

W124_Stewardship_and_Faithfulness.mp3

[00:00:02] You see you've got to chairman this evening. And this one is to help me to. Level with you without too much strain. I can well believe. Yes. Thank you. He says, comfortable. Some things are relative you see in this life. I could well believe that folks, if they were to think about these meetings. Would say. Well, it's very evident that Mr. Welch and Stewart Allan and the two chairmen, they all get their heads together and they say, well, let's take this particular line. Well, I would very much like to tell you that I hadn't the remotest idea what chapter was going to be read. What subject was going to be taken either by Stuart Allan or by the other two chairmen, and they didn't know what I was going to take. But when I came I said to him, Mr. Allen, now my reading is the first chapter of two Timothy. But he didn't tell me that the reading this afternoon was two Timothy. And within all of it, friends, you know, without making foolish claims, I think we can say this sounds a little bit as though God has a word to say to us without claiming to be more spiritual than anybody else. He is leading us. Because we've got three fold emphasis, as it were. Well, more than that, with each speaker on the fact that we have been entrusted with something which demands accountability and faithfulness. You notice that Paul writing at the close of his day's.

[00:02:01] Use the word ashamed three times in the first chapter. He said, Timothy, don't you be ashamed of this. I am not ashamed. This man sought me out very diligently in Rome and he was not ashamed. And then he focuses all that in two Timothy that you may be a workman and ashamed. In the same chapter one, he emphasizes the word Cobbett. We have been entrusted with something that good deposit which has been entrusted to us. In chapter two, he said to Timothy, The things that thou hast heard of me. Among many witnesses, the same commit thou. To faithful men who shall be able to teach others also. Notice the order. Not adequate men. Not men. They were learned. But in the first case, faithful for all the rest is so much wind. It is denying the truth that has been entrusted. And so I cannot help but feel as a solemn feeling about these meetings that we didn't choose the readings by consulting one another. We didn't choose the subjects, but it looks as though God intends that we should have them. If he leads us at all now, not doubting his leading, I am only saying that as an argument. I remember a lady once in distress asked me if I could pray for her, that the Lord would lead her. I said I'll do no such thing. And that upset her.

[00:03:43] I did it on purpose. I said that you can say the Lord is my shepherd. It goes without saying he leadeth me. I said, I'll tell you what. You want somebody to pray for you that you may follow his leading. That's your trouble. The children of Israel came out of Egypt and although they were severely handled by God for their sins, never once throughout the whole of that journey for 40 years, day or night, when once the pillar of cloud and the fire by night was given, did it leave them until they got to the River Jordan? So don't be afraid sometimes to be conscious that although you may not know how it's brought about, the Lord can and does will feel it. So in this case, with regard to myself, just for a moment, because so many of you friends have been interested in me and I felt I was very uncouth to keep away. But it's rather distressing to say over and over and over again just how you feel. You know that, don't you? Have you seen a snail crawling up a wall? He goes up about two inches and then drops back one. Well, I don't think many people would like a bit of us now. At least the doctor that comes to me gave me a great reprimand for moving too rapidly, even taking his shirt off and did it too quickly.

[00:05:15] But that's what's happening to me. I'm making progress like the snail. I go up to and I go back one, but I'm going up three. If it's only one, you see. And then it seems to repeat itself a little bit in my experience. In March 1962, I had to go into hospital. But I was out in time for the May meeting in March 1963. I had to go to hospital and by the grace of God, I'm out again. For the baby. If I don't keep on at that. But it's one of those things you are thankful for. Small mercies, as we say. Well, now, as we've been reminded and as I remind myself and you, we have two meetings a year with which in which we are so encouraged by the way, which you folks travel and stand by us and join in with us. One in September commemorates the fact that we have here a chapel. And we haven't paid a penny for it. And it's ours as long as we like to use it. Well, that's a gift of God, isn't it? And the second is. That we have the meeting in May to make sure that nobody is without some information as to the basis upon which we build. We can't put into our trust all the things we believe. But you do know those four, don't you? And they were rehearsed this afternoon. Without a trust, may be a legal affair.

