

12.b. FURTHER CONSEQUENCES OF FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRIST

Saints are faithful to Christ. There are three things in which faithfulness to Christ lies.

1. Faithfulness to Christ means that we do not take into our hearts, or value something or someone as equal or better than Christ, to do for us what we initially received Christ for.

We have been given the marriage bond between husband and wife as the example we are to follow in this relationship of ours as individuals to our Lord and Master. Christ is devoted to us the regenerate, we in turn are called upon to remain faithful to Him. The Galatians failed this test, as they kept looking over their shoulder to the law, instead of concentrating on Jesus.

To appear before God, the believer has to be righteous. We do not have any self-righteousness as this has been destroyed by sin. It is the righteousness of Christ alone, that enables us to appear before God. 1 JN 1:9 "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness". All our own efforts are as filthy rags in God's eyes, in attempting to be righteous. Although our good works after regeneration are acceptable to God, they have no value in making us righteous before God. The good works of the believer are those that God has ordained for us to walk in as a witness to His love to us. We are not to try to use them as a stepping stone to Salvation. Therefore, we trust Christ alone for our righteousness.

There are those that cry "This or that, I will do "or "Here and there I will watch and amend my ways." But rather our cry should be "In the Lord Jesus I have righteousness; all my desire is to be found in Him, not having my own righteousness."

2. Faithful believers cherish the Holy Spirit, the comforter that Christ sends to us, to abide in us as His representation in us.

The Holy Spirit is given to us by Christ, to abide with us forever. He cannot be a casual visitor, because in His absence we will be overwhelmed by Satan. So, whatever is done in any of Christ's people is done by Him. We have received the Holy Spirit, firstly for our sanctification and also for our comfort. So, we do indeed grieve the Holy Spirit by wontonly resisting His work of sanctification in our lives, and leading unholly, polluted, and defiled lives.

We can also grieve the Holy Spirit in His work as comforter. This we do by placing our comforts and joys in other things - things of the world and the secret sins we nurture in our hearts. This degrades our usefulness and fellowship with Christ. When we wander away from things Spiritual, we forfeit the great joy of the fellowship with Christ through the gracious Holy Spirit.

3. Faithful believers worship Christ according to His directions and use only those means which He has appointed. Unfaithfulness to Christ in this He calls "adultery and whoredom." False worship is "fornication" - unlawful in God's eyes. Churches which encourage false worship are called the "mothers of harlots" Believers are to receive nothing, practice nothing and recognize nothing in the worship of Christ other than that which He has appointed. Worshipping God in ways not appointed by Him are always strictly forbidden. We must not think that introducing a specific ritual will be nice in our worship services. If it does not honour God in the way that God has set out, it detracts from the Lordship of Christ and is forbidden. These superstitions and idolatries have caused much bloodshed in the Christian world. These incidents are recorded specifically in the history of the reformation and following - not forgetting the Crusades some 500 years before.

We are to worship God in that way that Christ taught the apostles MATT 28:20 "And teach them to obey everything I have commanded you," Oh, here is a fourth point. (Must have been inflation even in Owen's day)"

4. Faithful believers embrace, receive and practice everything that the Lord has appointed. They seek diligently to find out what is in His mind (the will of God), and what He wants done. And they will do nothing that is not pleasing to Him.

What is the proof of Christ's love for us? Christ shows and proves His love to His saints in richly providing for all their needs. JN 1:16 "From the fullness of His grace we have all received one blessing after another." If we have been called into trials and suffering, we have been found worthy of serving the Master. 1 PET 4:13 But scripture also tells us "My Grace is sufficient for you" and "As your days, so shall your strength be" All our trials are successful operations in God's eyes, and have achieved their purposes, as God does not fail in whatever He does. We may falter, but we do not fail under the omnipotent hand of God.

We receive abundant love, grace, providence, pardon, mercy, wisdom, and comfort from our gracious Lord. Yet we believers do not make adequate use of these unlimited provisions from Christ's bounty as we might. And what is our duty to Christ for His abundant goodness to us?

Our first duty to Christ is to practice holiness in the power of the Holy Spirit. Those that are most holy, are those that are most obedient. Christ by His Spirit works obedience in us. It is through our obedience to Christ that we are accepted by God. As we realise and recognize that we of ourselves have no strength or power to obey, we look to Christ as the one who bears our weakness JN 15:5 "Without me, you can do nothing". We have been placed under a mighty obligation to obey the teachings of Christ. It is to Christ, who is God, unto whom all honour and obedience is due.

Our second duty to Christ is to abound in the fruits of holiness. As Christ is rich in His graces to us, we are required to abound richly to Him in all grateful obedience.