

Faithful in Little Things

by Keith Malcomson

This sermon emphasizes the importance of being faithful in little things, drawing from the teachings in Luke 16, Luke 19, and Matthew 25. It highlights the need to be trustworthy and dependable in natural, financial, hard, unseen, and spiritual aspects of life, as these qualities are crucial for effective ministry and serving God.

Scripture: Luke 16:10, Luke 19:17, Matthew 25:21, Ephesians 6:5, 1 Corinthians 4:1, Nehemiah 7:2, Colossians 3:22

Topics: "Faithfulness in Small Things", "Trustworthiness in Service"

Description

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Transcript

Please turn with me. I'm going to turn to two verses in Luke, one verse in Matthew 25. I want to be brief in reading this and then go straight into my message.

My message tonight, part six, faithful in little things. Faithful in little things. Reading from Luke chapter 16.

Just listen if you don't have time to turn there. I want to just go very quick. Luke 16 verse 10.

He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much. And he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. Then Luke chapter 19 and verse 17.

Just again, one verse from Luke 19 verse 17. And he that is Jesus said unto them, well thou good servant, because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. And then just one last scripture here from Matthew 25 and verse 21.

His Lord said unto him, well done thou good and faithful servant. Thou has been faithful over a few things. I will make thee ruler over many things.

Enter thou into the joy of the Lord. Will you pray with me? Father, we thank you for the word of God. We want to have ears that are open, eyes that are open, hearts that are open tonight.

Lord God, to these statements of the Lord Jesus Christ, time and time again, speaking about little things, the least, the things that most do not even notice. But Lord God, we want to follow the Lord Jesus Christ. We want to be disciples and learners being taught by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Open our hearts that these little sayings about little things would be hidden in our heart and mold us and melt us. Lord God, into the likeness of your son, for your glory and your praise and your honor in Jesus mighty name. Amen.

Notice here that these three scriptures from three different chapters are the sayings of the Lord Jesus Christ. I am spoiled for choice because there are exact similar statements made by Christ all through the gospels. This is not something he threw in there as a casual statement.

He repeats it time and time and time again, similar things. He is repeating a principle that can never be broken, a principle of the kingdom. He lived by it.

His disciples lived by it. The early church lived by it. He taught it to the church of this generation.

And you will neglect this at your own peril because men have not believed this, and women, because they broke it, ignored it, set it aside, didn't believe it, didn't follow after, didn't build it into our life. They made wreck and ruin of marriage, of home, of ministry, of church, and of their eternal soul. Because you know what Christ is saying here? Christ is saying little things are massive.

Little things are important. Little things you ought to spend real time over. And as we go into these points here, while looking at the importance of little things, I don't want you to think that you could be a fanatic over little things and ignore important things and be okay.

Do you remember last week we dealt with King Saul? King Saul in the Old Testament started well, but he finished in disaster. Saul of Tarsus in the New Testament started bad but finished well. And believe me, I don't want to start good and finish bad.

How did Saul start? He started little or small in his own sight. When he was occupied with small things, focusing on small things, he was faithful in small things, then God blessed him and anointed him and raised him up. And when he was raised up to great things, he become unfaithful.

That ought to be a warning in what I'm saying. I'm exhorting you to be faithful in little things, but never think because you're faithful in little things now that you couldn't move away from that when God blesses you. Do you see how deceptive the heart is? You could be doing what I say tonight, and yet in the years ahead you could become proud and arrogant and self-sufficient and move away from this.

Please, if you are faithful in the little things, carry it forward into the big things. Never move beyond this principle. Never think that you can be blessed of God for being faithful in the little things and then become unfaithful in the big things and think it'll be okay.

Like Saul, you'll make wreck and ruin. Build this into the small things of life and carry it through your entire life into the big things. And so Jesus here, he emphasizes the importance of being faithful in little things, and that's our message.

Faithful in little things. It's the teaching of Christ. He that is faithful in that which is least is also faithful in much.

In other words, if you don't take notice of the little things, you are ignoring the big things. If you say, oh, that doesn't matter. All these little commandments don't matter.

I'll just focus on the main thing. You're a disaster. You're a disaster.

Because Jesus says how you deal with the little things is the exact same attitude towards big things. And if you go, that doesn't matter, and no one sees that, and that's not important. If that's your hard attitude, that is your same hard attitude towards the big things.

And we deceive ourselves saying, oh, I'm very burning for spiritual things, but all the natural things don't matter. And I want to give you a warning of this and an encouragement and a strengthening, because Christ has shown there's a parallel here. And he also in Luke 19, he talked about the good servant.

What was he? Faithful in very little things. You can't get more extreme than that. Not little things, very little things.

You know what? Christ eternally on the day of judgment in the future at the judgment seat of Christ, he's going to acknowledge everyone that was faithful in little things. This is a big part of the judgment seat of Christ. Do you look at it? It's center stage on that day.

Are you going to be one who he says to you were faithful in little things? No, let me repeat that. Very little things, things that no one else saw, things that others thought weren't important. Notice what he says here, faithful in little things.

The word faithful is a very important word. It actually means to be trustworthy. You can be relied upon.

You are dependable. You know, a chair that's not dependable, you'll sit on it and it collapses. We've got one of those seats.

There's five seats that are fine, but one of those seats, it'll crack under my weight. They all look the same. They all look strong, but I know in there around that table, and I'm not sure if any of you have sat at our table on that seat.

Maybe you thought, what have I done to the seat? One of those six seats will let you down. And you know what? I'm never quite sure. I hope Candice hasn't moved the seats around.

