

Faithful in a Few Things

“Well done, good and faithful servant! You were faithful over a few things; I will set you over many things. Enter into the joy of your master!” Matthew 25:23

Eternally Secure, but Accountable

All Christians will be called upon, in that day, to give an accounting of themselves; of things done in the body. This is not a specific accounting of sins in our life, as Christ has paid the complete and full penalty for sin. We are assured that he has paid the full price and sin will never be charged to our account again – in fact, He says in Psalm 103:12 that they’re removed “as far as the east is from the west”! He has put His very life into us and thereby made us children of God. We are a new creation and this gift of eternal salvation is based upon His righteousness! He will not go back on His word and His work to then condemn us. Christ took all condemnation! He also will not cause us to somehow be “unborn.” Therefore we are secure eternally as His children.

Some Christians take this to mean that they now have their “ticket” to heaven and can live any way they want. In one respect this is true, and Paul says that as God’s children, “all things are lawful.” That is, the Christian has complete freedom to choose what they want in their life. However, in this same sentence he finishes by saying, “but not all things are profitable.” The child of God has the freedom to choose whatever they want (as do all humans, according to their God-given free will), but Paul points out that the Christian’s choices may or may not be profitable or pleasing to the Lord. (and the reality is we have been purchased with the blood of Christ and we are actually NOT our own . . .)

Again, this has nothing to do with condemnation for sin, as that has been removed in Christ’s free gift of grace to us. However, sin can still have a negative impact on the believer, even though God’s penalty for it has been removed. We cannot “play” with sin in our lives and think that there are no consequences whatsoever. God may actually forget our sins (Hebrews 8:12), but sin in our lives can still damage our walk with the Lord. Sin can deceive us, dull our conscience and senses, break fellowship with God (from our side), damage human relations, cause physical issues, and other negative things! So in this respect, these kinds of choices are certainly not profitable.

The New Testament reveals that there will be two major, future judgments by God. These are the Great White Throne, found in Revelation 20:11-15, and the Bema of Christ (often rendered “judgment seat”) found in 2nd Corinthians 5:10 and Romans 4:10. The Bema is the first of these two, and Christians are the focus of scrutiny. Later on comes the Great White Throne, and from this judgment it says, “Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.” (Revelation 20:15)

At the Bema of Christ we are told there will be an accounting of things believers have done, to see if their actions were profitable or not. First Corinthians chapter three tells us the things we build with - our works - will be “tested by fire” to see how they will hold up under divine examination. If the materials we are building with survive the testing fire (gold, silver, precious stone) then there will be profit and meaning for our lives. If our building works are burned (wood, hay, stubble) then we will suffer loss and there won’t be profit. Paul goes on to say in this chapter that even if all our works are burned up, the person will still be saved “yet as through fire.” This is no loss of eternal salvation for the believer, but no profit either. Several other places in scripture indicate that for those who are faithful and their works remain, there will be rewards given to them, in that day, by the Lord.

What are the works that are profitable to a Christian? First of all Christ says in John 15, "Apart from Me you can do nothing." "Abide in Me and you will bear much fruit." Therefore we should not think running out to do our own version of "saving the world for Jesus" is pleasing in His sight. He said many will come to Him in that day saying, "Lord, Lord, did we not do . . . in your name?" And I will say, 'Depart from Me you workers of iniquity – I never knew you.'" (Matthew 7:21-23) How can He say that He never knew them – because God knows all, right? It is because they didn't have an intimate relationship with Him and didn't abide in Him. Therefore the things they did amounted to nothing, because He did not have a relationship with them and didn't specifically tell them to do those things! It may seem good to us to do many things, but if we don't hear it from Him and He's not leading us to do it, then there is no profit in it. These actions will actually rob us of reward (i.e., our wood, hay, stubble is burned up; see 1st Corinthians 3:12).

