but first He has to go through a life of pain and suffering and eventual death to get there. And Satan, in this moment, is offering Jesus a shortcut. "Hey, Jesus, I can give you all the world if you want right now. I know what you want is for people to worship you; you can get all that right here and right now. But, here's the catch: you have to worship me."

The temptation of Protection (vv.9-12). Satan gives him a Bible verse that's way out of context to make Jesus cave in. Satan says, "Look, if you really are who you say you are, then prove it. Why don't you jump off this cliff right now and command your angels to catch you so you won't get hurt."

And when you step back and look at those three temptations, those are really powerful are they not? Think about the things you're often tempted with, sometimes for albeit good reasons -

"God, if you could just give me _____, then I would be content."

"God, whatever you do, please don't put me through _____"

"God, if _____ happens, I don't know if I can keep on doing this."

And, despite the temptations to compromise and to be unfaithful to the will of the Father, Jesus never hesitates or compromises. **He remains faithful.** To which you might look at that and say, "Well yeah, He's Jesus, the Son of God; so, yeah, that seems on brand for Him." And while that is certainly true, the author here is also showing us a pattern that we're to follow and also live out whenever we're in a place to compromise, too. We too, can live into this same type of faithfulness Jesus did.

The pattern we see here is in two spots:

1 - Full of the Spirit (vv. 1 and 14)

Jesus, it reads, is full of the Holy Spirit. Fully empowered by the third person of the Trinity; overflowing moment-by-moment with transcendent power that is also now made available to you and to me.

To where, when we are fighting to be faithful, the good news is we don't fight our battles alone. It's not Jake vs. Flesh. It's Spirit vs. Flesh. It's not my will power vs. the pull of this world. It's transcendent Spirit power over flesh.

And, when we learn to walk daily in the power of the Holy Spirit, He provides a way out from the temptation and compromise so that we can live in the bounds of his covenant.

- This is why we make such a big deal about spiritual formation and practices like being consistent in LifeGroups, and singing together - not because it's the "churchy" thing to do... but because these are ways we day-in and day-out attune ourselves to the Spirit's presence in us and around us... ways we functionally keep in step with Him and are empowered by Him.

2 - Full of Scripture (vv. 4, 8, and 12)

Look at Jesus' response to each temptation:

- **Vs 4 - "it is written...."**
- **Vs 8 - "it is written...."**
- **Vs 12 - "it is said...."**

Jesus, each time He is tempted to compromise, He is instead armed with Scripture. Whatever Satan throws at Him, He is so full of the Spirit and so full of the Scriptures, that He's able to resist it all.

And this same Scripture is given to us. (Come to think of it, we actually have more Scripture available to us than Jesus did.) The truth of Scripture has been given to us to live a life of loyalty to King Jesus.

So, we make a big deal about God's Word. We open up the Bible every single week to push into this power that God's Word has because the pull of our flesh is so strong. We sing truths from the Bible Sunday after Sunday because we know Satan would love to keep us silent and in our heads. When we gather in LifeGroups week after week, we study the Scriptures because left to our own devices, we would rather seek our own happiness than do the hard work of seeking the Kingdom of God.

We want to follow the pattern of Jesus and let God's Word get into our very bones. So that when we are armed with the Spirit and the Scriptures, we can resist and be proven faithful to the end.

Charles Spurgeon

Oh, that you and I might get into the very heart of the Word of God, and get that Word into ourselves! As I have seen the silkworm eat into the leaf, and consume it, so ought we to do with the Word of the Lord—not crawl over its surface, but eat right into it till we have taken it into our inmost parts. It is idle merely to let the eye glance over the words... but it is blessed to eat into the very soul of the Bible until, at last, you come to talk in Scriptural language, and your very style is fashioned upon Scripture models, and, what is better still, your spirit is flavored with the words of the Lord. [May they say] "Why, this man is a living Bible!" Prick him anywhere—his blood is Bibline, the very essence of the Bible flows from him. He cannot speak without quoting a text, for his very soul is full of the Word of God.

