

## **Fruits of Faith Walking**

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Union Baptist Church – 7/10/2016

### **I. INTRODUCTION: THE DAILY CHOICE**

Well, folks, we have a big week ahead of us. With a very important vote coming up on Tuesday, I'd like to ask all of you to be in diligent prayer that God's will be done through the voting process. And if you're a member of this church, please make sure you vote. I'd love to hear that we had 100% participation this time. I'd also like to express to each of you that it's been a great privilege to be your Interim Pastor these past 11 months and I'm looking forward to whatever God has planned for the future. No matter the outcome, I commit to honoring the decision that's made and moving forward together in unity.

Well, today in our message we're going to return to our faith study. We've been taking a little side trip recently from the armor of God and the shield of faith to dig a little deeper into faith itself. So far we've seen that faith is central in all of Scripture, and that it's the core of what God desires from each of us. It is what pleases him. He simply asks us to take the abundant evidence he's given us within ourselves and in the world around us, in history, in his written Word, and in our own personal experience with him, and choose to trust him...to walk forward choosing to trust that no matter the circumstances or challenges in life, God is good and is working all things together for good in our lives.

We also learned that authentic humility is necessary to walk this way, recognizing that we don't know it all and that we have only a tiny window to look through, while God sees it all, has been there through it all, and knows exactly what he's accomplishing and bringing to pass through the mysteries and complexities of life. And without humility we won't be able to walk by faith because we won't understand our desperate need for God in everything. It's only a true understanding of that need that prepares us to walk by the Spirit in faith.

George Muller once said: "Faith does not operate in the realm of the possible. There is no glory for God in that which is humanly possible. Faith begins where man's power ends." When we give up on ourselves and our human abilities and

learn instead to rely on God's power and strength, that's when miraculous things begin to happen and God truly begins to be pleased and glorified in our lives. Where humility takes root, faith begins to grow and the impossible becomes possible.

And the faith to which God calls us has a strong foundation of evidence supporting it. It's not a blind faith where we close our eyes and leap into the void with no evidence that God is real and ready to catch us. That wouldn't be faith. That would be stupidity. No, the faith to which God calls us is founded on the abundant evidence God has already given us that he is real and that he is good and that he loves us deeply and personally. Having accepted and known these truths about him, we are then ready to begin walking by faith, trusting him through the mysteries and challenges of life.

During World War II, when England was being bombed by the Nazis, it's said that "a father, holding his small son by the hand, ran from a building that had been struck by a bomb. In the front yard was a shell hole. Seeking shelter as quickly as possible, the father jumped into the hole and held up his arms for his son to follow. Terrified, yet hearing his father's voice telling him to jump, the boy replied, "I can't see you!" The father, looking up against the sky tinted red by the burning buildings, called to the silhouette of his son, "But I can see you. Jump!" The boy jumped, because he trusted his father." The boy also had some evidence, didn't he, that his father was really there, having heard his familiar voice telling him where he was and what to do?

Donner Atwood has said: "The Christian faith enables us to face life or meet death, not because we can see, but with the certainty that we are seen; not that we know all the answers, but that we are known." The walk of faith is based on an enormous amount of evidence and comes with a perfect guidebook telling us who God is and how best to live our lives by his power. So are you ready to increase your faith and begin to operate in the realm of the impossible today?

Well if you are, Scripture has a lot to say about what happens when we learn to walk by faith, stepping out into the unknown with confidence that God sees both us and the path ahead clearly and will be faithful to see us through and accomplish miraculous things that bring him glory. The fruits of faith-walking are

out of this world, and I'd like to spend most of our time today examining these amazing fruits or benefits!

So what are the fruits of walking by faith? What will we grow on our tree when we walk this way? What might we expect to experience when we choose to trust God and walk by his power? Well, let's begin to examine this question today in that very familiar book of Ephesians.

