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Email: info@austin-sparks.net

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God's Faithfulness To Us in His Son

by T. Austin-Sparks

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"God is faithful, through whom ye were called into the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Cor. 1:9).

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as man can bear: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it" (1 Cor. 10:13).

"Faithful is he that calleth you, who will also do it... sanctify you wholly... your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5:24,23).

"The Lord is faithful, who shall establish you, and guard you from the evil one" (2 Thess. 3:3).

"If we are faithless, he abideth faithful; for he cannot deny himself" (2 Tim. 2:13).

God's Faithfulness Based Upon His Love For His Son

"God is faithful, through whom ye were called into the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord". That comprehensive statement means that God's faithfulness is based upon His love for His own Son; His faithfulness to us is because of His faithfulness to Him. Because of the fellowship with His Son into which He has called us, we enter into that faithfulness. That means much. It raises the very big question - which question, of course, we ought never to entertain - as to whether the Father would ever be unfaithful to His Son. We have a fairly solid block of Scripture to establish the nature of the relationship between the Father and the Son, and the Father's estimate of the Son, which would certainly lead us to rule out any such question as to whether the Father would ever be unfaithful to the Son, would ever fail Him, would ever go back upon any promise to Him. That, of course, is unthinkable.

The Father's Attitude To Us in His Son

It is not quite so easy for us to believe and really to enter livingly into the further statement that the Father's attitude to the Son is His attitude now to all who are in fellowship with His Son. We have selected a few passages of Scripture, which can be supported by a very great deal more, to show that that is so. God has Himself called us into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, and on that ground the same faithfulness which is toward His Son is carried over to us. That is something very strong, very far-reaching and much-embracing.

God is faithful. How? Why? It is a tremendous thing to find that to be the introduction to the first Corinthian letter. We know what is to follow in that letter. We know the disclosures that are going to be made about the state of things among the Corinthians. Another side, that of our responsibility, will develop, but when all has been said - and not much more could be said, I think, of human imperfections and the failures of Christians than we have in the first letter to the Corinthians - when all has been said of that kind, the faithfulness of God still stands, and all that is required from our side is that, when God shows where the faults and weaknesses and wrongs are, we adjust, we respond, we obey; and when we do so the Lord just goes on with the rest. We know quite well that if we resist the Lord, if we refuse obedience, if we do not walk in the light which He has given us, then of course we put ourselves out of the blessings and benefits of His faithfulness.

But there is the other side. I think sometimes we get loaded too heavily with our side, and do not take sufficient account of God's side in this way, that, given openness and responsiveness of heart to the Lord: given that there is no wilful, conscious resistance, disobedience, refusal, neglect, carelessness: given that we are toward the Lord and that the fellowship of His Son is to us the most precious thing: I say, given that, the Lord takes a tremendous amount upon His own faithfulness. He can be trusted to look after the imperfections and everything else, and I think that this, standing right at the commencement of this letter, just says, 'Well now, you Corinthians, there are many things where you are at fault, and many things that have to be put right, but if only you seek grace to make the adjustments and be obedient, God will faithfully fulfil all that He has undertaken to do. He will do it. Yours it is to seek to step into line with the Lord; His it is to perfect that which concerneth you: and He will.' God is faithful. And His faithfulness, as we have said, is not affected so much by our weaknesses, our defects. It is affected by His devotion to His Son. He has sworn to His Son, He has made promises to His Son, and He is not going to fail Him. Wherever He can get a way, He will fulfil His word to His Son. He is the covenant-keeping God, and all His covenants are related to His Son.

There are many covenants made by God in the Bible. There is the covenant of the rainbow; there is the covenant of the Sabbath day; and there are many others. But if you look at them you will find that in every covenant there are the features of the Lord Jesus. The covenants do not finally and exclusively concern only those to whom they were immediately made, but all the promises of God are ratified with a Yea and Amen in Christ Jesus (2 Cor. 1:20). That is to say, God looks beyond the temporal occasion to His Son and His Son's interests, and He has secured everything in Him. The faithfulness of God to His Son is the solid rock of our confidence.

Faithful to Conform to the Image of His Son

When you break this up, you find that it applies to so much. As a matter of fact, this word "through whom ye were called into the fellowship of his Son" applies to everything that affects us. The first calling is into the fellowship of His Son, and then within that fellowship we find that we are called "according to purpose". That is in Romans 8:28. Looking to see what the purpose is according to which we are called, we find we are "*foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son*". God is faithful to carry that out, not on the ground of any struggling on our part, nor of anything at all that

we can do other than walk in the light He has given; that means, to take our steps in the direction of His will as made known to us. Then the Lord is faithful to fulfil this work of conforming us to the image of His Son.

