**FAITHFULNESS**

**International Africa Convention 2021**

We will break down the word as it might be generally used:

“Faith – Fullness”.

Faith is a deep belief or conviction based upon past experiences.

Fullness means it is complete. It is full. It is all that can be attained.

 If we are to be considered “faithful” we must display a consistency in our words and actions. We must demonstrate that we do our best or utmost to be trustworthy to whatever duties we have.

Faithfulness implies a relationship between at least two individuals. It means that there must be a sense of trust or trustfulness between them.

Of course, there are “faithful” relationships involving many individuals as well.

In our specific consideration we are concerned with the most important relationship, that between us and our heavenly Father. We know that He is completely faithful on His part and we are trying to be so on our part.

Let us consider how our heavenly Father, the Lord God Almighty, is demonstrated in Scripture as being faithful:

1. Rev. 4:2, 3:

“And immediately I was in the spirit and behold a throne was set in heaven and one sat on the throne. And He that sat was to look upon like a jasper (diamond), and a sardine stone (red stone), and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald (green).”

God is symbolized by a diamond gem, crystal clear and radiating every color in light. It is hard like a gemstone. That is, His character is crystallized, UNCHANGEABLE, which implies one that could be counted upon to be FAITHFUL no matter what.

He is also shown as a red gemstone which would depict His most prominent character attribute of LOVE (as we read in I John 4:8 “….for God is love.”). He radiates loving compassion upon His vast creation, but especially on those that he has created in His image, angels and mankind.

The rainbow around His throne is a wonderful reminder of His rainbow covenant that He made for humanity’s peace of mind, that He would never again afflict the earth with a flood (Gen. 9:12-17).

Yet this rainbow has a green hue or color to it. This might represent that God has a LIFE-SUSTAINING Covenant for His human creation. And, indeed, this is so. In brief it is summed up in the Great Covenant He gave to Abraham – “In thee shall all the families of earth be blessed.” Gen. 12:3.

 To sum this up, God is pictured as being FAITHFUL to the human family. This is the big relationship. We know that He accomplishes this through the RANSOM FOR ALL AND THE RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS.

1. Deut. 7:9:

 “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.”

 In this verse we learn that an element of faithfulness can be that it might be timeless, endless. If we are to have confidence in such a Covenant, we must have absolute confidence in the one who makes such an endless Covenant!

1. And, again, in Psalm 119:90:

 “Thy faithfulness continues throughout all generations, Thou didst establish the earth and it stands.”

 The LORD that made the earth. The earth, which is still here, is a testimony to His great faithfulness.

 Now we want to focus our attention to our God’s faithfulness to us as His New Creation:

1. I Cor. 10:13:

“There has no temptation (or trial), taken you but such as is common to man, but God is FAITHFUL who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able (to bear), but (He) will with the temptation also direct the issue (Diaglott), that you may be able to bear it.”

We know from Scripture that we who have consecrated our lives to serve God must suffer, even as our fellow men and women suffer. Yet with us, our sufferings or trials are SUPERVISED with the intention of our being developed into Christlikeness. We learn by practicing how to think and act in harmony with the fruits of the Spirit. We all realize that practicing being loving, patient, kind, merciful and gentle requires difficulties, problems and hardships, otherwise, these character attributes would just be ideals without any reality!

But we learn that our FAITHFUL GOD will not let our New Creature be completely overwhelmed by our experiences IF we trust in Him and follow His instructions.

This is our relationship, but we must believe it. He IS doing His part, but He expects us to do OUR part. This means we must be FAITHFUL EVEN AS HE IS FAITHFUL. Even though we will fail at times, He will not.

1. I Thess. 5:24:

“Faithful is He that called you, who also will do it.”

Yes, He is not only abundantly capable to provide and assist us to victory, but in addition to that, He WANTS us to be successful. In fact this is an element of faithfulness – a DESIRE to be trusted. Let me say that again – our heavenly Father desires us to trust Him. And to help us to realize this, He continually is overruling on our behalf in harmony with His EXCEEDING GREAT AND PRECIOUS PROMISES.

 As we develop the spiritual sensibility that perceives and believes in His fulfilling His promises to us / for us, it enhances our personal relationship with Him. It becomes more real to us. This then becomes a VERY POWERFUL MOTIVATION FOR US TO BE FAITHFUL TO HIM IN RETURN.

 We might have a sense of debt to Him (and we do), but it is much better for our relationship if we can turn that sense of debt to one of GRATITUDE. A positive mind-set is much more likely to create feelings of peace and joy which in turn lead on to actions of FAITHFULNESS by us.