## II. THE FRUITS OF FAITH-WALKING

### A. Power

In Ephesians chapter 1, verses 18 to 19, Paul shares an important truth about what we'll experience when we choose to simply believe and trust in God. In fact he prays that each of us will have the eyes of our hearts opened so that we will know this truth with confidence. Paul says this in Ephesians chapter 1, verses 18 to 19:

18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is **the surpassing greatness of His power** toward us who believe.

Did you notice what Paul wants us to know with confidence? He wants us to know the surpassing greatness of God's power that operates within those who believe...those who choose to trust God and walk by faith. This immense power...the very power of God himself...is available to those who believe. And to look at it negatively, the surpassing greatness of God's power must not be available to those who operate in unbelief and spend their time doubting and questioning God. When we don't walk in faith, we're limited to what is humanly possible and God is not pleased or glorified by anything that we accomplish.

So the first fruit of faith-walking is power...not human strength and muscles...but the very power of God that enables us to walk through life in the realm of the impossible...glorifying God as he works powerfully through us to show himself to the world.

## B. Stability

The second fruit of faith-walking is found in Psalm 125, verse 1. The psalmist says this:

Those who trust in the Lord are as Mount Zion, which **cannot be moved** but abides forever.

When you think about a mountain, how easily can it be moved? I'd say that it would probably be near the top of the list of things that are difficult to move, wouldn't you? Moving an entire mountain is not something that's done...tunnels through a mountain or blasting off a part of one so a road can go through, yes...but completely destroying or moving an entire mountain, no. And what about moving Mount Zion, the mountain God himself has called his own and set apart as special forever?...not a chance.

Well, guess what, when you choose to trust God and walk forward in faith, you are as immovable as Mount Zion. Those who trust in the Lord have stability and security and the strongest foundation possible. You are surrounded by the Lord as with a shield and no matter what happens to you, you will remain secure in the presence of the Lord. Yours will be a house built on solid rock, rather than a house built on shifting sands, destined to collapse in the next windstorm.

## C. Joy

So we already have some great news, don't we, about the fruits of faith walking? Power and stability are promised to those who trust in the Lord. But we've only just begun. Psalm 33, verse 21, provides us with a third outstanding benefit that results from faith-walking... something every one of us would really like to have.

The psalmist says this:

21 For **our heart rejoices** in Him, because we trust in His holy name.

So as we trust in God's holy name, our heart rejoices...we experience joy and gladness. Isn't that something you want in your life? Who here doesn't want to experience joy and gladness in your life? Well, I can tell you the one sure way to

find it: learn to trust in God completely. Sound too simple? If so, why? You should definitely resolve that question in your mind if it's there, and soon!

Instead of questioning and doubting and complaining and kicking against the goads, learn to trust God and be content in him no matter your circumstances. That's the perfect path to true joy and happiness in your life. Notice that the joy is BECAUSE we trust. Joy comes as a direct result of choosing to trust in God's holy name. Without choosing to trust, we don't experience the joy.

#### **D. Fearlessness**

How about a fourth fruit of faith walking? Are you ready for another one? This is kind of fun...and it just keeps getting better! We find our fourth benefit of trusting God in Psalm 56, verses 2 to 4. David says this:

2 My foes have trampled upon me all day long, for they are many who fight proudly against me. 3 When I am afraid, I will put my trust in You. 4 In God, whose word I praise, in God I have put my trust; **I shall not be afraid**. What can mere man do to me?

Now this is a fruit we talked about last week in our study of Psalm 27. By putting his full trust in God, David experienced an amazing new reality: he had nothing to fear. Notice that he did begin in fear. He acknowledged that there were times in his life that he felt afraid. But the perfect resolution of that fear was found in one place: by putting his trust in God. Fear becomes a thing of the past as our confidence and trust in God grows.

Notice that David's life wasn't going that great. He'd been trampled on all day long by his enemies. That sounds fun doesn't it? And it sounds like he doesn't just have a couple enemies, but rather many enemies were fighting proudly against him and seemed to be having some success since David felt trampled on all day long. Yet, in the midst of losing battles and getting trampled on, David finds fearlessness and confidence, knowing that with God on his side he will eventually win the war. What is mere man, compared to the God of the universe!

