

“STEWARDS”
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*“Let a man so consider us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.
Moreover, it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful.”*
1 Corinthians 4:1, 2.

MY beloved Brothers—I might even say with Paul, “My dearly beloved and longed for”—it gives me intense delight to look into your faces once again, and yet I feel weighted with a solemn responsibility in having to direct your thoughts at this time so as to give the keynote to our solemn conference. I ask your continued prayers that I may speak aright, saying the right thing in the right way.

There is considerable advantage in the freedom of the usual inaugural address. It may take the methodical form of a sermon, or it may wear looser garments and come forth in the undress of a speech. Certain freedoms which are not usually accorded to a set sermon are allowed me in this rambling discourse. You shall call my talk by what name you choose, when I have done, but it will be a sermon—for I have a very definite and distinct text in my mind—and I shall keep to it with at least an average closeness.

I may as well announce the text, for it will furnish you with a clue to my intent. You will find the passage in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, in the first verses of the fourth Chapter—*“Let a man so consider us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful.”*

The Apostle was anxious to be rightly considered and well he might be, for ministers are not often estimated rightly. As a rule, they are either gloried in, or else despised. At the commencement of our ministry, when our stores are fresh, and our energies are full—when we blaze and flash and spend much time in the firework factory—people are apt to think us wonderful beings! And then the Apostle’s word is needed, “Therefore let no man boast in men” (1 Cor 3:21). It is not true, as flatterers insinuate, that in our case the gods have come down in the likeness of men—and we shall be idiots if we think so! In due time foolish expectations will be cured by disappointment and then we shall hear unwelcome truth mingled with unrighteous censure. The idol of yesterday is the butt of today! Nine days, nine weeks, nine months, or nine years—be it more or less—time works disenchantment and changes our position in the world’s view. The primrose day is over, and the nettle months are come! After the time of the singing of birds has passed away, we come nearer to the season of fruit, but the children are not half as pleased with us as when they wandered in our luxuriant meadows and strung our daisies and buttercups into crowns and garlands. In our more autumnal years, the people miss our flowers and greenery. Perhaps we are becoming sensible that it is so. The old man is solid and slow, whereas the young man rode upon the wings of the wind! It is clear that some think too much of us, and some think too little of us—it would be far better if they considered of us soberly “as the ministers of Christ.” It would be for the advantage of the Church, for our own benefit and for the glory of God if we were put in our right places and kept there, being neither overrated, nor unduly censured, but viewed in our relation to our Lord, rather than in our own personalities. “Let a man so consider us, as of the ministers of Christ.”

We are *ministers*. The word has a very respectable sound. To be a minister is the aspiration of many a youth. Perhaps if the word were otherwise rendered, their ambition might cool. Ministers are *servants*—they are not guests, but waiters, not landlords, but laborers. The word has been rendered “under-rowers,” men who tug the oar on the lowest bench. It was hard work to row a galley—those rapid strokes consumed the life of the slaves. There were three banks of oars. Those on the upper bank of oars had the advantage of fresh air. Those who were beneath were more closely shut in and I suppose that the lowest bank of rowers would be faint with heat, as well as worn out with sore travail. Brothers, let us be

content to wear out our lives even in the worst position, if by our labor we can speed the passage of our great Caesar and give speed to the ship of the Church in which He has embarked! We are willing to be chained to the oar and to work on through life to make His boat cleave the waves. We are not captains, nor owners of the galley, but only the oarsmen of Christ! The text, however, does not call us simply ministers or servants, but it adds, “*of Christ.*” We are not the servants of men, but of the Lord Jesus! Esteemed Sir, if you think because you subscribe to my support that I am bound to do your bidding, you are mistaken! Truly, we are “ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake” But in the highest sense our sole responsibility is to Him whom we call Master and Lord. We obey superior orders, but we cannot yield to the dictation of our fellow servants, however influential they may be. Our service is glorious because it is the service of Christ—we feel honored in being permitted to wait upon Him whose shoe laces we are not worthy to unloose!

