

1 Corinthians 4:1-13

Pastor John Miller

It sounds kind of repetitious and I hate to do this, but it's a situation where we're still on the same subject—chapters 1, 2, 3, 4—chapter 5 it'll change, we'll have a different subject every week, but he's basically still dealing with the issue of division. You need to keep that in mind or you won't really quite be able to understand what is going on. You know, when you want to understand your Bible, you want to know what the context is—what the original author was writing about, who he is writing to, and why he was writing what he was writing.

The church at Corinth was divided, and they were divided because they were carnal and proud and actually following men and weren't really following Christ. They were getting in their little groups, "I'm of Paul," "I'm of Apollos," "I'm of Peter," "I'm of Christ." They were actually doing personality kind of focus on the ministers. People do that today. They have their own pastor that they like the way he preaches or they like his personality or they like his delivery or his jokes or whatever it might be, and they kind of rally behind their little preachers. That's okay, but we've got to be careful that we don't focus on the man, that we focus on the message and the methods the man uses. It's not about his charisma. It's not about his intelligence. It's not about his looks—praise God for that—it's about the methods and the message that he uses in preaching.

What Paul wants to do is he wants them to understand how they should view the minister, so he's going to break it down about how we should view the minister. What we cover tonight in context deals with the minister, the pastor, but it all has application to every one of us because every member of the church is to be a minister. We may not be full-time ministers preaching the Word from a pulpit, but we're all called to minister. Amen? Every member of the church is given a gift of the Holy Spirit and is to use it for others for the glory of God. There's a lot of neat principles that we can learn here. What Paul does is paint pictures of the pastorate, and in doing that we get an idea about what the pastor's job is, what his message is, and what his methods are, and we get inside into the church.

Last week in 1 Corinthians 3 Paul presented three pictures of the pastor as the father, and they were going to need to be matured as he fed the household the Word of God. The pastor was a farmer, he was to sow the seed of the Word of God and the field was to produce the fruit. Thirdly, he was pictured as a builder and that we're building the Church, which is a habitation of God through the Spirit, and we want to build with the right materials, with the right motive, for the glory of God.

Now, we move into 1 Corinthians 4 and Paul paints three characteristics that should be found in every true minister. We'll look at only the first two tonight, but let me give them to you right now: 1) faithfulness, 2) humbleness, 3) tenderness. The idea again there is a father tender with the children. Every minister, every believer, should be faithful, should be humble, and should be tender and loving toward those that they minister to.

The first of what we want to look at tonight is the faithfulness, and the background for this is 1 Corinthians 4:1-6. Follow with me beginning in verse 1. Paul says, "Let a man so account of us,"—what he means by 'us' there is us apostles and us pastors, and in the context, no doubt, himself, Apollos, Peter, and the ministers that they were dividing over. He says, "Let a man so account of us,"—which is the idea of this is how you need to view us, this is what you need to think of us—"as"—number one—"of the ministers of Christ, and"—number two—"stewards of the mysteries of God,"—and we're going to come back to that. Verse 2, "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. 3 But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self." They were judging these ministers as to their ability and to their effectiveness and kind of getting their different opinions and views of them.

Paul says, verse 4, "For I know nothing by myself"—which is literally actually, 'I know nothing against myself'—"yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord. 5 Therefore"—here's the conclusion—"judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God. 6 And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us"—here it is—"not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another." He didn't want them to be proud about their pastor and who they were following.

Go back with me to verse 1, "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God." That word, verse 2, the key word is "faithful." He's talking about being faithful; and the idea of "faithful" means that we are obedient to God, doing what God's called us to do, doing our ministries in God's way. Faithfulness involves doing all that the master has commanded us to do and doing it in a way that is consistent with His Word, with His will, and for His glory. He says, "This is what we want." There are two areas that Paul wanted them to be found faithful: in the area of being a servant, and in the area of being a steward. He says, "I want you to see us as servants and stewards, and the key to that is that we be found faithful." So, we know what a minister is, he's a servant and a steward, and we know what he's supposed to be—he's supposed to be faithful to God and to God's call and to God's ministry that He has entrusted to him.