One of them is not dependable. You know, when you know someone's not dependable, you don't put much weight on it. Or you're there going, is this going to hold me? Is this chair safe? Do you realize it's the same about people? You're either going to be faithful, trustworthy, loyal.

That's what it means here. Christ is saying about being faithful in very little things. Are you reliable in very little things? Are you dependable in very little things? Do you have honesty in little things? Oh, with the textbooks, I can just cut corners.

Oh, in monetary things, I'm going to preach ahead of myself. I better be very careful here. But are you sincere? Do you have integrity? Let me give you five points, and I might add a sixth just to finalize this.

But there's five things. I want to explain what it means to be faithful in little things. And I have five points here so that you understand what it means to be faithful in little things.

I'm going to take the word little and expand it out from the teaching of the Bible so that when Christ says you've been faithful in little things, you're going to understand what that means. Because it's very important that you're loyal and faithful and that you've got integrity in little things. What are little things? Little things are things that normally you don't notice.

They seem insignificant. They seem unimportant. They seem like they won't even be taken account of.

I'm going to tell you, God does take account of them. The Bible takes account of them, and this preacher takes account of them. And if this preacher does, I assure you, God does in a very real way.

Let's look at these five things here and explain what it means to be faithful in little things. First of all, faithful in natural things. To be faithful in little things means to be faithful in natural things.

You might think that you're faithful in little things, but you're not faithful in natural things. What do I mean natural things? I mean your workplace. I mean your family.

I mean your house. I mean your everyday life. I mean the relationships around you, the people you meet.

Faithful in natural things, Christ is either going to commend you or reject you or reprimand you tonight. Have you been faithful in little things? It means to be faithful in natural things. For this, let me show you examples as we go through these points.

My first example is Nehemiah in the Old Testament. You know what his name means? It means ripe fruit or to gather in the vintage. In other words, Nehemiah is marked.

When you first see him, he has come to a place. There are years behind him, but he's come to a point in his life where his life and character, everything he is, he is ripe fruit. He is ready to be used by God.

You see, if you're not faithful in little things, you'll never reach a point of fruitfulness where God says, now you're ready. Now I'm going to use you. All of these years of being faithful and consistent and honest and having integrity.

You see, God doesn't use you just today because you're honest today. He uses you today because you've been honest and being faithful and being reliable. You know, some people could sit for years being faithful unnoticed, and in one moment of time, God lifts them up out of obscurity.

Ananas in the New Testament, you only read about him in one chapter. You never read about him before that or after it. He appears out of nowhere.

Who was Ananas? He was a disciple, not a preacher. He was a disciple in Damascus. And you know what? God had prepared him all through the years so that he's going to hear Christ in the middle of the night, and he's going to go lay hands on Saul of Tarsus, a new convert.

You realize God chose a man for a task, but it was years of preparation. This was a vital task. It's going to change the entire church.

It's going to change the known world. That new convert's got to come in and be treated right. Who did he choose? Ananas.

You know what I think? Ananias was a vessel in a church that sat there in obscurity, and he passed back into obscurity. But for that one night, for that one action, that one day, oh what consequences in world history. Do you know one day we're going to meet Ananias? One of these days we're going to see him.

But look at Nehemiah. Nehemiah had a history of being prepared, and suddenly he came to a place of ripeness. Where did God prepare him? In natural things.

He had a natural job. He wasn't a prince. He had no royal line of David in his blood.

He wasn't a preacher. Neither was Nehemiah a prophet. Do you know what he was? Nehemiah 1 verse 11.

For I was the king's cupbearer. He was a butler. He presented the drinks to king Artaxerxes.

That was his job. He managed to get a remarkable job in politics, in civil service. Now he wasn't a politician, but in civil service he was working nine to five or whatever the hours were, and he's there in the palace in this unique position.

And you know what? He spent years in there. If he had been unfaithful, if he got fired early, do you realize what we'd be missing? Do you realize what would not have happened if he'd been lazy, if he'd had the wrong humor, if he made the wrong comments, if he took advantage, if he stole things from the palace and said, Lord, you know I'm a servant of God. He's a pagan.

You know what that pagan king would have done with you? He would have had you martyred for the faith, I assure you. The only thing is you wouldn't have had any faith to back it up. And so we see with Nehemiah, he was a cupbearer and it all led him to one particular day.

Listen to what it says. In chapter two, verse two, wherefore the king said unto me, why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? This is nothing else but sorrow of heart. Then I was very afraid.

Do you know why he was very afraid? Because you're not allowed to be sad in the king's presence. If that king got sad, discouraged, depressed, it could bring down the entire empire. So whoever is in the king's palace, you've got to have the smile on your face.

You better not disturb that king. You're only a cupbearer. But do you know what? Because this man, the king knew he's faithful, he's reliable, he's trustworthy.

I watched him every single day in this palace. He's my cupbearer. But do you know what? As soon as he's got a frown on his face, he's sad.

What's the problem here? And you know what? Nehemiah got scared initially. This is a man who has lived for being faithful in little things. And he's in the right place at the right time to do the will of God.

He's only a secular cupbearer. And so we see faithfulness in natural things. Do you know being faithful as a cupbearer in the palace, being a civil servant in Ireland, you don't know where that can lead you.

For one day in history, one moment in time, you could be in the right place at the right time, speaking to the right person, and it could have wide consequences for the nation or the church. Do you know all through the Bible, I'm giving you principles that you can find from Genesis to Revelation, faithfulness in natural things. Natural things, we often in the church, we think natural things are unimportant.

They're little things. They don't matter. I'm going to tell you, little things, natural things are very important.

