

This week we noted not only the subject of faithfulness but also the subject of character and integrity. In reality these two subjects go hand and hand. Without integrity one is not apt to be faithful and faithfulness is generally a manifestation of integrity. A man's words are no greater than the character or integrity he possess. And when it comes to his actions, only God truly knows what motivates a man's actions, but a man of faithfulness is constant and reliable. A man lacking in integrity will not endure under hardship. Integrity is simply the spiritual strength to put into action that which you claim you believe.

The first quality of a good soldier, even before courage, comes the constancy in enduring hardship. Faithfulness, as a virtue of loyalty, shows itself most clearly when we are operating under stress. The tendency of most people is toward that which is expedient, that which is easiest and of course, best for themselves. Life presents many problems and a man's value is to be measured not so much by his successes, as by the way he handles his failures. The situation of a life's problem is always dependent upon a new awakening of the conscience, a change in attitude, a growth in personality, a deeper connection with God. The solution to a problem always demands that we descend to a deeper level of our consciousness. We must leave the level of conflicts and dilemmas to the level of self-examination under the searching light of God. We then can understand that a dilemma is a sign that there are deeper discoveries to be made in integrity and faithfulness and a new order to perceive which will transform the whole nature of the problem. The Christian soldier lays down his life for the betterment of his mission; his objective, which is the glorification of God and His plan. Therefore, character and integrity is what we should cultivate in ourselves and what we should look for in others, Pro 2:6-7.

Following is a list of the characteristic of *integrity related to the problem solving devices*:

1. Rebound (1Jo 1:9) is how the believer *maintains* his integrity.
2. The filling of the Holy Spirit gives the believer the *power* to operate in integrity.
3. The faith-rest life is the general *function* of integrity.
4. Grace orientation is the *application* of integrity.
5. Doctrinal orientation is the *mental attitude* of integrity.
6. A personal sense of destiny is the *result* of integrity.
7. Personal love for God is the *motivation* behind integrity.
8. Impersonal love for all mankind is the *function* of integrity *toward all*.
9. Sharing the perfect happiness (+H) of God is the *tranquility* of integrity.
10. Occupation with Christ is the *ultimate expression* of integrity.

Walking in integrity is the believer's security in life, Pro 10:9. Integrity is that which guides and directs one to make the proper decisions in life, Pro 11:3. How exactly does the believer operate in God's integrity? The integrity of God is made up of God's perfect righteousness (+R) and God's perfect justice (+J). The believer operates in God's integrity through expanding on his imputed +R through the inculcation of Bible doctrine. So then, the integrity of God comes by way of application of the doctrine resident in the believer's soul. To operate in integrity is to rely on God's +J in every area of your life. To live in integrity takes residual doctrine applied to the situation at hand. Integrity is difficult to find in others, conversely it is not difficult to have.

We need always to be alert to God's guidance, it could change at any time and we should not allow our desires or previously established paths to hinder divine direction for our lives. In order to be privy to the divine guidance of God we must operate in integrity and faithfulness to His word. To operate in faithfulness toward God is to execute

faithfulness toward His word since John 1:1 tells us that the Word was with God and the Word was God. Faithfulness itself is a loyal attitude toward something or someone in life you love, respect, admire, or recognize the authority of. Faithfulness is also a loyal, consistency in the performance of duties or services, it is to be firm in one's belief, true to one's word, to be reliable and dependable. Faithfulness is what brings blessings and rewards according to Pro 28:30. And, a lack of faithfulness is labeled as perversion in Deu 32:20. Num 12:6-8 shows us that God was impressed when He found faithfulness in Moses. Faithfulness is a virtue which determines whether or not an individual will receive blessings in this life, Luk 16:10-12.

The faithfulness or loyalty associated with our family connections, friendships, religious or political affiliations, professional lives, and so on, can all change as they develop. Sometimes the changes in loyalties can be quite dramatic, as in the case of Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus, Act 9:1-22. Others may be more measured and deliberate, though no less radical, as when Ruth the Moabite commits herself to accompany Naomi back to her homeland of Judah.

There are six major characteristics of faithfulness in the Bible:

- 1- Faithfulness toward God.
- 2- Faithfulness toward the right-man/right-woman.
- 3- Faithfulness toward friends.
- 4- Faithfulness toward the royal family.
- 5- The faithful congregational member.
- 6- The faithful worker on the job.

Faithfulness toward God, Deu 6:5, is the capacity to respond to God's love based on doctrine in the soul. This love requires effort and dedication to God's word, which is why the majority do not have faithfulness toward God. Faithfulness toward God also sets up the standard for grace, Psa 31:23; Jam 4:6. It also gives strength in times of pressure, Heb 11:27. And again, you cannot be faithful to God unless you are faithful to His word, Joh 1:1. Secondly we have the faithfulness toward the right-man/right-woman relationship, SOS 8:6-7. In this passage true love is said to be stronger than death. Also notice that the flame of true love is from the Lord not from the flesh.

