

Sonoraville Baptist Church
Sunday, November 6, 2011 – 11:00 AM
Rev. Steve Skates, Pastor

Found Faithful – 1 Corinthians 4:2

Introduction: In his book “Eating the Elephant,” Lifeway Director Thom Rainer tells of an interview Billy Graham had with a reporter. The reporter was fascinated by Rev. Graham’s success and asked if he anticipated being given great rewards in heaven for the millions of lives he had impacted through his ministry.

Billy Graham said that he was not sure of the extent of his own rewards, God is the final Judge, but he was certain that others would have greater rewards than he. He went on to say that there is a faithful elderly woman whom he knew, who was right then on her knees praying for her little country church, her family, and her nation. He said that for nearly 80 years, that sweet lady had been faithful to the Lord, constantly praying, and reading her Bible daily. To Billy Graham, that lady and many others like her, will receive the greatest rewards in heaven.

At the close of the interview, Billy Graham said: *“You see; we are not called to be successful. We are called to be faithful.”*

In our text for today, Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 4:2 (KJV)** *“It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.”* He is specifically talking about those who are called as God’s ministers, so you can see why faithfulness would be by far the most important quality of stewardship. However, what applies to the minister also applies to every believer because we all have been charged with sharing God’s love with a world that is lost.

But the problem is, we live in a day where a man’s word doesn’t mean what it used to. For example, over half of the couples who stand at an altar and say, *“I do,”* only *“do”* for a few years, then they *“don’t”* anymore! Today, how many athletes sign multi-year contracts, only to break the contract or demand a new one before it’s up? How many times have you heard someone say, *“I’ll pay you back,”* and they never do? Or how often to well-meaning Church members sign up to serve in some capacity, only to shirk their duties the first time something else comes along? The truth is, words such as faithfulness and loyalty are becoming more and more archaic and meaningless in our society today.

The very idea behind the word *“faithful”* is loyalty, consistency, dependability, reliability, and trustworthiness. And when the Lord returns for His church, the only requirement by which He will judge His servants is faithfulness. That is why when God searches our hearts, He is not so much seeking what we can give, but rather what we are able to keep.

Look at some of the heroes of faith recorded on the pages of God’s Word. Abraham became the patriarch of faith because God *“...found his heart faithful.”* (**Neh. 9:8 NIV**). Moses was the chosen deliverer because God deemed him *“...faithful in all my house.”* (**Num. 12:7 NIV**). Daniel was promoted and given more authority because *“...he was trustworthy and neither corrupt or negligent.”* (**Daniel 6:4 NIV**). In Hebrews 11, we find a hall-of-faith list of saints of God who were singled out for all eternity because they were found faithful. Faithfulness can be found at the center of every life that was mightily used of God.

So the question we must ask ourselves today is, *“Can God say of my life that He would find me faithful?”* And by what means does He measure faithfulness? Those are fair questions and ones that we all need to consider as we think about what God requires of us.

This morning, I want us to consider how God measures a life for faithfulness. We’ll do that by examining some of the things God is looking for in our lives that would cause Him to say, *“This person has what it takes to be my steward. He or she is found faithful.”* First:

1. God Looks for Faithfulness in Small Things

You know, our mindset in life is to desire the big things. We want the important jobs. We want to look good and feel good. We want the recognition, the pats on the back, and we want to accomplish great things in the sight of others. We desire those big things so much that we tend to overlook or even neglect the small things in life because we think they are beneath our dignity. But God doesn’t!

In **Luke 16:10 (NIV)**, Jesus said, *“He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much...”* In other words, it’s how we handle the small things of life that reveals if we are trustworthy enough to handle the

big things of life. So the little things are so important. How important you ask? Well have you ever thought about how where the mighty oak tree comes from? It grows from a tiny acorn. Have you ever considered that an entire field of wheat is contained in a small bag of seeds? Think about it! How much of your life is made up of big events compared to the number of small moments that accumulate over time? And then think about the significance of those small moments and how they can impact your life.

In the Bible, there are some wonderful examples of how some of the giants of faith found their faith. Gideon found his courage to thrash the enemy while he was threshing wheat. Moses and David discovered their mighty leadership skills while they were tending sheep. Peter's ability to catch fish led Christ to be able to trust him to catch men.

Let me tell you something...our lives would be much different if we could only see how the small things we faithfully carry out day after day shine like crown jewels in the eyes of God. The prophet Zechariah asked the question, "*Who despises the day of small things?*" **Zechariah 4:10 (NIV)**. Certainly God doesn't despise them; He holds them in high esteem. Second:

2. God Looks for Faithfulness in Secret Things

In the Old Testament, when King Saul found out that Samuel had anointed David to be the new king, Saul became very jealous of David. Even though David was proving to be a valuable resource for Saul by killing the giant enemy Goliath and winning other battles against the Philistines, Saul began to pursue David to take his life because of his threat to the throne. David had to escape outside the boundaries of Israel to hide from Saul.