God cares about how you work. God cares about everything you do. God cares how you treat people and speak to people.

God cares about the natural things of your life. God cares how you deal with everything in your life. And he did with Nehemiah.

And so he knew with this man, he'll have him in the right place at the right time. When you go over to the New Testament, you see a problem that arose in the natural church, the New Testament church over natural things. In Acts chapter 8, we read that the 12 apostles are dealing with the multitudes.

And you know what the problem was? A load of widows, there was such a revival, such an ingathering of souls, that all these peregration widows, they're fighting and bickering with one another. And they're saying, you got more food than me. You're getting more than me.

I got missed out last time. And the 12 apostles are doing this task in a revival. And you know what? They gather the whole church and they say, we shouldn't be doing this.

You know what? If I don't get Mrs. So-and-so the same as Mrs. So-and-so over here, when I stand up to preach, they're going to close their ears and say, that scoundrel of a preacher didn't give me enough bread yesterday. That's literally what happened. And you know what they say? They drew the church together and said, brethren, we're going to ask you to choose out certain men to serve the tables.

We want you to choose them. And listen to what they say. Look ye out among you, seven men of honest report.

There's got to be integrity, faithfulness. Well, we're only looking for them to feed widows. We're looking for them to hand out bread.

But you better make sure they're honest men. Do you realize this was natural things in the church? Not preaching, not evangelism, not worship, not teaching the word of God, not exhorting, not edifying. It's handing out bread because people want a daily meal.

And you know what? They choose these seven men, make sure they're honest and filled with the Holy Spirit. You know, an honest man is going to make sure he's filled with the Holy Spirit. That's one sure thing.

And make sure he's filled with wisdom. You're going to need wisdom with those ladies, I assure you. And he says, and we will appoint them over this business, natural things, physical things.

See, in natural things, natural things are important. You need to be faithful in them. Do not put one man into that job who's not faithful.

I don't want anyone doing natural jobs around the church. I don't want them painting the walls. I don't want them hoovering the carpet.

You know, I've said this for years. I said, I would hate someone hoovering this carpet who I know is covetous and proud or they're causing division in this church. You know what I'd say? I'd say, I put away that Hoover.

You do not deserve to Hoover this floor. Don't you know, I've lived this out and believe this all my days. You don't even have the right, the honor or the respect to Hoover this floor.

If you're going to split the place in two, you don't deserve that. And so that's the first thing, faithfulness in natural things. Now look at two of these seven men who they were.

One of the first ones is Stephen. Well, Stephen, what are you called to? A natural work in the church, natural, hand out bread, doing the business, doing the physical. I'm not called the spiritual ministry.

Stephen actually was faithful to do a natural job of deaconship, of doing the ministry of a deacon. It is a natural physical thing in the house of God. But very quickly in the next chapter, you see him gifted and called as one of the greatest preachers and expounders of the word of God, only comparable to the apostle Paul.

Do you see what faithfulness and natural things do? Today, a man who is faithful in natural things, normal things, secular things, tomorrow could be anointed as one of the greatest Bible teachers. And it's all because he was faithful in handing out bread. You see, in our minds, we see no connection between handing out bread to widows and standing up in Jerusalem and preaching to that generation and that city.

We don't see the connection, but I do. The Bible connects it and says a man who would not be faithful handing out bread to widows, that the apostles could go and minister and go and pray. You've got no right.

Don't think God would anoint you greatly in this generation. Or what about the second one named in the list? His name is Philip. Anyone ever heard about Philip? Here he is.

He's in the midst of these boisterous widows. All the noise in the streets said, oh God, give me wisdom here. And before very long in chapter eight, what do you see? You see the same Philip, anointed of the Holy Ghost, a soul winner who goes down to Samaria, preaches the gospel and the entire city gets saved and miracles are done and demons are cast out and the entire community has changed.

Where did that begin? It began with a man being faithful in natural things in the house of God. You see, some people despise faithful things. I do not.

And I never have. You're going to find these five points that I give you are intertwined. I can hardly separate them.

It was very difficult because when I don't point one, then I went to point two. I went, hold on. I can't separate.

What do I use in these two points? Because they're so similar, yet they're so different. And you're going to see that in a second. So number one, faithful and natural things.

To be faithful in little things is to be faithful in natural things. You could despise natural things, not realizing these little things, natural things are what Christ notes. He's actually looking at these natural things saying, these are the little things I count as faithful.

I look for faithfulness in them. Saints of God, make sure you're faithful in little things, natural things, whether in the workplace or the home or in the church, they're natural. Never let your mind say because they're natural, they're not spiritual.

Do you realize that's a lie from the devil? Raising a child. Don't think that's natural. That is not just natural.

Faithfulness needs to be in that in order to be blessed of God. Remember Philip a little bit later, God moves him from an entire revival, citywide revival, and he takes him out into the wilderness. Where? For one soul.

A man who doesn't understand the principle of being faithful in natural things, that to hand out bread to widows will lead you to revival in a city. If you don't understand that, you would never leave an entire citywide revival to go out into the desert and stand there alone going, why has God brought me here? For one soul. Because you'll start saying, what's the point of this? God can't be in this.

This isn't worth it. God would never lead me out of multitudes getting saved for this. Do you see how you've got to be careful about little things? One soul, if it's in the will of God, is more important than a city.

Second of all, faithful in other people's things. Boy, we're getting into it. I'm explaining faithful in little things.

So there's the second definition, not only natural things, but other people's things. This may be sore for some. You say, I see a principle all through scripture where there is to be faithfulness in other people's things.