Faithful in Leading Into Afore Prepared Good Works

Then we are told that we are "*created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them*" (Eph. 2:10). This same sovereign calling relates to the works which God has afore-prepared for us to walk in; and if He gets us responsive and obedient in His hands God is faithful to see to it that we are found in the afore-prepared works. It is not a case of our straining to be in the work of the Lord, but of the outworking of this Divine sovereignty. God has appointed certain things which He calls good works in relation to His Son, and if He possesses us completely, we shall find that, in the sovereignty of God, we shall come into the good works afore-prepared.

Faithful in Fulfilment of Vocation

Then the same thing is said about our vocation. We are familiar with such words as Ephesians 4:1 - "*... beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling*". Or again in 1 Tim. 6:12 - "*Fight the good fight of the faith, lay hold on the life eternal, whereunto thou wast called*". This Divine calling lies behind every aspect of the life of the child of God, whether conformity to Christ's image, or the works to be performed, or the vocation to be fulfilled; the calling gathers it all up, carries it all. Our calling into the fellowship of His Son means that we are brought into all that: and again, given a full-hearted response, the faithfulness of God to His Son demands that we do not miss the way for want of light, that we do not miss the calling because we never had the Divine help in that direction. If we miss the way after we have wholly put ourselves into the Lord's hands and responded to His calling, then that is God's unfaithfulness, not to us, but to His Son. If any of these aspects, of the work and way of God fail where we are concerned when He has us wholly, then God has failed His Son; and if you can think of that, then you can think of failure in these respects where we are concerned. If you cannot believe that God is going to fail His Son, then, apprehending the truth that Christ and ourselves are one now by the calling of God, you need not fear that God can fail us. He is faithful.

It does not say that we shall always be able to see how God is doing it, but He is faithful. The end will be attained, it will be an accomplished fact, and when eventually we see things as God sees them, and know what He was doing and how He was doing it, we shall see that He has reached His end, and say, 'Well, I could not see it, I had very bad times about it, but God has got what He was after, and He has got for His Son what He intended Him to have'. God is getting for His Son what He has promised Him by the way in which He is dealing with us and leading us. He is faithful to His Son, and therefore He is faithful where we are concerned. That is the one side.

The Ground of Rest

But there is the other side. What is the ground on which we shall come to rest in this matter, and to assurance and to relief from strain? It will be the ground of the Lord Jesus. It will be when we take and maintain this attitude: 'Lord, it is for Thy Son, not for me, it is all for Him. If greater gain is coming to Him, if Thy faithfulness to Him is being proved by my being denied or deprived of many things that I feel would be for Him, that I would like for Him, that I think would be best - so long as He is gaining His end and Thy faithfulness to Him is working out in His having that which Thou dost

want Him to have where I am concerned, that is the only thing that matters. If in any way I have to adjust, I count on that same faithfulness to be shown to me as was shown to the Lord Jesus, to bring me into the knowledge of my need, that I shall not err in ignorance, and the Lord Jesus shall not lose anything because of my blindness or failure. I count on Thy faithfulness to work in that way for my enlightenment. I make it a matter of Thy faithfulness to Christ, and that faithfulness to Christ will mean also faithfulness toward me; and though it may express itself in ways contrary to my expectation or desire, I come to rest on that'.

Now note this as a personal application. If you go to the letter to the Romans, you have these same things emphasized, but you find there much that is individual. When you come to the Corinthian letter, you have come more on to the collective ground of the Church; and then you move right on to the highest expression of that in 'Ephesians'; but the same thing applies right through from the individual aspect to the corporate in 'Ephesians'. Every step, every stage, from the individual to the whole Church is governed by this faithfulness of God to His Son. It is all a matter of God's keeping His eye on His Son, and therefore upon everything that can be for His Son, and faithfully seeing to it that, wherever He has a chance, wherever there is response to Him, the goal is reached. With all the seemingly hopeless conditions as at Corinth, God says even there, "God is faithful, through whom ye were called into the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord". He says, in effect, 'I am going to tell you what is necessary from your side in the matter of adjustment and correction, how this and that must go, and this and that must come in. Give your response, and I will see to it that all that ever can be for My Son shall be, even in Corinth, even in you'.

Oh, this is only walking round a little fragment, seeing it from different aspects, but the affirmation of our hearts must be - God is faithful. We may not think He is being faithful because He is not taking us the way we want or would like, but God is faithful and the whole universe hangs upon that. For us there is no bigger issue raised than that of the faithfulness of God. For us, everything for faith, for life, our very existence, hangs upon whether God is faithful. If we have any question about that, our world goes to pieces. We have nothing to stand upon if we have any question about the faithfulness of God, and that, not as a general and abstract thing, but as concrete and personal. It must not be personal in the sense that we want God to come *our* way. It is only personal in the right sense when it is in fellowship with His Son Jesus Christ.