

June 30, 2019

You Did Not Deny My Faith

Revelation 2:12-17

2:12 “And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: ‘The words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword.

2:13 “‘I know where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is. Yet you hold fast my name, and you did not deny my faith even in the days of Antipas my faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

2:14 But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality.

2:15 So also you have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

2:16 Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth.

2:17 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.’

1. Being Faithful to Christ

I received an email from an inquiry that a certain person sent to many people. It was like this. “I need someone who will do a service for the Lord faithfully. Please let me know if you have such person.” I thought, “Why does this email use ‘faithful person’? Isn’t everyone who serve the Lord faithful?” However, the reality does not seem to be so. I saw some quit without notice while taking on his own. Some never follow the rule, and never keep due date. It’s reality. So I think

the email used the word “faithful person” on purpose.

In this world’s work, “able people,” “enthusiastic people,” and “minded people” are sought and praised, but in the work of the Kingdom of God, “faithful people” are sought more than anything. In the parable of the talents, the servant who received five talents made another five talents. And the servant who received two talents made another two talents. The master praised both of them, saying, “Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.”(Matthew 25:21, 23) The word is exactly same to both of them. Christ sees and rewards for the faithfulness to work rather than the result of the work.

Paul recommends Timothy, Tychicus, Epaphras, Onesimus to people because they were “faithful people.” (1 Corinthians 4:17, Ephesians 6:21, Colossians 1:7, 4:9).

Each message to the seven churches in Revelation Chapters 2 and 3 begins with the word of Christ, “I know” Christ keeps his eyes on the church, but what the eyes of Christ see is how faithful the church is to the Lord. Christ encouraged the church in Smyrna, saying, “Be faithful unto death.” (2:10), and for Pergamum’s church, he called Antipas “my faithful witness.” (verse 13) He also praise the other believers, because they “did not deny the faith” in Christ, that is, they are faithful to the Lord. Christ seeks the church to be “faithful” above all, pays attention to it, and compliments it.

So why does Christ so much so that he needs to be faithful to the believers? It is because faith is to be faithful to Christ. Faith and faithfulness are exactly the same thing, because believers and faithful men are the same people.

In fact, the Greek term for “faithful” is “*pistos*” (πιστός), which is the adjective form of the noun “*pistis*” (πίστις). And “*pistis*” is used in many parts of the Bible to mean “truth,” “faithfulness,” “faith,” and “trust.” In English “the faithful” means “believers” and “believing people.” It is natural that a believer is faithful, and it is a complete contradiction that a believer is not being faithful.

Galatians 5:22-23 mentions the fruit of the Spirits of nine. They are “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.” The seventh “faithfulness” is “*pistis*” (πίστις) in the original language. In English, it is translated as “faithfulness”. Three of “faith,” “faithful,” and “faithfulness” are connected. Faith makes people faithful and faithful ones bear the fruit of “faithfulness.” Invisible “faith” gives personal character as “faithful,” and the character produces visible “faithfulness.” We want to start from faith in order to be faithful and to bear the fruit of “faithfulness.”

2. Faithfulness of Christ

Believers who want to be faithful also expect other people to be faithful. However, today is a time you often meet insane people and face serious problems, rather than meeting faithful ones. Besides, while wishing to be faithful to God and people, we may often regret not having done so. At that time, remember the sincerity of God and the faithfulness of Jesus Christ, so as not to be discouraged and lose your faithfulness.

Romans 3:4 says, “By no means! Let God be true though every one were a liar.” Even if you are betrayed, God will never betray us. God

said in Isaiah 61:8. “For I the LORD love justice; I hate robbery and wrong; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.” And, Jeremiah 31:3 says, “I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.” These are the words to the people of God who turned against God. Because God is the just and absolute ruler, there is no wonder if he destroys those who did not keep his promise with God. Even so, God still loved the unbelief and the unfaithful people, showed his sincerity and faithfulness.

That was the same with Jesus Christ. Revelation 1:5 says, “Grace to you and peace from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth.” The word “*pistos*” (πιστός) is used for “faithful.” The word could be translated “reliable” when you want to emphasize the certainty of Christ and his words. But the translated word “faithful” tells us that Christ became human, throws out his life, and achieved God’s salvation and witnessed it. Christ is not only faithful to God, but faithful to sinful ones, fulfilling that promise that he promised to save sinners.