Go back with me to verse 1 again. Notice it says, "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers,"—there's our word for servant—"of Christ." It's pretty simple, pretty basic, we understand that. They are to be viewed, they are to be looked at, and they are to be servants. You know, I attend pastor's conferences. I speak occasionally at pastor's conferences, and pastor's are always talking about, "What's your vision," and "What's your plan for the church?" I've always been kind of perplexed by that because I don't really have a vision, I just want to teach the Bible. Finally, I came to the realization that my vision is not really a vision but it's obedient to what God already says in His Word that a pastor is supposed to be and a pastor is supposed to do.

In the Bible, the Scriptures focus on the character of the pastor and the ministry of the pastor, and character always comes first. It doesn't matter if he's a good preacher, if he's not living a godly life. Character results in conduct. The idea for a pastor, and I say this because if I'm speaking to any pastors through this message tonight, God tells us in His Word what you're supposed to be and what you're supposed to do, and the focus should be being biblical, thus being faithful to what God's will and call is for our lives.

The word "ministers of Christ," in verse 1 is not the normal word for servant, *doûlos*, it's a different word that's a little unique. It's actually a word used for what were called under-rower slaves in the boats or in the ships. How many of you have seen the movie, Ben-Hur? Remember when Ben-Hur is in that boat down underneath the galley there and they're rowing. Remember the old, ancient Greek boats and they're rowing. Sometimes they have two levels of oars, and they're rowing inside the boat and they're being whipped, K-SHH! K-SHH! (That's the sound effects for a whip.) They're telling them to row, and they're under there rowing. They were known as under-rowers. That's the very Greek word that the English Bible translated "ministers" here.

When we hear the word "minister," we usually think of somebody who is over the church and someone that's looked up to and somebody that's respected in the community, someone who has a good standing in the community, and someone that gets discounts for being a pastor.... But the word here used for "minister" means slave, actually a slave. View your pastor as a servant or a slave, an under-rower. That's what the word actually means. The New American Standard Bible says, "Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ" This is what he wants them to understand, that he and Apollos and Peter are slaves or under-rowers of Christ. Paul did not want to be seen as a man of high status but rather as Christ's servant and slave, willing to do the lowest task.

I read this quote years ago, and it's always stuck with me, "The minister is a servant of the church, but the church is not his master." Jesus is the Master. When we use the word "pastor," it's a reference to the same thing, a minister, and the word "pastor" actually is a Latin word which means shepherd. That's what the word literally means. It means shepherd. We're likened unto sheep in the church, and the pastor is the shepherd. But the Bible is pretty clear that Jesus Christ is the Chief Shepherd. He's the One that's the Shepherd of the sheep, and a minister or pastor is only an undershepherd. First he says, "You need to realize that we're just slaves." But it's also to be worked out as the stewardship in our lives as well. Go back to verse 1. He says, " . . . and stewards of the mysteries of God. 2 Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."

There are two areas that Paul wanted them to view them in as faithful—faithful as a slave or a servant, faithful as a steward. What is a steward? The word "steward" means house law, and a steward was an administrator or an overseer of his master's estate. He managed everything for his master. A good example of a steward in the Bible is Joseph. Remember when Joseph got sold to Egypt, and when he got to Egypt he got purchased by Potiphar. Potiphar had all this wealth, this great big house and all this stuff. He didn't know anything about what was going on

because it was all turned over to Joseph, and he basically took everything—he paid the bills, he paid the servants, he oversaw the other servants, he just took care of everything. He's just the head guy. The steward, and this is what's important, owned nothing, had nothing, but was over everything. It was entrusted to him to take care of all the issues, all the affairs of his master, so he would take care of the household.

The Church is the household of faith, and ministers are stewards who are to share God's wealth of God's Word with God's household. The Church, like a family, is to be fed, so the master would provide the food, and the steward would actually distribute it and feed those that were there in the house.

