

"Simple Marks Of Faithfulness"

During the reign of Queen Victoria, a heartwarming story made its way to the headlines of British news. The story is told of a homeless, mixed breed puppy that wandered the streets and came to the feet of a sentry outside St. James Palace. The dog was covered with snow, and was both hungry and cold. The sentry picked up the dog and fed him, and gave him the name Jack. Jack became so attached to the sentry that he was adopted to be the mascot for the Scots Guards. During the Crimean War, Jack could be seen stride-for-stride with his master on the battlefield. When his master was mortally wounded during a battle, Jack stood faithfully by his master's side until both were removed from the battlefield. Hearing of the courage this noble dog displayed, Queen Victoria was deeply touched. She had a miniature Victoria Cross made, which is Britain's highest military decoration for gallantry, and she placed it on the collar of the dog. However, Jack did not live for an award; he lived for his master. For the next twelve years, Jack would make his way through the iron gates of the cemetery and lay down upon the grave of his master. There, Jack would lay every day between meals until he died.

There was a time when a man's word was his bond. Today, however, we live in a day where a man's word means so very little. Whether it is a signature on a marriage certificate, a business contract, or a pact between nations, faithful loyalty is becoming an extinct characteristic in our society. Paul noted in 1 Corinthians 4:2, "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." The very idea behind the word "faithful" means someone loyal, consistent, dependable, and trustworthy. When God searches the storehouse of a man's heart it is never to seek what that man is able to give, but rather to seek what that man is able to keep. Abraham became the patriarch of faith because God "...found his heart faithful." Moses was the chosen deliverer because "...he was faithful in all his house." Daniel was given promotion and power "...forasmuch as he was faithful." Seventeenth-century author William Gurnall wrote, "How can there be great faith where is little faithfulness?" Faithfulness can be found at the core of every life that was ever greatly used of God. Staying the course of faithfulness is not always easy, but when faithfulness is most difficult is when it is most essential. Would God say of your life that you are faithful? Consider how God measures a life for faithfulness.

God looks for lives **faithful in small things**. In Luke 16:10, Jesus said, "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much..." In other words, it is how we handle the small things of life that reveals if we are trustworthy to handle the big things of life. We are so prone to be captivated by big things that we both overlook and neglect adequate care of the small things thinking they are beneath our dignity. Perhaps that is why God hides the massive oak in the tiny acorn, and the wealth of a wheat field in a bag of seeds. Life is not made up of big events, but rather a lot of small moments accumulated over time. Henry Ward Beecher wrote, "Be inspired to nobleness of life in the least things. Set such sacredness upon every part of your life that nothing shall be trivial, nothing unimportant, and nothing dull in the daily life." It was in Gideon's threshing of wheat that he exposed the courage to thrash the enemy. It was in David's method of tending sheep that he exposed his trust for leading a kingdom. It was in Peter's tenacity for catching fish that exposed his trust to catch men. How much different our lives would be if we could only see how the small things we hold in our hands are deeply attached to our heart. The prophet asked the question, "For who hath despised the day of small things?" Certainly not God.

God looks for lives **faithful in secret things**. In 1 Samuel 22, Saul is pursuing David to take his life fearing David is a threat to his throne. However, Ahimelech said to Saul, "And who is so faithful among all thy servants as David...?" At a time when David thought no one had noticed, the integrity of his heart had been spotted both publicly and privately. As Michelangelo was painting the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, the great artist 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 no one but he and God are watching. 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 never knew his usefulness was being measured by how he had tied his young colt. I like what Frances Ridley Havergal said, "Faithfulness to principle is only proved by faithfulness in detail." Many of life's golden opportunities are either gained or forfeited by how we order our private world. God will never overlook a life whose private shadow outdistances his public image.

God looks for lives **faithful in sacred things**. In 2 Timothy 2:2, Paul writes, "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men..." It was Paul's way of saying to Timothy, "You've been entrusted with spiritual treasures (doctrine, theology, wisdom, and grace) that must be guarded by reliable and trustworthy men." Just how dependable are you with the spiritual treasures of prayer, devotions, service, and meditating on God's Word? The value we place on sacred things is often the distinguishing factor in our usefulness and trustworthiness. Hananiah "...was a faithful man, and feared God above many," and he was given greater authority. Tychicus was "...a faithful minister in the Lord," and was entrusted to carry letters from Paul. Though their names are not highly recognizable to us, God forever noted their legacy as being faithful in sacred things. J. Wilbur Chapman once said, "The rule that governs my life is this: anything that dims my vision of Christ, or takes away my taste for Bible study, or cramps my prayer life, or makes Christian work difficult is wrong for me, and I must, as a Christian, turn away from it." Jesus linked a man's heart to his treasure because He knew a man will always be loyal to that which he truly loves.

There are times when life truly resembles a battlefield, and each of us possess enough scars to prove it. However, when our battles are the most intense is when we are most apt to be tempted to desert the things that matter most. Those treasures which hold eternal value are always worth staying with and fighting for. In such moments, may we ever be reminded that it is those whose hearts exhibit the fierce loyalty of a dog that will hear, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

Your Most Proud Pastor,
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