Maybe you're faithful with your own things and less faithful with other people's things. That reveals an attitude not towards me or them. You may say, but they are unsaved.

Do you know what it's revealing? An attitude of heart towards the Lord Jesus Christ. If you're unfaithful saying, oh, but that's theirs. If I've got a car and it's my car and I pay for it, I'll look after it.

If I'm using someone else's car, I'll rake the guts out of it. As we used to say, it's young guys. Or if I borrow a lawnmower from someone else, doesn't matter if I go over the stones, but if it's mine and I paid for it, no stone is going to break my blade as it goes around.

Do you know that's all an attitude that God takes note of? Are you faithful with other people's things? Let me give you the examples. Exodus chapter three, verse one. Now Moses, you know who Moses is? Do you know how often Moses is mentioned in the Bible? Moses kept the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, 40 years.

He fled from Egypt and he ends up at the backside of the desert. What's he doing? He's looking after sheep. Do you know why he's looking after sheep? Do you know why this is there? It's God's plan.

Faithful in other people's things. Do you know God put him in that position? They're not his sheep. At the end of 40 years with Jethro, he doesn't have his own sheep.

He doesn't have his own herd. He's still looking after his father-in-law's sheep. After all these years, he's married into the family.

He's married the daughter. He's in there in the same family and still they're Jethro's sheep. He never owned the sheep and yet God has them there.

Why? God is preparing them. Do you know that God could never use them in Egypt unless he was faithful with those sheep? You need to be so careful with the attitude of your heart. You see, this is explaining little

things.

Little things are other people's possessions that you're laboring on. They're not yours. They're ultimately not under your authority, but you're using them.

And so you see here that he kept the flock of Jethro and he led the flock to the backside of the desert and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb, and the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire. Where did God find him? Being faithful with other people's things. Where did God prepare him? While he kept other people's things.

Where did God come to use him? While he was keeping other people's things. Let me take you briefly all through scripture. Remember Saul we dealt with last week.

What was he doing? He was going looking for his father's donkeys, keeping them, looking after them, managing them. That's where God found him and anointed him. I'm going to choose you as the king and anoint you.

He was looking after his father's donkeys. What about young David? He was keeping his father's sheep on the hillside. In fact, way out from the family, they had a sin for him.

Why? Come, the prophet is calling. He won't do anything until you, young shepherd boy, come in here. And he gets anointed of God.

As you go through scripture, you find this time after time after time. 1 Kings chapter 9. We read about Elisha and Elijah coming to anoint him. Listen to what it says.

Elisha, the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with 12 yoke of oxen before him. And he was the 12th. And Elijah passed by him and cast his mantle upon him.

When? He's plowing for his parents, for his daddy. And he's got the, I mean, he has got a business going here. He is plowing.

He's not lazy. He is in the field plowing. Do you know how many times in the Bible, it notes about those who are laboring in the natural things.

They're being faithful in the products of other people, for parents, for family, for friends, for community. And they're laboring away in these things. And that's where God finds them.

In fact, it's amazing how many of these men that you'll find in the Old Testament, they were in the sheep fold. Do you think God's going to use you as spiritual sheep if you can't look after natural sheep? Maybe how you conduct yourself in your workplace will depend on whether God uses you in ministry or not. I wonder if that was the condition of God using you to do miracles, cast out demons, to heal the sick.

I wonder how it would affect you. All through scripture, you find this. And so the anointing of God comes upon Elisha right in the midst of plowing.

When you come to the New Testament, where did Jesus call to preach the gospel? Where did he find the disciples? Well, he found a tax collector there doing his job. The other disciples, he went out, and as they're throwing out the nets, he said, come follow me to preach the gospel. You're fishing, but I'm calling you to be fisher of men.

When did Peter get the call? When he's using a physical net, he's a big, hardy fisherman. And God calls him right in the throne of the net to fish after men. What about John the apostle? What is he doing the first time Christ meets with him and calls him? You know what he's doing? He's mending the net.

The word mending there in the gospels means to restore or repair. Notice that. That's no accident.

Do you know what he's doing in Revelation? He's restoring and repairing the church. Peter brought the harvest in the Pentecost. John is an old man.

He's repairing the churches, bringing them in. It's all connected. Do you know that God had me in the army for a particular reason? I'm going to have to fight some wars in this church, I can tell you.

And he uses all those natural principles. That's why I understand authority and submission so well. That's why I understand order so well.

That's why I understand the church so well. All those things that are basic out there. My point, second point, faithful in other things.

42 years old. Until 42 years old, I was faithful in other men's things, in ministry. I didn't build my own church, didn't build my own ministry, didn't serve myself.

Until 42 years old, I was happy to serve everybody else in ministry. 42 years old. Do you think God is quick in preparing people? You see, faithful in other people's things is absolutely vital.

If you can't be faithful with another man's ministry, God will never raise you up in ministry, never. Why would he? If you can't be faithful in this church, why would he send you out to do something? Why would he? I'm showing you what faithfulness in little things, it saturates your entire life. Third of all, faithful in financial things.

If I started to expound the chapters and the verses that Christ connects faithfulness to money, possessions, you'd be shocked. We've done an entire series on this, how to store treasures up in heaven. And so the third thing to be faithful in little things is to be faithful in financial things.

The little things is finance. It says in Luke chapter 19, 16, then came the first saying, Lord, thy pound had gained 10 pounds. Jesus has given a parable.

What does he say in the next verse? And he said unto him, well, thou good servant, because thou has been faithful in a very little. Being faithful in a little is in the context of money. Do you know Jesus talked more about money than he did heaven or hell? More about money.

