FAITHFULNESS AND LOYALTY TO GOD AND HIS CHURCH

Keynote Address

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Down through the ages, and even before the creation of this world, God has required faithfulness and loyalty to Him……however, He has not demanded it. Faithfulness and loyalty are not forced but are automatic responses to God’s saving truth and love melting the receptive heart in complete and humble submissiveness to God. Faithfulness and loyalty are results of a connection with God and a love for Him.

It was not until Lucifer began to doubt God that disloyalty began in an insidious manner…..it fact, it is called the “mystery of iniquity.” Since that time and the fall of humanity, there has been an element of distrust and disloyalty that has pervaded human existence. It has only accelerated as Satan has spread his half-truths and cynicism into the very core of human existence and into God’s remnant people, the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The only remedy for unfaithfulness and disloyalty is to humble ourselves before Christ who epitomizes faithfulness and loyalty to truth. The personal connection and spiritual blessings that come with knowing Jesus Christ, His teachings, His truth, and His mission provide an inoculation against the latest and ever-evolving satanic virus of disloyalty and rebellion. It is only taking on the “mind of Christ” as outlined in Philippians 2:5-8 and being in Him at all times as the Vine as instructed in John 15:1-8 that we are provided, through His grace and the power of the Holy Spirit, with a sure way of aligning ourselves on God’s side of faithfulness and loyalty.

We are called to be faithful and loyal to God, to His Word, to His truth, to His church, to His mission, and to our designation as disciples of Christ and proclaimers of His Word. Total commitment to Him is required as we face the very last days of earth’s history. I believe we are at the very end of time and the requirements to be faithful, true, committed, and loyal to God and His three angels’ messages are paramount as we see the prophetic clock ticking and the world devolving into ultimate chaos.

The historicist, prophetic understanding of Daniel and Revelation tells us the second coming of the Lord is imminent. Within the framework of God’s last-day message to the world through His chosen people, the Seventh-day Adventist Church, we are to find our place of faithfulness to His Word and loyalty to its public and personal proclamation.

The ultimate demonstration of our personal commitment to God’s complete biblical truth and His commission to proclaim it will present itself as an amazing opportunity to declare to the world and the universe our absolute faithfulness and loyalty.

God’s end-time people will be tested with that same test that confronted Lucifer. Ultimately, the true and faithful will demonstrate their complete allegiance to God, His Word, His truth, His church, and His mission for all of us. It will not be a blind loyalty, but a profound and humble loyalty that will not be swayed by any exterior or prevailing political correctness. God calls for us all to humble our hearts before Him. This complete faithfulness and loyalty will not partake in multi-directional confusion and self-centered demands for personal rights and prominence. It will not participate in misguided, self-centered, humanistically-leaning, and existential relativism as demonstrated in various tendencies including the emergent church developments.

God’s true, faithful, and loyal people will have a singleness of heart and focused purpose born of a deep familiarity with the Holy Word of God and His Spirit of Prophecy instructions. The people of God’s Advent movement will proclaim with holy boldness His truth and heaven-born mission of the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14:6-12 and the fourth angel of Revelation 18:1-4 entrusted to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. These characteristics and messages will prevail in His people demonstrating their unfiltered and unfettered loyalty. Their loyalty is something you can take to the bank…..it is pure gold produced from taking Revelation 3:14-22 with complete seriousness: “And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, ‘These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold not hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’----and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked----I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich: and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love; I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit say to the churches.” This is the powerful result of complete and humble trust in the leading of the Holy Spirit to produce the ultimate demonstration of faithfulness and loyalty to God.

In Early Writings, page 270, we read, “I asked the meaning of the shaking I had seen, and was shown that it would be caused by the straight testimony called forth by the counsel of the True Witness to the Laodiceans. This will have its effect upon the heart of the receiver, and will lead him to pour forth the straight truth. Some will not bear this straight testimony. They will rise up against it, and this is what will cause a shaking among God’s people. I saw that the testimony of the True Witness has not been half heeded. The solemn testimony upon which the destiny of the church hangs has been lightly esteemed, if not entirely disregarded. This testimony must work deep repentance; all who truly receive it, will obey it, and be purified.”

Taylor G Bunch, in his pamphlet entitled, “Forty Years in the Wilderness in Type and Antitype” indicates the above Spirit of Prophecy quotation and the references to Testimonies, Vol 5, that follow and on page 39, says, “Then follows a picture of the latter rain and its glorious results which stirs up the wrath of the enemy and brings on the ‘great tribulation. The final persecution does not produce the awakening of the church. On the contrary it is the spiritual awakening that arouses Satan to persecute the remnant people of God.”

