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Campbell Chapel Free
Will Baptist Church

Bob Bradley

What is our mission?

**TO BOLDLY DECLARE
THE WORD OF GOD**

CAMPBELL CHAPEL FWBC - SERMON

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Sunday, June 7, 2009

Bob Bradley

I Corinthians 4:1-5

1 Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.

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.

4 For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.

5 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 the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.

Paul visited Corinth in his second missionary journey; if my mind serves me correctly. He established a church here at Corinth. Corinth was a very wealthy place. Corinth was also very wicked. Those who lived there lived very loose lives. As far as the eye goes to look at it would have been wonderful place to look at, but it was a very wicked place. Many people traveled through there. A lot of money came through there. There are a lot of different things we could talk about at Corinth, but we don't want to talk about that tonight.

What I do want to mention in passing here is that it was a very wicked place. When you read history about Corinth at this time, they had all kinds of different things that they did, as far as, sinful amusements that they did. Even the women that lived there; when you mentioned a Corinthian lady or girl that lived there then it was automatically thought that they were immoral. When you mention the Corinthian parties, suppers, or dinners that they had were very immoral; the things that they did. Even in the world during that time, if you mentioned the city of Corinth, then it wasn't a nice place to talk about.

However, that is where the Word of God is needed. God sends and allows the Apostle Paul to go there. He spends some time there. He establishes a church there; a church that did very well. They had issues. Every church has issues. In the book of I Corinthians, we can read—I don't preach much from the book of Corinthians. I don't know why. You read through it. It is a wonderful book to study. As I thought today, it is a book that we should probably study through once a year. Take it verse by verse and look at it. Because when we look at the book of Corinthians, and we look at the problems that the church at Corinth was facing and how that the Apostle Paul instructed these folks to handle the problems then the problems they were having are the same problems we are having today.

The church at Corinth was a carnal church. There were a lot of carnal people in Corinth and many people that never grew up much. They had never matured much even though the gospel was preached there. God did a great work there. Many people were saved there, but there were people that never grew much in their Christian life.

Immature Christian people you can attribute for the majority of the problems in any church in America or any church in the world today. You can attribute the majority of the problems, divisions, and every situation that arises to people that are immature spiritually. People who are spiritual can work out things. They don't get offended when someone doesn't shake hands with them. Many different things can go there, but that is not what we are going to talk about tonight. Spiritually minded people look at situations differently than do immature people. It's great to grow up spiritually. It's great to get in a place in our lives that we can pass or get beyond baby things. Isn't it? It's great to get there. We were all there at one time. Everybody here tonight, everybody that is listening to me tonight if you are not there tonight you were there at one time; we were very childish in our Christian life. Some may still yet be there tonight. However, if you are past that then you need to thank God for that because it makes life a lot easier to live. You are a whole lot easier to get along with. Truth? I am too.

They were having all kinds of issues here. One of the issues they were having again was caused by being spiritually immature; there were all kinds of them here but I'm just going to talk about one of them for a very short time tonight. We see this somewhat today. Some of the folks were saved when Paul, no doubt, was preaching. Therefore, some of the people thought that there was nobody like Paul. Some of the folks were saved when Apollos was preaching. They thought that there wasn't anybody like Apollos. Some of them were, no doubt, Peter was preaching or some of the others were preaching and they thought that just because they were saved on this particular night when this individual was preaching then they thought that this guy was better than this guy. Therefore, they started judging people and especially preachers, and the pastors and ministers that were there. They were judging them but they were not looking at things in a right way.

We do that a lot. We judge people. The majority of the time when we judge people, we judge them wrong. We all do that a lot of times. We judge people and we look at people and we look at them wrong. We look at ministries today, I was thinking about one earlier that has probably hundreds or maybe even thousands of buildings on the area that they are at. They have four or five hundred acres that they own. It scatters everywhere. We look at that kind of a ministry and we want to think "Hey, God must be doing some great things there." He may be. Also, we look at this guy down here pasturing a church that has 12 people in it that is struggling to pay the bills. It may not necessarily be the prettiest building in the community. We look at this ministry over here then we look at this ministry over here and we get in our minds "Hey, this guy's ministry must be greater than what this guy's ministry is because of outer appearances. Don't ever go that route, because it is not the case at all.