Do you know money could decide your eternal destiny and where you go? Not a little prayer, not saying you believe something, but the fruit of living this out. Because you see, the word faithful comes from the word faith. We separate faith from faithfulness.

Oh, I have faith in Christ. Well then live it out, be faithful. Oh no, I haven't worked that out yet.

It's the same word. But the tense of it is, what is faithfulness then? It is faith in operation. It is faith in action.

If your faith doesn't have action, then it's a dead faith. It's not real faith. Faith actually is seen.

If you have faith and you're faithful, you've got to be. It's absolutely connected. It says here, thy pound.

How humble that Jesus is dealing with a man, humbly here. This man is aware of what God gave him, what God has entrusted. Let me ask you, what are you doing with what God has given into your hands? You know, you're going to be accountable for every penny, for a house, for a car, for a room, for work, for pay.

What did you do with your first pay wage? What was your first thought? The last time you had money put into your bank account or your hand, what was your thought about it? Faithfulness to God or commitment to self? You see, the little things, being faithful in little things, this is the third point here. It's your money. It's your possessions.

It's the things that you have. That's what it is. You know, Jesus calls it the least.

He calls money, possessions, mammon, the least. We think they're the most. We think to gain wealth, have a better job, better pay, better income, more provision, more security.

That's a big thing to us. Jesus didn't say so. He said, it's the least.

It's a little thing. Do you know financial things in this world are called the least, the little? And what you do with them will affect what you do with the important things, the spiritual things, your spiritual life, souls, soul winning. All of this is affected by it.

Christ gives entire parables in entire chapters about faithfulness in financial things. They'll affect you eternally. Do you know what he says in these parables? If you're faithful with these little financial things, you could get 10 cities in the kingdom to come.

I didn't write this. Christ actually taught this explicitly about being faithful, faithful in a little. Money is not the issue.

If you want to gain, be faithful. If you want to gain spiritually, you know money is a great revealer of the heart. That's why it's dealt with time and time and time again.

In the book of Acts, it's dealt with from chapter one all the way through. It's remarkable. When you go to the gospels, Christ deals with it time after time after time.

He's not begging for money. He's not asking for money. He's saying that your possessions reveal an awful lot about you.

They're a little thing. We actually think that mammon is a big thing, but it's not. He actually teaches in these parables, use mammon or possessions to make friends eternally.

How can you make eternal friends? I mean everlasting friends. You use mammon. How do you use mammon to win friends that you can never lose? How is that possible? You actually use your finance to win souls who are going to enter into the kingdom of God, and they're going to dwell with you for all eternity.

It is remarkable that the Bible teaches that how you use this little thing called money, mammon, possessions, could affect many souls for generations to come. Fourth of all, faithful in hard things. So little things are hard things.

Wouldn't you love to jump over the hard things? Is it always easy to be faithful in the hard things? Absolutely not. You remember young Joseph was a young man who was faithful in hard things. Remember he was at home at 17 years old.

Everything's good. His father loves him. His brothers hate him, but he's there.

He's blessed. He's loved. He's provided for.

No sore trials. The brothers won't touch him while daddy's alive. But you know what? God had a plan.

This young man, this young godly man, has got to get prepared. See how he was at 17. He could never sit on the second highest throne to Pharaoh in Egypt.

He's not ready. He doesn't have the character. He is godly.

God has chosen him because of his heart, but he's not ready. He's going to have to pass through years of hardship, of fire, of trials. He's going to have to be hated.

You know some of you in the future, you've got to be hated or you'll never be prepared for what God has you. If you think that hatred is a small thing, all you see is men. The things that happen around you, you see man.

You see other people. You see sinners. You see your mommy.

Some of you guys, when you come in here from South Straight through to Rory, I tell you your mommy's near have killed you in your attitudes. You come in here and all of a sudden as the gospel, you get saved and then you're getting sanctified and you go, uh-oh, this affects my attitude towards mommy. I always thought I was right.

I was always proud. I thought, Mom! And this preacher isn't exempt, okay? Boy, the dealings of God. But there's hard things.

Look at young Joseph. You see in Genesis chapter 31 that Joseph is brought down into Egypt and sold as a slave to Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh's guard. He stands on the stone and they say, hiya spitter, we're selling this young boy, 17 years old.

Don't you know God's plan is in this to prepare in the hard things? The hard things are the little things. It's very hard to accept that hatred towards you, being sold by your brethren, becoming a prisoner, becoming a slave, working in Potiphar's house. It's very hard to believe these little things are of God.

Are you going to be faithful in the hard things? It's very easy to be faithful in the easy thing, the blessing of God. God's blessing me and prospering me. What about when you go down to Egypt, down into captivity? Can you actually see God's hand in this? You know the story.

He didn't say it. He's looking up this way. You're looking back and saying, sure, we know it.

We would have walked through that easy enough. But do you know what? In chapter 39, he's sold in the Pharaoh's house. And it says, and the Lord was with Joseph.

And he was a prosperous man and was in the house of his master in Egypt. And his master saw that the Lord was with him. Now look, faithfulness, you are in a hard time.

You are suffering. You have been hated. You have been sold.

You are a prisoner. You're in an environment working for a man. You don't want that.

Do you realize how bitter he could have become? Do you realize how resentful? Do you realize he could have started saying, this is not God's will for my life. I've got dreams. God gave me a dream that all my brothers are going to bow down.

Here he is. He is a servant. He is a slave.

He is serving a man in his house. See how all these principles run together. I can hardly separate these points.

