

**PBC20061011CS**

**SURRENDER**

**Faithfulness**

**Various Scripture Passages**

October 11, 2006 - Wednesday 6:30PM - Dr. David H. McKinley

**[Dr. McKinley, message, SURRENDER: Faithfulness]**

Thank you. Be seated, please and know how grateful we are to see you and to share this evening together in the connection service, a very memorable and a very significant evening in the life of our church. And we are so thankful that you're here and sharing it with us tonight.

You know faithfulness is one of the most honored and celebrated ah... of all of the qualities of life. We like to celebrate faithfulness. Just earlier today I was with a couple who have been married for 65 years, and you know that's something to celebrate; that's something to honor when someone has made it across the journey of a lifetime, sharing life and love together; when someone is faithful in a place of service for so many years... 20 year, 30 years, 40 years. Sometimes even in something like our children's ministry ... just somebody who's faithful for a year to come in and be there every time they're suppose to be there and to do what they're suppose to do! We celebrate and we thank God for their faithfulness because faithfulness is such an important quality in life.

In fact, if I had to put the words in a sphere that make up what I would call the sphere of faithfulness in life, all of these words and more could be added to that sphere. It would be the sphere of those who are dependable, reliable, consistent, trustworthy, dutiful, responsible... all of those things come together in the sphere of what we would call the realm of faithfulness.

In fact, tonight I'm just curious about something... about you and about me. If I were to ask 5 people who know you well... 5 people who know me well to write down some words that describe my character... your character, my demeanor... your demeanor, I wonder if one of the words that they would choose would be the word faithfulness? I say that because of the fact that faithfulness seems to be a diminishing quality in our culture today. Faithfulness is something that when we see it, we honor it on the one hand, but it seems to be less and less visible on the others. We live in a day where our marriages fail and erode because of a lack of faithfulness. Business partnerships explode and vanish because of a lack of faithfulness. And friendships fade and fail because of a lack of faithfulness.

I talked a moment ago about a couple who'd been married for... for... for 65 years. I heard about a couple who were in their sixties! They were celebrating their fortieth anniversary and they had taken a little day trip out to the beach to walk along the shoreline, and as they were there walking and talking about the 40 years they'd spent together in marriage, they came across... well, there was a little bottle there laying on the side of the seashore, and they picked it up and were looking at it, admired it, and started sort of rubbing that bottle, and poof! All the sudden out popped a genie. The genie said that there are some wishes for you. And the wife looked at her husband and she looked at that genie and she said, "I only have one simple wish." She said, "I wish that I could have a trip around the world with my husband." And just like that [snap!] suddenly right there in front of her... she was standing and she was holding airline tickets and she was holding cruise tickets to go all the way around the world. Well, the man looked at the woman and looked at the genie and said, "I have a wish." He said, "I wish I could have a companion that was 30 years my younger." And just [snap] like that he turned 90 years of age! [laughter] You gotta love that genie, right? [laughter]

Well, that's not faithfulness. And the fact of life is, is that some people [who] even do the same thing over and over, are not necessarily faithful. Faithfulness is a very important quality in each and every one of our lives. Proverbs 25 and verse 19 puts it this way:

*19) Confidence in an unfaithful man in a time of trouble is like a bad tooth and a foot out of joint. ... Confidence in an unfaithful man in a time of trouble is like a bad tooth... tooth and a foot out of joint.*

Is it any wonder that the Marines have that slogan *Semper Fidelis* ... Always Faithful? Not faithful when it's convenient, not faithful because I'm comfortable, but faithful because of a commitment in my life! That's what faithfulness is! It is a value of the heart. That is sealed and secured before God and that is lived in evidence in all of the relationships... in all of the realms of my life.

Well when we look at the life of the Apostle Paul as we've been doing each Wednesday here in the connection service, studying the subject of surrender, one of the qualities and one of the themes that we discover is this theme and this quality of faithfulness.

Last week we joined the Apostle Paul in Acts 17 as he was there at Mars Hill and ah... as he stood there and gave a defense for his faith. But tonight I want you to take your Bible and open it with me to Acts chapter 18 because that's going to provide the foundation and the framework for just a few thoughts that I want to share with you at the outset of this service this evening, on this very important subject of faithfulness.