Paul called the spiritual wealth, verse 1, “. . . the mysteries of God.” A pastor is a steward “. . . of the mysteries of God.” So, what are the “mysteries of God”? The “mysteries of God” are basically the Scriptures, the Word of God, the revelation of God found in the Bible. The New Testament had several mysteries that it talks about, one of them is the Church. That means that in the Old Testament it's not revealed but now it is revealed. The rapture is called a mystery, “Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye” The New Testament word “mystery” is a reference to a doctrine of Scripture that at one time was not revealed but is now revealed. It's not something we can't know, it's something we can't know unless God reveals it, and He has revealed it in His Word. The best way to view this is that a pastor, a minister, is to be a steward of the Scriptures, and he's to take the Bible without adding to it or taking away from it or substituting something else—his own message—and simply give it to God's people—feeding them, teaching them, communicating to them the Word of God. So, a faithful pastor, a servant, who is a good steward of the Word of God.

This has direct application to the pastor's preaching. I don't know. I'm not here to promote my books, and it just popped into my brain, but we actually have a book that we produced from the teaching we've done on preaching. It's called, *The Nuts And Bolts Of Expository Preaching*. We've actually put a book together on preaching.

What is preaching? Preaching is expounding the Word of God. This is why we call it expository preaching. The word “expositional” means taking the text of Scripture and you're pulling out the meaning of the original author and you're preaching the meaning of the text. You're not imposing into the text your ideas, you're taking out of the text based on its historical, grammatical, theological context and preaching the Word. It's basically what Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 4, “Preach the word” not preach your thoughts, not preach your own ideas, not preach your philosophies, not preach the wisdom of man. Remember Paul said, “I preach the cross and don't want to know anything but Christ crucified.” The pastor's job in the Bible is to expound Scripture, to preach the Word as a faithful servant and as a steward of the Scriptures, the Word of God. This is so very, very important.

John Stott has written a book called, *The Preacher's Portrait*. In that book he's got pictures of the pastor. In one chapter, that years ago I read and it really impacted my life and my

philosophy of ministry, was the pastor, a steward and the idea that God gives to us His Word and wants us to faithfully communicate His Word, teach His Word, to God's people, the household of God. I don't invent the message. I don't create the message. I get the message from God and just basically as a good steward communicate the message to the people of God, the household of God, the church.

Let me point out a couple thoughts here that it motivates preachers in two areas. First of all, it's the preacher's incentive; and secondly, his message that is influenced by this concept of the preacher being a steward. Because God has invested the preacher with His Word, the preacher is to actually be motivated by a desire to be trustworthy, to be faithful to preach the Bible—nothing more, nothing less, just the Word of God. The steward has received a trust, so he must show himself worthy of that trust to the householder, which is God, and the household, which is the family of God. Secondly, the steward was not expected to feed the household out of his own pocket, so also the preacher is to provide not his own message, but it is integrity of preaching God's Word, not adding to it or taking away from it. He's not to use his own ingenuity.

A lot of pastors try to think of some really cool, hip, pertinent, practical life situational messages to preach on so they can razzmatazz the people of God. That's not what feeds people or matures or grows them, and that's not fidelity or faithfulness to God's Word as a steward. God entrusts His Word to the pastor, and the pastor faithfully communicates His Word to God's people. The steward was to be simply a dispenser of the goods the master provided for him.

I very rarely read this quote unless I'm in a pastor's conference, but I want to read it to you from Stott's book, *The Preacher's Portrait*, in the chapter where he talks about a steward. He says, "Let me give a homely illustration. The Englishman's favorite breakfast dish is eggs and bacon," John Stott was an Englishman. "We will suppose that a certain householder issued his steward, or housekeeper, eggs and bacon with instructions to dispense them to the household for breakfast on four successive mornings. On Monday morning, the steward threw them in the garbage can, gave them fish instead. This is contradiction, and his master was angry. On Tuesday morning, he gave them eggs only, not bacon. That is subtraction, and his master was angry again. On Wednesday morning, he gave them eggs, bacon, and sausage. This is addition, and his master was still angry. But in the end on Thursday morning, he gave them eggs and bacon—nothing else, nothing less, nothing more—and his master was well pleased with him at last."

