

"Be Faithful"

I Corinthians 4:1-5

- Those of us who know Christ as Savior are described in this passage
- We are described for a purpose
- As we remember who we are, we are also reminded how we should behave
- Faithfully, as stewards

- A steward is someone who takes care of something that is not their own
- They are responsible for something that belongs to someone else
- A good steward does this faithfully
- They execute the task with integrity, according to the owner's desires

- Today, an exhortation from I Corinthians: "Be Faithful"

I Corinthians 4:1

1 Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.

- Here is our first encounter with the word "steward"
- This word means manager, usually the manager of a household
- It is someone with whom the head of a house or proprietor has entrusted the management of his affairs
- The word that comes first, accompanies this word steward, is "minister"
- This is a servant
- Again, someone serving under another
- Often someone who "serves with their hands"

- As believers in Christ, we must see ourselves in this way
- This is who we are
- We are ministers and stewards
- When it says we are stewards of the "mysteries of God"
- It doesn't mean stewards of things that are unknown, but rather things that are indeed known
- It is speaking of the good news, the gospel, and God's word
- We are servants of God, managing the distribution of His message

- These descriptions of believers are helpful
- They remind us of the exciting, but sobering responsibility we have
- How then should we go about this work?

I Corinthians 4:2

2 Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.

- God himself is requiring something of us - his ministers and stewards
- We are to be found faithful
- We must prove that we can be relied upon

- We must be worthy of trust
- We must discharge our duties with diligence and fidelity
- He is an ever-gracious master, but He has expectations
- And our humble, righteous response is critical

- There are some wonderful things to remember, of course
- He does not leave us on our own, but walks daily by our side
- He leads the way in love, eager to see us follow His footsteps
- And He loves His children
- Provides abundant mercy - lifting those who stumble

- Let's be very clear about stewardship
- God requires faithfulness, and this is no stretch, so do we!
- Consider those who we trust to be our stewards:
 - Bankers or insurance providers
 - Lawyers or doctors
 - Plumbers and mechanics
 - Even our friends and family
- They are merely stewards of earthly things like:
 - Money
 - Safety
 - Our good name
 - Material possessions
 - Our happiness
 - Or our security
- These things are not trivial
- But we deal in matters of life and death, heaven and hell
- Responsible to proclaim the truth to those believing lies
- To bring light to those in darkness
- To provide hope to those without it
- To present the gift of life to the dead
- To urge them to consider eternity and their place in it

- How could we then expect any lower of a standard from God?
- For we hold those who steward our earthly goods to a standard of faithfulness too!

- The next portion reminds us that it is not others who determine how God's steward is doing
- Only our master can judge our faithfulness

I Corinthians 4:3

3 But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self.

4 For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.

- We are in danger of consider what others think
- We may either "perform" for them - disingenuous, with wrong motives
- Or fear what they may think if we follow the Savior's directives

- But others have no right to judge our ministry
- We have no right to judge our own ministry
- Let us entrust judgement to the One who knows perfectly
- And always judges rightly
- The One for whom we are stewards - the Lord

- It is not about whether we look good to others
- Or whether we feel good about ourselves
- The Master sets the standards
- And He determines if we meet them

I Corinthians 4:5

5 Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.

- His evaluation goes far beyond any man's evaluation
- He knows all the hidden things
- He sees what man cannot
- He looks into the heart
- When we struggle to determine our motivations, He has no struggle
- His judgement is perfection
- The standard is His eternal word

- This is a simultaneous encouragement and warning
- A wonderful privilege and a grave responsibility
- It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful
- Let us go forth, bearing His message, as His worthy stewards and ministers

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