In Acts chapter 18 Paul has gone to Corinth. It's the place to which he would write 2 letters, the letters that you read in the New Testament... the letters to the church at Corinth... the Corinthian letters, 1 and 2

Corinthians. And yet when Paul arrived in Corinth, there was something of a stir and something of an uproar and there was the potential there as there had been in other areas for Paul to basically be shunned and potential even dispelled and persecuted. But in Acts chapter 18, beginning in verse 9 God spoke something to Paul's heart.

If you need a new Bible, there's one there for you; these new ESB versions that we have. We have the page numbers there for you as well, if you want to follow along [and] Don't have your own Bible tonight, but I just simply want you to read with me Acts chapter 18 and I want you to see here what the Word of God says in verses 9 and 10:

*9) Paul one night had a vision and God said this: "Do not be afraid, but go on speaking, and do not be silent. 10) "for I am with you and no one will attack you to harm you; for I have many people in this city who are My people."*

And then the Bible says:

*11) And he stayed there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.*

God gave Paul a reassurance; God reminded him of His faithfulness to work in and through his life. And it was this reassurance of the faithfulness of God that gave strength and fortification and confidence to Paul's life, to Paul's faith and to Paul's service for the Lord Jesus Christ. And so we see a faithfulness in the life of Paul because of a dependence upon the faithfulness of a great God.

I hope that you know and are aware of God's faithfulness in your life. One of my favorite, if not my favorite of all hymns is that great hymn Great Is Thy Faithfulness, because my life has been built and forged on the reality of the truth that my God is a faithful God. Because if God is not faithful than His word is not true or trustworthy, and I have no foundation for my faith. But because God is faithful, then everything He has written, everything He has said, everything He calls me to do, everything that I'm required to do, I can do with confidence because my faith and my trust is in a faithful God!

Well, tonight I want us to consider, under this theme of surrender, 3 simple things that Paul, this apostle who was reinforced and reassured by the faithfulness of God, teaches us about this subject of faithfulness. In fact, if you read the writings of Paul beginning in the book of Romans and going all the way down through the book Titus, you will find that over and over Paul spoke of this subject of faithfulness. It was a recurring theme in His writings. And I believe that if you take those themes and those reflections that Paul provides under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that there are 3 things that we can see and embrace about faithfulness tonight. What are they?

Number one, God's faithfulness is expressed in His call... God's faithfulness is expressed in His call. The God who calls us... you and me... is a God who is faithful, and the very act of His calling is an expression of His faithfulness. What do I mean by that?

Well, you've got your hand there in Acts 18. Look over in the book of Corinthians, the group to whom he wrote this letter. We now know what happened; that he came there, that God reassured him there, that he stayed there. So now he's writing back to the church at Corinth, and here's what he says in 1 Corinthians chapter 1 and verse 9, he says:

*9) God is faithful by whom you are called into fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.*

God is faithful in that He has called us into fellowship with His Son, our Savior Jesus Christ. I believe that the greatest evidence of the faithfulness of God is the fact that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us; that when we did not deserve God's grace and mercy, when God could have said to us, "that's it! [clap] I'm done with you; [clap] all of you!" He chose not to do so. But in His love, in His goodness, in His grace, in His faithfulness he has called us and called us into a relationship with Himself through Jesus Christ, whereby we can know God, we can love God, we can experience God, and we can live our lives in fellowship with Him. That is an incredible act of faithfulness of God for us.

And so the very act of God's call and drive to bring us into faithfulness is an expression of who He is and what He's like, and He in love and grace calls us into fellowship. But not only does he call us into that fellowship because He's faithful, but He keeps us in that fellowship because He's faithful.

Over in 1 Corinthians chapter 10 and in verse 13 the Bible talks to us about the very thing that would disrupt our fellowship with God and it's temptation... the enticement to sin. And here's what the Bible tells us about that:

*13) No temptation ~~been~~ has overtaken you that is not common to man; but God is faithful and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with that temptation He will also provide a way of escape that you may be able to endure it.*

How am I going to live this life for Christ? How am I going to be kept from all of the influences and the opportunities and the enticements of the world to fall away from a relationship with Christ? Well, the God who called me is the God who keeps me. And that is a part of His faithfulness in His call; that He calls us into fellowship and He keeps us if only we will lean into Him.

