

CHAPTER XVII

THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD

"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;" (Deut. 7:9).

Faithfulness is one of the sweetest and most comforting of the divine attributes. Faithfulness belongs to God; fickleness characterizes sinful men. The faithfulness of God is a practical truth for the believer. It is a pillow for his weary head, a stimulant for his fainting heart, and a brace for his feeble knees. In all the exigencies of life God can be safely relied upon. He will never disappoint the trusting soul. He will never suffer His faithfulness to fail. The faithfulness of God coupled with His mighty power is our everlasting hope. Men disappoint us because they are lacking either in faithfulness or power. But we can look above the wreck and ruin caused by the unfaithfulness of men and behold One who is great in faithfulness. *"Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)"* (Heb. 10 :23).

Unfaithfulness is one of the outstanding characteristics of these evil days. Who has not suffered at the hands of unfaithful men? And where is the man who has not been guilty, in some measure at least, of this very sin? In the economic world nearly all failures are the results of unfaithful debtors or employees. In the social realm marital infidelity has become a terrible scourge; the sacred bonds of wedlock are broken with the ease of discarding an old garment. In the political world pre-election promises are broken as flippantly as they are made. In international affairs treaties between nations are treated as mere scraps of paper. There is fear and alarm everywhere as men learn that they cannot trust one another. And in the religious realm unfaithfulness is as evident as anywhere else. Multitudes who profess to believe the Bible are ignoring great portions of it, pronouncing other parts out of date, and withal seeking to explain much of it away.

Sick of Humanity

A reporter for one of the big American dailies, who, witnessed the battle of the Alcazar in war torn, bullet riddled and blood soaked Spain, lying upon his hospital bed in France, spoke to his manager across the ocean, and said, "I'm sick of humanity!" The human race began its downward career in the garden of plenty by unfaithfulness to its Creator, and by the same sin is destroying itself. Here is a question for heart searching: Have we been the cause of grief to others by our unfaithfulness? Has wife, husband, child, parent, neighbor, pastor, brother, or anyone else been brought to grief by

our unfaithfulness? Remember the tears caused by wrong doing are kept in God's bottle to be brought as evidence in the day of judgment.

The Faithful God

There is One who is great in faithfulness. Faithfulness is a perfection in God by which He is true to His word and to all His covenant engagements. He never breaks a contract with Himself or with His creatures. What He has purposed that will He do, and what He has promised that will He perform. Lying is one of the most prevalent sins of all times. It was the belief of a lie that caused the ruin of the human race. Adam and Eve turned away from God's word and followed the father of lies. And all their children have followed in their steps. The children of Israel, in the long ago, would actually beg their prophets to preach lies to them. *"Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits:"* (Isa. 30:10). In our day lying has been camouflaged with the big word propaganda.

It is said that in Siam they have a law, that when man lies his mouth is sewed up for three days. Bro. R. G. Lee says that if such law were in effect in this country many business men would not be able to answer the telephone and some of the women would be going around with pretty embroidered mouths.

The proneness to tell and believe lies is one of the most startling facts of human history. Of only one man has it ever been truthfully said that there was no deceit in His mouth. And this was the God man, Christ Jesus, the Truth incarnate. *"And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth"* (Isa. 53:9).

God is Faithful to Himself

Of God we read *"If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself"* (II Tim. 2:13). This means that He will faithfully perform all that He has purposed. *"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose"* (Rom. 8:28). Back in eternity there was a people foreknown and predestinated whom God purposed to call and justify and glorify. This was a secret purpose known only to God and not a promise made to men, for as yet man had no actual being. Now, if God should fail to call and justify and glorify the foreknown and predestinated, He would not be faithful or true to Himself. It would be as if a man purposed to do something and then failed through lack of constancy or ability. God is faithful to His own purpose, and has ample power to execute all His plans. *"And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of*

heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" (Dan. 4:35).

God is Faithful to His Son

There were certain promises made to Jesus Christ, the spiritual David, on condition that He perform His duties as Mediator of the better covenant. And God has sworn that He will not lie unto David, that is, Christ, the spiritual David. He was to see His seed and the travail of His soul and be satisfied. "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities" (Isa. 53:11). Concerning the covenant of grace entered into by the three persons of the Godhead, we can do no better than to quote B. H. Carroll: "Before there was any world, a covenant of grace and mercy was entered into between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the evidences of which covenant are abundant in the New Testament and the parts to be performed by each Person of the Godhead are clearly expressed, viz: The Father's grace and love in agreeing to send the Son, His covenant obligations to give the Son a seed, His foreknowledge of this seed, His predestination concerning this seed, His justification and adoption of them in time. The Son's covenant was the obligation to assume human nature in His incarnation, voluntarily renouncing the glory He had with the Father before the world was, to become obedient to the death of the cross. The consideration held out to Him, as a hope set before Him, inducing Him to endure the shame of the cross, and the reward bestowed upon Him because of that obedience, was His resurrection, His glorification, His exaltation to the royal priestly throne and His investment with the right of judgment. And the Spirit's covenant-obligations were to apply this work of redemption in calling, convincing, regenerating, sanctifying, and raising from the dead the seed promised to the Son, the whole of it showing that the plan of salvation was not an afterthought; that the roots of it in election and predestination are both in eternity before the world was, and the fruits of it are in eternity after the judgment. The believer is asked to consider this chain, test each link, shake it and hear it rattle, connected from eternity to eternity. Everyone that God chose in Christ is drawn by the Spirit to Christ. Everyone predestinated is called by the Spirit in time, justified in time, and will be glorified when the Lord comes."