We are also said to be “stewards.” What are stewards? Let us consider—

I. WHAT IS THE OFFICE OF STEWARD? What is required of stewards? This is our duty. We are not now speaking of anybody outside, but of you and myself, therefore, let us make personal application of all that is said.

First, *a steward is a servant and nothing more.* Perhaps he does not always remember this—and it is a very pitiful business when the servant begins to think that he is “my lord.” It is a pity that servants, when honored by their master, should be so apt to give themselves airs. How ridiculous Jack-in-Office makes himself! I do not refer now to butlers and footmen, but to ourselves! If we magnify ourselves, we shall become contemptible—and we shall neither magnify our office nor our Lord. We are the servants of Christ, but not lords over His heritage.

Ministers are for churches—not churches for minister. In our work among the churches we must not dare to view them as estates to be farmed for our own profit, or gardens to be trimmed to our own taste.

A steward is a servant of a peculiar kind, for he has to superintend the other servants and that is a difficult thing to do. An old friend of mine, who is now with God, once said, “I have always been a shepherd. Forty years I was a shepherd of sheep and another forty years I was a shepherd of men—and the last flock was a deal more sheepish than the first.” This witness is true. I think I have heard that a sheep has as many diseases as there are days in the year, but I am sure that the other sort of sheep are liable to ten times as many! A pastor’s work is an anxious one. All sorts of difficulties occur with our fellow servants and, alas, unwise stewards make a great many more than there need be by expecting perfection in others, although they do not possess it themselves! Our fellow servants are, after all, wisely selected, for He who put them into His household knew what He was doing—at any rate, they are *His* choice and not ours. It is not our place to find fault with our Lord’s own election!

The other servants will take their cue from us. A steward who is dull, inert and slow, will have a slow team of servants about him and the business of his lordship will fare badly. Those who travel will have noticed that the servants in a hotel are very much like the landlord—if the landlord is cheery, attentive, and obliging—all the maids and waiters partake of his geniality! But if he looks sourly at you and treats you with indifference, you will find that the whole establishment is of a disdainful order. Oh, that we may always be alive and earnest in the service of the Lord Jesus and that our people may also be alive! A minister must give himself wholly to his work. I have read of a Puritan divine, that he was so full of life that his people said he lived like one who fed on live things! Oh, for a life sustained by living bread! We shall not be good stewards in the management of our fellow servants unless we are, ourselves, filled with the Grace of God! We must set our fellow servants an example of zeal and tenderness, constancy, hopefulness, energy and *obedience.* We must ourselves practice constant self-denial and select as our own part of the work that which is the hardest and most humiliating. We are to rise above our fellows by superior self-forgetfulness. Be it ours to lead the forlorn hopes and bear the heaviest burdens. Archdeacon Hare was giving a lecture at Trinity College when a cry of, “Fire!” was raised. His pupils rushed away and formed themselves into a line to pass buckets of water from the river to the burning building. The tutor saw a consumptive student standing up to his waist in the water and cried to him, “What? *You* in the water, Sterling?” The reply was, “Somebody must be in it, and why not I as well as another?” Let us say to ourselves, “Some fellows must be doing the drudgery of the church and laboring in the hardest places—and why should not I take that post?”

Next, remember that *stewards are servants under the more immediate command of the great Master.* We should be as the steward who daily goes into his lord’s private room to receive orders. John Ploughman was never in the squire’s parlor, but the steward is often there. If he neglected to consult the squire, he would soon be doing amiss and involving himself in heavy responsibility. How often ought you and I say, “Lord, show me what You would have me to do!” To cease

to look up to God, so as to learn and practice His will, would be to quit our true position. A steward who never communicates with his master? Give him his wages and let him go! He who does his own will and not his master's is of no value as a steward! Brothers, we must continually wait upon God. The habit of going for orders must be cultivated. How grateful should we be that our Master is always within call! He guides His servants with His eyes and with His guidance He also gives the necessary power. He will make our faces to shine before the eyes of our fellows if we commune with Him. Our example must encourage others to wait upon the Lord. As our business is to tell them the mind of God, let us study that mind very carefully.