You see, the Bible says He is able to keep us and that there is no temptation that can overtake us. But the secret in it all is learning to

trust Him, learning to lean into Him, learning to take His word as your truth in life.

And then, He cleanses us. How do I maintain this fellowship with God? First John chapter 1, verse 9. Once again the Bible tells us here that:

*9) If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

So God's faithfulness is seen ~~as He~~... in His call. He calls us to Himself, He keeps us in fellowship, and even if we stumble and fall, are stained by sin, the Bible says our God is faithful to forgive us, to cleanse us, to restore us. That is a great truth? Amen? Amen! God's faithfulness is seen... is evidenced in His call.

But let me say a second thing that Paul teaches us about faithfulness. And that is that not only that God's faithfulness is evidenced in His call, but God's call includes an expectation of our faithfulness to Him... God's call includes an expectation of our faithfulness to Him.

We started there in 1 Corinthians chapter 1 and went to 10, but let's go over to 1 Corinthians chapter 4 for just a moment... 1 Corinthians chapter 4. Paul talks about his life and about his faith. And the faithful God in whom he trusts has now produced in him a heart and a desire to live a faithful life. You see, the more that I taste and experience God's faithfulness, the more my trust in Him rises and as it rises, there is a sense of desire and compulsion in me to be found faithful.

Do you want to be faithful to God? Well, if you're a Christian, you do, because a part of the work of the Holy Spirit is to help me to so see and understand that God loves me and has called me to Himself, that what I now want to do is to be the person God has called me to be! That's the passion of my heart! I want to be that man, you want to be that woman! You want to be that person that God has called you to be.

And so how did Paul express it? Listen to what he says in 1 Corinthians chapter 4, and we begin reading in verse 1. He says:

*1) This is how one should regard us. As servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. (And this is what he says...) Moreover it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy.*

That is, that we be found faithful. And because we have this stewardship of life in Christ, what is required of us is that every one of us would be found faithful, trustworthy. That's another good word for faithfulness. Trustworthy.

I want you to imagine with me for just a moment that I was going to take a trip tonight, and one of you... any one of you in this room said to me, "I'll be glad to take you to the airport." I say, "That's great. That would be a

very kind thing for you to do. In fact, I tell you what, I'm going to let you take me to the airport and I'm going to ask you just take my car, keep my car, if you want to, you can use my car. But I ask you to do 1 thing: would you have my car there when I get back so I've got a way to get home from the airport. You say, "Fine." I say, "Great." You drive me to the airport, I get on a plane, I take a trip, I come back home. I get home and guess what? You're not there. In fact, not only are you not there, I don't have a message, I don't have a car, I don't have anything. I get on the phone; I call you and I say, "Where are you?" You say, "Oh, you know I forgot you were coming in today." I say, "Well, what about my car?" "Oh, it's at home. I just left it out in front of your house." You say, "Well, all right." I mean, I'd be a little bit... well, in a holy way... ticked off about that. [laughter] You know.

But now let's say I get a cab, pay \$45.00 to get from the airport to get home, I get there and when I drive up in that cab I notice that not only is my car sitting there, but there is massive damage to the front end of my car. And not only is there massive damage to the front end of my car, but I look inside and it is totally trashed. I mean stain on the seat, trash and food containers all over the car. And I even put the key in the ignition to start to turn it over and I realize that it won't even start because it's completely out of gas.

I pick up the phone; I call you again. I'm more than ticked off; I have righteous indignation [laughter] now in my life. I say to you, "What in the world happened? This is my car. I asked you to take care of my car." You say, "Oh, well, you know I drove it for a few days and then I had that accident and I figured the best thing to do was just to leave it there at the house." "You did what? You had an accident in my car? What about all this stuff in my...?" "Well, you know, I had a busy week; I just put everything I put in it and just tried to live and so I did that..." "What about the gas? There's no gas in the car?" How do you think I feel about that person? Is that trustworthy? Is that faithfulness? Absolutely not.

