

Faith Not to Share

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The title of my study is about faith not to share. We hear a great deal about sharing our faith. There is a time not to do that.

"Hast thou faith? Have it to thyself before God" Romans 14:22.

That is very clear that it is not to share. To bring it out a little more vividly I will read from some other translations:

"Certainly keep your own conviction on the matter as between yourself and God" Moffatt.

"For your part you must keep the faith you have to yourself as between God and you" Goodspeed.

"As for you and your faith, keep your faith to yourself in the presence of God." Weymouth.

Having heard those modern translations, go back and look at the King James Version and you will find that is exactly what it says. And we need a great deal of wisdom to know when to share our faith and when not to. It is when not to that I want to study with you.

The text is clear, but there are some things you are to have to yourself before God. Faith is naturally between you and God. Faith is not something you could have without God or apart from God all by yourself, because faith is believing God.

"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" Romans 10:17.

There are some things God has told us that we are to believe and tell to others. There are some things God tells us that we are to have to ourselves with God. Here is an example:

"And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man; but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them" Matthew 8:4.

This is the story of the healing of the leper. Immediately after the Sermon on the Mount the leper came and worshiped Jesus and asked to be healed. Jesus put forth His hand and healed him. And told him to tell no man.

You say that is a strange thing. Surely if God had healed a man, the first thing he ought to do it to tell everybody. Ordinarily it would be so. Many times it would be appropriate. On this occasion Jesus said, See thou tell no man.

God has two problems with man. One is to get them to open their lips in praise when they are tempted to keep silent, and the other is to keep still. God is very patient with us. How much wisdom we need.

The other gospel writers tell us that this leper immediately went out and published it, and made it hard for Jesus' work. So one reason you can see why God says to keep it to yourself on some occasions is because it might at that particular time make problems. It might be misunderstood.

Jesus practiced what He preached. He didn't tell everybody everything. He knew many things He never told even His closest disciples. In fact, after He had been with them for three and a half years He said:

"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now" John 16:12.

Isn't that interesting? Think of it. Jesus had been with those disciples for three and a half years, and He had not shared all His faith with them.

What heavenly wisdom is needed to know what to share and what not to share. People are not ready to take some things. You can't feed hamburger or soy burger to a 3-month-old baby. It isn't the thing. It isn't the time.

John 21 is a very interesting chapter. It seems sort of an appendix to the book as a whole. It is a story on a particular occasion which none of the other gospel writers told.

Christ met with His disciples on the Sea of Galilee. The disciples were out fishing. As they approached the shore at dawn with empty boats they saw along the beach a lonely figure. They presently recognized that it was Jesus. Oh, what a meeting it was. How happy they were to see Him. And Jesus had breakfast ready.

"As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread" John 21:9.

My subject is not the diet question, but it is interesting that Jesus was feeding them fish and bread. That would bother some people, wouldn't it? Yes. At any rate He served breakfast. As they were eating together Jesus talked with them. When breakfast was over Jesus turned to Peter and asked him:

"Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these?" verse 15.

Peter said he did. Jesus asked him again and again. How did Peter feel? He felt bad about the third time. But how many times had Peter denied his Lord? Three times. So Jesus now gave him the privilege and the opportunity to affirm his

allegiance three times in the presence of his fellow disciples. But all this is introductory.

After breakfast Jesus and Peter were walking down the beach together. Jesus was talking to Peter about some very intimate things. He talked to Peter about Peter's future. He talked to Peter about Peter's death. And Peter understood that some day he was to follow his Lord in crucifixion.

This happened later when Peter was bent with age. He was crucified in Rome. He asked that he might be crucified with his head downward because he considered it too great an honor to die in the exact manner his Lord had died.

All this Jesus opened to Peter as they were walking side by side down the beach. Now comes the interesting thing I want you to see:

"Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do" verses 20, 21.

Jesus, you have been telling me about my future. There is something else I would like to know. What about John? What is John going to do? What ought he to do? What is his future, and what is his duty?

Did Jesus tell Peter all about John? No.

"Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou Me" verse 22.

John was not to be crucified. Do you see that there are some things we are to know and share with God, but it may not be our duty to share them with others, because it doesn't pertain to them?

Before I go any further with this subject I ought to make clear that there are some things that God has given His people in the way of faith that are to be shared with everybody. At least on appropriate occasions. There are some things in the realm of duty that God has made crystal clear in His word.

For instance, in the Ten Commandments we have the plain instruction, Thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness. We don't have to rationalize about that and say maybe it pertains to this man and not to that other man. Maybe it is good instruction for me, but if somebody else wants to kill and lie and steal, I don't have to worry about that. Maybe that is what they ought to do.