[00:06:55] And it may be cut and dried and very dusty. But nevertheless, the word trust ought to be a word that we honor. See we are a trusted with the truth. And the Apostle was very conscious of that, but he said he has completed it and you covet it. And I have kept the faith and all the Gentiles have heard he finished the work that God gave him to

do. As as we were reminded, he wasn't spared a great deal of opposition and suffering. That was a test. But by the grace of God, he went through to the end. And so my subject is going to be this question of stewardship and faithfulness. First of all, will you turn with me to the passage, which I think will be the basis of our studies? One Corinthians Chapter four. One Corinthians Chapter four. You notice how it's introduced because there's no chapters in the original first 21 of the preceding chapter. Therefore, let no man glory in men. The trouble with the Corinthians was they were already splitting up into factions. One says, I am of Apollos. Another one said, I am of Peter. Another one said, I am of Paul. Well, he said, You're not. You're of Christ. And the first move. For this integrating a work. And robbing it of its real point is to start putting one or another of the human instruments on a pedestal.

[00:09:17] I can't say. But what I'm very thankful when anyone says, Well, you've stuck it for over 50 years. Well, I have, but you see, that doesn't put me on a pedestal. Because I know about myself a bit more than you do. As you know, a bit more about yourself than I do. And so he says, Here, let no man glory in men. But all things are yours. Whether Paul. Or a promise. Or give us. Then he goes on. Or the world or life. This. Or things present or things to come, all are yours. And ye are Christ's. Christ is God's. Well, now he says, I want you to think of that. Nevermind about. I am of Paul and I'm of a polis. Now that in chapter four. That a man so account of us. Account of us, verse two. It is required, verse two to be found. First three to be judged. You notice the words that are used? This is not salvation. This is accountability. So let's look at this again. Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ. Will you say, Well, there he goes. He puts himself on a pedestal. But friends. The word minister means to be a servant. In the early days, when the girl with a lace cap opened the door to the minister of the church, it was two servants looking at one another. The word minister means to serve our savior, said the son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.

[00:11:22] And to give his life a ransom for many. But that's not the word here in this epistle. He goes out of his way, almost. To show. The depths to which sometimes the child of God may descend. He said, We are accounted as the filth of the world, the filth of the world. And the offscouring, of all things. And when he said all that list he says for years I am. Oh thank you saying that afterwards. But he said. Expected to be in that position and true to Christ. Then to purchase immunity by faithlessness. So he says, Here, let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ. Now, this particular word,

minister, doesn't come many times, as far as I know, in the New Testament or the old. What its original use is one of a degraded position, a dreadful position. If you happen to have a copy of Ben-Hur at home and you glimpse at Chapter four, you'll get a little idea of what this particular word meant in the days of the Apostle Paul. You've seen, I suppose, pictures or sculptures of one of the ships of those days. They didn't have petrol, they didn't have engines, but they had human labour. And these great ships had three banks of oars, long sweeps. And each one of those men were either slaves or prisoners of war.

[00:13:11] And they were in three banks. At the lowest one of all is what the apostle took here. Chained to the seat. Doomed if the ship was struck. He says that a man so account of us as Abdul Rahman. He couldn't have gone much deeper and lower in human society than that particular word. The next is this and stewards. At the mysteries of God. Now, the next thought is, of course, the word steward indicates something which has been entrusted. For the moment. Shall we turn to that passage which we have in, I think, Luke's Gospel about the steward. Yes. The parable. He said. He said to his disciples, there was a certain rich man which had a steward, and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. And he called him and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? Given a cat at thy stewardship. So it's incipient in the very thought of stewardship that you may have to give an account. The Apostle was aware of that, as we see when we come back to Corinthians again. So there may be no longer Stuart. Then the steward said within himself, What should I do, my Lord, take it away from me. The stewardship. I cannot dig the beg. I am ashamed. I am resolve what to do that when I'm put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their homes.

[00:15:11] So he said to one How much I wish thou write down this? How much I wish thou write down that to another how much I wish out. Write down that. I don't know. That's not our savior. The Lord of that steward commended the unjust steward because he had done wisely. Then he comes back. Verse nine is a passage which has stumbled many. And I say unto you, make to yourselves friends of the Mammon of Unrighteousness. What a lovely text for a person who wants to get away with it, isn't it? But you say is there. Well, the first thing to remember is that the law didn't speak English. What language he did speak. We may not know sometimes Aramaic, sometimes Greek. But the scriptures that we have. Read just the same, he says. Do I say unto you? Copy this. Adjust it. Do I say unto you, Make unto yourselves friends of

the man of unrighteousness that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations? And the implied answer is no. He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in that which is much. Now it goes on to the future and he that is unjust. In the present he 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 you, you're the true riches.

