

Text: Gal. 5:22

Title: The fruit of the Spirit in the life of Christ - faith

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Introduction: Chieko Asakawa is an IBM fellow at the company's Academy of Technology, an appointment that IBM calls their "most prestigious honor." Her research efforts have centered on IBM's Accessibility Project, which seeks to use technology to improve the lives of people with disabilities. Chieko earned her PhD in Engineering at the University of Tokyo, and the Japanese government has awarded her with their Medal of Honor with Purple Ribbon for her work on developing a voice internet browser for the visually impaired. Chieko has been blind since the age of 14.

I became aware of Chieko because she was featured in a recent IBM commercial in which she demonstrated how a cell phone can now help navigate a blind person through a building with information like how many feet down the hallway the next door is. It was remarkable to see her use the technology, and then even more remarkable to learn that she was instrumental in the development of the technology. She is to accessibility technology what Fanny Crosby was to English hymnody.

We have come to the virtue of faith in our study of the fruit of the Spirit. The apostle Paul summed up the entire Christian experience with this one virtue when he wrote, "We walk by faith, not by sight." Just like a blind person cannot see with his eyes what he must believe his phone is telling him, so also a believer cannot see with his eyes what he must believe the Scripture tells him. We would not call Chieko's faith in her technology "blind faith," for it is very well-informed faith. So also, for the believer, ours is not a

blind faith in the Scripture, but rather a very well-informed faith.

That faith appears in the fruit of the Spirit tells us that the faith of the believer depends not only on being well-informed, but also on the empowerment of the Holy Spirit in our life. It is an important part of walking in the Spirit and not fulfilling the lust of the flesh. To understand what a life empowered to believe this way looks like, we do well again to think on the life of Christ, the One anointed by the Holy Spirit, whose faith was flawless.

Jesus Christ is the God-man, and as God Jesus possesses with the perfection of deity the attribute of faithfulness. The New Testament often refers to God's faithfulness. His faithfulness cannot be nullified by man's unbelief (Rom. 3:3); it provides for the propitiation of sinners in the blood of the Son (Rom. 3:25); it called us into fellowship with the Son and keeps us there (1 Cor. 1:9); it makes a way to escape temptation (1 Cor. 10:13); it makes the apostle's word consistent (2 Cor. 1:18); it accomplishes in and through us what God calls us to do (1 Thess. 5:24); it protects us from the evil one in times of suffering (2 Thess. 3:3; 1 Pet. 4:19); it compensates for our unfaithfulness (2 Tim. 2:13); it keeps His promise so that we have an unwavering hope (Heb. 10:23, 11:11); and it forgives every confessed sin (1 John 1:9). In each of these ways, Jesus Christ is faithful because Jesus Christ is God.

But when we speak of the fruit of the Spirit as a believer's faith, we need to examine the ways Jesus Christ bore this fruit as the Spirit-anointed man. I would like us to consider three ways in which this was true of Christ this morning.

I. As Spirit-anointed man, Christ was never afflicted by "little faith."

Illustration: “Big Mike” and “Little Mike” were useful nicknames at a recent Tuesday morning prayer time. The phrase “little faith” is a nickname Jesus would use at times for His disciples. In those contexts, we see His Spirit-empowered faith as it contrasts the disciples’ little-faith.

Application: As you study the words for *faith* and *believing* in the New Testament, you come to the realization that there are many, many causes of unbelief in our sinful world today. Here are some that I have found:

- Insistence on seeing (John 4:48, 6:30, 7:31 w/8:30-59, 10:22-42, 12:37-38, 14:11, 20:25, 20:29, 2 Cor. 5:7).
- The love of darkness and evil deeds (John 3:19, 16:9, 1 Tim. 1:19, 3:9, Tit. 1:12-13).
- The search for glory from others rather than from God (John 5:44, 11:48, 12:42).
- The inability to hear Jesus’s voice as the true Shepherd (John 10:26-27, 12:39-40).
- Division among God’s people (John 17:21).
- The influence of scoffers and false teachers and false doctrines (Acts 13:41, 1 Cor. 2:5, 15:2, 1 Tim. 4:1, 2 Tim. 2:18, 1 John 4:1, 5:10, Jude 3-4).
- Discouragement over tribulations and the tempter (Acts 14:22, 1 Thess. 3:5, 1 Pet. 5:9).
- A lack of opportunity to hear due to the lack of preachers (Rom. 10:14).
- Spiritual pride (Rom. 11:20).
- Spiritual immaturity (Rom. 14:2).
- The love of money (1 Tim. 6:10).
- False professions of faith (Jam. 2:19, 2:26).
- God’s judgment (2 Thess. 2:11).

So it is not at all surprising that the disciples of Christ struggled with unbelief at times, and in those times our Lord would often deal with them as “Little-faiths” in such a way

that their faith might be strengthened. He trusts God perfectly in four ways on those occasions:

1. He trusted that His needs would always be met (Matt. 6:30, 16:8, Luke 12:28). Jesus would have been great this way at church business meetings. We are often guilty of sinful unbelief and little faith when we feel financial pressure. Jesus had no place to lay His head at times, but His faith in the guarantee that His heavenly father would provide for Him never wavered.

2. He trusted that He never needed to be afraid (Matt. 8:26, Mark 4:40, Luke 8:25). Perhaps the one episode in which He felt the most stress was His time in the Garden of Gethsemane, contemplating His need to endure the wrath of God against the sin of sinners. He understood what it was to sweat great drops of blood under duress. But He did so without fear. God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of love and of power and of a sound mind (2 Tim. 1:7). He never lacked this love, power, and sound mind due to fear.