No. That's getting clear away from the realm of truth. If that were a right application of the Ten Commandments, it would be wrong for the church to sit in judgment on any case, wouldn't it? But if a member of the church goes down and gets drunk, the church will labor with him. If a man uses tobacco, and keeps defiling

the temple of God and going contrary to the laws of health that God has written in the body, the church will finally say, Sorry, but those who use tobacco and liquor will never enter heaven. You know better. You are a member of the church. So dear brother, we plead with you to give it up. But if you won't, then your name must be removed from the church book.

On that matter the church does not take the attitude, Well, I think I shouldn't use liquor, but if you use it, that's your business. No. That is the attitude some people in the world take. That's why they are against any prohibition law in either church or state. But they misunderstand the question. They take a proper principle of religious liberty and misapply it.

But it is the other way around I am studying with you. There is a time for us to speak in trumpet tones, to lift up our voices and show people their sins (Isaiah 58). When the Word of God speaks in clear language to the whole world, when God comes to Sinai and gives the ten commandments, we don't have to have any attitude that maybe that is for me and maybe for somebody else, but I am going to let other people alone and not worry about it.

No. We are to declare the Word of God at the right time and the right place, and with the right emphasis. But the Word of God is clear. That's God's standard of judgment.

I am studying in the realm of personal duty. I am studying in the realm of experience with God which everybody ought to have, and alone with God. "Hast thou faith? Have it to thyself before God." And where there are ten things that God gives clearly in His word for everybody, there are a hundred things that God wants to teach you and me personally, and He wants to have us in a private schoolroom when He does it. It is written in the prophets:

"And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto Me" John 6:45.

If you want to be happy you will let God teach you His personal will for you in the details of life. You will have an experience that will make you glad in knowing what God wants you to do. You will not wait for others to decide those things for you. And when you have had that experience, you will not suppose that gives you a license, and certainly not an obligation, to go out and share that with everybody, and get them to see as you see in all the details. That's my subject. That's what our text says.

As an example of that we will take something interesting that the servant of the Lord wrote:

"There is a wide difference in constitutions and temperaments, and the demands of the system differ greatly in different persons. What would be food for one might be poison for another; so precise rules cannot be laid down to fit every case" *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, page 494.

Is that a disappointment? Some people are very anxious to get hold of precise rules so they will know exactly what to do, and not have to think it through. So often that same type of mind wants to get hold of precise rules so they can tell everybody else precisely what to do. It is embarrassing to some people not to know for sure what other people ought to do. But if that embarrasses us, let's get embarrassed fast and long and get it over with. God has not given us the job nor the privilege to know what everybody else ought to do. He didn't even give that to Peter. When Peter wanted to know about John, Jesus said, What is that to you.

"I cannot eat beans, for they are poison to me" *Ibid.*, page 494.

Now if I don't like beans, I would be glad to read that. And I probably would like to read it to the cook at our house and say, See here. We shouldn't have beans around here because Sister White said they were poison.

Did she say beans were poison? Yes, she did. Of course, there is the little phrase, "to me."

Oh. That doesn't contradict the rest, but it does modify it, doesn't it?

"But for me to say that for this reason no one must eat them would be simply ridiculous. I cannot eat a spoonful of milk gravy, or milk toast, without suffering in consequence; but other members of my family can eat these things, and realize no such effect; therefore I take that which suits my stomach best, and they do the same. We have no words, no contention; all moves along harmoniously in my large family, for I do not attempt to dictate what they shall or shall not eat" *Ibid.*, page 494.

I wonder what it would be like to live in the prophets' home. Well, apparently it was a happy place.

If even the prophet of God found it necessary to have a personal experience with the Lord, probably some of the rest of us will need to do that. What do you say? And if she was not only willing but glad to let the other members of her family find out for themselves what is best for them and follow it, don't you suppose that would be a happy way for us to live?

That is exactly what Paul is talking about in Romans. If you read the whole chapter you will see that he was talking about the members of the early church judging one another. A good deal of it was concerned with the question of eating. But the principle applies, and is so applied by the Spirit of Prophecy. Let me read another interesting statement on this:

"We must remember that there are a great many different minds in the world, and we cannot expect everyone to see exactly as we do in regard to all questions of diet" *Medical Ministry*, page 269.

Can't everybody see the same? Well, we ought to see the same on great things. We ought to see the same on vital issues. But there is a great world of details in diet and dress, recreation, amusements, literature and music where God has left it, on purpose, for people to seek Him and find out what He wants them to do.