[00:17:09] If your trust the true riches, and if you have not been faithful in that which is another man's who shall give you that which is your own. Now that's a parable and you may have to just leave it at that. But don't you see some things that we do, some things some ways in which we act have an influence on the future? Our stewardship has got to be accounted for. And the apostle Paul made no hesitation when he said, I have finished my course. I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown. He didn't say, Oh, I won't say that. He said it. There is a crown waiting for me, but not for me only. But for all them that love his appearing and act in harmony with such a love and such a coming. So he said, Here, let a man so account of us. I'm back again to one Corinthians four as steward, as ministers of Christ and stewards. Once again, I stop again for a moment, as most of you know. But we must say these things. The word steward and the word dispensation. Both derive from the same root. You can hear the words, can't you? Oikonomos is a steward or Oikonomia is a dispensation. So you see, a dispensation is not some fantastic thing that nobody knows what it means. It means a stewardship.

[00:18:51] And Peter had a stewardship with regard to the people that were entrusted to his care. And Paul had a stewardship with regard to the people entrusted to his care. And I had had a meeting together. And I do agree that just as Paul as Peter had the apostleship of the circumcision, so Paul had the Gospel of the Apostleship of the Uncircumcision and they gave a right hands of fellowship and went their way. So you see this emphasis upon Dispensational truth is involved in our stewardship. So when Paul knew the end was very near and he was very much attached to that young man, Timothy. Him. Be not ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me, his prisoner. I suppose if we could think of a committee meeting together, putting their heads together and deciding who they should elect to step into the shoes of the Apostle Paul when he was done. One of the last persons I think of was a man. Who had to be jogged along like he was by by Paul to be told, even in a letter like this. God has not given us a spirit of cowardice. The word is not fear. Cowardice. He said to Timothy, Let no man despise

thy youth. He said to Timothy, he didn't say drink no longer water. He said, Be no longer a water drinker. You see the difference? He was one of those sort of abstemious shrinking persons.

[00:20:43] He's like, Is that the one that God's going to choose? Well, you see, God chooses earthen vessels. It doesn't matter what shape size, whether it's Dresden or Woolworths, it's what he puts in it that matters. That's what that's what matters. And the only thing for which the earthen vessel can be held responsible. Is the stewardship that which has been entrusted. Whatever. Look a little closer at this passage. One Corinthians. At four when he says the mysteries of God. Do you remember there were a series of mysteries revealed before the mystery in which we find our calling. We have the mystery of Israel's blindness, for instance, and so on. But they were a steward of whatever they were. And then he says, Moreover, it is required. A is a word that means an investigation will be made and account has to be rendered. It is required. It was used in a parable. The man behind. And a guide. The word means to be found by an assessment or an investigation. An inquiry found faithful. Another point is this that faithfulness. Is not an isolated thing. There are other features in one's life that contribute or detract from it. You will not be faithful to the Word of God. If you are always thinking about yourself. The apostle Paul. If any man had something to boast about. He said, I bore. And you said you account of me as an under.

[00:22:46] One of the lowest and most degraded forms of service that he could think of. But if you want, start allowing people to say, I am of Paul, I of Apollos, I am of Cephas. You see, that's going to make an inroad to your faithfulness. So we'll watch that, shall we? We're very grateful to Eddie earthen vessel that has ever been used. To be filled and poured out. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the Excellency may be of God and not of men. All these folks write to me and say, Well, you stuck it out for a good many years. 50 odd years. Well, it's true. But you see, I could start prancing about and I could get a swelled head and away would go. My real usefulness in the service of God. And I should have to account for that when I stood before him. And I don't want to be ashamed in his presence. I do wish with all my heart that something that I've done will earn from him. Just a little word of commendation. I don't think that's wrong. But whether I'm commended or condemned by the rest of the world, I don't think that matters very much in comparison. If you are always seeking approval of others, you

won't know whether you're coming or going, will you? You may not be story of the of the man who ended up by carrying his donkey.