I don't know if you understood what I was reading, but that is a very homely illustration of how a minister, how a pastor, is to dispense the Word of God to God's people. What feeds the people is the Word of God, not a pastor's ingenuity or creativity or dynamic personality or intellect, it's the Word of God. Again, 2 Timothy 4:2, "Preach the word," so we need to be faithful to God, not worry about what men think about us. This is where Paul moves now in the text. The faithfulness that is required in a steward is to be something that is consistent, even when people oppose us or come against us.

Look at verse 2. He says, "Moreover it is required,"—underline that word 'required'—"in

stewards, that a man be found”—look at that word ‘found’—“faithful.” Here’s the question, who requires the steward to be “found faithful”? The answer: God. The minister answers to God and is accountable to God, not again the church. This is why I said he’s a slave to the church, but the church is not his master. He serves the Lord out of obedience to God’s stewardship that He gave him, God’s Word. So, he doesn’t judge himself, he doesn’t judge others. He doesn’t worry about man’s judgment of him, he knows that he’s doing it to the Lord and that God will be the One who judges him, and that’s his focus.

Verses 3-4 we see that there are three judgments that can happen when we serve the Lord. He says, “But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you.” He’s basically saying, “I don’t really worry about what you think of me or that you will judge me.” A pastor shouldn’t be motivated by what people think about him. It’s great if people like you, but that’s not why the pastor’s there. He’s not there to make you happy. He’s not there to be your buddy. He’s not there to be your friend. He’s there to faithfully preach the Word of God to God’s people and faithfully dispense the Word of God. Paul says, “Look, I’m not going to worry about man’s judgment,” verse 3, “I’m not worried about being judged of you,” “. . . or of man’s judgment.”

The second category of judgment is self-judgment. He says, verse 3, “. . . yea, I judge not mine own self. 4 For I know nothing by myself,”—he’s not judging himself. He doesn’t worry about man’s judgment, he doesn’t worry about his own judging himself, but thirdly, he says it’s the Lord that judges me, verse 4, “. . . yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.” That’s an attitude or a mentality that we all need to have—I don’t judge myself, I don’t worry about what other people say about me, I worry only about what God thinks.

When you go to heaven the only thing that’s going to matter is hearing the Lord say, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant,”—not smart, not talented, not intellectual, not charismatic, not dynamic, not creative, but faithful. Every one of us has within our reach the ability to be faithful to what God has entrusted to us, and so he doesn’t judge himself, he doesn’t worry about others’ judgments, he knows that some day he will be judged by the Lord.

Look at verse 4, “For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.” So, it’s the Lord that we have to be accountable to. Here’s what we need to think about when we serve the Lord: Am I pleasing the Lord? Am I obedient to the Lord? Am I doing what the Lord has called me to do?

Look at verse 5, “Therefore”—here’s the conclusion—“judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.” The first thing he does is say, “The Lord’s going to come back. We’re going to all stand before the Lord. We’ll have to give an account to God, and God’s the One that we should be thinking about that we want to be obedient to.”

Look at verse 6, “And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written,

that no one of you be puffed up for one against another.” Basically he says, “Look, the Lord is the One who’s going to judge me, so I’m living for the Lord, I’m serving the Lord, I’m doing obediently what the Lord’s called me to do, and all I care about is His approval. I want to be faithful to God.” Paul’s thinking here in verse 5 about the final evaluation or judgment. We call it the Bema Seat of Christ, 2 Corinthians 5:10, we’re going to give an account to God for our service. Not only the pastor, but all the people, we’re all going to stand before Christ and give an account to Him of what we did with the ministries that He entrusted to us whether we were serving and whether we were faithful in the application of our ministries. So, stop judging God’s servants, it’s the wrong time, verse 5; and secondly, you are judging by the wrong standards, verse 6.

Look at verse 6. Paul says, “And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written,”—what does the Scripture say—“that no one of you be puffed up for one against another.” He’s basically saying you need to have a right view of the ministry and the ministers.