Thirdly we have the faithfulness in friendship, Pro 18:24; 17:17; 17:9; 10:12. Rom 12:9 tells us that a true friend is not a hypocrite. And, a true friend can level with you, Pro 27:6. Next we have the faithfulness toward the royal family of God, Romans chapters 12 through 14. Then we have the faithful congregation members who consists of those who identify their right pastor-teacher and remain under this authority. They have objectivity, poise, good academic discipline and manners under the ministry of God the Holy Spirit. The faithful congregational member is thoughtful of others and offers privacy to all, 2Ti 4:1-4. And, the sixth category of faithfulness is found in the worker on the job as noted in Col 3:22-23.

The faithful soldier should be every day, every night, and every hour ready to offer all the resistance of which he is capable against the enemy. Our enemy, Satan, hates to see faithfulness in operation toward the word of God, toward right-man/right-woman, actually toward anything but that which his plan promotes "SELF". A well-established maxim of war is not to do anything which your enemy wishes and for the single reason that he does so wish. The fearless conduct of faithfulness and the discipline involved is that which establishes the soldiers honor. To abandon one's position is to lack integrity and faithfulness and who needs or wants a soldier like that?! Every work before the attempt, carries in it an appearance of difficulty which requires the discipline which cultivates integrity and the energetic determination brought on by faithfulness. To give in under hardship and turn toward an apparently easier road is to lack integrity. It also deprives the believer of the lesson and rewards mapped out by God in the given situation. Faithfulness to God's word not only allows us to carry through God's plan for our lives, it also gives the believer a confidence and security far greater than anything this world has to offer. Faithfulness and integrity do go hand in hand and establish the mark of a good Christian soldier.

The following two statements from Abraham Lincoln tell of his integrity leading a war-torn nation:

"I desire so to conduct the affairs of this administration that if at the end, when I come to lay down the reins of power, I have lost every other friend on earth, I shall at least have one friend left, and that friend shall be down inside of me.

I do the very best I know how; the very best I can; and I mean to keep on doing it to the end. If the end brings me out all right, what is said against me will not amount to anything. If the end brings me out all wrong, then a legion of angels swearing I was right will make no difference."

God regards more the faithfulness with which we work than the amount we do. He looks to see how much of His word is applied and how much His Spirit is cherished. In such, a full surrender of self is required. The greatest work can be marred by a self-seeking attitude. God sees in our lives the many temptations resisted of which the world, and even near friends, never know. God and His angels watch over all. A book of remembrance is written before Him of all who are faithful, even in the little things. So never grow discouraged at being faithful, God sees all and there is great reward in faithfulness. Remember your partnership with Christ to whom you remain faithful in the winning of souls to His eternal kingdom and **know** that your faithfulness will see its glorious objective.

The Marriage Feast

ASCEND, beloved, the joy;
The festal day has come;
Tonight the Lamb does feast His own,
Tonight He with His bride sits down,
Tonight puts on the spousal crown,
In the great upper room.

Ascend, beloved, to the love;
This is the day of days;
Tonight the bridal song is sung,
Tonight ten thousand harps are strung,
In sympathy with heart and tongue,
Unto the Lamb's high praise.

The festal lamps are lighting now
In the general marriage hall;
By angel hands the board is spread,
By angel hands the sacred bread
Is on the golden table laid;
The King His own does call.

The gems are gleaming from the roof,
Like stars in night's round dome;
The festal wreaths are hanging there,
The festal fragrance fills the air,

And flowers of heaven, divinely fair,
Unfold their happy bloom.

Long, long deferred, now come at last,
The lamb's glad wedding day;
The guests are gathering to the feast,
The seats in heavenly order placed,
The royal throne above the rest;
How bright the new array!

Sorrow and sighing are no more,
The weeping hours are past;
Tonight the waiting will be done,
Tonight the wedding robe put on,
The glory and the joy begun;
The crown has come at last.

Without, within, is light, is light;
Around, above, is love;
We enter, to go out no more,
We raise the song unsung before,
We doff the sackcloth that we wore;
For all is joy above.

Ascend, beloved, to the life;
Our days of death are over;
Mortality has done its worst,
The fetters of the tomb are burst,
The last has now become the first,
For ever, evermore.

Ascend, beloved, to the feast;
Make haste, thy day has come;
Thrice blest are they the Lamb does call
To share the heavenly festival
In the new Salem palace-hall,
Our everlasting home!

---Bonar