And yet we live our lives being unfaithful to God with the very thing that He's entrusted to us. You see the heart of a true believer and follower of Christ is a desire to be found faithful. And that's why Paul said, "It is required [tap] of a steward [tap]... someone who receives a trust... to be found faithful. If I gave you my car and asked you to take care of it for me, I have an expectation that you're going to be a good steward. And God expects that of us in life whether it's with our families, managing the relationships that have been entrusted to us with our husbands, our wives, our children; or with our finances, taking what God has provided for us to live and being faithful to manage that well, to give that back to Christ, to honor Him, to invest in His work; with our fellowship, with the church of God. There's got to be a heart of faithfulness; that we're not just here because it's easy and we get something and it's comfortable.

The Bible teaches us as believers that we're to be connected to one another, committed to one another, Semper Fi should be the very cry of the

church! And that every aspect of life would bear the imagine that in my life and in my heart I understand that not only has God in His faithfulness called me, but that God's call requires a faithfulness in me.

That brings me to the last thing... or excuse me... one other thing I want to say about that before I walk away from that. I just want to point out the fact that Paul's greatest fear... Paul's greatest fear was that he would become... or be found unfaithful. And I really believe that's the fear of any true believer and follower of Christ. I don't want to be unfaithful. Listen to what Paul said in 1 Corinthians chapter 9, verse 24. He said:

*24) Do you not know that in a race all runners compete, but only one receives the prize? So run in a way that you may obtain it. 25) Every athlete exercises self control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. 26) So I do not run aimlessly. I do not box as one beating the air. 27) But I discipline my body... I bring it under control, lest after preaching to my... to others, I myself should be disqualified. (Literally, that I should be found unfaithful.)*

You see, God's faithfulness brings the desire for faithfulness in me.

So that does bring me to the last point and that is, that as I read the words and the instruction of Paul, that faithfulness is an essential quality for leadership and service in the life of the church... faithfulness is an essential quality for leadership and service in God's church.

Listen to what Paul wrote to Timothy in 2 Timothy chapter 2 and verse 2. The books of Timothy... 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus were all written as pastoral epistles, that is, to tell church leaders how to conduct the business of the church. Greatest manual on church... leadership management, oversight, administration... 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus. That's where it all is. And here's what Paul said to Timothy. He said in 2 Timothy chapter 2 and verse 2, he said:

*2) The things that you have seen and heard among many witnesses, you are to entrust these to faithful men, commit it to faithful men...*

God is looking for faithfulness in ~~the~~... His church with His people that they would be found faithful, and that those who are faithful would teach others also. And that is the constant process that is in motion in the ministry of Prestonwood. That we would be faithful to that which God has entrusted to us, that we would take it and entrust it to faithful servants... leaders and men in this fellowship. And that they would teach others to be faithful also.

I say that tonight because that's the very reason that we are here tonight. We are here to give and to dispense a charge of faithfulness. In the book of Timothy we are told that the ministry of the church is to be supported and is to be partnered and fulfilled though the office and ministry of deacons.

The deacon office is outlined in 1 Timothy chapter 3. It comes in partnership and in co-relationship with the office of the pastor and the leaders and members of the ministry team of the church. And so tonight we are here because we are beginning a new day and a new opportunity in ministry at Prestonwood with new deacons. And tonight we want to take time with these deacons to share and to celebrate God's work in their lives, and to look at a future that is going to move us beyond anything we've ever said, done and known together in the church, because we're enlarging the sphere of influence. We're lengthening cords and strengthening stakes tonight, and we believe that God has given us faithful men to fulfill the task to which we're called. And I'm thankful that you're here to be a part of this moment and this celebration of life.

*Father, I do pray that You would do a work in our hearts tonight that would deepen and strengthen faithfulness. We know that our faithfulness comes from You. We're dependent upon Your character, Your nature, Your love. Move and work in our hearts tonight and help these men, their wives, their families, all of us, O God, to be found faithful. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.*

*[music begins]*



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