Beginning in verse 7, down to verse 13, Paul the apostle talks about the second quality, that of humility or being humble. We want to be servants who are faithful because we’re stewards, and we want to be trustworthy. Secondly, we want to be humble. Look at verse 7, “For who maketh thee to differ from another?”—question mark. He’s asking three rhetorical questions in verse 7. “. . . and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?”—question mark—“now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?” Paul is wrapping this section up—1 Corinthians 1, 2, 3, and 4—and when he does he really just is kind of laying into them. He’s going to get into some sanctified sarcasm to challenge them, but he starts with these rhetorical questions and basically wants them to have a right attitude of the ministry and our service to God. He says, “For who maketh thee to differ from another?” Now the answer to that in verse 7 is God does.

God makes each one of us unique and gives each one of us a specific gift, so God’s the One who makes us different. We’re not all the same, and the Spirit gives to everyone, as He chooses, the gifts He wants to give. So, you don’t pick your gift, you don’t choose your gift, God gives you the gift. God makes you the way He’s made you, and the way you use the gift and exercise the gift...and by the way, just take the gift of teaching for an example, God may give you the gift of teaching and it works in and through your life in a certain way that a different individual has a gift of teaching, but it works through their life in a different way; so don’t put everybody in the same category. Judge ministers or speakers or teachers or Bible preachers based on how they use or exercise their gift. They need to have fidelity to the Word of God, but they’re different. They have different personalities, different backgrounds, different perspectives. He’s made each one of us different, so God’s the One that creates the variety. Paul was not Apollos, Apollos was not Paul, and neither one of them were Peter; so don’t be arguing about these guys.

Secondly, in verse 7, “. . . and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?”—I love that. He says, “What do you have that you haven’t received?” Do you know what the answer is? Zero. I

just thought I would encourage you. Anything you have came from God, even your breath. Everything that we have comes from God, so let's not quibble or fight over different ministers. ". . . now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" You're acting like it's you. You're acting like you're somebody special. You're puffed up. You're proud. You think you're somebody wonderful.

Everything you have has been received by God, that's why if God's given you a gift, and you're using it for others to be blessed and to be edified and to be encouraged or instructed or whatever your gift is, your gift is not for you. Your gift of the Spirit is for the other believer; it's for the body of Christ. It's for building them up and for the glory of God. Gifts of the Spirit aren't jewelry to show off, they're tools to build up other people, and they were given to us by God—they're grace, *cháris*, endowments for the good of others and for the glory of God. He says, "God made us different. Whatever you have, you've received. If you've received them, then why do you go around acting as though you have not received it. It's so very, very important.

Now, from verse 8, down to verse 13, Paul begins to speak with a sanctified sarcasm. He basically points out that as apostles, he and the other pastors and preachers were considered to be the scum of the earth. They were persecuted. They were put down. It was a difficult thing to serve the Lord in a hostile world. But the Corinthians were leaning on the wisdom of the world trying to escape trials and persecution and glorying in man's wisdom, and Paul wants to correct that. He's trying to shame them into humility. He says, verse 8, "Now ye are full,"—he's going to contrast between the Corinthians who thought they were hot stuff and himself and the other ministers who were actually slaves and servants of the Lord. In referring to the Corinthians as, "ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us: and I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you." The contrast is between, you think you're reigning in this world as kings, while we as God's servants are like prisoners.

Verse 9, "For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men." The first contrast is, "You Corinthians think you're so hot, you're kings, while we're basically prisoners." There's a word picture that is implied in verse 9 that you've got to get. Paul makes it clear. He says, "God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a"—and he uses the word—"spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men." This is what was known as a Roman triumph. That's not a motorcycle, it's a parade.

What they had at that time was when Roman soldiers and the general went out to war and would conquer an enemy, they would actually bring them back to Rome and have what we would call like a Ticker tape parade. They would have a big parade, the conquering general, the people that he conquered would all be in shackles. They would be fastened to wagons at the end of the parade, and people would be cheering and celebrating and throwing confetti. At the end of the parade, the people who were conquered, the prisoners, were paraded through the Roman streets. Paul is actually likening himself and the other apostles to these prisoners at the end of the parade headed on their way to death because what they would do is actually then take these prisoners to the coliseum and make them fight each other and also throw them

in the coliseum to the wild beasts and the wild animals. They would have to fight them with their bare hands and no doubt be torn to pieces as the Romans would be cheering in the grandstands of the coliseum, and they would be appointed unto death.