Others believe they must do many significant things in order to be pleasing to God at the Bema, so as to not suffer loss there. But thinking they have to do many big works can cause them to fall into a performance mode where they almost never seem to measure up. This results in self condemnation and unhealthy fear. Our Father's loving desire for His children is that we would experience no condemnation (there is none for believers – Romans 8:1) and that we would be perfected in love. First John 4:18 tells us, "*There is no fear in love; perfect love drives out all fear. So then, love has not been made perfect in anyone who is afraid, because fear has to do with punishment.*" Yes, God is the most Awesome Being who is worthy to be feared, since He exerts ultimate control and judgment over all. But the proper perspective is knowing Him as a loving Father who strongly desires the very best for all His children. The Lord in Luke 12:32 tells us, "It is the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." However, if we need it, He will discipline us for our eventual good.

A Few Things – Well Done

Let's look now at Matthew 25 where the faithful and unfaithful servants are presented. This parable gives good insights into what works are profitable and therefore pleasing to God. The three servants all receive money from their master before he leaves on a journey. Two of the servants are faithful, to increase this money entrusted to them, and one isn't faithful. The faithful ones receive praise and reward when their master returns, but the third, unfaithful one receives neither.

The third servant didn't know his master well and had an erroneous view of him as a "hard man" and accuses his master of almost magically "reaping where you haven't sown." The unfaithful one feared his master and therefore hid his master's money and did nothing. His attitude and approach were in error and therefore there was no profit to be returned to his master. He receives a rebuke for his error in judgment and is told he should have "deposited my money with the bankers so there would at least have been interest paid on it." (Personally, I believe the "bankers" are those who also possessed money as the servant did, therefore they equate to other believers. Accordingly this probably means to invest our heavenly "deposit" in those of God's household we're surrounded with.) The master calls this servant "wicked and lazy." He goes on to decree, "Therefore take the money from him . . . and throw that unprofitable servant into outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." I think this parable clearly shows that the attitudes, fear and works of this unfaithful one were not pleasing to God! Regardless of exactly what is meant by "outer darkness" or "weeping and gnashing of teeth," I think everyone would agree that we don't want to be in that situation!

Now look at what he told his faithful servants. These two wisely invested the money entrusted to them and each was able to present their master with double in return. This greatly pleased the master and he told each of them, "Well done good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in a

few things; I will put you over many things. Enter into the joy of your master!” This situation of the three servants is clearly an illustration of the Bema, where an awarding of rewards occurs in an atmosphere of righteousness. But there is also the real possibility of not attaining to a reward, and thereby a loss is experienced (along with a rebuke for being unprofitable).

God Starts Small

So if the Lord gives rewards based upon us being faithful in a few things, let’s examine whether this principle arises in other places in scripture. **The question is - does He demand a high level of significant works from us or rather is He pleased if we just follow through faithfully on a smaller number of things He gives us to do?**

The principle of God starting things off in a small way occurs a lot in scripture and also in nature. All living things start smaller and grow larger. This is a principle of life. This can be seen with plants (seeds) and animals (eggs, embryos & cells multiplying). In the gospels Christ likens the divine life planted in us to a seed. We are also told in Matthew 17:20 that if we have “faith the size of a mustard seed” we can move mountains. Life starts small and grows. God plants small seeds so they can grow. He creates something out of nothing. He starts small. It’s His way.

This smallness is illustrated in the scriptures many times. God came to Elijah in 1st Kings 19:12 as “a still, small voice.” A small stone killed Goliath. He praised the church in Philadelphia telling them, “You have a little strength.” Likewise He told Paul, “My strength is perfected in weakness” (2 Cor. 12:9). God was pleased with the widow’s mite as an offering and not satisfied with the much larger one by the other worshipper (Mark 12:42). His beginnings with the nation of Israel started small with His relationship with one man, Abram (later named Abraham).

Jesus condensed all the law and the profits down into two things we need to concern ourselves with. In Matthew 22:66 Jesus is asked which commandment is the greatest. He answered that it was to love God supremely and also that the second greatest commandment was to love your neighbor as yourself. He then said, “All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” So instead of pointing us to many things to be faithful in, He gives us two. He also told Martha in Luke 10:41-42, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; but *only* one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part . . .” namely Christ Himself. God doesn’t give us a big list, but rather we see time and again that He focuses us on a small number of things we are to pay attention to.