At one point, Saul got wind that Ahimelech, the priest of Nob might have been aiding David by giving him provisions and spiritual advice. So Saul summoned for Ahimelech and accused him and David of conspiring against him. But Ahimelech said to Saul, "*Who is so faithful among all thy servants as David...and is honourable in thine house?*" **(1 Samuel 22:14 KJV)**. At a time when David thought no one had noticed, the integrity of his heart had been spotted both publicly and privately. I'm telling you, the old adage is true...Honesty is always the best policy. And I might add, so is being found faithful in the secret things.

When Michelangelo was painting the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, he was asked why he put such detail into something nobody could see. He answered, "*I can see it, and God can see it.*"

The full depth of a man's character is measured when he thinks no one but God is watching. Bob Reccord, former Director of the North American Mission Board told a story on James Dobson's Focus on the Family Radio Show about a pastor friend of his who once bought a couple of CDs that were on sale at a local mall. Being in a hurry to get to a counseling appointment, he quickly paid for the CDs, took the receipt and change and threw it into the bag with the CDs and left. When he got to his car, he reached for the change, and noticed that the cashier had given him too much change. His first thought was that he didn't have time to go back in to make things right. After all, people made mistakes like that all the time. But a small voice kept saying, "*You don't have time not to.*"

So, he went back in, walked up to the same cashier who checked him out before, and said, "*I'm sorry – but it looks like you may have given me too much change by accident.*"

With a big tear rolling down her cheek, the lady looked up at him and said, "*No sir, I did it on purpose. You see, I came to your church last Sunday and sat on the back row. You preached about honesty and how important it is to be honest as a Christian. I gave you too much change so I could see if you really meant it.*" Your integrity and your faithfulness to your commitment to Christ, even in the everyday events of your life, it makes a difference in the lives of others.

Gideon's soldiers never knew their courage was being measured by how they drank water. Nathaniel never knew his honesty was being measured as he sat thinking under a fig tree. The unnamed villager in Jerusalem never knew his usefulness was being measured by how he had tied his young colt. These and many other examples of faithfulness go to show that many of life's golden opportunities are either gained or lost by our actions in our private world. Finally:

3. God Looks for Faithfulness in Sacred Things

In **2 Timothy 2:2 (HCSB)** Paul is writing to young Timothy who was the pastor of the church at Ephesus, "*And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, commit to faithful men....*" What Paul was saying to Timothy was this: "*Timothy, you've been entrusted with spiritual treasures of doctrine, theology, wisdom, and grace. These must be guarded by reliable and trustworthy men.*"

I ask you...just how dependable are you with the spiritual treasures of prayer, devotion, service, and meditating on God's Word? The value we place on sacred things is often the distinguishing factor in our usefulness and trustworthiness. In **Nehemiah 7:2 (KJV)** Nehemiah said that he put "*Hananiah, the commander of the citadel*" in charge at Jerusalem because "...*was a faithful man, and feared God above many.*" Twice, Paul called Tychicus "... *a faithful minister...and a faithful servant in the Lord.*" (**Col. 4:7 & Eph 6:21 NIV**). You may not recognize their names, but God knows who they were and He forever noted in Scripture their legacy as being faithful in sacred things.

J. Wilbur Chapman, a Presbyterian evangelist at the turn of the 20th century, and writer of the beloved hymn "*One Day*," once said, "*Anything that dims my vision of Christ, or takes away my taste for Bible study, or cramps me in my prayer life, or makes Christian work difficult is wrong for me, and I must, as a Christian, turn away from it.*" (copied from the internet - wholesomewords.org – Echoes From Glory). Chapman lived out what Jesus said in **Luke 12:34 (NIV)** "...*where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*" Chapman knew where his heart was and he was devoted to it.

Conclusion: I close with a story entitled "When the Wind Blows." It's about a young man who applied for a job as a farmhand. When the farmer asked for his qualifications, he said, "*I can sleep when the wind blows.*" This puzzled the farmer. But he liked the young man, and hired him.

A few weeks later, a storm blew up and it woke the farmer and his wife up. They got up and began to check things out to see if everything was secure. They found that the shutters of the farmhouse had been securely fastened, and a good supply of logs had been set next to the fireplace. They found that all the farm tools and equipment had been securely placed in the storage shed, and the barn was properly locked. Even the animals were calm. Everything was well.

Then they went to check on the young man they had hired, and found him soundly asleep in the guest house. That is when the farmer understood the meaning of what the young man said: "*I can sleep when the wind blows.*" Because the young man did his work loyally and faithfully when the skies were clear, he was prepared for the storm. So when the wind blew, he was not afraid. He could sleep in peace.

The point is, there was nothing dramatic or sensational in that young boy's work – he just faithfully did what was needed each day. And as a result, he could rest peacefully - even in a storm, knowing that he was faithful in his responsibilities, and in his life.

I pray that when all is said and done my life, that God will be able to say of me, "*I found him faithful – faithful in the small things; faithful in the secret things, faithful in the sacred things.*" And I pray that is your desire as well. Will you be found faithful?