Again—*stewards are constantly giving account*. Their account is given as they go along. A business-like proprietor requires an account of outgoings and incomings from day to day. There is great truth in the old proverb that “short reckonings make long friends.” If we make short reckonings with God, we shall be long friends with Him. I wonder if any of you keep account of your faults and shortcomings. Perhaps the time will be better spent in constant efforts to serve your Master and increase His estate. We ought, each one, to ask himself, “What am I doing by my preaching? Is it of the right kind? Am I giving prominence to those Doctrines which my Lord would have me put in the forefront? Am I caring for souls as He would have me care for them?” It is a good thing thus to review one's whole life and enquire, “Do I give sufficient time to private prayer? Do I study the Scriptures as intensely as I should? I hurry about to many meetings, but am I, in all this, fulfilling my Master's orders? May I not be gratifying myself with the appearance of doing much, whereas I could really be doing more if I were more attentive to the quality than to the quantity of the work?” Oh, to go often to the Master and to be right and clear in our accounts with Him! This will be profitable both to our churches and to ourselves.

To come to the main point—*a steward is a trustee of his master's goods*. Whatever he has belongs to his Master and choice things are put into his custody, not that he may do as he likes with them, but that he may take care of them. The Lord has entrusted to each one of us certain talents—and these are not our own. Gifts of knowledge, thought, speech and influence are not ours to glory in, but ours in trust for the Lord alone! It is *His* pound that gains five pounds!

We ought to increase our capital stock. Are all you young Brothers doing that? Are you increasing in gift and capacity? My Brothers, do not neglect yourselves! I observe that some Brothers grow and others stand still, dwarfed and stunted. Men, like horses, are very disappointing creatures—good colts drop suddenly lame, or develop a vice of which they were never before suspected. To be always giving out and never taking in tends to emptiness.

Brothers, we are stewards of the mysteries of God—we are “put in trust with the Gospel.” Paul speaks of the Gospel of the blessed God which was committed to his trust. I hope none of you have ever had the misfortune to be made a trustee. It is a thankless office. In executing a trust, there is little scope for originality—we are bound to carry out a trust with literal exactness. One person wishes to receive more money and another desires to alter a clause in the deed—but the faithful trustee falls back upon the document and abides by its provisions. I hear him say, as they worry him, “Dear Friends, I did not make this trust. I am simply the administrator of it and I am bound to carry it out.” The Gospel of the Grace of God needs great improvement—at least, so I am informed—but I know it is no business of mine to improve it! My part is to act upon it. No doubt many would improve God, Himself, from off the face of the earth if they could. They would improve the Atonement until it vanished. Great alterations are demanded of us, in the name of the spirit of the age. And of course we are warned that the very notion of punishment for sin is a barbarous relic of mediaeval ages and must be given up! And with it the Doctrine of Substitution and many other old-fashioned dogmas! We have nothing to do with these demands—we have only to preach the Gospel as we find it. Stewards must keep to their orders and trustees must carry out the terms of their trust!

My Brothers, we are at this present hour set for the *defense* of the Gospel. If ever men were called to this office, we are so called. These are times of drifting—men have pulled up their anchors and are driven to and fro with winds and tides of divers kinds. As for me, I have in this hour of danger not only let down the great bower anchor, but I have cast four anchors out of the stern! That may be quite the wrong place, but in these times we need anchoring both fore and aft. Now I am fixed! Skeptical reasoning might have moved me at one time, but not now! Do our enemies ask us to lay down our swords and cease to fight for the old faith? Like the Greeks to Xerxes, we answer, “Come and take them!” The other day the advanced thinkers were going to sweep the orthodox into limbo, but as yet, we survive their assaults. These boasters do not know the vitality of evangelical truth! No, glorious Gospel, you shall never perish! If we are to die, we

will die fighting. If we shall personally pass away, fresh Evangelists will preach upon our graves. Evangelical truths are like the dragon’s teeth which Cadmus sowed—they breed men all armed for the fray. The Gospel lives by dying! Brothers, at any rate, in this contest, if we are not victorious, we will at least be faithful!

