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CHRISTIAN FIDELITY

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FIDELITY is faithfulness or adherence to the right; it also carries the significance or loyalty or adherence to a person to whom one is bound by contract or agreement.

Every Christian is bound by contract to the Lord. This means that he will acknowledge no spiritual head but Christ, and that his action and conduct will be governed by the will of God in Christ, as indicated by means of His Word and providences.

But fidelity implies more than this, as it applies to a Christian. True Christian fidelity means a genuine heart appreciation of those principles of conduct which actuate Jehovah God in his dealings with His creatures; so that as one becomes better and better acquainted with the Heavenly Father, and with what He is doing and why He is doing it, he is able more and more to enter into a oneness of desire, of intention, of purposes with Him, so that cooperation becomes, no longer a matter of duty only but comes to be intelligent and of choice.

This, as we know, was the heart attitude of the Lord Jesus, who said, "Lo, I come in the volume of the book it is written of me, I DELIGHT, to do Thy will, O My God: yea Thy law is within My heart." (Psa. 40:7, 8.) Until the hidden things were revealed to Jesus, this doing of God's will might have appeared quite simple and easy. He might reasonably have supposed that such a course of fidelity would bring Him the approbation and support of the professed people of God; but we know that it brought Him the reverse of this—shame, ignominy, and finally death as an evil-doer in the sight of that people.

So, in the experience of the footstep followers of Jesus, it is usually found that a course of fidelity to God and Christian principle will lead to unexpected results. God permits it to be thus, as a test of faithfulness, of the genuineness of one's contract of agreement with Him.

He Suffered, So Must We

Every Christian when first coming to God and entering into the covenant by sacrifice, has his own preconceived ideas or notions as to what experiences the course of faithfulness may bring; what the sacrifice will involve. These may or may not be correct — perhaps in a general way or in theory they may be correct — but the probabilities are very great they will not include an exact knowledge of the form of the most crucial and heart-searching tests which God, who searcheth the reins and the heart, will bring to bear upon him. He will not know beforehand the precise nature of these tests, even as our beloved Head and forerunner did not.

In theory, or in the abstract, the character of these tests is known; and it may be stated that their nature or essence is such as will be intended to make manifest whether or not the individual concerned is a keeper of the first or chief commandment. What is this commandment? It is, "Hear, O Israel: Jehovah our God is one Jehovah: and thou shalt love Jehovah thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." (Deut. 6:4, 5, R.V.; Mark 12:29, 30).

Two Tests to Be Met

The tests to which reference is made will be such as will make manifest the answer to two subsidiary questions: (1) Is the consecration genuine? (Thou shalt love Jehovah thy God WITH ALL THY HEART, SOUL AND MIGHT); and, (2) Is the consecration made to Jehovah the true God? ("Thou shalt love JEHOVAH THY GOD," etc.)

The 144,000 overcomers of the Gospel Age, who are to reign with the Lord as kings and priests, are described in the Revelation as those who had successfully passed the tests noted above. They were such as were "beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the Word of God;" i.e. their consecration was genuine, they were symbolically beheaded, had no head but Christ. They had thus satisfactorily answered the first of the two subsidiary questions noted; and they also "had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands." (Rev. 20:4.) Thus they had satisfactorily answered the second of the subsidiary questions noted.

As indicated in this Scripture, every overcomer who is to have a part in the First Resurrection must pass these crucial tests, and in no case will the examination be an easy one; but God will supply the necessary grace and strength through Christ our advocate and helper, so that each one whose heart is loyal, and who is in real earnest in regard to the race for the prize of the high calling in Christ, will come off "conqueror, and more than conqueror."

We profess absolute obedience to the will of God, yet we wonder sometimes whether we are always sufficiently attentive to the readings of the divine Word and providences. Is our obedience really to the will of God, or may it be rather sometimes only to that which we conceive in our own minds as the will of God? The expression, "Hear O, Israel," prefacing the chief commandment to natural and spiritual Israel, is significant. An attentive ear is required in order that we may discern God's will for us.

The Trial of Faith

Primarily it is our faith that is on trial in this age; for faith in God and the provision He has made for our justification and sanctification through Christ, is the foundation of Christian character; and we know that no durable structure can be built without a proper foundation. One's ability to follow in the footsteps of the Master in a course of unswerving loyalty to principle at the cost of all things earthly, will be dependent upon the extent to which faith has been developed.

That ours is primarily a trial of faith, is evident from the words of Apostle Peter, "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than that of gold that perished, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." — 1 Peter 1:7.

What then, is the relationship of faith to fidelity? We walk by faith and not by sight, and fidelity to the right is absolutely dependent upon faith. "But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." — Heb. 11:6.

Many Called, Few Chosen

We know that hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, have made consecration to God in this age, and have started upon the race course for the prize of immortality; yet only a comparatively small number, a "little flock," will finally prove to be faithful unto death. Why have so many failed? The reason is to be seen in lack of faith, of genuine belief in God, in His plan, in His Word and providences. The natural tendency of the human mind is to have confidence only in that which is seen, and to have little confidence in that which is invisible and immaterial.