3. He trusted to never doubt God's Word (Matt. 14:31, 17:20, 21:21, Luke 17:6, 24:25). Peter went a long way down the road of trusting God's Word when he walked with Christ on the stormy Sea of Galilee. Jesus said, "Be not afraid, it is I," and Peter believed and said, "Lord, bid me come." Jesus said, "Come," and Peter went. But then in the middle of demonstrating great trust and faith in the Word of God, he began to doubt. Satan is especially focused on creating unbelief in the human heart when it comes to God's Word (Gen. 3:1, 4-5).

4. He trusted to pray (Mark 11:24, Luke 22:32, John 11:42). Jesus understood that some very difficult lessons awaited a very boastful Peter in this passage, but He could nevertheless see the day when the church would have a better Peter.

In that day Peter would humbly strengthen his brothers. How could Jesus see that day? He trusted to pray.

Conclusion – Part One: In each of these ways, Jesus demonstrated perfectly the virtue that Paul says will be a part of our lives if we are walking in the Spirit. He will produce this faith in us, in spite of all the ways the enemy seeks to make us “Little-faiths” disbelieve. Are we trusting the Lord to meet our every need? Do we have the courage of the faithful or the fear of little-faith? Have we found His word to be unquestionably true, or do doubts linger? Do we demonstrate our faith in prayer? If the answer to any of these questions is that our faith is little-faith, we need to confess our unbelief and ask our faithful God to forgive our awful sin. As Spirit-anointed man, Christ was never afflicted by little-faith. If we walk in the Spirit, we will not be either. We will bear the fruit of Christlike faith.

II. As Spirit-anointed man, Christ was faithful to His mission.

Illustration: Colonel Robert Howard has been described as “The Greatest Hero America Never Knew” [<https://www.dmagazine.com/publications/d-magazine/2010/july/colonel-robert-howard-of-waco-greatest-american-hero/>; accessed 9/27/2019]. He was a graduate of Texas Christian University, and served our nation as a special forces Green Beret. He was awarded two Distinguished Service Crosses, a Silver Star, several Bronze Stars, and 8 Purple Hearts, although he was wounded 14 times in battle. He died at the age of 70 of pancreatic cancer but used his retirement years to visit troops in Afghanistan and Iraq. He belongs among our greatest American heroes as the only military man ever to be nominated for the Medal of Honor three times, which was awarded to him on one of those occasions.

His life represents well many brave men and women upon whose faithfulness to their mission our freedoms depend.

Application: The number 3 was an important part of the greatness of Jesus as the Spirit-anointed Christ. His mission as a man was threefold, pictured prophetically in the three offices of Israel, which required the anointing of oil – the prophet, the priest, and the king. Jesus executed His Christ-mission with perfect faithfulness in spite of the difficulty it presented to Him, and He did so in the power of God’s Spirit as man. Note three passages that speak of this faithfulness: (1) faithfulness as prophet (Heb. 3:2); (2) faithfulness as priest (Heb. 2:17); and (3) faithfulness as king (Rev. 19:11-16). The apostle John sums up this threefold faithfulness in Rev. 1:5, “And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness (as the prophet), and the first begotten of the dead (as the priest), and the prince of the kings of the earth (as the king).”

Because of the faithfulness of Christ, sinners may be saved. How incredibly critical it was for sinners that Jesus Christ was faithful as prophet, priest, and king.

And yet, so many are still not saved. Why? Certainly not because Jesus was unfaithful. No, rather, because you and I have been unfaithful (1 Cor. 15:34). As we study the faith of Christ in the New Testament, we come upon a truth that puts an enormous responsibility on us – He has had a certain kind of faith in us. He has entrusted us with the gospel (1 Thess. 2:4, “But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts”; 1 Tim. 1:11, “According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust”).

Jesus told His disciples, “As the Father has sent Me, so send I you.” Imagine the life of Christ with only the faithfulness of

the average church member or professing Christian who is not even willing to be a church member. No man would be saved. Now imagine a world in which every Christian is a faithful church member like Jesus Christ was faithful to His mission. Dare I surmise that no man would be lost? It would be something like the coming millennium, would it not? What kind of world is our level of faithfulness to our mission creating in our day? We live in a very needy day that way. Perhaps we need to confess our lack of faithfulness, repent, and become filled with the fruit of the Spirit which is faithfulness to our mission.

III. As Spirit-anointed man, Christ is the author and finisher of the faith (Heb. 12:2).

Application: Here I simply want to conclude with the truth that Jesus is not only the example of faith and faithfulness; He is also the object of faith. He is the author of faith – where saving faith begins; and He is the finisher of faith – where saving faith ends. Have you looked to Him that way? Can you say this morning, He is the author and finisher of your faith? Is He the one you trust for salvation? To be saved from our sin, we must look to Him with the eyes of faith. Our hearts are wired by our sin to look to ourselves. Only His power of saving grace can change that in us.

Conclusion – Part Two: I spoke to a man named Alan a couple of Saturday's ago of his soul's need for the gospel. One of the objections of Alan in defense of his unbelief was that he needed proof. I told him that God has no trouble proving Himself and left our conversation there hoping he would read the gospel pamphlet I had given him.

But as I have contemplated my answer to his objection, I wish I had told Alan that there is no greater proof available

than what God Himself has said. That there is no greater proof than His Word simply goes with His being God. If you can find more credible proof for a claim, that is not the claim of God. And so He says, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else" (Isa. 45:22). That is the only proof that can save, so without faith in that proof – God's Word that commands, "Look unto Me!" – it is impossible to please this God. Without faith it is impossible to be saved.

"A man came – I think it was actually in Philadelphia – on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, 'Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.' That is the distinction – the sermon, and the 'lightning and the thunder.' To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters."

– David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*