A steward’s business is to dispense his Master’s goods according to their design. He is to bring forth things new and old—to provide milk for babes and strong meat for men, giving to each one his portion of meat in due season. At some tables I fear the strong men have been waiting a long time for the meat and there is small hope of its yet appearing—the milk and water is more plentiful by far! Someone went to hear a certain preacher last Sunday and complained that he did not preach Christ. Another remarked that perhaps it was not the due season, but my Brothers, the due season for preaching Christ is every time you preach! God’s children are always hungry and no bread will satisfy them but that which came down from Heaven.

A wise steward will maintain the proportion of the Truths of God. He will bring forth things new and old—not always Doctrine, not always practice, and not always experience. He will not always preach conflict, nor always victory—not giving a one-sided view of the Truths of God, but a sort of stereoscopic view which shall make the Truth of God stand out *“evidently set forth”* before them. Much of the preparation of spiritual food lies in the correct proportion of the ingredients. Excess in one direction and failure in another may breed much mischief! Let us, therefore, use weight and measure—and *look up* for guidance!

Brothers, take care that you use your talents for your Master, and only for your Master. It is disloyalty to our Master if we wish to be soul-winners in order to be thought to be so! It is unfaithfulness to Jesus if we preach sound Doctrine with the view to be thought sound, or pray earnestly with the desire that we may be known as praying men. It is for us to pursue our Lord’s Glory with a single eye and with our whole heart. We must use our Lord’s Gospel, our Lord’s people and our Lord’s talents for our Lord and for Him alone.

The steward should also be the guardian of his Master’s family. Look to the interests of all who are in Christ Jesus, and let them all be as dear to you as your own children. Servants in the olden times were often so united to the family and so interested in their masters’ affairs, that they spoke of *our* house, *our* land, *our* carriage, *our* horses and *our* children. Our Lord would have us thus identify ourselves with His holy business and especially He would have us love His chosen. We, beyond all others, should lay down our lives for the Brothers and Sisters in Christ! Because they belong to Christ, we love them for His sake. I trust we can heartily say—

***“There’s not a lamb in all Your flock
I would disdain to feed.”***

Brothers, let us heartily love all whom Jesus loves! Cherish the tried and suffering! Visit the fatherless and the widow! Care for the faint and the feeble! Bear with the melancholy and despondent! Be mindful of all parts of the household and thus shall you be a good steward.

I shall cease from this picture when I have said that *the steward represents his master.* When the master is away, everybody comes to the steward for orders. He had need to behave himself well who represents such a Lord as ours! A steward should speak much more carefully and wisely when he speaks for his lord than when he speaks on his own account. Unless he is guarded in his utterances, his lord may be forced to say to him, “You had better speak for yourself. I cannot allow you thus to misrepresent me.” My beloved Brothers and fellow servants, the Lord Jesus is compromised by us if we do not keep His way, declare His Truth, and manifest His spirit. Men infer the master from the servant. Are they not to be excused if they do? Ought not the steward to act after his master’s manner? You cannot dissociate the squire from the steward—the lord from his representative. A Puritan was told that he was too precise, but replied, “I serve a precise God.”

If urged to utter your own thoughts rather than revealed Truth of God, follow Jesus, who spoke not His own things, but those of the Father. In this you will be acting as a steward should do. Here lies your wisdom, your comfort, and your strength. It was a sufficient vindication for a steward, when one accused him of folly, that he could reply, “Say what you please of what I did, for therein I followed my master’s orders.” Caviler, do not blame the steward! The man has done according to the command of his superior—what else would you have him do? Our conscience is clear and our heart is restful when we feel that we have taken up our cross and have followed the footprints of the Crucified One! Wisdom is justified of her children.