Consequently, it seems that the great majority of professed Christians, having made a covenant with God by which they agree to lay down or devote the earthly visible things in sacrifice, prove in the final test that they are unwilling to comply with the terms of this agreement; because the earthly things are seen, and they loom large and important to the natural mind and eye, while the unseen things seem by comparison unreal and relatively less important. The faith of such in the things unseen is not strong enough. Perhaps they have not availed themselves of all of the means which the Lord has supplied for their development in the all-important quality of faith.

Faith's Foundation

Many such are what would be considered noble characters. They may exhibit many admirable and Christ-like qualities, they may even take delight in the devotional aspects of religious worship, but their faith has not taken proper hold upon the Word of God. Many such have not perceived the distinction between genuine Christian worship and mere emotionalism; between faith and credulity.

The apostle says, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." It is in proportion as one acquires, by diligence in study and meditation, an accurate, individual acquaintance with God's Word and Plan, that one's faith becomes strong. This requires effort.

Today we stand near the thresh-hold of the Kingdom, our heavenly Canaan. Yet the Church is today beset with more temptations, trials and perplexities perhaps than at any other time in her earthly pilgrimage. The faith of every one is being tried as by fire. It is clear that the whole world is drifting into

infidelity, and there is great need for the “whole armour” that will enable us to overcome in this “evil day.”

Even among those who are called Bible Students, there is much to indicate that many are not really established in the faith. This is indicated in the readiness shown by them to be blown about by every shifting wind of doctrine, to lightly adopt new or different teachings which nullify or make void much that has been proved and recognized as truth in the past, with resultant undermining of the faith foundation. Many such are, we fear, in the condition described by the Apostle Paul, who mentioned some who ought, by reason of the length of time they had been in the truth, to be teachers of others, yet had need that someone teach them again certain of the first principles of the oracles of God.

The First Principles

The plan of God, as revealed in His Word, is a consistent whole, a logical unit; and every important feature of that plan is indispensable to round out, or complete, the whole. Should we remove any of the harp-strings from the harp, the result is ether discord, or music of an inferior quality. Among the “first principles” or essentials to harmony in the plan of God, we itemize the following:

(1) Man’s creation with moral perception and moral responsibility, the ability to distinguish between right and wrong.

(2) The original trial and fall in Eden.

(3) The sentence, “dying thou shalt die,” followed by the extinction of the sinner, the loss of life and all that he possessed.

(4) The Law Covenant, by which was demonstrated man’s inability in his fallen state to keep God’s Law, or to return to righteousness.

(5) The Ransom sacrifice, by which the way is opened for the removal of the original penalty.

(6) The high calling in Christ, the bringing into existence of the seed, the instrument for the restoring of all that was lost.

(7) The spiritual resurrection of the Great Company, by which those who because of lack of faith, have measurably failed to live up to the terms of their covenant, will receive life on a plane below the divine.

(8) The “better resurrection” (Heb. 11:35) of the ancient worthies as an earthly class, by which they, from the beginning of the Mediatorial Reign, will exemplify Christ to mankind.

(9) The Restitution of mankind to the condition that was lost, plus knowledge and experience with sin, implying character completeness at the end of God’s rest — Gen. 2:2, R.V.

(10) The final, examination of mankind in the “little season” following the Mediatorial reign, to determine who have, and who have not, among mankind, come to determine who have, and who have not among mankind, come to perfection of heart harmony with righteousness; followed by

(11) The Second Death of such as fail to measure up to these reasonable requirements.

(12) A chronology. Every wise and complete plan of action must include the “What,” the “How” and the “When,” i.e., it must include an exact outline of the things to be accomplished, the means or methods by which the desired ends are to be brought about, and also the time element, by which are coordinated or brought into proper order and sequence the various elements of the plan. The purpose of a revealed chronology is evidently two-fold: (1) To prove to the sanctified intelligence that the Bible is in very fact God’s revelation to man and that He knows the end from the beginning. To establish the credibility and integrity of the Biblical record, and (2) That the man of God may be “thoroughly furnished;” that he may be informed regarding the meaning and significance of the great and momentous events which are transpiring in the earth; that he may be aware of the dispensational changes which are in progress.

God’s Plan is Complete

If we remove any one of these fundamental provisions of divine Wisdom from our conception of the plan, the result must be a loss of faith and confidence in the whole; for we have taken out something necessary to its completeness, and to its adequacy to accomplish the desired ends.

If we take out several of them, as some of our brethren have done, then it would seem to one who is given to close reasoning and analysis of causes and effects, that what we have left is but a bare outline of what this or that person may conceive as the divine program, without any particular coherence or logical sequence of causes and effects, and subject to change, in accordance with the uncertainties and vagaries of human interpretation.

The remedy is to cast anchor. The Lord, in the Harvest of the Age, has raised up, even as He said He would do, a faithful and wise servant, through whose ministry there has been provided an exposition of the plan of salvation in which we can have confidence; for it harmonizes with the Word of God, and satisfies the requirements of reason, of science, and of all of the facts and phenomena of human experience. It is consistent in every detail, and these facts stamp it as entirely separate and distinct from all other religious teachings whether Protestant, Catholic or Pagan and as being therefore the one and only current conception of the divine program of God’s dealings with His creatures.