And this, my friends, is the same fearlessness and confidence that each of us can have as we learn to walk by faith, choosing to trust God even through the midst of

seemingly hopeless circumstances. Do you have any of those in your life right now? Well these times when we're being trampled on all day long by our enemies are the times when our faith is tested...tried in the fire...to see whether it's pure gold. These difficult times are perfect opportunities to grow our faith muscles and experience the amazing benefits of simple trust in our faithful God.

## **E. Surrounded by Lovingkindness**

Are you ready for number five? This fifth fruit of faith walking is what sustains us through those "trampled on" days and through whatever difficulties come our way. It's found in Psalm 32, verse 10.

David says:

10 Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but he who trusts in the Lord,  
**lovingkindness shall surround him.**

Aren't you glad that David was a man after God's own heart? The book of Psalms is a treasure trove of amazing and comforting truths about who God is and how closely he longs to walk with us and fill us up with his life, love, and joy. David's psalms are a living testimony of what God can do through imperfect human beings when we trust and seek him. The fifth fruit of faith walking is the amazing gift of being surrounded by the lovingkindness of the Lord.

You may remember way back in one of my early messages on Ephesians that we talked about the meaning of the word translated, "lovingkindness," in the New American Standard, or "steadfast love," in other translations. We discovered that the original word combines what you might call a "trinity" of words. The word communicates a combination of strength, steadfastness and love, something only God himself can perfectly supply. Human beings can love each other within human limits, can be somewhat faithful to each other, and can use their human strength on behalf of others, but only God can love perfectly, be absolutely steadfast and faithful, be supremely capable of protecting those he loves with strength like no other, and do it all at the same time. And this is what he says he will do for those who choose to trust in him.

No matter what we go through in life or death, when we choose to continue trusting God we will be surrounded and immersed in his perfect lovingkindness. We will rest assured that God is with us at all times and constantly working for our good. We will remain in his presence constantly and experience the perfect steadfast love only he can give.

We will not have to live our lives in despair and sorrow like those who have no hope, when we choose to trust in the God who is the very essence of love.

## F. Spiritual Success

I've got 3 more fruits of faith walking for us today. Number 6 is found in the words of Jehoshaphat in 2 Chronicles 20, verse 20, when a great army was coming against Judah and Jerusalem. The Israelites were vastly outnumbered and from a human perspective, all hope was lost. But remember, God works in the realm of the impossible for those who trust him. In the face of this overwhelming army, this is what happened:

20 They rose early in the morning and went out to the wilderness of Tekoa; and when they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Listen to me, O Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, put your trust in the Lord your God and **you will be established**. Put your trust in His prophets and **succeed**."

Jehoshaphat is walking in faith here, isn't he? He was boldly expressing his faith in God and taking actions based on that very real faith. His word to the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem was this: trust in the Lord and his word and you will be established and succeed. The word, "established," echoes the benefit we saw earlier of being as immovable as Mount Zion...stability and security.

But the sixth fruit of faith walking I'd like to focus on here is success. Jehoshaphat said, "Put your trust in His prophets and succeed." And what was the job of godly prophets? They were to speak the very words of God. So to trust in God's prophets was to trust in God's Word, and the promise was that if people would do that they would succeed.

Now we need to be careful here, because some might say this is a promise that if we trust in and follow God's Word, we're guaranteed good health, financial success and material blessings. But the rest of Scripture is very clear that we're

not promised health and wealth if we trust in God. As we'll see in the Hall of Faith soon, many who trusted in God experienced anything but health and wealth: "They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated – of whom the world was not worthy – wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth." That doesn't sound like success in the world's eyes, does it?

