

Sabbath School Today **With the 1888 Message Dynamic**

The Fruit of the Spirit **Lesson 8: “The Fruit of the Spirit Is Faithfulness”**

“The just shall live by faith” (Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38; cf. Hab. 2:4 LXX). In all these verses the Greek word translated as “faith” is *pistis*. *Pistis* is a noun. The literal translation of Habakkuk 2:4 is “the just shall live by My faith.” However, in modern translations and popular paraphrases of the Bible (NKJV, NIV, ASV, ESV, TLB, *The Message*, etc.), *pistis* is translated as “faithfulness,” an adjective, that carries with it all the synonyms the *Quarterly* gives us on Sabbath afternoon’s lesson. The lesson is correct, “‘faith’ and ‘faithfulness’ are not the same thing. Faith is that indefinable power, a gift from God, through which we can believe in a reality that yet remains unseen.” Faithfulness is a response or reaction to something, and thus can be understood as a “work,” something we generate from within ourselves.

Faith’s source is the unseen but knowable God who has revealed Himself through creation, His providential workings, the Bible’s true word, and the life of Jesus Christ as recorded in that true word. Though in His incarnation Jesus took upon His sinless nature the fallen nature of Adam, He remained the express image of God (Heb. 1:1-3). A fundamental Gospel truth is the faith of Jesus, perfected through His experience in fallen flesh (Heb. 2:14-18; 4:15, 16; 5:8, 9). It is this tested and proven faith that is given to “every man” as an endowment from our heavenly Father (Rom. 12:3). All persons born into this world receive this endowment and through this gift (that comes only from God; it cannot be manufactured by us) the Holy Spirit works to bring us to repentance.

What did the faith of Jesus test and prove?—the *power* of God to conquer sin where it had taken root in the flesh and mind of man. If Christ had come to this earth and assumed the nature of Adam before the fall, then nothing would have been proven regarding the effectiveness of the Gospel promise: “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed” (Gen. 3:15). The unfallen human nature does not war against its Creator; it has no enmity in it. But the fallen nature, from the moment Eve turned from that special tree in the Garden back toward her husband with a piece of fruit in her hand, had enmity, put there through self-indulgence, and distrust of and private interpretation of God’s explicit word. How important it is to be exceedingly careful how we handle the word of God.

Again, what did the faith of Jesus test and prove?—the *faithfulness* of God to His everlasting covenant promise to “save His people from their sin.” It was tested and proven in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. God’s faithfulness was effected through Jesus’ total commitment to His Father’s will. And “He imparts to us His own faithfulness. This he does by giving us Himself. So that we do not get righteousness which we ourselves manufacture; but to make the matter doubly sure, the Lord imparts to us in Himself the faith by which we appropriate His righteousness. Thus

the faith of Christ must bring the righteousness of God, because the possession of that faith is the possession of the Lord Himself. This faith is dealt to every man, even as Christ gave Himself to every man” (E. J. Waggoner, *Waggoner on Romans*, p. 69).

As the “Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,” Christ was consecrated as the Ransom for the fallen race when the covenant was made between the Godhead in heaven. To this commitment Christ remained unwaveringly true. He was “obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:8). Though His fallen nature quailed before the terror of death by crucifixion, His faith in God’s power to deliver Him never faltered (see Matt. 26:38-44).

“And in this word ‘faith’ I mean not a mere theoretical notion, but ‘faith’ in its only true meaning of the *will submitted* to Him, the *heart yielded* to Him, and the *affections fixed* upon Him. This only is faith; and this itself by the grace and gift of God. And this faith, of the will submitted to God *through* Christ, of the heart yielded to God *in* Christ, and the affections fixed upon God *by* Christ—this is the faith of angels as truly as of men” (A. T. Jones, *The Everlasting Gospel of the Everlasting Covenant*, p. 19; cf. *1893 General Conference Bulletin*, p. 299 [original pagination]; and *Steps to Christ*, p. 63).

The mind of Christ was expressed in His will. And “the mind of Christ was subject to the word of God always” (Jones, *1893 General Conference Bulletin*, p. 297). Christ assumed the fallen nature of His ancestor, Adam, but His mind was His own mind. “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him,” for the very reason that “the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be” (1 Cor. 2:14; Rom. 8:7). But through His commitment to the will of His Father and the covenant promise, Christ never sinned even by a thought. “He was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, not in the likeness of sinful mind. Do not drag His mind into it. His flesh was our flesh, but the mind was ‘the mind of Christ Jesus.’ Therefore it is written: ‘Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus’” (Jones, *1895 General Conference Bulletin*, p. 327).

