

Faithfulness

I Corinthians 3:1-5

10/ 09/ 05

Intro

In chapter three Paul was teaching about the importance of desiring spiritual maturity. The church was having many problems and Paul knew this was caused by a lack of spiritual growth in the church, so he gave them principles of spiritual growth in the church.

Here in chapter four, Paul is continuing with the same theme, in that he knows that they must learn to become faithful, trustworthy before the Lord.

He knows that their motives are not right and Paul wants to remind them that they need to live before the Lord.

These are the principles of being trustworthy to the Lord.

I. Be Found Faithful

A. As servants of Christ

- The word “servant” in the Greek here is not the usual word we often find, but instead, the word means “under oarsman.” It was used of those who would row in the belly of the ship.
- In other words, Paul is saying that he is nobody special, and neither is Apollos. We are just rowing in the belly of the ship; Christ is the head and receives all glory.

- Part of spiritual maturity is accepting the fact that God gets the glory and that we are his servants, His oarsmen.

Psalm 115:1, “Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to Your name give glory because of Your lovingkindness, because of Your truth.”

- Paul wrote to Timothy that an overseer (elder) in the church should not be a new convert. This is because this quality of humble recognition of God’s glory comes with maturity.

I Timothy 3:1, 6, “It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do. An overseer, then, must be above reproach... and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil.”

B. As stewards of God’s truth

- This is an interesting word in the Greek because it also speaks to someone who is a governor of an estate, or a treasure over someone’s wealth.
- He is still under the master, but he has much authority because he is the steward of the master’s wealth.
- It means that we have been given stewardship of God’s mysteries, of God’s truths. We are to dispense God’s truth as those entrusted with God’s message.

Illus – The story of the unrighteous steward demonstrates the importance of the position.

Luke 16:1-7 The unrighteous steward.

C. Trustworthiness is required of stewards

- Verse 2, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful.

Matthew 24:45-47, “Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions.”

- We have been given a responsibility to know God’s Word and to be able to teach others.

I Peter 4:10-11, “As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

II. Desire the Approval of God

A. It is God who examines us

- Since God is the One who examines us, we must be faithful to what he has called us.
- We should seek His approval; that He would say that we have done well...

Matthew 25:21, His master said to him, “Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.”

Psalm 96:11, 13, “Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; ...before the Lord, for He is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in His faithfulness.”

B. Do not seek the approval of men

- This is a very real problem for most people.
- We want the approval of men because we want to be validated; we want to know that we’re ok, because in our hearts, we’re not sure if we are.
- So we seek the approval of others, but the people we seek approval from may not be approved of God themselves; and there is where we get into trouble.

Matthew 23:4-7, “They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men’s shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger. But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men; for they broaden their phylacteries and lengthen the tassels of their garments. They love the place of honor at banquets and the chief seats in the synagogues, and respectful greetings in the market places, and being called Rabbi by men.”

Illus – There were several Pharisees who believed in the Lord Jesus, but they were afraid to let this known.

John 12:42-43, “Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God.”

C. Nor even your own approval

- Paul wrote that he doesn't even examine himself.
- What he means is that he knows that he is not his own judge.
- He is pointing out that there is another kind of person who doesn't care what others think, and at first we may think this is good. But neither do they care what God thinks, and that is not good.
- David is an example of man who also would not judge himself...

Illus – When David was fleeing the city of Jerusalem because his son Absalom was taking the city, Shimei ran along with David just on the next hill and he was shouting insults. Hid commander wanted to “dispatch him,” but David refused.

II Samuel 16:11-12, Then David said to Abishai and to all his servants, “Behold, my son who came out from me seeks my life; how much more now this Benjamite? Let him alone and let him curse, for the Lord has told him. Perhaps the Lord will look on my affliction and return good to me instead of his cursing this day.”

III. Light Will Pierce the Darkness

A. Live in the light

- Verse 5; Paul wrote that the Lord will be the judge and that He will bring to light what is hidden in the darkness.
- There is great comfort in this. There is so much darkness in this world and so much that is hidden in darkness, but God will pierce the darkness with His light.

John 3:19-21, “This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.”

Ephesians 5:8-11, “for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.”

B. Have godly motives

- Paul was challenging them to become spiritually mature, and was reminding them that God knows the very motives of our hearts.

- Paul wants them to have godly motives, yet the divisions and strife did not come from godly motives.

Matthew 15:18-20, “But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders. These are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man.”

Hebrews 4:12, “For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”

Conclusion

May we be found trustworthy as servants of the Lord and stewards of His Word. To be spiritually mature, we must desire truth in the inmost part of our lives – in our hearts.