[00:24:30] First of all, the boy sat on the donkey and he was reproved for that then did his wife sit on the donkey and he was reproved of that and that he sat on the donkey and he was approved of that. So he carried the donkey. You see, if you're going to listen to everybody's comment and you're going to be moved by everybody's opinion, you might as well give it up. You need not be stubborn, but you could be like a tornado blade. You could be bent double without breaking. That's the character. That's the spirit. So God gave every one of us here in our own capacity, in the places where God has put us, not merely to strive to be learned, not merely to be apt to teach, which we should be if we are doing it, but first and foremost to be faithful. It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful. And so the apostle could write of one in the epistle to the Colossians. He is a faithful minister. He could write of Timothy, who was a faithful minister. Oh, what a commendation to have from a man like Paul that you are faithful to that which has been committed to your trust. So one of the things that we seek to do in these main meetings is to remember that we have a trust and that we have a body of truth.

[00:26:05] Not that it's been invented by Huberty, but there it is for all to read and all to see. And we cannot play fast and loose with it for any sakes. Whatever. I do remember the great tag I had for a moment when I first stepped into this chapel. We have been wanderers on the face of the earth for years and at long last. There was a possibility. That we might get the use of this chapel. And I say to myself, But we have the deeds read. I've either got to make a compromise, which God forbid, or I'll have to walk out and be a wanderer once again. Give me grace to do that, Lord. And then the fears were negated because I thought in the title deeds there will be how you to conduct the ordinances. And I thought, that's going to finish it. If I compromise over that, I might as well shut up. And I should have done long ago, I suppose. But in the deeds. It simply said that no one who believed merely oratory or practiced what is called the mass. Could take any part in this meeting who almost jumped and said, hallelujah. And then, to my surprise, instead of the aged trustee being alarmed, he picked up the little booklet, the Dispensational Place of the Lord's Supper, which I thought would have blown the whole thing up sky high. And he came back for six more copies.

[00:27:50] I'm only telling your friends I'm not made of sterner stuff that never passes through our moments. Temptation, even our saviour, is tempted. But he never for a moment faltered. I'm glad I didn't. But that's not boasting. That's only saying it is required in stewards. The very first thing, all your so-called usefulness, all the printing of your books, all the meetings you have, there are nothing worse if they are at the cost of faithfulness to that which has been committed or entrusted. So he says here another thing. But with me, it's a very small thing that I should be judged of you or of man's judgment. This is taking that very line. And by the way, when it says man's judgment, that's a very free rendering of the words or of man's day. Literally judged a man's day. This is the day when man judges. But he said, you know, the day I'm looking forward to, don't you? I'm looking to that day, the day of Christ. And as long as I've got that in mind, I should not be unduly influenced by what you think of me. But with me, it's a very small thing that I should be judged of you or of Men's Day or Men's judgement. The next day he said, I judged not my own self. How do you say, why don't you do that, Paul? Well, he says, I'm not really capable of analyzing my own feelings, failings or successes with such a bundle of contradictions.

[00:29:41] He says, I know nothing by myself, and I think the modern idiom would demand. I know nothing against myself. But he said, because I know nothing against myself, it doesn't follow. There's not plenty of things that somebody else might see. But he said, I got here by justified by that because I don't see it. He the judges me. Is the Lord. Therefore 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 hearts. And then shall every man have praise of God? So it is required in stewards that a man without faithful. I've got 1 or 2 little points here that. I would like just to add, although I shan't be able to go on much longer and you wouldn't wish me to, I hope when the apostle said he took that lowly position, it was only walking in the steps of his great master. One of the most wonderful passages so far as wording is concerned is Jesus knowing that he came from God? And when to God took a towel and girded himself. In the full knowledge that he came from God and was going back again. You have to take a towel in this country is not everybody's job but out of the east.

[00:31:26] David when he conquered the abyss, he said, Moab is my washpot. Over Edam of I cast out my shoe. The lowest office that could be performed in any Eastern Bible house was to wash the feet of anyone there. So I picked up this a little bit. He

might have taken a sector. Or he might have taken a crowd. So he was the Lord of glory. Universe all his own, or the Conqueror's sword might have rested in the grip of his mighty hand, and a myriad host of angels have descended at his command. But he took a tail. Is that true? Isn't that the spirit? That should be the animating spirit of us. We are not worthy of the trust that's been put into our into us. We're not worthy. But God doesn't look at the vessel for worthiness. He just looks at the fact that you are faithful to that which has been entrusted. I mentioned about the statement of the Apostle Paul when he says about himself, Now come a bit further down, this Chapter four is a little bit sarcastic sometimes, you know, and that's got a that's got a place in ministry, he says verse eight, Now you are full. Now you are rich. You have reigned as kings without us. And I would to God you did reign. That we also might reign with you. For I think that God hath set forth us. The apostles last, as it were, appointed to death.