It's remarkable. And you have here that Joseph's got to be faithful. Do you know what? His heart was right with God, with man, and with his situation.

I think some of us would have got there and said, I'm not serving this man. I'll sabotage his house. I'll turn off the taps on his water.

I won't light the fire for his hot water. I hate this situation. This is not God's will for my life.

This is not God's plan for my life. And you'd become twisted in character. And that's a hard situation that is meant to prepare you for one of the greatest callings of any generation.

You would actually nullify it because you can't see God's hand in it. They're hating me. God, why are you allowing this? Because I'm trying to make you into a vessel that I can put right next to Pharaoh and to save all the people, to feed all nations.

Do you realize with a great call, a great plan, a great vision, a great dream from God, there are hard things you're going to go through. God will go over you with a steamroller. God may break your heart.

God may allow people to turn against you that you never expected. And you're either going to get bitter or better. Faithfulness in hard things.

And then, you know the story of Potiphar's house, what happens? It all goes wrong. But you know what? Joseph was made overseer of Potiphar's house. It was a hard situation.

He kept his heart right. He was faithful. Remember what faithfulness means? Reliable, trustworthy.

Could Potiphar trust him? Yes. Did Potiphar look at him and say, I can trust this man. He is faithful.

He is honest. He is upright. I can depend upon him to such a degree I can put him over everything in my house.

And then it all goes belly up. What happens next? He goes into the prison and he begins to interpret the dreams of other men. God begins to show him things about other people.

Some of you would say, why have you left me here, God? I'm not helping other men. What about moving in my life? What about my calling? What about my ministry? Do you see that in hard things, until you can serve others, be faithful to others, minister to others? I think it's one of the most remarkable things I've seen. The past week, my wife in a hospital, in one of the most serious of situations physically.

I mean serious. And I'm watching her witness to them. I'm sitting there as this old Catholic lady is there with her swollen feet and my wife getting up, who can hardly walk at that point and going over and saying, can I pray for you, Rose? Can I lay hands on you and ask God to help you? Sitting at that bedside with a nurse, a mature experienced nurse sitting at her side saying, Candice, you don't deserve this.

You're good. You're nice. You don't deserve this.

You're a nice person. And Candice said, oh no, the only thing that matters is eternal life, that you know you're ready to meet Jesus Christ. You know what that nurse done? See, she's ministering to herself, pity.

Do you know what that nurse started to do? Was to weep. And she turned away. She couldn't handle it.

Candice said, yeah, poor old me. I don't deserve this. But when you start saying there's something bigger here, you know what? See in your hardships, you better minister unto the Lord.

What a wonderful place. And you know the story of Joseph. He was prepared in the hard things.

Are you going to be faithful in the hard things? Do you know it's very hard to be faithful, trustworthy in the hard things, reliable, still in your position? God doesn't want me here. I'm jumping ship. Then you will not be ready for what God has for you.

Do you remember Patrick? You know Patrick, they call him St. Patrick. But he was Patrick, a real preacher of the gospel. If you read his letters, dynamic.

Do you know that he was a sinner at 15 years old? He was a rebel. He used to laugh at the preachers, the elders in the church. They would rebuke sin, deal with sin.

And at 15 years old, he would scorn them, laugh at them and reject them. He was an atheist in heart. His family were born again.

His grandparents had been born again. And yet he was sitting there in church saying, I don't believe this. Patrick in the fifth century.

And you know what? God had a plan for his life. And you know what happened? The Irish, some of your ancestors, the Irish invaded on their boats and they raided, killed servants and they captured this young 15, 16 year old and they carried them away to Ireland to Slemish Mountain in Antrim. And for the next six years, he looked after, watch it, not just sheep.

It was sheep, but it was another man's sheep in a hard situation. What are you going to do, Patrick? Do you realize in that six years as a prisoner in a foreign land, looking after sheep, another man's sheep, do you realize that was God's plan to raise up the evangelist, the apostle to reach the Irish people? Do you realize that was God's plan? And yet in hardship, we misunderstand it. And these little things, hardship is little things.

You know what? All we see is this is against me. No, it's working for you, but you won't see it for six years or maybe 20 years. What do you think is meant to destroy you could be the very thing that makes you into a man or woman of God.

It was with Patrick. And so God placed him amongst the Irish as a slave. He's learning the language.

He's learning the local culture. He's learning about the people. He is praying.

He is fasting. A hundred times in a night, he said. He said when it was cold and raining and the frost was on the ground, he would get up to pray.

That's faithfulness, isn't it? He's a slave. He's not lazy. He is reliable.

I believe he was very faithful over those sheep. I believe not one wolf came or one fox came and stole any of those sheep. I believe he watched over them.

He fed them well. They were some of the best sheep on that hillside. I can assure you, Patrick watched over them.

You know, William Carey, the great missionary that reached India with the gospel, six years, sorry, seven years before he saw his first convert, baptized him and ordered that he backslid. I know very few preachers today would labor in a country, a city, a nation for seven years, get one convert and they would stay there. Do you know what William Carey said? He said, if anyone is going to speak about me, one thing they must say, I'm a plotter.

That's a rough way of saying I'm faithful. You know what? I just keep going. It gets tough.

I feel like throwing the towel in. I feel like I can't do this, but you know what? I just keep going forward. I just keep taking the next step.

You know why? I want to be faithful. I'm serving God. Fifth and finally here, faithful in unseen things.

I'm describing little things, being faithful in little things. It's remarkable. Fifth, faithful in unseen things.

How do I explain little things? You operate in little things. They're unseen things. As soon as someone isn't looking, that's a little thing.

