140 Faithfulness (*Fidelitas*)

Among all the conditions, faithfulness is particularly to be praised, Prov. 28[:20]: “A faithful man shall be much praised.” And because it is commonly said how the lord of such a family ought to be, since according to the Psal. [144:13]: “The Lord is faithful in all his words”; he does not want to have a servant unless he is faithful. However, in four people the greatest faithfulness is required: in his own household, in his friends, in his masters, in his companions.

¶ The faithfulness of servants to their lords consists in attending upon them; of friends to their friends in loving them; of masters to their servants in retaining them; of companions to their companions in helping them.

¶ Concerning the first, the Lord does not place a servant for attending unless he is faithful. The example concerning Paul [1] Tim. 1[:12]: “I give thanks to my God who has … counted me faithful, putting me in the ministry.” And such a one does not want to have companions with him unless they are faithful, Col. 4[:7]: “All the things he … will make known to you.” This is against the many masters who want to have only servants who are pillagers and thieves, Isai. 1[:23]: “Your princes are faithless, companions of thieves.”

The faithfulness of a servant is evident in the good dispensation of things committed to him which the usurers and avaricious use, who in the time of necessity close the purse. In this they are like mastiffs who with a full belly yet keep for themselves the carcass lest the birds eat of it. Rather they drive them away, 1 Cor. 4[:2]: “Here now it is required among the dispensers, that a man be found faithful.” And it may be said there are so few faithful among such ones that it is necessary to seek if they can be found. Wherefore Matt. 24[:45]: “Who, do you think, is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord has appointed over his family.” But how will he give wheat who sells bran and denies to the Christian straw which he gives to a pig, Prov. 20[:6]: “Who shall find a faithful man?” I think that if one would be faithful in the least he would be raised up to greater, Luc. 16[:10]: “He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in that which is greater.”

¶ The example of the lord who concerning the faithful servant made the example concerning the wicked steward, Luke 16[:8]. “Well done, you good servant, because you have been faithful,” etc. [Luke 19:17].

¶ Concerning the second faithfulness which is in the loving of friends, Neh. 9[:8]: “You did find his heart faithful before you.” Christ like a bird of prey[[1]](#endnote-1) seeks only the heart of his prey. And here faithfulness consists in firmness of the will when we do what we know the Lord wishes.

¶ The example of the jealous husband who tests the faithfulness of his wife in various ways, Wis. 3[:9]: “They that are faithful in love shall rest in him.” And truly we are held to be faithful to Christ because he is exceedingly faithful to us. Not only in the conduct of this life, but in death by protecting us from the devils when all our worldly friends desert us, rather they hurry away, Eccli. 6[:15]: “Nothing can be compared to a faithful friend”; and “A faithful friend is a strong defense: and he that has found him, has found a treasure.”

¶ The third faithfulness is of masters in their subjects to whom the subjects are committed, as the shepherds of the sheep, Tob. 10[:6]: “Our son is safe: that man with whom we sent him is very trusty.” Formerly wolves were sent among the sheep, Matt. 10[:16]: “Behold I send you as sheep in the midst of wolves.” But now sheep are sent to the wolves, Ezech. 22[:27]: “Her princes in the midst of her, are like wolves ravening the prey,” namely, following the riches of avarice, Isai. 1[:23]: “Your princes are faithless, companions of thieves.” Rather as it seems they are crueler than wolves, because wolves, although they eat the flesh, however they leave behind the wool. For neither do they savage the carcass, because of this it is said, Soph. 3[:4]: “Senseless men without faith: her priests have polluted the sanctuary.” But the faithful prelate heals the injured sheep through prayer, he does not sanction, Eccli. 15[:10]: Healing “shall abound in a faithful mouth.”

Again, he feeds the hungry through preaching and would that he not withdraw his repast, Eccli. 37[:6]: “A wise man instructs his own people, and the fruits of his understanding are faithful.”

Again, he reconciles the people through correction, Apo. 19[:11]: “He that sat upon the horse was called faithful and true.” But, alas, because today that can be said, “Isai. 1[:21-23]: “How is the faithful city … become a harlot?” etc., up to “They judge not.” But would that sometime Gad may turn his hand to doing for the sheep from the wolves, just as he promised, Isai. 1[:25-26]: “I will turn my hand to you, and I will clean purge away your dress,” etc., up to “A faithful city.”

In the fourth place, faithfulness of companions is required of those who ought to communicate in wealth and loss through preceding suffering and subsequent glory. Of such a kind of faithfulness is that between Christ and the good Christian who does not abandon man in the struggle.

1. Cf. Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *De proprietatibus rerum* 12.2 Accipiter, hawk (1505, p. 225b): Carnibo recentibio et sanguinolentis cibantur et solent eis dari corda auium que predantur.

They should be fed with fresh flesh and bloody, and men should use to give them to eat the hearts of fowls that they take. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)