Instead, the success we'll experience as we trust in God is of a spiritual nature. Sometimes it may work out to be what looks like success to other people, but many times it will be success in God's eyes only...a success that we'll know in our hearts, but one that may not be known clearly to others. In the case of Jehoshaphat, success in the eyes of other people did result as he and his people trusted God and the opposing armies were soundly defeated. This will be the case for us at times in our lives too. But the real success that we can count on as we trust in God is the success of seeing God accomplish the impossible, empowering us for things we never thought we could do and allowing us to continue glorifying him through all the ups and downs of life, whether we experience worldly success or simply the success of growing our faith and drawing nearer to God as he carries us through even the most difficult times in life.

## **G. Healthy Growth and Fruitfulness Even in Drought**

Well, are you getting excited about the fruits of faith walking yet? I still have two more! Number 7 is found in Jeremiah 17, verses 7 to 8, and provides us with a beautiful picture of life built on trust in the Lord:

7 "**Blessed** is the man who trusts in the Lord and whose trust is the Lord. 8 "For he **will be like a tree** planted by the water, that extends its roots by a stream and **will not fear** when the heat comes; but its **leaves will be green**, and it **will not be anxious** in a year of drought **nor cease to yield fruit**.

By trusting in the Lord, we become like a tree with deep roots planted by a stream that never dries up. When intense heat and drought comes and other trees dry up and die, we will remain green and fruitful. We will have a never ending source of living water flowing through us and making us healthy and fruitful in all that we do. Healthy growth and fruitfulness even through intense heat and drought await those who will simply choose to trust in the Lord.



## H. Perfect Peace

And this brings us to the eighth fruit of faith walking, found in Isaiah 26, verses 3 and 4. And believe me, this is something else each of us longs for in our lives. Listen to this final promise for those who will walk by faith:

3 "The steadfast of mind You will keep in **perfect peace**, because he trusts in You. 4 "Trust in the Lord forever, for in God the Lord, we have an everlasting Rock.

Perfect peace...also known as the peace that passes understanding... awaits those who will trust in the Lord. Notice that the perfect peace comes BECAUSE OF trust. Without choosing to trust, there's no peace. But when we do choose to trust, remaining steadfast in our firm faith in God's goodness, he keeps us in perfect peace. We don't just have peace for a few minutes and then go back to stress and anxiety. Instead we remain in perfect, enduring peace as we trust. "Trust in the Lord forever, for in God the Lord, we have an everlasting Rock." Amen? Do you believe today that he's worthy of your trust and that he will fill you with perfect peace if you'll choose to trust him?

## III. CONCLUSION

Power, stability, joy, fearlessness, lovingkindness, spiritual success, healthy growth and fruitfulness in any circumstance, and perfect peace...Aren't these the very things you're longing for in your life and walk with God right now? Are you ready to start growing your faith and experiencing the amazing benefits of trusting in God?

Scripture tells us that faith and the work of the Holy Spirit are intertwined. In the book of Acts, godly men like Stephen and Barnabas were described as full of faith and of the Holy Spirit. Paul also tells us in Ephesians that we need to be strengthened with power through the Holy Spirit in order for Christ to dwell in our hearts through faith, being rooted and grounded in his love. And those who learn to walk in faith become filled with the Holy Spirit, something most perfectly illustrated for us in the earthly life of Jesus Christ. But Paul prayed for this process to happen in the lives of ALL believers.

So as you seek to grow your faith and experience these amazing fruits of faith walking, I want to challenge you to seek the Lord and pray for the power of his Spirit to be at work in you. Pray for the same to happen within other believers. And in your daily battles to trust in the Lord rather than doubting and complaining and living in fear and depression, pray, pray, pray. God will answer those prayers over time and more and more he will enable you to simply trust him and begin experiencing the amazing benefits of that trust. He'll enable you to fearlessly take that jump into the unknown, having heard his voice and experienced his perfect love, never-ending faithfulness, and inexhaustible goodness.

Next week, Lord willing, we'll look at more specific ways to grow our faith and begin walking confidently in God's power. Let's pray!