The second part of our study is—

II. OUR OBLIGATIONS AS STEWARDS. “It is required in stewards that a man be found *faithful*.” It is not required that a man be found brilliant, or that he be found pleasing to his associates, or even that he be found successful! All that is required is that he be found faithful—but truly this is no small matter! It will need that the Lord, Himself, be both our wisdom and our strength, or we shall surely fail. Many are the ways by which we may come short of this requirement, however simple it may seem to be.

We may fail to be faithful through *acting as if we were chiefs instead of servants*. A difficulty arises in the church which might readily be settled by loving forbearance, but we “stand upon our dignity” and then the servant grows out of his livery. We can be very high and mighty if we please—and the smaller we are, the more easily do we swell out. No cock is greater in fight than a bantam—and no minister is more ready to contend for his “dignity” than the man who has no dignity! How foolish we look when we play the grandee! The steward thinks he has not been treated with proper respect and he will “let the servants know who he is.” His master was roughly used the other day by an angry tenant—and he took no notice, for he had too much mind to be put out with so small a matter—but his steward passes by nothing and fires up at everything! Is this as it should be? I think I see the gentle Master lay His hand upon His furious servant’s shoulder, and I hear Him say, “Can you not bear it? I have borne far more than this.”

Brothers, our Master “endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself,” and shall we be weary and faint in our minds? How can we be stewards of the gentle Jesus if we behave ourselves haughtily? Let us never ride the high horse, nor attempt to be lords over God’s heritage, for He will not have it—and we cannot be faithful if we give way to pride.

We shall also fail in our duty as stewards if we begin speculating with our Master’s money. We may play ducks and drakes with our own, but not with our Lord’s money. We are not bidden to speculate, but to “occupy” till He comes. Honest trading with His goods is one thing, but to play a high game and run unlawful risks is quite another! I do not intend to speculate with my Master’s Gospel by dreaming that I can improve it by my own deep thinking, or by soaring aloft with the philosophers! We will not, even with the idea of saving souls, speak other than the Gospel! If I could create a great excitement by delivering novel doctrine, I would abhor the thought! To raise a revival by suppressing the Truth of God is dealing deceitfully—it is a pious fraud and our Lord wants no gain which might come by such a transaction! It is ours simply and honestly to trade with our Master’s pounds and bring Him such increase as they gain in fair dealing.

We may become false to our trust *by acting as men-pleasers*. When the steward studies the good pleasure of the plowman, or the whims of the maid, everything must go wrong, for everything is out of place. We are influenced by one another and we influence one another. The greatest are unconsciously influenced in some measure by the least. The minister must be overwhelmingly influenced by the Lord, his God, so that other influences may not warp him from his fidelity. We must resort continually to headquarters and receive the Word from the mouth of the Lord, Himself, so that we may be kept straight and true! Otherwise we shall soon be biased, although we may not be aware of it. There must be no holding back to please one person—no rushing forward to satisfy another—no moving an inch even to gratify the whole community! We must not harp upon a certain string to win the approval of this party. Neither must we be silent upon an important Doctrine to avoid offending that clique! What have we to do with idols, dead or alive? O Brothers, if you go in for pleasing everybody, you have indeed set yourselves a task! The toils of Sisyphus and the labors of Hercules are nothing to this! We must not flatter men. We must speak plain words—and words which conscience will approve. If we please men, we shall displease our Lord, so that success in our self-imposed task would be fatal to our eternal interests! In trying to please men, we shall not even succeed in pleasing ourselves! To please our Lord, though it may seem very difficult, is an easier task than pleasing men. O Steward, have your eyes only upon your Master!

We shall not be found faithful stewards *if we are idlers and triflers*. Do you ever meet with lazy ministers? I have heard of them, but when my eyes sees them, my heart abhors them. If you plan to be lazy, there are plenty of avocations in which you will not be needed, but, above all, you are not needed in the Christian ministry! The man who finds the ministry an easy life will also find that it will bring a hard death. If we are not laborers, we are not true stewards, for we are to be examples of diligence to the household. I like Adam Clarke’s precept—“Kill yourselves with work and pray yourselves alive again.” We shall never do our duty either to God or man if we are sluggards.

