

“Relationships of Spiritual Man” by Ruth Paxson

Bio:

Ruth Paxson (1889-1949) was Bible teacher, missionary, and author. Born in Manchester, Iowa in 1889, and accepted Christ as her personal Savior when a child. She graduated from the State University of Iowa, and afterward spent one year at Moody Bible Institute. She served as YWCA secretary for Iowa and eventually traveled as secretary for the Student Volunteer Movement. Sponsored by the YWCA, in 1911, Ruth sailed for the mission field in China. Later she left that work to devote herself to evangelism and summer Bible teaching among missionaries in China. In that country her Bible lessons to pastors, evangelists, and teachers during the 1920s were well received. In response to requests from both Chinese and missionary friends, the lessons were expanded and originally published in three volumes, now combined in a one-volume edition of *Life On the Highest Plane*.

Leaving China for health reasons, Miss Paxson went to Switzerland; then followed a period of Bible teaching on the European continent and at the Keswick Bible Conference in England. For fifteen years prior to World War II, Miss Paxson, with her friend and companion of 34 years, Miss Edith Davis, also a gifted Bible teacher, ministered the Word of God in various countries, including Holland. In Amsterdam alone there were forty-five Bible classes taught by people to whom these two Bible teachers had ministered previously.

In 1947, Miss Paxson, with a traveling companion, flew across the Atlantic to minister the Word of God in Europe and at Keswick, England. The impact of the testimony and Bible teaching ministry of Miss Paxson has been felt around the world because of the circulation of her books. Miss Paxson was called Home to be with the Lord, October 1, 1949. This

selection is taken from the third volume contained in her one volume book, *Life On the Highest Plane*. [1] In this selection she writes that one “relationship” to which the Spirit calls all Christians is discernment (See 1 John 2:18-27.).

Note: To this point, we can contrast Wm. Paul Young’s emphasis upon “relationship” in *The Shack* (“We are a circle of relationship . . . Submission . . . is all about relationships of love and respect.” (*The Shack*, 122, 145) Centuries ago Paxson wrote about relationships, but not the kind of relationships Young would stand for; that in days of “deepening apostasy” God calls every spiritual Christian “to three things; discernment, devotion and division.” Nine decades ago Ruth Paxson wrote this encouraging word to Christians who engage in their relationship with God and His Word through discernment [2]:

Prophecy of Apostasy

Under the inspiration of the divine Spirit Paul foretold the apostasy that would sweep the entire professing Church and would eat at its very vitals. Into a veritable whirlpool of doubt, disbelief and disloyalty multitudes would be drawn.

1 TIM. 4:1-2, R. V., “But the Spirit saith expressly, that in the later times some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons, through the hypocrisy of men that speak lies, branded in their own conscience as with a hot iron.”

2 TIM. 4:3-4, R. V., “For the time will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine; but having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts; . . . And will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside unto fables.”

Deception and Departure within Christendom

No Spirit-taught student of the Word of God and of the universal condition of Christendom doubts that the day of this prophesied apostasy is already upon us. In the churches of the mission field as well as in those of the homelands this declension from the true faith and this disloyalty to Him who is the Truth is in everyday evidence. (In China about twenty-five hundred missionaries, representing all denominations and nationalities, united in a Bible Union as a testimony before the native Christians of their loyalty to Jesus Christ and to His Word, and as a protest to the inroads of Modernism, into a field where for more than one hundred years the pure Gospel seed had been sown and nurtured by thousands of missionaries loyal to Christ and to His truth.)

Today many religious leaders in all parts of Christendom have departed from the faith and are openly in revolt against the truth. They will not endure sound doctrine but are actively declaring war upon the foundational truths of Christianity. Just last week a minister, still occupying an evangelical pulpit, was assisting in the ordination of a Unitarian minister. On that occasion he made this pronouncement, "The Church is in revolt against Fundamentalism and Puritanism," which means that he is openly in favor of Liberalism and License. Such men are at heart unitarian because they deny every truth of the Word which makes the Lord Jesus Christ the unique Son of God. Their place is entirely outside the evangelical Church and, if they practiced even the most elementary principles of the ethical gospel which they preach, they would pack up their ecclesiastical belongings, depart from the evangelical pulpit, and establish themselves either with their unitarian brethren or seek virgin soil in which to plant their tares.

But they have no intention whatever of leaving the evangelical pulpit, rather they purpose deliberately to stretch forth their hands and stealthily lay hold upon the entire machinery

of the Church both at home and upon the mission field and secure its control. They usually are such adepts in the manipulation of language that through the use of "good words and fair speeches" (Romans 16:18) they deceive even the true people of God. They preach sermons filled with the rankest poison but sugarcoated with sweet words and eloquent phrases, patronizing the Jesus of history. Only those who have the discernment which the Holy Spirit alone gives detect the deception. And, when the men and women who love their Lord better than they love their own lives cry out in protest against such high-handed dishonesty, they have the blatant effrontery to charge them with bringing division into the Church and to accuse them with lack of love.

The conflict between Fundamentalism and Modernism is dividing organized Christianity in twain. There are some who live near the border line of both camps who earnestly desire neutrality between these opposing forces. They plead for unity; they plan for union; they pray for unanimity. But those who live at the headquarters of both camps know that this can never be. The only unity which the Bible enjoins is "the unity of the Spirit" which is based on "one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism and one God."