The carnal mind is not “at” enmity with God; it *is* enmity. “There is the point: if it were *at* enmity, then it might be reconciled, because the thing that would make it *at* enmity would be the source of the trouble. And therefore, take away the source of the trouble, then the thing that is at enmity would be reconciled. ... In this matter of the carnal mind though, there is nothing between; *it is the thing itself*. That is the root. ... The only thing that can be done with it, is to *destroy* it, *uproot* it, *banish* it, *annihilate* it” (Jones, *1893 General Conference Bulletin*, p. 260; emphases in original).

The natural mind of man is the mind of Satan, transformed by accepting the will of Satan, which began with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. That natural mind cannot be converted. It cannot be made more acceptable to God through any amount of good works, because all our good works are merely outworkings of the carnal mind. “The impossibility of good deeds proceeding from a sinful heart is thus forcibly illustrated by the Saviour [quotes Luke 6:44, 45]. That is to say, a man cannot do good until he first becomes good. Therefore, deeds done by a sinful person have no effect

whatever to make him righteous, but, on the contrary, coming from an evil heart, they are evil, and so add to the sum of his sinfulness” (E. J. Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness*, pp. 62, 63). “God can make an evil man good, but only by putting His own goodness in place of the evil” (*Waggoner on Romans*, p. 64).

“ ... And so we find that when Christ covers us with the robe of His righteousness, He does not furnish a cloak for sin, but takes the sin away. And this shows that the forgiveness of sins is something more than a mere form, something more than a mere entry in the books of record in heaven, to the effect that the sin has been canceled. The forgiveness of sins is a reality; it is something tangible, something that vitally affects the individual. It actually clears him from guilt; and if he is cleared from guilt, is justified, made righteous, he has certainly undergone a radical change. He is, indeed, another person” (*Christ and His Righteousness*, p. 74).

Such a “radical change” can only take place in our lives through faith in God’s power to deliver us from sin, both as individuals and corporately as the “bride of Christ.” It is this which all heaven is waiting to see: “Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus” (Rev. 14:12).

But the question arises: how is this accomplished when my natural mind is enmity toward God? Why would I want to remain loyal to the one toward whom I naturally have such violent animosity and distrust? (Note: pagan religions, Roman Catholicism, and Calvinism, perpetuate this enmity in the human heart by viewing God as an angry deity just waiting to destroy us, but restrained by the blood of sacrifices and good works.)

First, there must be some dying. “As long as I reserve some of my will, I will go my way in spite of myself, Let there be some dying here. Let there be some actual dying to self. That is what it means; it means death: and of course people never struggle to die; they struggle to stay alive, if there are any struggles” (Jones, *1893 General Conference Bulletin*, p. 299). The only way that any “good product” can arise from our heart, is if that heart is crucified with Christ. When we totally relinquish our will to God, then we are dead to any idea of self-existence or self-worth or self-righteousness. Emptied of self, then we can have the mind of Christ and the faith of Jesus, and His mind will produce His own righteousness (the only righteousness there is in the whole universe) in our surrendered heart.

This then is how faith works and how faithfulness is produced: “When the individual believes in Jesus Christ, and obtains the righteousness which is by faith, then the Holy Spirit, which is the circumcision of the heart, is received by him. And when the whole people, as a church, receive the righteousness of faith, the blessing of Abraham, then what is to hinder the church from receiving the Spirit of God? [Congregation: ‘Nothing.’] That is where we are. What is to hinder, then, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit? What holds back the outpouring of the Holy Ghost? [Voice: ‘Unbelief.’]” (Jones, *ibid.*, p. 383).

Unbelief in the power of the word of God brought our first parents down to a life of sin and misery. The situation can be turned around only when God’s people know of a

certainty that God is more powerful than Satan and sin; when God's people trust implicitly in God's faithfulness to deliver on His promise. God has already done all that could be done, including testing and proving that "measure of faith" that He gives to every person. All that is left is for us as individuals to appreciate fully the high cost of salvation so that we become willing to die to self in all its myriad forms (see *Counsels on Health*, pp. 222, 223).

—Ann Walper