

FAITHFULNESS IN LITTLE THINGS 10/10/22H

Radio Sermon delivered over Station KRLD

May 18, 1947

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Dallas, Texas

"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. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own." (Luke 16:10-12)

This text immediately follows the Parable of the Unjust Steward, which is a story of a servant who cheated his master, of debtors who were in collusion with the fraud, and of a master complimenting his servant. This steward was accused of wasting his master's goods, and was therefore asked to give an account of his stewardship. The servant then said to himself, "What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me my stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed. I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses." (Luke 16:3-4). "So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. Then he said to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore." (Luke 16:5-7)

And the Lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely." (Luke 16:8) As much as to say, "At least you are a shrewd and clever fellow." The commendation was not due to the trickery, fraud and unscrupulousness of the steward, but his foresight. He looked ahead; he accepted the inevitable and prepared for it.

The writer further says, "For the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light." (Luke 16:8) Thus the Lord is showing that often there is far more prudence, foresight and common sense exercised by men of the world in pursuit of small ends than by Christians in matters of eternal moment in the service of God.

Then Jesus says in the text, "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least is also unjust also in much." This is a maxim that will almost universally hold true. A man that shows fidelity in small matters will also show faithfulness in large matters. And he that will cheat and defraud in the small petty things, will also cheat in those things of great importance. Hence, one's conduct in the little things of life is a sure test of what he is likely to do with the greater things. It is fidelity to principles and not to pounds that counts. Hence, it is a well established fact that it is not quantity but quality, not abundance but ability to handle the trifles that decide our doom and destiny.

Jesus further says, "If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteousness mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?" That is, if we as disciples of Christ are not faithful in any earthly trust, how could the Lord trust us with heavenly possessions? We must prove our selves to be faithful with the proper use of material things before we can be trusted with spiritual things.

Again the Lord declared in the text, "And if ye have not been faithful in what which is another man's who shall give you that which is your own?" The earthly means and opportunities that we have now are not our own, they are only lent or entrusted to us by the Lord to see whether He can trust ~~us~~ us with eternal riches. If we do not know how to act as stewards over earthly possessions, we surely would not know how to serve as stewards over heavenly possessions. There is nothing in this life that we can claim as our own. Paul said, "For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." (I Cor. 10:26). The crown of life is all that we can ever claim for our own; hence if we do not properly use our blessings and opportunities here, who shall give to us the crown of life in eternity?

The Little Things of Life

The little things of life constitute almost the whole of life. The great days of the year, for example, are few for the most of us. If we were to begin to make an inventory of the things that we do in a single day—the thoughts that we entertain, the words that we speak, and the deeds that we perform, we could never list them all. Yet there are 365 such days in a year, and a year is but a twentieth, fiftieth, or seventieth part of our life. And during those days there are but a few days of outstanding events; hence the other days are made up of common and unimportant things as men may determine them. However, at the end of life's way we may look back over our life and see that we have accomplished great things to the glory of God and the salvation of the lost.

The smaller duties of life, because of their apparent insignificance and constant recurrence, are often harder to perform than the great ones. On the day of battle, with its noise of trumpets, when every pulse is beating with the throb of heroism, such excitement will stimulate us to the performance of duty; but how difficult our duty becomes during the dull months of weary drill, amid the petty details of military duty.

In time of the "big meeting" some members of the Lord's church are found to carry on in the service of the Master in a most zealous and consecrated manner; but after the church settles down to the routine of Bible study and prayer meeting and Christian service, those "big meeting" church members are conspicuous by their constant absence.

Consider the eyes, the teeth, the fingers. We do not know how much they mean to us until one becomes injured, or we lose one of these small but tremendously important members. So it is with life itself. The little things of life constitute almost the entirety of life.

God's Estimate of Little Things

The least things are important in God's sight; He is observant of the small things. He upholds the sparrow's wing; He clothes the lily of the field with His own beautifying hand; He numbers the hairs of our heads; He makes the small rays of sun to rise on the evil and the good, and makes the small drops of rain to fall on the just and on the unjust. He carries on a process of growth in every tree, flower, herb and living thing too delicate for the eye to see.