"Minds do not run in exactly the same channel. I do not eat butter, but there are members of my family who do. It is not placed on my table, but I make no disturbance because some members of my family choose to eat it occasionally" *Ibid.*, page 269.

If you were a prophet, could you abstain from eating certain things and still not make any disturbance if other people around the house ate them? Could you do it even if you were not a prophet? That's the test. None of us are prophets.

"Many of our conscientious brethren have butter on their tables, and I feel under no obligation to do otherwise. These things should never be allowed to cause disturbance among brethren. I cannot see the need of butter where there is abundance of fruit and of sterilized cream. Those who love and serve God should be allowed to follow their own convictions" *Ibid.*, page 269.

In order to follow my own convictions, what would I have to have? I would have to have some convictions, wouldn't I? If a brother gets some convictions from God and I get some, won't they be exactly the same? Not necessarily. Certainly Sister White was led of the Lord, and there were conscientious brethren who didn't see these diet questions as she saw them. Were they being led of the Devil? Apparently not.

"We may not feel justified in doing as they do, but we should not allow differences of opinion to create disunion. May the Lord help us to be as firm as a rock to the principles of the law spoken from Sinai" *Ibid.*, page 269.

She exalts the great Ten Commandment law. That's the great issue. And what is the heart of that law? The Sabbath. Is that what the coming issue is over? Remember that the great issue is not going to be over some of these details, but there are those in the church who would make issues over them. God hasn't sent them. They ran before they were called. The great issue is the law of God which centers in the Fourth Commandment. May the Lord help us to be as firm as a rock to the principles of the law spoken from Sinai, and may He help us not to allow differences of opinion to be a barrier between us and our brethren.

In stressing the point of not trying to press others, I want to make it clear that is not the most important point in our study. The most important point is to get some convictions you share with God and God shares with you. Some people find they are not to press convictions on others, and they think the easiest way to avoid it is

not to have any convictions. So when in Rome they do as the Romans do. They fit in nicely in whatever society they find themselves in.

Like the chameleon. It is green on a green bush and brown on a brown bush.

But that isn't what our text says. Oh, no. If you have convictions on a point of diet, follow those convictions, and let other people do the same. If you have convictions on a point of dress, follow those convictions, and allow other people to do the same. If to you a certain piece of music doesn't belong to the songs of Zion, leave it alone. But if some other brother or sister feels free to use it, don't feel it is your duty to judge them, even in your heart.

Speaking about music. I have been quite interested in the discussion that I hear evidence from time to time as to whether in our church we should restrict ourselves to what is called the high class music, or whether we should descend to the more common religious songs which are used freely in some types of evangelism. Not being a musician, I have the advantage of being able to sit by and hear it discussed without having to take sides in the matter. But in my own mind I have a philosophy that helps me. I think that God can use some simple little song to reach some types of minds, and I am sure there are some people touched by some of those moving, grand hymns that have come down from ages past, and be blessed by them far more than some of the others. And I choose to leave God with His job of helping each one who is looking to Him for guidance to know what He wants them to do on the music question. That is a happy way to live. In fact, let's go back to our text and we will see that is the happy way to live:

"Hast thou faith? Have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth"
Romans 14:22.

I like texts that have in it the word happy. The happy man is the one who allows himself to do certain things without regard to what others do, but doesn't condemn himself when he does it. In other words, he is walking according to the light God gives him. And there are two reasons he is happy. He knows what God wants him to do, and he is doing it, and he is not trying to inflict it on other people.

Now, if you miss either one of those you will be unhappy. If you don't get convictions and follow them, you won't know this happiness. Jesus says:

"If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" John 13:17.

Know what God wants you to do, and do it. That's the way to be happy.

But along with it, if you become a busybody, a church tinker, and every time you see someone doing something in diet or dress or music or reading or child training, or a dozen other subjects, that doesn't measure up to your idea of what ought to be done, and if you feel that you have the job of either talking to them, or worse yet, talking to others about their failures, friends, it will make you miserable, and you will probably make some other people miserable too.

If God burdens your heart about it, take it to the Lord in prayer. Those who get the seal in Ezekiel 9 are those who sigh and cry alone with God, and plead with Him. And they are sighing and crying about something far more important than many of the little details. They are sighing about abominations, tremendous iniquities. I am not trying to minimize the Lord's instructions. But if the prophet gave these minute details on diet, and could choose to follow them and yet leave her brethren to carry out their convictions, certainly we who attempt to follow what she has written can do the same.