Verse 13 says, “I know where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is. Yet you hold fast my name, and you did not deny my faith even in the days of Antipas my faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.” Antipas of the Pergamum Church is called “my faithful witness.” This is exactly the same word as in Christ in Revelation 1:5 called “the faithful witness.” Antipas is a “faithful witness” who kept the faith in Christ and was martyred, as the word “Be faithful unto death.” And he was able to become a “faithful witness” because Christ himself was a “faithful witness.” Not only he

become a “faithful witness” by following Christ, he also received “faithfulness” from the “faithful witness” Christ.

It’s not just Antipas. Other members of the Pergamum Church did not abandon their faith in Christ. The verse 13 says, “you did not deny my faith.” “My faith (πίστις)” means “faith in which we believe in Christ,” but our faith (πίστις) in Christ is based on the truth (πίστις) of Christ to us. The believers of Pergamum firmly trust in the truth of Christ and kept it.

”Keeping faith” does not mean that you have a strong “belief” or “conviction” by telling yourself that “this is true” and “I believe in this.” Our “faith” depends on the “truth” of Christ. When lamenting your own mistrust or suffering other people’s dishonor, let’s turn to the “faithful witness” Jesus Christ. Rely on the “faithfulness” of Christ to us.

3. Reward to the Faithful

We learned our “faith to Christ” and “the faithfulness to us” of Christ. Now, let us think about “reward to the faithful.” Faithfulness to believers is a matter of course, but Christ compliments and rewards that matter as if it were something special.

The Pergamum Church was a faithful church to Christ. “The throne of Satan” in verse 13 is considered to be a temple built for emperor worship. The Pergamum congregation stood up to such external pressure. However, there was a weak point in the temptation from the inside, and there were those who did not leave the Nicolaitans. The Nicolaitans admitted Christians to participated in rituals that eat what was dedicated to idols, and sexual immorality at the temple of idols.

Still they said that they were Christians, and in the church, but they were not real Christians. These teachings say that they have a “new and better teachings,” but in fact, they are nothing but steaming of the old wrong teachings. This was in the time of Moses when Balak king of Moab sought to curse Israel by hiring the fortune teller Balaam. But it was not successful by the power of the Lord. Then, they tempted Israelite to idols and sexual immorality. (Numbers 25:1-3).

At that time, the judgment of God fell, and twenty-four thousand people fell to the sword (Numbers 25:9). In the days of Moses the actual sword judged people, but in this time Christ judged people with the “double-edged sword” coming out of his mouth, the word of God. In Revelation 1:16, the figure of Christ is described, “In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.” The message to Pergamum’s church starts with the words “The words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword.” (2:12), then Christ warned them in 2:16, saying “Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth.”

We are not in the same persecution as the first generation church. However, I think that temptation is big only for the part with less persecution. Many temptations are waiting for anywhere. If you ease your mind a little, you may fall into immorality, addictions, or crime.

We do not obey the clearly wrong teachings. However, we will gradually leave the truth of Christ if we do not think and pray carefully about what the Bible is trying to say, not take it seriously, and stand in front of the Word of God to examine ourselves. When we lose our faithfulness to God’s Word, our faithfulness to Christ will be

lost. We also will be unfaithful to people. No matter how clever and good things we say, we will not be responsible for what we say. And if we repeat that kind of thing, it becomes a habit, and the habit becomes the person's personality. "One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much." (Luke 16:10) If we are not faithful, repent. Repentance is a blessing. Let's seek that blessing. We may be able to do only small things. But, we can witness Christ by being faithful to what is given to us.

And Christ rewards such a person. Revelation 17:14 says, "They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful." In sports, you win and lose at first. Students are concerned about grades going up and down, and companies pursue profits. In this world, it makes a lot of fuss as "wins" and "loses," but we know the last victory. When Christ wins over every evil, who will take over the victory? They will be "the called and chosen faithful." "A person who wins" is a "faithful person." A "faithful person" gets final victory. Believe in this promise and proceed toward the reward of the Lord.

(Prayer)

True and honest God. Thank you for encouraging us to be faithful. When we see the Lord, we want to hear the voice saying, "Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master." We pray this in the name of Jesus, our true Master. Amen.