1. I John 1:9:

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Here is a most reassuring Scripture that puts God’s faithfulness in a most merciful way. He is encouraging us to have confidence that, if we have once accepted His gift of His only begotten Son Jesus as our means of sin atonement with Him, we have this means of continually cleansing our robes of righteousness. By humbly and sincerely admitting in prayer to Him that we are truly sorry and repentant, we admit our need for and belief in Him and in Jesus’ precious blood.

He knows we will continually have our unintentional failures as well as those that overtake us due to Adam-itis – inherited sinful, fallen human nature.

But this is the important point – He is faithful to us even when we have failures. This demonstrates the DEPTH OF HIS FAITHFULNESS TO US.

From Rpt. 5939 “these assurances of divine favor and willingness to forgive are designed to have upon our hearts a mellowing influence which will make us all the more careful to avoid sin and to maintain fellowship with the Lord.”

1. Hebrews 11:11:

“Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised.”

Again, we see the RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE BELIEVER AND GOD ALMIGHTY. The Ancient Worthy, Sarah, was able to have faith that she would have a miracle child because she had confidence in the One who had previously shown His faithfulness to her and Abraham ever since they had left Ur of the Chaldees and journeyed to the Promised Land.

We might conclude that faithfulness begets faithfulness!

1. Hebrews 10:23:

“Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, for He is faithful that promised.”

 As we just read about the Ancient Worthy Sarah, so too with us. Our Profession as presented in this book of Hebrews is so stated to be one of our participation in the anti-typical Priesthood, of which Jesus is our High Priest and we are under-priests. Just as he is the Head of the Body, we are the Body members (consider Hebrews 3:1).

 Paul is here encouraging us to be motivated to keep our sacrificial vows – that is to be faithful, because God is faithful who has given us so many wonderful Promises that we can see being fulfilled in our lives.

NOW WE WANT TO FOCUS ON SCRIPTURES REGARDING OUR BEING FAITHFUL.

1. Matthew 25:21:

“His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things, enter thou into the joy of thy lord.”

What a wonderful hope! A wonderful goal! To hear such an expression of praise from our Master!

In the context the Master is Jesus and his servants are the consecrated disciples. We learn a very important lesson here: that we are on trial now in this life as to whether or not we will be faithfully engaged in his service, the Kingdom service, and thereby develop the right character (just as Jesus did in his time of earthly service). Or will we be NEGLIGENT servants? Are we wasting precious time and attention on the things of this life, that which we could set aside so we could focus our attention on doing our Master’s business?

This then becomes one of our POSITIVE MOTIVATORS, Jesus’ APPROVAL. This is not a motivation of pride. No, pride will not be rewarded. Rather, it is a motivation of wanting to demonstrate to him who gave himself for us that we are so very APPRECIATIVE of this privileged service. We gladly sacrifice to serve, and when we are finally done (at death, when God says “it is enough”), Jesus reciprocates and shows us his appreciation for our efforts!

If Jesus shows us his appreciation we can be assured that our heavenly Father appreciates our efforts.

Another lesson from this verse, this parable of the Talents, is that there is a future work for us to be engaged in. Yes, we are in training to be useful, faithful servants, the Bride of Christ, to work with God and Jesus (our Bridegroom), for all eternity. First, we will work with those here on earth on the Highway of Holiness during the Restitution of all things. After that we will work during the Ages to come, in ways and on projects far beyond our imaginations. As we read in Revelation 14:14:

“…Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth, yes, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works do follow them.”

We also learn that faithfulness is a basic, essential element of character that is to be expected in this time of our testing / training. But it is to be part of our eternal character, as well.

However, this is not a problem because being faithful becomes what we WANT to do, what we DESIRE to be.

This is a large part of what will give God confidence to grant such the DIVINE NATURE upon their resurrection, immortality, as we read in: I Cor. 15:53, 54:

“For this corruptible must put on incorruption and this mortal must put on immortality, so when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, death is swallowed up in victory.”

1. Luke 16:10:

“He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust to the least is unjust also in much.”

Here again in Jesus’ own words he emphasizes the IMPACT of one being faithful or not, even in that which is least. We can readily see that if one is not faithful in the least affairs, then one can never really be sure if they will be faithful in future responsibilities. It demonstrates a weakness of character, a weakness of mind. It implies that the person who is being trusted, can only be trusted if they think the responsibility is important enough.

 Or it may demonstrate a casual or lazy attitude because they themselves are not DISCIPLINED enough in their own behavior to be trustworthy.

 Regardless of the “why”, unless these poor habits are changed for the better, such a person is not fit for greater responsibilities for the future, especially when part of the great privileges for the Bride Class is to assist God and Jesus in the rehabilitation of all mankind!

 You see, with faithfulness being such a FOUNDATION of a person’s character, how can someone teach others what they themselves failed to learn in this life?