Yet some who are always busy may yet be unfaithful, if all that they do is done in a jaunty, trifling manner. If we play at preaching, we have chosen an awful game. To shuffle texts like cards and make literary essays out of themes which

move all Heaven and Hell is shameful work! We must be serious as death in this solemn work. There are boys and girls who are always giggling, but who never laugh—and they are the very image of certain always-jesting preachers. I like an honest laugh. True humor can be sanctified and those who can stir men to smile can also move them to weep. But even this has limits which the foolish soon exceed. Be seriously in earnest. Live like men who have something to live for and preach like men to whom preaching is the highest exercise of their being! Our work is the most important under Heaven, or else it is sheer imposture! If you are not earnest in carrying out His instructions, your Lord will give His vineyard to another, for He will not put up with those who turn His service into trifling.

When we *misuse our Master’s property*, we are false to our trust. We are entrusted with a certain amount of talent, strength and influence—and we have to use this trust money with a single purpose. Our purpose is to promote the Master’s honor and Glory. We are to seek God’s Glory and nothing else. By all means, let every man use his best influence on the right side in politics—but no minister has liberty to use his position in the Church to promote party ends! I do not censure workers for temperance, but even this admirable purpose must not push out the Gospel! I trust it never does. I hold that no minister has a right to use his ability or office to cater for the mere amusement of the multitude. The Master has sent us to win souls—all is within the compass of our commission which tends towards that—but that is chiefly our work which drives directly and distinctly at that end. The danger lies at this time in setting up theatricals, semi-theatricals, concerts, and so forth. Until I see that the Lord Jesus Christ has set up a theater, or planned a miracle play, I shall not think of emulating the stage or competing with the music hall! If I do my own business, by preaching the Gospel, I shall have enough to do. One objective is enough for most men—one such as ours is enough for any minister, however many his talents, however versatile his mind.

If we would be faithful as stewards, *we must not neglect any one of the family*, nor neglect any portion of the estate. I wonder whether we practice a personal observation of our hearers. Our beloved friend, Mr. Archibald Brown, is right when he says that London needs not only house-to-house visitation, but room-to-room visitation! We must, in the case of our people, go further and practice man-to-man visitation. By personal contact, alone, can certain persons be reached. If I had a number of bottles before me, and were to play upon them with a fire-engine, how much of the water would be lost? If I want to make sure of filling them, I must take them up, one by one, and carefully pour the liquid into them. We must watch over our sheep, one by one. This is to be done not only by personal talk, but by personal prayer. Dr. Guthrie says that he called upon a sick man who greatly refreshed his soul, for he told him that he was known to accompany his minister in his visits. “While I lie here, I shall follow you in your visitation. I keep on *remembering* house after house in my prayer, and I pray for the man, his wife, his children and all who dwell with him.” Thus, without moving a step, the sick saint visited Macfarlane, and Douglas, and Duncan, and all the others whom his pastor called to see! We ought thus to beat the bounds of our parish and go round and round our congregations, forgetting none, despairing of none, bearing all upon our hearts before the Lord. Especially let us think of the poor, the crotchety, the desponding. Let our care, like the hurdles of a sheepfold, enclose all the flock!

Another thing must not be overlooked. In order to faithfulness *we must never connive at evil*. This injunction will be warmly commended by certain Brothers whose only notion of pruning a tree is to cut it down. A gardener comes to a gentleman’s house and when he is told that the shrubs are a little overgrown, he answers, “I will see to it.” In a few days you walk round the garden. He has seen to it with a vengeance! He has done the garden, and it is done for! Some persons cannot learn the balance of virtues—they cannot kill a mouse except by burning down the barn! Did I hear you say, “I was faithful, I never connived at evil”? So far so good! But may it not happen that by a bad temper you produced more evil than that which you destroyed? Yield in all things personal, but be firm where truth and holiness are concerned! We must be faithful, lest we incur the sin and penalty of Eli. Be honest to the rich and influential. Be firm with the wavering and unsteady, for the blood of these will be required at our hands. Brothers, you will need all the wisdom and Grace you can get in order to fulfill your duties as pastors! There is an adaptation to rule men which would seem to be quite absent from certain preachers—and the place of it is supplied by an adaptation to set a house on fire, for they scatter firebrands and burning coals wherever they go. Be you not like they! Strive not, and yet wink not at sin!