[00:33:24] Now, that's not always obvious to us because we've never been to the Coliseum. We've never seen men fighting for their lives against wild beasts in the arena. And we would never know that the ones who went in last, for which the whole crowd was waiting and yelling for her, never came out alive. They were doomed. Criminals. I never came out alive. He said, I think God has appointed me to be like one of those last ones. I think the goddess has forces as set us forth as the apostles last, as it were, appointed to death. For we are made a spectacle. As a word theatre. That was then. He was in the theatre of this world. A spectacle. After the world and to angels and to men. We are fools, for Christ's sake. But yea wise in Christ we are weak, but ye are strong. Ye are honourable, but we are despised. Even unto this present hour we both hunger and thirst. Are. Nike is not buffeted and have no certain dwelling place and labor working with our own hands, being reviled. We bless being persecuted. We suffer it. Being defiant. We entreat we are made as the filth of the world and the offscouring of all things unto this day. I won't read any further until I get to verse 16, wherefore I beseech you, look at the audacity of this. Be ye followers of me.

[00:35:10] Fancy telling people you've made the filth of the world and the offscouring of all things, and the criminals that go in here either. And he says, Be ye followers of me. Now that's the man that God raised up and entrusted with the truth that we rejoice in. We don't praise Paul, but we do praise the grace of God and the mercy that was extended and all the grace that was given to that man against all opposition. All defamation, all inducements one way or another. Turning neither to the right hand or to

the left. Anthony could say. Nevertheless, I am not ashamed. I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which not I have committed unto him. There's a hidden which which people see. That means that I have committed my soul into his care. Well, he didn't say that. I am, I think I better turn to the passage so that we can see it in its context. That's in the two Timothy Chapter one. Two Timothy Chapter one. He speaks about in verse 11 Whereunto I am appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher of the Gentiles. For the which cause. I also suffer these things. Nevertheless, I am not ashamed. I mentioned in passing that the word ashamed came with regard to his exhortation to Timothy. Be not thou therefore ashamed. And here it comes again.

[00:37:00] I'm not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which has been committed. There's no I have committed or he has, but that which has been committed. Against that day. I think he goes on to explain, hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me in faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus. That's what was committed. The form of sound words which he'd heard of. Paul. That good thing which was committed unto thee. So Subject was committed to Timothy. Keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelt in us. And then, of course, there were some who departed, like Fidelis and Hermogenes. And so we have. The exhortation to this man, to faithfulness in chapter two. Where we had read, he said. I'm just looking for the Yeah, I'm looking for the passage. Where does it say about the word? Oh, I see. In verse nine wherein I suffer trouble as an evil doer, even unto bonds. That a word of God is not bound. There's a resilience about Paul. I feel that he would appreciate the Cockney rejoinder for that's how this is written. He says, I suffer trouble even unto bonds. But the Word of God is not bound like that, you see. But you can't put that in a book, can you? He says, I may be in bondage, not the word of God.

[00:38:53] And so he says, Something has been committed to me. Something has been committed to you. Now, Timothy, you've got to go on chapter two. Verse one and two. They are therefore my son. Be strong. We could do we could say that to everybody. I think Emerson has a wonderful essay on Be Strong. I bet he doesn't say what Paul says. He says, Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. That's a very different thing. At the things that thou hast heard of me. Among many witnesses, the same commit is this word commit against thee. Commit thou to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also. Faithfulness. First ability to teach. Well, that would be essential.

But faithfulness first. Because you may have a teacher. A very wonderful teacher. Who might be teaching that which is untrue, but commit to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also. So I feel, if you will accept that at the Ministry of our brethren today. All on one note, the idea that we have suddenly committed, we are entrusted with something and the one great thing that's demanded of us is not cleverness nor success. That faithfulness. And it's not so much what people think of us now, and it's not so much what we think about ourselves, but what the Lord is going to think about us. Will we stand in His presence? It is required in stewards that a man be found at.