Can you be faithful when no one's looking? Are you faithful in the things that no one will ever say or appreciate or praise you for? Are you faithful when eyes are on you? Do you pray when we're gathered together? Yet when you're alone, you don't pray like that. Listen to what it says here in Ephesians 5, sorry, Ephesians 6, and you'll find the same in Colossians 3. Ephesians 6 verse 5, it's speaking of servants and their masters. The servants in that hour, they could be anything from slaves who've been bought and they're owned by a master, all the way through to someone who's just hired, nine to five.

Now I want to pay you a wage every day, every week. It's a business. It's the workplace.

And so we see servants be obedient to them who are your masters. It could be in the workplace, your boss. My boss is unsaved.

I don't need to be faithful. God doesn't look at that. I can cut corners.

I don't need to obey my boss. He's unsaved. After all, everyone takes advantage, don't they? So why shouldn't I? Well, let's read the scripture and find out.

Are you faithful in unseen things? We think it's okay to be unfaithful if we don't get caught. If we see the speed in a van, our speed in the car changes. We see it down the road.

Why are you slowing down? The van's there. Then the van's around the corner. You fly around the next corner.

Do you realize what that's revealing? You've just said the only reason you're keeping the speed limit. And again, aren't we prone to it? This preacher, I assure you, is not beyond that. Servants be obedient to them that are your masters, according to the flesh.

With fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as under Christ. You're a secular boss. You're to serve them as if you're serving Christ.

That's what the Bible teaches. If you don't, Christ notes it. This is scripture.

Not with eye service. Notice this, not with eye service. Do you know what the word eye service there? It's a very old word.

Do you know what eye service means? He's telling us here, do not do it with eye service. What is eye service? This is it. You work hard only when you're watched.

You need an eye kept on you at all times or else you won't do it faithfully. And so the Bible says, do not do it with eye service as men pleasers focused on man. If you're a Christian in the workplace, your work ethic is to be radically different.

Radically different. You do not fit into culture. You don't learn it from those around you.

You don't work like those around you. You have a different work ethic. You know what? You're not serving your boss.

You're not a banker. You're not a mechanic. You're not selling something.

You're not a chemist. You're not selling sandwiches in the shop down the road. You're not just a school teacher.

Do you realize that's what the Bible says? You're not serving those men or institutions. But my boss is wicked, lazy, irresponsible. You're serving Christ in that workplace.

You need to have that fixed. This is a little thing. This is one of those little things you could ignore so easy and miss and yet not be faithful in little things.

But I'm pointing it out. I'm emphasizing it. Not with eye service as men pleasers, but as the servants of Christ.

How you work in the secular place. Do you realize in the first century there were some men who were slaves, who had been bought, who had no rights, and yet the Bible is preaching you're serving Christ in that place. You're not serving a slave owner.

If you can get free, praise God. The Bible doesn't teach slavery, but it says if you're in that situation, then serve Christ, not a slave owner. Patrick done it, and he changed an entire nation.

Do you realize how you operate in the workplace could change a nation? It did with Patrick. This nation was changed by a man who served his slave owner, who looked after his sheep. All these points flow together in a remarkable way, but it goes further.

But as the servants of Christ doing the will of God from the heart, right from the heart. Same with school. Nice school teachers.

What about doing it unto Christ from the heart? Do the will of God in that environment with good will, doing service as to the Lord and not to men. Do you get the message in this? It's remarkable teaching. This isn't the sort of scripture the average Christian memorizes in their spare time.

They usually memorize, you're going to bless me. Every blessing is mine in Christ Jesus. Scriptures like this, where I say with goodwill doing service as to the Lord and not to men.

You're not serving men. See in this church, you're not serving men. In your workplace, you shouldn't be serving men.

In your home and family, you shouldn't be serving men. Wives, do you think it's your husband you're serving? Children, do you think it's your parents you're serving? Or is it Christ? See as a child, it was once my dad disciplined me, punished me, and I knew he was wrong, but I understood why he thought it was me. I hadn't done anything wrong, but he thought I had.

And in my mind and heart, I said, Lord, he thinks he's doing the right thing, but I'm submitted to you. I love you. It affects my whole life and every area.

So faithfulness and unseen things. And you find the same thing in Colossians chapter three. As we close here, all of these things, faithfulness and these five points flow into your spiritual life and the ministry.

Those are the little things I've mentioned. I mentioned five things that are the little things, the normal, natural, hard things, the financial things, the things you face every day that you could so easily not see God in, and you don't think are important, and it doesn't matter by cutting corners. And yet these five things feed into this last thing I'm going to mention, faithfulness in spiritual ministry.

It's a remarkable thing that we would actually be faithful in 1 Corinthians 4 and 1. Just listen. If God calls you to ministry, Paul says, let a man so account of us as the ministers of Christ, stewards of the ministry of God. Moreover, it is required in stewards.

What's he talking about? Talking about someone in God's house who oversees, gets responsibility, gains authority, gains a calling in God's house. That is a steward. What is a preacher? He's a steward of the mysteries of God.

These mysteries that are revealed from God, it is the gospel. A preacher is someone who has been given the mysteries of God, and he's a steward. He needs to look after these mysteries.

What does he say about this man? Moreover, it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful. Required means it's absolutely necessary. You've got no right to preach.

You've got no right to have authority in this house. You've got no right to lead in the call of God or in ministry or to go forth in ministry unless you're faithful. How do I know you're faithful? Oh, I'm faithful at reading my Bible.