And how did God choose to manifest Himself in the flesh? He did it as a small human baby! Not much is as small, weak and helpless as an infant, yet that’s how He decided to launch the New Covenant. It was the one grain of wheat that came to fall into the ground to die, so that many grains would be brought forth – truly a small beginning! And He started His ministry with a small handful of men – twelve disciples. And His work with all the gentile nations was spearheaded by one man, Paul. A few faithful men, with the seed of Christ growing in them, overturned the whole world!

Snapshots of Faith

Hebrews chapter eleven is known as “the faith chapter.” It is full of instances of a little faith being demonstrated. That is, it is often just a small amount of faith shown by someone, which in turn give God the means to do something in a big way. We often think the faithful ones presented in this chapter were giants of faith, but that’s not really the case at all. For instance, Abraham tried to give his wife, Sarah, away not once, but twice! And David murdered Uriah and then stole his wife! Sampson made many mistakes and errors in judgment, but finished well with one final act of faith.

Over and over in this chapter we see this – people who were not always so faithful, yet instances of their faith are recorded by the Holy Spirit in Hebrews 11.

I've heard it said that this chapter is like a loving father taking snapshots of His children as they do something that makes him proud. Like a proud dad showing a picture of his daughter and saying, "And that's little Janie doing her very first summersault!" God records these instances where people put their trust and simple faith in Him. It's as if the Holy Spirit only saw these few instances of faith at work in these people's lives - and these were the important things to convey . . . not their failures and shortcomings. Sure, the shortcomings were certainly in their lives, but recorded are the "few things" these ones were faithful in. They are specific instances of faith; through which God was then able to work and use for His glory. It's these things that really matter to Him.

These things show us a good context for why the Lord would be pleased by His children being faithful in just a few things. This should be a most encouraging word to us. God knows us and knows few of us are spiritual SuperSaints. Our loving and wise Father doesn't place a heavy burden of crushing responsibility on our backs. Christ said, "Take My yoke upon you, for My yoke is easy and My burden is light." Was He just speaking something in a flowery way to somehow motivate us even though it wasn't true? A thousand NO's! If He said it, then pleasing Him is in reality easy and light. This is such encouragement – He assures us we can make it and hear those blessed words from Him, *"Well done good and faithful servant! You have been faithful in a few things . . . enter into the joy of your Lord!"*

What are the Few Things?

What are the few things each of us should be faithful in? That depends on the individual. What you are to be specifically faithful in may differ from what I am to be faithful in. We all must learn from Him what these things are that He wants, in order that we may be well-pleasing to Him. Are there things you know for certain He has told you to do ongoing? If you don't know what they are, then ask Him what are your few things to be faithful in.

I can tell you that there are a few things He has communicated to me that He wants me to be faithful in, and He has reinforced these things many times with me. They aren't what I consider really big things. One thing He has impressed me with over and over is for me to just stay where He has put me. (This is important as I've had a history of "jumping ship" throughout much of my life.) That means to stay with my wife; stay with the Christians He's put me with; stay with others He's surrounded me with, stay with my job, house, etc.

A second thing is to seek Him faithfully each morning when I arise from sleep by talking to Him, taking everything to Him in prayer, getting into His word, declaring His word, and singing. A third thing is getting with other believers several times a week to enjoy Christ with one another. As Hebrews 10:25 says, "Don't forsake the assembling of yourselves together, as is the practice of some, and so much the more as you see the day drawing near." I know that this also means to make myself available for saints who are in need of my assistance and also fellowship. A fourth thing He's impressed on me is simply to keep turning to Him throughout my day, in a simple way as I remember Him – calling His name and talking to Him about anything and everything. *Bottom-line: It's really all about just having a relationship with Him and with fellow believers wherein He dwells!*

These are my few things I know to be consistently faithful in, and that I know for certain He has given me. I know that if I wasn't at least reasonably faithful in these things that I would have zero excuse in that day before Him at the Bema. He has confirmed these to me repeatedly through His indwelling Anointing, through His word and through fellowship. If nothing else happens in my life, I

need to make sure I apply some diligence to see that these things are happening regularly. By being faithful in the few things He gives us, is the way to please Him and our way into glory!

“I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 3:14

“There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out all fear, because fear means punishment. The one not fearing has been perfected in love.”

1 John 4:18