 Just as being faithful includes trustworthiness, so does being JUST. If someone is unjust in small, seemingly insignificant matters, you certainly cannot trust them to be just in more important matters. It is a character flaw.

1. I Corinthians 4:1,2:

“Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.”

The Apostle Paul is writing that he (and by extension all that are consecrated), should be considered to be stewards or servants of the mysteries of God – that is the TRUTH, IN DOCTRINE AND PROPHECY.

 And clearly, everyone understands that a servant in any matter is EXPECTED to be faithful in the discharge of his duties.

How much more when the duty, our duty, is the presentation of the Truth! And so it is. Our consecration to serve the LORD and the TRUTH is to become the most important thing in our lives. In fact, it needs to become the dominant theme in our lives.

What does it practically mean – “serving the Truth is to become the dominant theme in our lives?”

It means that EVERY DECISION ON ANYTHING OF IMPORTANCE should be considered as to how it would impact our spiritual New Creature life, now and into the future. And not only our spiritual life but if we are married, how it would impact our spouse’s life.

That might mean our education, employment, marriage or not, if married, to have children or not and if yes, how many children. It will include where would we live, would we own a vehicle, all of the aspects of life that take our TIME AND ENERGY.

That is what life really is, our time and our energy. Jesus told us clearly that there are only two masters – God or mammon, which is materialism. It is how we each determine for ourselves all these life decisions that will over time assist in the growth of our New Creature, or not.

But it is not just the big decisions of life that will demonstrate our faithfulness, it is the small seemingly insignificant, daily decisions too. Like the verse says, we need to catch the “little foxes”, that spoil the vine. Yes, the Fruits of the Spirit can be adversely affected by our little decisions.

For a few examples:

1. Will I attend the meetings, during the week as well as on Sunday?
2. Am I going to find time each day to read or study on something spiritually uplifting?
3. Are my friends worldly or spiritually minded? If worldly, am I going to limit my time with them?
4. Am I a sanctifying influence on those around me?
5. Do I witness to people I come in contact with?
6. Am I being honest in all my dealings?

We need to self-inspect and ask ourselves: am I living my life every day as an Ambassador of the Kingdom of God and Christ? You see, this is our assignment, to represent all the characteristics of an official of the incoming New Heavens and New Earth. It is a way of life. Paul puts it in a very powerful way:

II Corinthians 4:10, 11:

“Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.”

Do people “see” Jesus in us? I am guessing that most often people do not “see” anything out of the ordinary in us, but there are times during our daily routines that offer an opportunity to practice some fruits of the Spirit in our interaction with them. Perhaps it is patience, or kindness. At other times it may be helpfulness, maybe just by listening to someone who needs that. At other times it might be a few words about the Peaceable Kingdom and the blessings that shall be for all people, or a word of comfort – for all of us are suffering under the permission of evil.

A daily life of discipleship is really a day of common things done in a Christ-like way. In fact, not saying a word at a time when someone else is venting, can be the best witness.

Regardless, in all these matters we are to be FAITHFUL to God, Jesus and Truth. If we are alert to this in our mind and heart, then we stand a better chance of performing it.

1. Rev. 2:10:

“…Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life.”

Even though this is a promise that was given to the brethren suffering great persecution during the second stage of the Gospel Age Church, the promise is applicable to all God’s people.

 When we consecrate our lives, we vow or covenant to be “dead” to self-will and alive to do God’s will. But consecrating is just the first step. It will have to be our daily mind set the entire rest of our lives, until God has determined that our education and practice as New Creatures, our Spiritual New Man, in mind and heart, (though trapped in this fallen human flesh), has reached its conclusion and He allows this life on earth, to come to a close.

 If He deems us to have been FAITHFUL to that final end, He will grant us a Crown (reward) of life (immortality – divine life as part of His family)!

1. We want to close with Rev. 17:14:

“These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them for he is Lord of lords and King of kings and they that are with him are CALLED AND CHOSEN AND FAITHFUL.”

Yes, the Lamb, Jesus, as the final Victor, second only to his God, his Father, the Lord God Almighty, will have with him those that his Father has CALLED with the heavenly calling to discipleship, to walk in Jesus’ footsteps, to be developed as copies of His own Son.

They are CHOSEN, out of all that had responded to the CALL. These have progressed to become Spirit-begotten and have the first-fruits of the Spirit.

But it is only the 144,000 – the Bride of Christ, that have proven themselves FAITHFUL to all of the conditions, testings and trials of discipleship!

Conclusion: It is up to us. What are we going to do? How are we going to live our daily lives? Are we making the best choices, the best decisions?

We cannot change yesterday. We can try to affect the future, but it is only today that we can ACTUALLY IMPACT OUR NEW CREATURE’S FAITHFULNESS. And each new day is a new opportunity. Let us try not to waste them….

May the Lord so help us. Amen.