God is a great God. There are people that God places in churches that have twenty thousand members. They pastor there. They preach there. God has blessed them with leadership skills and has given them the ability to do that. Not everybody can do that. Not everybody can talk to doctors. Not everybody can preach to lawyers. Everybody cannot do that necessarily. However, God has men out there that do

that. Not everybody can minister to drug addicts. Not everybody can go down and speak and have a great witness unto people who are drug addicts. Not everybody can do that. However, there are people who God has saved that can do that. They are doing that. Just because we have one fellow is speaking to lawyers, and a fellow speaking to save drug addicts; that doesn't make this guy any better than this guy. It doesn't make it any better.

That is what was going on here at Corinth. It was dividing the church here at Corinth because some people were looking at one preacher being greater than the other preacher; one minister being greater than the other minister. Paul says something. Let's look at ministers for what they are. Let's look at ministers for who they really are. When you look at a minister in the light of who they really are, then it should change the way you feel and the way you act and it should change many things that you say.

Many times we want to pick apart preachers. I may not be able to speak as well as someone else can speak. I may not be as good looking as somebody else is. My clothes may not be as nice as someone else's is. I may not have the education that someone else has. For those reasons sometimes we pick people apart. Let's don't do that. Let's look preachers, pastors and ministers and all of us tonight; who that we really are. If we look at whom that we really are then we will be able to see who Christ really is and I promise you that we can leave here today; better people.

He said this in the first verse.

1 Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.

Do you know what Paul says here? Let people—people were judging Paul and people were judging Apollos, Stephen, Peter and all these other guys who were here. They were being judged here, but they were not being judged rightly. He says, "Let a man so account..." In other words, let a man look at us or let a man judge us for whom that we really are because he said here; "...as the ministers of Christ..." Do you know what the word "minister" here means? It's a word that probably you never thought about before. The word "minister" means "a low rower." That is what the word in the Greek means. "A low rower" and that is not somebody sitting on the back seat necessarily. The word "minister" was applied to the individual who were slaves and sat in the bottom of the big ships that were out on the ocean. They were chained to whatever they were sitting on. They had the oars that went through the sides of the ship and they sat down there and they rowed.

Paul says, you look at us, you judge us, and you give an account for us as the ministers of Christ. Paul is saying here; you look at us as who we really are. We are just low rowers. We are just slaves. That is all that we are. Do you know what a slave cannot do? A slave does not have the ability to choose what he is going to do or not going to do. A slave does not have the right to change the orders of his master. His will absolutely means nothing. A servant's will or a slave's will has to be completely dedicated unto his master. Paul is saying here that we are just like the men sitting in the bottom of the ship, chained up. Do you know who Paul was chained to? He was chained to Christ.

He looked at himself here. He did not get exalted in himself. He could probably speak more languages than anybody here at Corinth. He was a very brilliant man. Do you know what he did not do? He did

not brag on self. He was not sticking out his chest and saying, "Hey, how much I know." He looked at himself as being a low-rower, sitting at the bottom of a ship, chained up down there. He was chained up to Christ. He knew who his master was. Paul was not the master of the ship. He was not the one directing the ship. He was just a rower, rowing the ship. That is all that he was.

Friend listen. That is good for you and me. That is good for preachers but that is good for all of us to understand that we are not the master of the ship. We are to be servants. We are to be slaves. We are to be chained up to Christ. We should surrender our will to His will. We should be doing whatever He says.

If the ship needs to go this way; He directs the ship to go that way then you and I need to be rowing. We don't need to be sitting on the deck up there in the lawn chair whining about going this direction. Do we? We do that a lot. "I don't like this direction, Lord. So, I am just going to sit in this lawn chair and whine." Go ahead. You are going to get sunburned. You can go up there and sit if you want to but you are going to get sunburned. Do you know what is going to happen after awhile? The sun is going to bake you and after awhile you are going to dry up. That is what is going to happen to you.

Paul says we are just ministers. We are just ministers. We are just people here. We are just servants. We are just slaves. That is all that we are. They were judging these men because maybe one could speak better than the others.