The Death of Christ No Experiment

The death of Christ was not an experiment, uncertain in its results. The work of the Holy Spirit is not a mere trial to see what can be accomplished. We cannot subscribe to the doctrine of an unfaithful Father, a defeated Holy Spirit, and a disappointed Son. We believe in a faithful God, an invincible Spirit, and a victorious Christ. Spurgeon says:

"That every soul for whom Christ shed His blood as a substitute He will claim as His own and have

as His right, I firmly believe. I love to hold and I delight to proclaim this precious truth. Not all the powers of earth or hell, not the obstinacy of the human will, nor the deep depravity of the human mind, can ever prevent Christ seeing the travail of His soul and being satisfied."

But better still are the words from the lips of incarnate Truth; Hear ye Him:

"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6 :37-40). And again He said, *"As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him"* (Jno. 17:2).

The Ground of Our Security

The ground of our security is God's faithfulness to His Son. *"God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord"* (I Cor. 1:9). According to covenant engagements Jesus Christ was to have fellows or companions. Now, by the calling of God (the effectual call of the Spirit by the word) we were first admitted into fellowship with Christ, and the ultimate objective is our presence with Him in glory. And this is guaranteed by the faithfulness of God, *"Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (I Cor. 1:8), for the called are to be justified and glorified. The called and justified are safe as long as God keeps His word to His Son. Freedom from chastisement depends upon the believer's good behavior, but certainty of glory rests upon God's faithfulness to His Son.

"If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me" (Ps. 89:30-36).

What a firm foundation for our faith! Our safety does not rest upon our faithfulness to God, but upon God's faithfulness to His Son. HALLELUJAH!

God Is Faithful to His Saints

God has made promises to poor, helpless, mourning believers in Christ and He will faithfully perform every promise He has made. *"For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance"*

(Rom. 11:29). This means that God is true to His covenant promises, and will not fail to glorify all the called. *"For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us"* (II Cor. 1:20).

Preservation

God is faithful in **preserving** His people. *"For the LORD loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off"* (Ps. 37:28). *"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand"* (Jno. 10:27-29). Whatever is preserved is helpless to keep itself. The saints are weak, but they are kept by the power of God: *"Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time"* (1 Peter 1:5). God's promise to the believer is everlasting life. And this is not everlasting existence, but everlasting favor or justification so that he will never come under condemnation again. *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life"* (Jno. 5:24).

"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." (I Thess. 5:23,24). Here the believer's complete sanctification and deliverance from sin is made to depend upon the faithfulness of God. The called are not only justified; they will also be glorified, for God is faithful. God is not going to call sinners with the effectual, life giving call and then leave them stranded on the highway to glory. There is no "coffin corner" for the souls of the saints. Neither will their evacuation be a "Dunkirk." Those who have fled to Jesus Christ as a refuge from the storm of Divine wrath have God's word and His oath, *"That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us"* (Heb. 6:18).

"There's never a heartache and never a groan,
 Never a tear drop, and never a moan;
 Never a danger, but there on His throne,
 Moment by moment He thinks of His own."

Discipline

God is faithful in disciplining His people. The psalmist cries: *"I know, O LORD, that thy judgments*

are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me" (Ps. 119:75). Here David submits to God's dealings with him and acknowledges that they are right and good. In David's creed there was no place for luck or chance. He believed that God ordered all that befell him. His afflictions were most painful, but He saw God's hand in them and believed they were for his good. But he goes further and says that God was faithful in sending them. God was acting in the best interests of David and knew what he needed. God was as faithful to His own in chastening as He is in preserving them. God is no unfaithful and indulgent Eli. He will not allow His children to sin without correction. *"He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes"* (Prov. 13:24).

We ought to praise God for His faithfulness in using the rod to bring us back to Himself and into the path of obedience. The saints have the wayward nature of a sheep and are prone to go astray. God is a faithful Shepherd who knows how to use the rod to bring us back. Hear David again: *"Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word"* (Ps. 119:67). And the doctrine is the same whether in the Old Testament or the New Testament. In Heb. 12:11 we read, *"Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."* This glorious truth is put in verse by one of the Puritans, Thomas Washburn (1606-1687).

"The saint like a silly sheep doth often stray,
Not knowing of his way

Blind deserts and the wilderness of sin

He daily travels in.

There's nothing will seduce him sooner than

Afflictions to his pen.

He wanders in the sunshine, but in rain

And stormy weather hastens home again.

"Thou, the great Shepherd of my soul, O keep me, Thy unworthy sheep from gadding:

If fair means will not do it,

Let foul, then, bring me to it.

Rather than I should perish in my error,

Lord, bring me back with terror;

Better I be chastened with Thy rod and shepherd's staff,

Than stray from Thee, my God.

"Though for the present stripes do grieve me sore
At the last they profit more

And make me to observe Thy word,

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Which I neglected heretofore;
 Let me come home by weeping cross
 Than still be at a loss.
 For health I'd rather take a bitter pill
 Than eating sweet meats to be always ill."

As the saint grows in knowledge of the truth about God and man, he will become more and more sick of self and fond of Him. When the truth about God and self reaches the inward parts, then will we do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly before God. "*He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*" (Micah 6:8).

Oh, how much do we, His blood-bought people, need to be more faithful to Him who never suffers His faithfulness to fail toward us! This is what He requires of us as stewards of His goods. "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (I Cor. 4:2). It will not matter much when we come to die whether we have had much of this world's goods and honor or not, but it will matter much whether or not we have been faithful to our Redeemer. May the faithfulness of God become a spring in us from which shall flow waters of faithful service to Him!

"O love that will not let me go, I rest my weary soul on Thee;
 I give Thee back the life I owe,
 That in Thine ocean depths its flow
 May richer, fuller be."