What about these five points? What if these five points I've mentioned tonight are critical to you preaching the word, doing evangelism, doing worship, being in eldership, being effective in spiritual ministry? What if these five things actually were the qualifiers or the disqualifiers of you really serving God or having the call

of God upon you? Well, can I tell you they are. They are. If you ignore these five things, you are damaging the call of God in your life.

You're actually, if you're unfaithful in these five things, I promise you, you're going to be unfaithful in spiritual ministry. You would not be faithful. Show me a man unfaithful in these five points.

I'll show you a man who will not be faithful in preaching the word of God. You may say, I wouldn't change it. I'll be faithful to speak what you give me.

I'll study the Bible. You won't if you're not faithful in those five things because they mark you. These are the little things.

If you can't be faithful in the trials and with money, if you can't be faithful with other people's possessions, you'll never be faithful with God's word. Because how you serve man, how you respond to others, whether in church or work or home, you're not dealing with me. You're dealing with the Lord Jesus Christ.

These scriptures teach this. And in Nehemiah, way down the road when others were being unfaithful, when men who started well and led the way and were in high priestly ministry in Nehemiah, when Nehemiah comes back and he says, what have you done to the revival? And he puts them out of ministry. Do you know who he looks for? Listen to this as I close.

Nehemiah chapter 7 and 2, that I gave my brother Hanani and Hanani, the ruler of the palace. These two men, Hanani and Hanani, he made joint rulers over the entire city of Jerusalem. He put all the unfaithful men out of ministry.

All the ones who started well and weren't finishing well. He said, you're excluded from ministry. But he looked for two men and said, you've got the responsibility.

Who are they? Hanani was the one who came to him in chapter 1 saying the remnant are suffering. And that broke Nehemiah's heart. And it led him to pray for three months.

That was him. But listen, Hananiah was the second one. Listen to what he says about Hananiah.

For he was a faithful man who feared God above many. This person came out of nowhere. But I tell you, Nehemiah noticed him and he said, you know what? He's more faithful, reliable, trustworthy.

Maybe he was a pen pusher. Maybe he was a wall builder. Who knows? After all, you're dealing with a man who was a cupbearer who'd become a revivalist.

And so he said, this man, Hananiah, is faithful. I'll make him ruler over half the city. And you, Hananiah and Hananiah, don't let anyone in through those gates who shouldn't come in.

I'm giving you a responsibility. Don't let anyone come through there on the Sabbath. Don't let anyone buy and sell on the Sabbath.

Don't let any of those foreigners in this gate. And you know what? He knew they were going to do it. And that's why he made them leaders in the city of God.

What I'm telling you tonight, it's affected my life. It's affected Candace's life. It's made us who we are.

What we've done in the unseen when no one else looked. You ask her and I'll tell you what I've done. Remember cleaning under that seat.

I know I've almost worn that statement out, but I can give you other ones. Serving the Lord Jesus Christ when no one can see, in the hard times, with my money, with other people's possessions, all of these things, it was to the glory of the Lord. Will you pray with me here tonight? And even as you pray in your seat and online as well, as we pray, will you say, Lord, this doesn't come natural to us.

This is a work of sanctification. It takes God's grace. Maybe I've touched on something tonight and it needs to be revolutionized.

Maybe you need to change your whole idea of things. Not because I said it, but because it's in the word of God and taught as a clear principle of scripture. Faithfulness in little things.

And maybe tonight, as we close and pray now, and you bow your heads and pray with me. Maybe now, right now is the time where you make a decision to say that's going to change. Lord, will you help me? Give me grace and sanctify me.

Will you pray just in your heart? You know what God's dealing with you right now. You know what the spirit of God has shown you. You know what's the burden of your heart.

And he doesn't leave you to do that by your own strength with people or situations. Ask for his grace right now. Ask him to renew your mind.

Ask him to change your attitudes. Father, we do love you here tonight. Father, your word is so lovely, so pure.

It's against the flesh. It's against nature. It's against our own inclinations and habits of culture and family life and habits of a lifetime.

But Lord God, we do love the Lord Jesus Christ. We know that he's altogether lovely. He's altogether different than us.

And we've been dealing with words and commands that he has given us about being faithful in very little things, maybe things we hadn't seen before, things that we weren't counting as important, things, oh God, that we were ignoring or neglecting or deliberately hiding from. Father, I pray tonight, will you grant grace right in this room, right in this meeting, even as the video goes out at whatever point. Father, I pray that you're going to minister of your grace, that decisions are going to be made, that faithfulness is going to come into operation in workplaces, in families, in churches.

Lord God, in individual lives, that are going to have such a consequence for the glory of your name and of your kingdom, that souls are going to be saved, that bosses are going to be converted. Lord God, that nurses are going to be saved on these wards in Limerick. Lord God, we're praying, oh God, that you'd save nurses and doctors in this city, because they see someone living for you.

I pray for every workplace, every environment, every home, every street in this city of Limerick. My God, raise up faithful men and women, Lord God, who are faithful in the little things, the unseen things, the hard things. Lord God, in the midst of serving other people, Lord God, radically transform us, that we would see that we're serving you, that we're walking with you, that we're loving you, and we bless you tonight.

But for your grace, we'd be hell-deserving sinners. But for your mercy, oh God, we could never be faithful. But Lord God, put your fruit within us.

The fruit of faith, our faithfulness. Lord God, let your Holy Spirit bring forth this attribute of the living God, to be reliable, honest, upright. Lord God, to have integrity.

Lord God, to be faithful in money, in our attitudes, in our words, in our actions. And Lord God, we pray for your blessing, as we desire to do that. In Jesus' mighty name, Amen.

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