Such unity is not something which we attempt to "make" but rather is something already created by the Holy Spirit which we "keep." Such unity does not "become" for it "is" wherever there is oneness in Christ Jesus. This and only this is the unity for which our Lord prayed and which He expects of His children.

EPH 4: 3-6, "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

Such unity can never exist between Fundamentalism and Modernism for they are as far apart as darkness and light, as death and life. Let me quote from an editorial of *The Christian Century*:

The God of the Fundamentalist is one God; the God of the Modernist is another. The Christ of the Fundamentalist is one Christ; the Christ of the Modernist is another. The Bible of Fundamentalism is one Bible; the Bible of Modernism is another. The Church, the kingdom, the salvation, the consummation of all things-these are one thing to the Fundamentalist and another thing to the Modernist. Which God is the Christian God, which Christ is the Christian Christ, which Bible is the Christian Bible, which church, which kingdom, which salvation, which consummation are the Christian Church, the Christian kingdom, the Christian salvation, the Christian consummation? The future will tell. You may sing 'Blest be the tie' till doomsday, but it cannot bind these worlds together.

Thus according to the testimony of Modernism itself we see that between Fundamentalism and Modernism a great gulf is fixed which nothing or no one can bridge. The issue admits of no neutrality. Loyalty to the Lord Jesus Christ demands that every Christian study to know and declare himself either for or against the Christ of the Fundamentalist or the Christ of the Modernist. In such a conflict as this silence is cowardice, nay, it may even be construed to be desertion and treachery. Loyalty to God in these difficult days of deepening apostasy calls every Christian to three things; discernment, devotion and division.

The Call for Discernment

Christians should be able to discern between false and true teaching even when the former is given in its most subtle form, so that there shall not be the slightest deviation from the truth of God's Word. It is not enough to believe God's

truth, we are to “walk” in it.

2 JOHN 1-4, “The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth; for the truth’s sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever. . . . I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father.”

3 JOHN 3-4, “For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.”

Discernment requires watchfulness; it required a continuous prayerful study under the tutelage of the Holy Spirit of God’s Word and a careful comparison of what one hears and reads with what one studies. Paul told the Ephesian elders that from among themselves men would arise speaking perverse things to draw men away after them and cautioned them to watch and to remember his warnings.

ACTS 20:31-32, “Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.”

He warned Timothy to be on his guard continuously against false teaching and unsound doctrine.

2 TIM. 4:3, 5, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure

afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry."

He warned the Christians against deception and urged them to become adults in the faith that they might always be able to discern the false and the true.

EPH. 5:6, "Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of Cod upon the children of disobedience."

EPH. 4:14, "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive."

The Call for Devotion

Loyalty to the Lord Jesus demands devotion to the truth at any cost as the Holy Spirit has taught us. When men and women everywhere are departing from the faith, possibly even members of our own family and our friends, God asks of us a faithfulness to the faith of our fathers that beats no retreat.

2 TIM. 3:14, "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them."

2 TIM. 4:7, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."

1 COR. 16:13, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong."

2 TIM. 1:13, "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus."

Devotion to Jesus Christ calls us to a loyalty to truth that brooks no neutrality. It even challenges us to take our place in the front ranks and "to fight the good fight of faith."

1 TIM. 6:12, "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses."

JUDE 3-4, "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered livered unto the saints. . . . For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ."

The Call for Division

There is pseudo-union in Christendom today that is tantamount to dishonoring disloyalty. Its slogan is "For the sake of peace we must have union even at the cost of truth." It bids the Fundamentalist sit silently while the Modernist seeks and secures control of the machinery of the Church both at home and abroad. If he protests he is accused of being divisive.

As one studies the gospel of Matthew he will find a place where the Lord Jesus Christ made a definite, deliberate break with the men who had willfully rejected Him. There was a clean-cut cleavage between Him and the religious leaders of that day and He withdrew from them and from that time on devoted Himself exclusively to those who were His own.

We have not only His example but we have the clear teaching of Scripture to guide us in this very delicate and difficult matter. God calls His children into complete separation from all those who are traitors to the truth. He commands His loyal ones to have no fellowship with them and not to be partakers of their sins.

1 TIM. 6:3-5, "If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome some words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine trine which is according to godliness; . . . He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, . . . Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness, from such withdraw thyself."

2 JOHN 9-11, "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. . . . If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."

Such loyalty to the Lord Jesus is bound to mean suffering to the man or woman of sensitive spirit. It will incur a persecution as real as anything endured by the Christians of the first century, even though of a different nature. The intellectuals of the twentieth century consign the conservative to the slums of scholarship and the worldlings regard him as an antique. But for the joy that is set before him the Fundamentalist endures the ignominy and reproach of the cross.

2 TIM. 3:12, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."

2 TIM. 1:8, "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me, his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God."

Footnotes

[1] Ruth Paxson, *Life on the Highest Plane: A Study of the Spiritual Nature and Needs of Man* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1928): III. 230-238. The bio is taken from the dust jacket of the book. As a personal and sentimental aside, I inherited a copy of this book (3 volumes in one) from the estate of my Aunt Leona Hertel (1917-2009) who until her retirement ministered with the Radio Bible Class from its beginning under Dr. M.R. DeHaan. Like Paxson, she too was a single woman who served the Lord all her life.

[2] Bold headings have been added by me to help readers trace the movement of Paxson's thematic statements about the relationships of a spiritual person.