Friend, let's don't ever do that. Listen, anybody that has been called of Almighty God; if you are saved tonight, then we are chained to Christ. We are slaves. Again, if we are living in the will of God tonight, then we have surrendered our will unto Him. We are just rowers; that's all that we are. We are not the master of the ship. We don't own the ship. It's not my business which direction the ship is going. However, it is my responsibility to row. It's your responsibility to row. It's all of our responsibilities to row. Do you know what you can do? You can take 20 men and put them down there rowing; ten on one side and ten on the other; you can get somewhere and people don't tire out quickly. However, if you put two down there; one on one side and one on the other side, you have one rowing and...if you have two rowing, one on each side, the other eighteen just sitting looking around then do you know what happens. You don't get very far. You will kill two of them while the other eighteen are sitting there.

Paul says, "We are just servants is all that we are. Look at us that way." Look at us as just being servants. We are low-rowers. We are just like the slaves that sit in the bottom of the ship. We just need to be rowing. That's all that we need to be doing. He goes on and says this here.

He also uses the word "stewards." The steward was also a slave. Joseph was a steward. Do you remember Joseph? He was a steward in the house of Potiphar. Do you remember him? He was a steward there. Joseph was a slave, but yet he was a steward. A steward was someone over the entire estate of somebody else. Just like Joseph was over the entire estate of Potiphar; Paul is saying here that hey, we are stewards. A steward was a slave but in a lot of ways he was like the ones that were low-rowers, but in a different way. A fellow that was over an estate, a steward, he was over the entire estate of his master. Everything that his master owned, he was over that. He had a little more freedom

than an ordinary slave. If you read about Potiphar; he did not really know what he owned until he asked Joseph.

Paul says not only are we ministers, but we also a steward. He is a steward of something, just like a steward that is over worldly things. A steward was someone that the master of the house or the fellow that owned the estate; he did not oversee it, or he did not have his thumb upon him every day. He was not looking over his shoulder every day. He gave him some freedom. He is the steward of something. He says he is the steward of the mysteries of Almighty God. He says, we are low-rowers but we are also stewards. God has placed over something.

I thought about this today. Every one of us should have a mission. Every one of us should have a mission.

Since God has saved us, He has made us ministers. Every one of us is a steward. No. We all can't preach, and we can't do a lot of different things. However, we all can row. We all can work. He uses the word stewards here. We are stewards of the mysteries of God. He is talking about as you and I read and study the Bible; God will bless us. God will give us understanding about things. The un-saved don't understand the Word of God. They don't understand anything about the Bible. They don't understand anything about that at all. You and I and everyone who has been saved are stewards of that. It is our responsibility to take care of that.

What is our mission? TO BOLDLY DECLARE THE WORD OF GOD

That's our mission. That is our responsibility. That is our mission. We don't have to bow our heads and we don't have to be ashamed to tell anybody what the Bible says. We don't have to be ashamed of that. We should boldly proclaim that. We are stewards of that. Why don't we want to share it? God gave us that ability. God gave us that responsibility, to watch over that, to make sure that is protected.

A steward's responsibility was to take care of something that was valuable. The Word of God is the most valuable we have and it is our responsibility to protect that. Truth?

There are many folks today—there are many Virus's around. They have their Bible-blasters out and want to destroy the Word of God. *(That will make sense to you down through the week. Virus was a character in the Bible school skits.)*

There are many folks around who wants to destroy the Word of God. We are stewards of that. Not only are we rowers, but we are stewards. We are the overseers. God has given us that authority, that right. No. It doesn't give us the right to stick our chest and brag who that we are and what that we are. No. However, we have the responsibility to protect what belongs to our master and that is His Holy Infallible Word and we need to protect it. We need to proclaim it boldly. We don't have anything to be quiet about. We don't have anything to be ashamed of.

When people ask me about what the Word of God says about a situation, the majority of the time they are asking you about something controversial. When you answer it according to the Word of God, most of the time they are not going to like it. They are going separate you from their company. They are

going to label you as a fanatic or crazy guy. That's okay. That is alright because we are not going to be standing before men in judgment.

2 Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.