We see this modeled by Jesus in **Luke 4**. And we can do that too.

And, if I can be a bit forward with you all, I have this sense right now in our church of a spirit of weariness. Of just being tired with the day-in and day-out grind of the Christian life. And this is by no means an indictment or me wanting to come at you. **I'm with you in this feeling, too.** At times, just exhausted and worn out from life. Sometimes it feels like you're just trudging through; just walking in the mud.

For so many of us the past couple of years have been difficult seasons of transition and change:

- Maybe this church is new to you, maybe this city is new to you, maybe you have new babies to take care of, or you're newly married, or you have new friendships you're learning to form, or you're in a new job, or a new life stage.
- For others of us, there's been nothing new, but the daily grind of life's responsibilities is just wearisome.
- Or maybe life just threw a curveball at you that you didn't expect. You got that call or text or conversation that you didn't want to have and it just upended you.

And the pull towards weariness and spiritual exhaustion can often get us into this place of compromise - not in the big stuff per se - to be honest, I'm not worried about the big stuff for like 95% of us. It's the small stuff of compromise. It's the small acts of faithfulness that our weariness makes us start phoning it in on.

It's the weariness that pulls us to want to compromise when it comes to...

- Intentionality with your spouse - "Hey, I've had a hard day, so I won't be engaging."
- Reading the Bible - "Hey, this has been a busy season, and I'll get to it when I have more time."
- Showing up to group - "I'm tired, and I don't have the energy to get in the car and go to LifeGroup."
- Investing in Christian friendships - "It's a two-way street. They should make the first move if they are really interested in the friendship."

In our weariness the enemy makes us think - "You know what, no big deal. I can skimp a little bit here and a little bit there," and we miss the reality that those small acts of compromise, in the long run, are doing massive things to our soul bit-by-bit.

But, I want you to know that in an age of compromise and comfort - there is a better way being offered to you. The Spirit and the Scriptures are here for you in their abundance to guide us into this life of flourishing and faithfulness for the long run.

So, I don't know where the pull is for you to compromise, but what Scriptures do you need to arm yourself with in the power of the Spirit? You'll be talking about that together in LifeGroup this week. But, maybe for you, you need to arm yourself with:

Isaiah 40:31 - ...they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength...they shall run and not be weary...

Isaiah 42:3 - a bruised reed, He will not crush...

Philippians 4:13 - I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

2 Corinthians 12:9 - ..."My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

To memorize these. Hide them in your heart. So that when you feel the pull to compromise, you can fight back with these and persevere.

Whatever the case is, the picture we see in Scripture is clear: Sow to the Spirit in the little acts of faithfulness - and you will reap the reward of godliness; and, the fruit of faithfulness will grow more and more into your soul.

Corrie and Casper ten Boom.

I'm reminded of one story in particular in church history. Some of you may have heard of Corrie ten Boom. She wrote a memoir of her life called, *The Hiding Place*, where she talks about her life as a Dutch Christian during the German occupation of Holland in World War 2. She and her family, including her dad, Casper ten Boom, were imprisoned and sent to concentration camps for hiding and saving Jews from the Nazis. The whole thing is a really beautiful picture of ordinary Christians trusting and obeying Jesus in the midst of utter chaos.

In the book, Corrie talks a lot about how **ordinary and awesome her dad** was. Describes how every morning before any of them went to work, her dad would gather them at the breakfast table and read a chapter of the Bible. It's funny how Corrie talks about it because it's exactly how you'd imagine it. Some days they had deep conversations about amazing insights from the scripture. And she says some days it lead to no conversation at all. "Alright, let's get to work." But, Casper just modeled for his kids, "**We believe that God's Word is changing us whether we get anything out of it in the moment or not.**" And the more they read God's Word, the more they read about Jesus' care for the broken and lonely. The more they read about Him healing the sick. The more they read about Him welcoming in the broken and the foreigner and giving His life up for sinners like them.