If we are going to see the latter rain in the near future, we must humble ourselves and look to Christ and His all-sufficient righteousness in order for Him to work in us through His justifying and sanctifying power to be faithful and loyal leaders for Him. Testimonies, Vol 5, page 133, says, “There is too much bustle and stir about our religion, while Calvary and the cross are forgotten.” Our submission to Christ as administrators and leaders and our proclamation of the straight testimony of God will provide the pathway towards the outpouring of the latter rain of the Holy Spirit. In Testimonies, Vol 5, pages 211, 212, and 214, say, “The class who do not feel grieved over their own spiritual declension, nor mourn over the sins of others, will be left without the seal of God…..The seal of God will be placed upon the forehead of those only who sigh and cry for the abominations done in the land……Not one of us will ever receive the seal of God while our characters have one spot or stain upon them. It is left with us to remedy the defects of our characters, to cleanse the soul temple of every defilement. Then the latter rain will fall upon us as the early rain fell upon the disciples on the day of Pentecost.”

Throughout the Bible, God has provided numerous illustrations of faithful and loyal followers: Job, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Esther, Samuel, Deborah, Elijah, Dorcas, Paul, Peter, John, and so many more. Hebrews 11 is replete with the illustrious list of God’s humble, faithful, and loyal leaders.

However, God also used demonstrations of disloyalty and disrespect to point out our need for humility in loyally serving Him. One of the most dramatic accounts of disloyalty, unfaithfulness, and disrespect is found in II Kings 2. Elisha had just seen Elijah ascend to heaven in a fiery chariot. Elisha had asked for and received a double portion of God’s spirit. As leaders in God’s cause, let us determinedly ask for a double portion of God’s spirit-----imploring God for the falling of the latter rain of the Holy Spirit in these days just before Christ’s return when the truth will go like lightening around the world leading to intense persecution and then God’s great deliverance of those who are faithful, loyal, and true to Him and His Word.

Elisha picked up Elijah’s mantle that had fallen as Elijah ascended to his eternal reward for his faithful and loyal service to God representing all those who will not see death at the end of time but will be transported to heaven at Christ’s soon second coming……Oh, what a day to look forward to and to proclaim it to the world....reach the world…..respond by saying, “I Will Go.”

Verse 12 of II Kings 2 says that Elisha struck the Jordan River with the mantle. It parted and he crossed over. The sons of the prophets saw that the spirit of Elijah rested upon Elisha. Let us plead with the Lord for His Spirit to rest upon us as humble leaders. After showing God’s power in a tangible manner, outlined in the latter part of chapter two, by casting salt into impure water and “healing” it, Elisha proceeded to Bethel on God’s mission. At that point, the Bible indicates that 42 young people came up to mock him. Today, we have wonderful and faithful young people and older ones…..we also have disloyal, unfaithful, and disrespectful younger and older people in the church…..it has always been this way and, unfortunately, always will be until the separation of the sheep and goats at the coming of the Lord. Let us all pledge ourselves to be part of the sheep who hear the voice of the Lord and respond with absolute faithfulness and loyalty until His appearing. Interestingly, in verse 23, the young people were mocking Elisha because he was bald. Making fun of anyone is not appropriate and showing disrespect to spiritual leaders is siding with evil efforts to destabilize the church. In verse, 24, Elisha turns to confront the faithless and disloyal hecklers and pronounces a curse on them. Two female bears came out of the woods and killed the 42 youth. Although the scripture does not elaborate on this, Ellen White does. In Prophets and Kings, pages 236-237, we read, “Had Elisha allowed the mockery to pass unnoticed, he would have continued to be ridiculed and reviled by the rabble, and his mission to instruct and save in a time of grave national peril might have been defeated. This one instance of terrible severity was sufficient to command respect throughout his life. For fifty years he went in and out of the gate of Bethel, and to and fro in the land, from city to city, passing through crowds of idle, rude, dissolute youth; but none mocked him or made light of his qualifications as the prophet of the Most High. Even kindness should have its limits. Authority must be maintained by a firm severity, or it will be received by many with mockery and contempt. The so-called tenderness, the coaxing and indulgence, used toward youth by parents and guardians, is one of the worst evils which can come upon them. In every family, firmness, decision, positive requirements, are essential…….Reverence should be shown for God’s representatives---for ministers, teachers, and parents, who are called to speak and act in His stead. In the respect shown them, God is honored.”

So, faithfulness, loyalty, and respect on the part of all, young and old, are signs of our direct connection with God as we demonstrate the vital spiritual elements of transparency, integrity, faithfulness, accountability, and loyalty in our humble leadership responsibilities.

In Christian Service, page 267, we read, “Every act of loyalty and faith will be crowned with special tokens of God’s favor and approbation.”

As we begin this Global Leadership Summit, let us fully recognize our need of Christ and His all-encompassing righteousness to form our characters in His likeness so that we may be faithful and loyal to God and His church as we enter the very last days of earth’s history with a sense of urgency to proclaim the three angels’ messages and Christ’s soon coming. In proclaiming this wonderful Advent message, may we all say, “I Will Go.”