Paul is actually painting this picture. He says, “We’re prisoners at the end of the parade, the triumph, and you guys think you’re so hot stuff, you’re kings reigning in this life. Would to God you did reign, and we reigned with you. But God has put us last,” “. . . appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels,”—that’s the imagery there of the triumph and they were the prisoners. They would actually take the captives and strap them to the wheels of their chariots like hubcaps, human hubcaps, and they would be rolling with the chariot wheels as they came into the city. Again, as I said, they’d be thrown into the wild animals.

The second contrast is he says that you Corinthians think you’re so wise when we who are following God’s wisdom are viewed in the world as being fools. He says, “We are fools for Christ’s sake, but ye”—again, this is sarcasm—“are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised,” so the contrast: kings, prisoners; wise, fool; strong, weak; honorable, despised.

Verse 11, “Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace; 12 And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it”—we allow it—“Being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day.” Welcome to the ministry. What a contrast to the ministers that so often today promote themselves, the superstars that gain the applause and the approval of the world. I love this section here. Paul, in 2 Corinthians, talks so much about his suffering.

When Paul was converted and God called Ananias to go lay hands on him and pray for him, He says, “For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake.” Paul could’ve stayed a Pharisee, a member of the Sanhedrin, a rabbi and been very, very comfortable in the Jewish nation of Israel; but he got called by God to follow Christ, and he was faithful and he paid a price. He suffered greatly. He basically contrasts with, as I said, sanctified sarcasm, “You guys think you’re so wise, well we’re following Christ and we’re viewed as fools. You think you’re so strong, well we’re weak. You’re honorable, we’re despised.” “Even unto this present hour,”—I love it, verse 11—“we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked”—that’s not literally running around naked, by the way, it just meant that they were scantily clothed. They just had their bare necessities. “. . . and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace.” They didn’t own a bunch of million-dollar homes. “And labour, working with our own hands”—he was making tents and working hard—“being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it.”

Verse 13, “Being defamed,”—which means lied about, that’s one of the hardest things to endure —“we intreat”—we accept it—“we are made as the filth”—that word ‘filth,’ the Greek word means the dust on the floor. When you would sweep the dust off your floor, that’s the dirt on the floor—“and are the offscouring,”—I thought, What in the world is offscouring? The Greek word

for “offscouring,” do you know what it is? It’s actually when we eat a meal, and we have our dirty plates and we scrape the food off our plates into the trash can. That’s the offscouring. When you clean off the leftover food from your plate and you throw it away. Paul says, “That’s what we ministers are, the apostles are, we’re just the trash. We’re just the scrapings off the plate. We’re the offscouring of the world.” He’s really got their attention. He’s basically saying again, “So we don’t want you to be arguing or fighting over us in this way.”

I’m stopping in the middle of a section, which unfortunately, we should go to the end of the chapter, but let me close with these three application points. First, ministry is a stewardship, so be faithful. Every one of us as Christians have a ministry. It’s a stewardship, be faithful. Be trustworthy. Secondly, ministry is a gift of God’s grace, be humble. God wants ministers to be humble. He wants believers to be humble—all of us to do our service to the Lord humbly. Thirdly, ministry is a battle, be courageous. It is not easy serving the Lord. It’s a blessing, there’s great joy, but if you’re going to go out into this world and be faithful to God, you’re going to face opposition, you’re going to face persecution. The Bible says, “. . . all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”

If you want to be like the world, if you want to avoid faithfulness to God, you can spare yourself some misery and heartache, but what do you want to do? Do you want to be faithful to God and hear Him say someday, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant,” or do you want to compromise in order to avoid persecution and opposition?

Ministry is a stewardship, be faithful. Ministry is a gift of God’s grace, be humble, “. . . what hast thou that thou didst not receive?” Ministry is a battle, be courageous. The battle rages. Let’s pray.