Again a steward was a man that would oversee someone's estate. Get this. Talking again about preachers, ministers; you will not find in there anywhere where it says that you are required to be intelligent. Does it say that in there anywhere? It does not say that you are required to have a lot of money. It does not say that you are required to this or that, but it says **YOU ARE REQUIRED TO BE FAITHFUL.**

That is the requirement for a steward; for someone that is placed over someone's estate. You and I have been placed over the Word of God and the mysteries of the Word of God; things that have been revealed in the Word of God. That is what we are to be stewards over. You and I are to be faithful in that. We are to be faithful in that whether people agree with us or whether they don't agree with us. When people shun us and when people shame us, when people reject us; it does not matter we still yet need to be faithful. We are still yet to be faithful.

The word "faithful" means "to be firm in adherence." The word "adherence" means "to remain loyal." Faithful—it means "to be firm in whatsoever one is bound to by duty or by promise."

We are to be bound by that. We have a duty. We have a responsibility. To be faithful is a responsibility that we have. We have been born again. We are chained to Him. We are servants of Him. We have a responsibility, we are bound to Him. We have been born into His family, so we are part of His family. Therefore, we have an obligation to protect that which belongs unto our Father. We have that responsibility. Everyone tonight, sitting here tonight, every one listening to me tonight; we have a responsibility to know the Word of God. We are responsible to know the Word of God; that is why I want us to read it. That is why I want us to look at it. **TO KNOW THE WORD OF GOD.** That is our responsibility.

Someone mentioned about our kids a little while ago; we have a great bunch of young people. Do you know why we have a great bunch of kids? It is because we have a great bunch of parents. That filters down. That filters down from parents to kids. If you have a bunch of deadbeat parent then the kids are going to be out of control. That is true.

I thank God that I was taught to respect mom and dad; and to respect people.

People are just people. We all have basically the same type of blood running through our veins. We might have different color of hair. We might have different body make-ups. We might have all kinds of things but we are just people. We are blessed.

He says it's required. A requirement—if we are going to be a steward the requirement is to be faithful.

The question that we need to ask ourselves tonight is "**Are we being faithful?**"

Are we really at the bottom of the ship rowing? Are we sitting upon the deck watching the waves?

Are we sitting up there just watching the waves go by? Are we really busy doing something for God?

Are we being faithful? What are we doing?

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.

Paul looked at the guys that was there judging him and says "Hey, I really don't care if you judge me." He says here, "It's a very small thing if you judge me."

Paul is saying in his own mind and to these folks here; I don't really care if you judge me. Paul was human. I guarantee you that there were things said to Paul that hurt him. He had feelings just like everybody else. However, he was not going to allow what people thought and said about him to dictate how he lived and what he done. He wasn't worrying about that. It did not say that it did not mean anything to him but he did say that it was a very small thing to him.

You learn that if you are going to work and do anything for God there is always going to be some odd ball that is going to oppose everything that you do. It does not matter who they are. If they oppose the work of Jesus Christ; don't you think they are going to oppose you? If you are living in the will of God; if you are a faithful steward then they are going to oppose you. They are going to say things that are very hurtful and harmful. We have to get beyond that and understand that is going to happen.

Paul says that is a very small thing for you to judge me.

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.

In other words, Paul says, I don't sit around and evaluate my own ministry. I don't sit around and evaluate all the success that I may or may not be having. Paul says, I don't even do it and for you to do it—it is a very small thing to me. If you are sitting around evaluating how I speak or what I talk about or how I talk, if you are evaluating me on the basis of how many people are being saved and that part of my ministry; if you are evaluating me that really does not mean a whole lot to me. He says here, I don't evaluate my ministry that way either. Did Paul say that he never looked at anything he did? No. that is not what he is saying. Paul did not sit around and look at his life as being a success or failure on how many people he seen saved. You cannot base faithfulness on numbers.

If that was the case then Noah was a terrible failure. Truth? If that were true then we could down through the scriptures and we could name a bunch of people that were absolute failures in life if we went by numbers. Faithfulness has nothing to do with numbers. Sure we will some people saved. Sure, when people are faithful then God will bless. Absolutely. However, if you have a guy sitting over here seeing a hundred a week saved then do you know what we should be doing? We should be praising the Lord for that. If we are not seeing half that saved, do you know what we should be doing for the guy down the road? We should be praying for him. Ask God to continue to bless him. Do you know why? Because we are working for the same thing and that is to see people get saved. They may go to a

different kind of a church than what we call... They may look at things a bit different than we look at things, they may practice some things that we don't necessarily like, but if people are being saved then let's praise God. People being born into the family of God; let's don't sit around and criticize them. Let's don't sit around and find fault with them, but let's be praising God for them and asking God to bless them.