Some neglect their obligations as stewards by *forgetting that the Master is coming*. “He will not come yet,” whisper some. “There are so many prophecies to be fulfilled and it is even possible that He will not come at all, in the vulgar sense of the term. There is no particular need for us to make haste.” Ah, my Brothers, it is the unfaithful servant who says,

“My Lord delays his coming.” This belief allows him to put off labor and travail. The servant will not clean the room by daily duty because the master is away—and she can have a great clean up, in the form of a revival, before her lord arrives. If we would each feel that each day may be our last day, we would be more intense in our work. While preaching the Gospel, we may someday be interrupted by the blast of the trumpet, and the cry, “Behold, the Bridegroom comes; go you out to meet Him!” This expectation will tend to quicken our pace. The time is short, our account is near—our Lord is at the door! We must work with all our might. We must not be eye-servants, except in this sense—that we labor in the Lord’s Presence since He is so near!

I am impressed with the rapid flight of time, the swift approach of the last great audit. These annual conferences return so speedily! To some of us it seems only a day or two since that of 1886—the last of them hastens on. I shall soon be giving in the account of my stewardship, or, if I should survive for a while, others of you may be summoned to meet your Lord. You will soon go home to your Lord if your Lord does not soon come to you! We must work on from hour to hour with our eyes upon the audit, that we may not be ashamed of the record which will be found in the volume of the book.

The *reward* of faithful stewards is exceedingly great—let us aspire to it. The Lord will make the man who was faithful in a few things to be ruler over many things. That is an extraordinary passage where our Lord says, “Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when He comes, shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that He shall gird Himself and make them to sit down to meat, and He will come forth and serve them.” It is wonderful that our Lord has already served us, but how can we comprehend that He will serve us again? Think of Jesus rising up from His Throne to wait upon us! “Behold,” He cries, “here comes a man who served Me faithfully on earth! Make way for him, you angels, and principalities, and powers! This is the man whom the King delights to honor.” And to our surprise, the King girds Himself and waits upon us! We are ready to cry, “Not so, my Lord.” But He must and will keep His Word! This unspeakable honor He will pay to His true servants. Happy man to have been the poorest and most despised of ministers, to be now served by the King of kings!

Beloved Brothers, we are bound to go forward, cost us what it may, for we dare not go back—we have no armor for our backs. We believe ourselves to be called to this ministry and we cannot be false to the call. If I must be a lost soul, let me be lost as a thief, a blasphemer, or a murderer rather than as an unfaithful steward to the Lord Jesus! This is to be a Judas, a son of perdition, indeed! Remember, if any of you are unfaithful, you win for yourselves a superfluity of condemnation. You were not forced to be ministers. You were not forced to enter upon this sacred office. By your own choice you are here. In your youth you aspired to this holy thing and thought yourselves happy in attaining your desire. Brothers, if we meant to be untrue to Jesus, there was no necessity to have climbed this sacred rock in order to multiply the horrors of our final fall! We could have perished quite sufficiently in the ordinary ways of sin. What need to qualify ourselves for a greater condemnation? This will be a dreadful result if this is all that comes of our college studies and our burning of the midnight oil in acquiring knowledge. My heart and my flesh tremble while I contemplate the possibility of any of us being found guilty of treachery to our charge and treason to our King! May the good Lord so abide with us, that at the last we may be clear of the blood of all men! It will be seven heavens in one to hear our Master say, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

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