And so when the first Jew came to their door seeking shelter, the response was automatic. Without even knowing it, they'd been preparing for a long time. Casper ten Boom's place of work became known as the place to get help. Whether it was financial help, emotional help, the town just knew that **the ten Boom's lived**

like Jesus. This was the normal rhythm of their lives when the Gestapo moved in and the bombs started falling in Holland. So, inviting in Jews and gypsies and any seeking shelter was the most natural thing in the world.

Eventually the family was caught for sheltering and aiding Jews; they were rounded up and taken to the concentration camps. And a member of the Gestapo said to Corrie's dad, "Sir, you're very old and I'd like to send you home. All you have to do is promise me you will stop hiding Jews in your house." And her dad looked back at the soldier and said, "Sir, if you send me home today, I will open my door to the first person who knocks tomorrow." He was so trained by the teachings and life of Jesus, so enamored with helping his neighbor, that there was no way he was gonna stop.

Now - just about everybody I know wants to be that kind of person - courageous, faithful. Willing to stand up to the evil empire to live and love like Jesus... but, we're just not as quick to realize the connection between becoming that kind of person later requires becoming a person of faithfulness now.

Casper ten Boom didn't magically become a courageous hero who looked like Jesus when the war started. His heroic courage was the end result of a lifetime of mornings spent around a table with the Bible open. Faithfulness is built in the small moments, and revealed in the crisis.

What are you building in the small moments? A life of faithfulness and fidelity to Jesus? Or a little compromise here, and a little compromise there.

Conclusion

I have good news - God has given you Himself through His Spirit and through the Scriptures to fight. And on top of that - He's given you a family right here to belong to, to help you and for you to help others.

I think about the many people in our church family sowing these little acts of faithfulness oftentimes in very unseen or unflashy ways and, man, does that help me when I'm feeling weary - to see you all continue to serve and persevere even when things are weary for you:

- **LifeGroup leaders** - I know y'all go through some stuff. And I know full well there are a thousand other ways you could spend your time each week, especially when you have a job and kids and free time is sort of non-existent. And you faithfully put in the work every week to pour into our people. God is bearing the fruit of faithfulness in you, and your faithfulness is moving all of us towards a deeper love for Jesus.
- **LifeGroup attenders** - who simply show up week after week - even when you don't want to be. You are present, you're there. And oftentimes God does miraculous things in your life and the lives of those around you when you're present and just show up. Over the long haul, you are blessing us.
- **Kidtown volunteers** - who often sacrifice being here with us in this Gathering right now because our kids need to hear about Jesus taught in a way that's accessible to them. Who, even right now, in our baby room, there are volunteers who are praying for these kids to one day love Jesus. And it often goes unseen or unnoticed - and I realize the added irony that if you're a Kidtown volunteer you probably aren't even in here right now for me to single you out - so you're probably gonna hear this on the podcast later. But, just so you know, we love you and are so thankful for your faithfulness. And all the parents here said Amen.

And not only does God give us His Spirit, His Scripture, and His family - there is also an endless fountain of grace being offered for us, even when we're in the midst of the fight and it can feel like a struggle. Here's a verse I find myself going back to a lot:

2 Timothy 2:13

if we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself.

“He cannot deny Himself.” It is utterly impossible. It’s never gonna happen. He promised to keep you to the very end. And He’s not going back on His Word, ever. Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. And when Jesus says, “I came that they might have life and have it to the fullest” - He meant it. And when He said, “Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest” - He meant that, too. And He is not going back on His word. Ever.

Maybe you’re weary right now; God remains faithful. Maybe you’re here this morning and you’re exhausted from the fight. God remains faithful to you. Maybe you’ve messed up one, too many times than you care to admit. And the beauty is, God is with you to the very end. He’s persevering along with you in the hope and the heartache. In the joy and the pain. And He will see you through to the end to produce the fruit of faithfulness in you. That’s a promise that God intends to keep.

Pray.

Communion.