Paul says I don't even judge my own ministry in the light that you guys are.

4 For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.

In other words, Paul is saying; I can look at my own life and I know that there is nothing in my own life that is condemning me. I know that my conscious is right before Almighty God. I know that there is nothing in my life that is not pleasing to God, but that still does not justify me.

Do you know what Paul knew? Paul knew that it was not his judgment that was going to matter when life came to an end. Paul understood that it was not what he thought about himself that was going to matter when life came to an end but it was what the Lord thought [knows] that was going to matter. We get all mixed up sometimes.

There is a fine line between looking at what we are doing and righteously looking at ourselves and the direction that we are going. What I mean by that is this. Many times we say that I know there is not anything between me and God, but a lot of times our conscious has been so seared and our hearts so hardened that we wouldn't know if there was anything between us and God or not. On the flip side of that we look at people going the other direction and bragging on themselves and different things.

However, what I want us to know tonight is that Paul is saying "I know there is nothing between me and God. I know that my life is pure between me and God. I know that He is blessing my life. I know that the Spirit of God is within me. I know that He leading me. I know that He is guiding me. Even though that is all the case and that is the fact; that still yet does not justify me." In other words," I am still yet not going to escape the judgment of Almighty God." Man's judgment doesn't mean anything. What man thinks of me does not mean anything. What I think about myself does not mean anything either.

4 For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.

"Even though I judge myself, it does not really matter, because it is the Lord who is going to judge me."

5 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 the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.

When you read Romans 14 and some other places, do you know what you can read about? Paul used the term "the Judgment seat of Christ" or "the beam of Judgment," you have heard me say that before. The "judgment seat" in the Greek meant "the beam seat." In the Roman games when they had their Olympics; the beam seat was where the judge sat and where the rewards were passed out at after an

event was handled. It was when the games were over and you would come around to receive your medal; it was at the beam seat. You were rewarded at the beam seat.

There is going to be a day that you and I are going to stand before Almighty God at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

The people that sat at the beam seat were citizens. They did not have worry about whether they were citizens or not. That was already proved before they ever got to the game. Before they ever got to the judgment seat or the beam seat it was already proven that they were citizens.

You and I when we get to the Judgment Seat of Christ, we don't have to worry about whether we are right or wrong, saved or lost when we get there. We will be there because we are saved. The lost are going to the Great White Throne of Judgment. You and I are going to the Judgment Seat of Christ. WE are going to stand there one day and God is going to evaluate everything.

The Bible says this:

5 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 the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.

In my life and in your life there may things that you may have hid from your family, husband, wife, or children. You may have some things hid. You may do a lot of things in secret. You may do a lot of things when nobody else is around, but I promise you something; God is watching. There is going to be a day that it is all going to be made known. All of the hidden things of darkness—it pays to live right today. It pays to live right when you are all by yourself. When no one else is around, when no one else is watching you; it pays to live right, because you know why? Christians do that. A lot of church members don't but Christians do. There is going to be a day that it is all going to be made manifest.

5 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 the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.

Our hearts are going to be wide open on that day before the Lord. Everything that is there, all of our motives, why we did what we did, everything about our lives and our ministry and our stewardship is going to be wide open. There is not going to be anything hid on that day. It may be hid today. People sometimes do good deeds with an evil motive. People do that. They will do some kind of a good deed, just trying to take advantage of you or just trying to get leverage over you they will try to do you a good deed. However, on that day it is all going to be open. Everything is going to be wide open. There is not going to be nothing that you will be able to hide on that. Nothing at all...

5 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 the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.

Let's don't be judging anybody. Let's don't be putting people in categories. Let's just be faithful in our rowing, as ministers, as workers, as slaves, as stewards; let's be faithful. Then all these other things won't matter if we will just do that. If you were a faithful minister, you were blessed. If you were a faithful steward then you were blessed. Your owners would bless you. Your owners would take good care of you. They would provide for you.

God will do the same thing for us if we will just be faithful for Him.

Come—