I come to the point of how to get convictions

"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" James 1:5.

Do you know what liberally means? It means plenty. All you need. My God shall supply all your needs. But your need is not to know what Brother Jones or Brother Smith ought to do. If you ask for that, God will say, Sorry, there isn't room on your plate for that. But if you ask wisdom for yourself, God will give to you all you need.

"The Lord speaks; enter into your closet, and in silence commune with your own heart" *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, page 163.

What's the closet? The secret place of prayer. And Jesus said:

"But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly" Matthew 6:6.

Why shut the door? Oh, God has something He wants to whisper to you, and He doesn't want anybody else to hear. That's right. There are some things you need to know that nobody else can hear.

Have you listened? I fear we are in this busy, mad age, and so many people are rushing about from one thing to another. And even meeting will never meet this need.

"Listen to the voice of truth and conscience. Nothing will give such clear views of self as secret prayer. He who seeth in secret and knoweth all things will enlighten your understanding and answer your petitions. Plain, simple duties that must not be neglected will open before you" *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, page 163.

Where? In the secret place of prayer.

My dear friends, there are some things that ought to be preached from the pulpit. I trust they are being preached. But there are some things God wants you to know that will never be preached from this pulpit. There are personal duties that God has for you that, if you ever learn them, you will learn them on your knees before God.

You are to get convictions. And when you get them, don't spoil them by trying to make them the rule to measure everybody else by. It is your privilege to know what God wants you to do. Get counsel if you want to, but never let that counsel intervene between you and the Wonderful Counselor.

We need wisdom to know what things we should learn together, and what things we should learn alone.

It wouldn't be the thing for the Sabbath School superintendent to go all alone and find out that the time to have Sabbath School would be at 10:45 instead of 9:30. That wouldn't be the thing we are studying about. That is to be decided in counsel.

But we are talking about the realm of personal duty. And to find that out, you need to go alone with God, and in silence commune in prayer.

If you do that, God will teach you, and you can have a wonderful experience. You can come forth knowing what God wants you to do in the realm of personal duty, and at the same time encourage other people to go to God and find out what God wants them to do. And listen friends, it won't be the same for everybody:

"I was shown that it is the will of God that the saints should cut loose from every encumbrance before the time of trouble comes, and make a covenant with God through sacrifice. If they have their property on the altar and earnestly enquire of God for duty, He will teach them when to dispose of these things.

"I also saw that God had not required all of His people to dispose of their property at the same time; but if they desired to be taught, He would teach them, in a time of need, when to sell and how much to sell" *Early Writings*, page 56.

That makes God the teacher of every soul as what to do with his property.

Looking back, the rich young ruler came to Jesus, and Jesus said, If you want to be perfect go and sell all you have, give to the poor, and come and take up the cross and follow Me.

Did Jesus say that to Zacchaeus? No. I wonder why He said it to the rich young man, and didn't say it to Zacchaeus. When we get up there with Jesus, He can explain it.

He didn't say it to Nicodemus either, did He? No. Nicodemus was a rich man. He was a rich man for some time after he became a Christian. Longer than the rich young man would have been.

But what did the rich young man do? He went away sorrowful. I suppose a public relations expert would have said, The Master missed the point that time. He didn't handle the case well. If He had asked the rich young man for half of what he had, the rich young man would have done it, and Jesus would have gotten all his riches and the young man too.

But Jesus wanted something infinitely more than the young man's riches, or the presence of the man in the church. He wanted the man's soul. And Jesus knew that the only way that rich young man could be converted was to be willing to give up all, and that in his particular case the only way he could enter into life was to make that sacrifice then and there.

Suppose the rich young man had accepted what Jesus said. Suppose he had gone home and sold all he had and became one of Jesus' disciples. Then suppose he had gone out and told everybody that he studied with that in order to accept Jesus they had to sell all their property, give it to the poor, and come in penniless. That's the way I had to do, and you have got to do the same.

Are there people in the world who have that idea? Oh, yes. Do you see what I am getting at?

Have an experience with God. Know what God wants you to do, and be willing for God to lead you in a different track from what He leads somebody else. If we will do that, we can have a happy time.

Our Father, write upon our hearts these precious principles of truth and beauty. Make us glad that we can individually be taught of God in these personal details of daily living. Make us glad to go to the secret place of prayer and find out what our Father wants us to do, then walk with Him step by step as Enoch did. And make us glad in allowing others to do the same. Thus may we march together with Thy remnant people to the Canaan land just over Jordan. For Jesus' sake, Amen.

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