Christ also gave concern to the small things. His teaching at large was done in the retired places, and His parables were drawn from the ordinary things of life. When the walls of death burst asunder and He came forth from Joseph's new tomb, He folded the linen cloths and napkin, and laid them in order apart; thus showing that even in accomplishing the greater things He did not overlook the smaller things.

To the disciples Jesus made this amazing statement, "And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward." (Matt. 10:42). There cannot be a more trivial service we could render than to give a cup of cold water to a passing traveller. Yet it is not the value of the gift that counts, but the end that the giver has in mind, and the spirit in which he gives it; the motive that prompts the giver. The gift may be great in value, and yet insofar as the spirit and motive of the giver are concerned, they may be valueless. On the other hand, the gift or deed may be insignificant in itself, yet when coupled with the spirit and motive it may be worthy of special cognizance and honor.

The Bible exalts little things. It was only a small rod in the hands of Moses which God used as an agency in performing many mighty wonders. When the Israelites fought against the Midianites and the Amalekites under the leadership of Gideon, the fifth judge of Israel, lest they boast of victory through their own strength, the Lord commanded Gideon to send those back home who were "fearful and afraid". Twenty and two thousand returned, leaving only ten thousand. But Jehovah told Gideon there were "yet too many". By the Lord's own process the number was reduced to only three hundred, and through this small number God wrought victory for Israel. David killed Goliath with but a small stone which he took from the brook, and which he discharged from his little sling.

In the New Testament Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: Which indeed is the least of all seeds; but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof." (Matt. 13:31-32). When Jesus one day watched "the people cast money into the treasury", He saw the rich cast in much and He was greatly impressed with a little widow which "threw in two mites, which make a farthing". Jesus said, "This poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living." (Mark 12:43-44).

When God through His prophet Elisha, told Naaman to go and dip seven times in the Jordan that he might be healed of his leprosy, the Bible tell us that "he turned and went away in a rage." (I Kings 5:12). But one of the servants of Naaman came to him and said, "My father, if the prophet had bid thee to do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it?" (I Kings 5:13). If God required that we perform some pretentious and ostentatious thing, perhaps more would seek to follow Him. Yet if the Lord required some act of ingenuity very few of us could serve Him. But since God has required the humble things, many stumble over their pride. When Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved", who is man to minimize baptism and consider it one of Christ's non-essential commands? Christ has no non-essential commands. "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city". (Rev. 22:14). There are no commands of the Lord that we can exclude from the list, and there are none that we can exalt above another.

A friend once saw Michael Angelo, the great Italian sculptor and painter, at work on one of his statues. Some time afterwards he saw him again, and seeing so little had been done, he said to Angelo, "Have you been idle since I last saw you?"

"By no means," replied the sculptor. "I have retouched this part and polished that; I have softened this feature and brought out that muscle; I have given more expression to this lip, and more energy to this limb."

"Well, well", said the friend, "But all these are mere trifles."
 "It may be so," replied Angelp, "But remember that trifles make perfection,
and perfection is no trifle."

The Reward for Faithfulness

Fidelity in small things prepares us for and opens the way to a wider sphere of service. Every power strengthens by exercise. Everything that I can do, I can do better the next time because of the previous effort. Few, if any, can suddenly rise to great things who have not been first trained by little things. Neither God nor man will make a man ruler over many things, who has not been faithful over a few things. - N. G. e

Also fidelity in small things enables us to secure enduring possessions in eternity - it makes it possible for us to "lay up treasures in heaven." We cannot take with us beyond the grave our business or the success that it may have gained for us. We cannot carry into eternity our material possessions or the pleasures they have brought us. But we can take the good we have done. The good use we may have made of our money - the kindness it may have enabled us to show others, the self-sacrifice it may have enabled us to practice, the happiness it may have caused others - these are secured for us. They shall be waiting for us in the eternal world to speak for us at judgment and to welcome us into heaven.

Hence by means of this world with all of its opportunities and challenges, God is testing character. By means of this present world God is proving our capacity for the greater world beyond. Let us, then, say with the prophet of old, "For who hath despised the day of small things?"

