

Subject: Profile of a Faithful Servant

Scripture: John 3:22-36

As we come to verse 22 through the end of chapter 3, John describes the character of John the Baptist and his relationship to Christ as a faithful servant. The whole idea of being a servant is not something that most people get excited about. Many books have been written on the subject of leadership, but not too many are written about servanthood. People say they want to be leaders or servant leaders, but not very many want to be just plain servants.

When we think of the privilege of being a servant, we think of those who serve in the military. We think of police officers and firefighters who are called public servants because they render a great service to the public, and they see themselves as servants. On the other hand, I hear the candidates for president and wonder if they really see themselves as public servants or servants at all. But the greatest privilege on earth is for us to serve Christ and to be called servants of Christ. According to Bible terminology, a Christian is a son in God's family, a sheep in God's fold, a saint by virtue of his position in Christ, and a servant. Jesus said: "He that is greatest among you, let him be your servant." John the Baptist was such a man.

Proverbs 20:6 *Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find?* We are not called to the same assignment as John the Baptist, but we can and we should follow the example of this faithful servant.

1. THE CONFLICT OF A FAITHFUL SERVANT (vs. 22-26)

John encountered several kinds of conflict and all servants of Christ will face conflict. First of all, we see conflict with the world and its values. This is suggested by verse 24 which refers to John's imprisonment. Why was John thrown in prison? **Matthew 14:1-4**¹ *At that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus,*² *And said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him.*³ *For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife.*⁴ *For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her.* John thought it was outrageous that a ruler in Israel would commit sin openly, so he rebuked Herod, and because of that he was imprisoned and later killed. When we take a stand on God's Word and moral absolutes, we are bound to have conflict with the world.

2 Timothy 3:12 *Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.*

John had another kind of conflict that all servants face, and that is conflict with the sinful thoughts and desires of the flesh. The word "question" (vs. 25) means a dispute and it probably had to do with the relation of John's baptism to the Jewish purification practices and what was called proselyte baptism for those people who wanted to become Jews. Another kind of conflict was the jealous attitude of John's followers toward Jesus and His growing number of followers (vs. 26). This is the age old conflict we have with our sinful nature and as long as we are in this body we will have this battle. John didn't have a problem with jealousy, but his followers did and it could have affected him. We not only have to battle against our own selfish desires, but often with those who are closest to us (maybe in our own family) that could have a negative impact on us.

2. THE CONTENTMENT OF A FAITHFUL SERVANT (vs. 27-29)

John had a good heart and gave a powerful answer to his disciples. He knew who he was and he knew who Jesus was and he was content with that. John understood that Jesus is the heavenly bridegroom and the church is the bride. He saw himself as the friend of the

bridegroom (the best man) and he was satisfied just to be in His presence and hear His voice. Remember that John the Baptist said of himself that he was a voice in the wilderness. He was a powerful preacher, but he said there's someone else I'd rather hear. I often think about Dr. Adrian Rogers. At his funeral the preacher said "he had a voice that could only be called golden" and I heard that and wept. I wish you could have heard him in person. But how much greater would it be to hear the heavenly voice of our Lord Jesus. John said: I'm content to just stand by and listen to Him. John had complete joy because he had fulfilled his role as friend (best man) of the groom. We should serve the Lord with joy. **Psalms 100:2** *Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing.*

3. THE COMMITMENT OF A FAITHFUL SERVANT (vs. 30)

The word "must" is used in three important ways in this chapter. There is the "must" of the sinner (vs. 7). There is the "must" of the Savior (vs. 14). There is the "must" of the servant (vs. 30). This really sums up the attitude of a servant. It's all about Christ and not about us. This was Paul's testimony: **Philippians 1:20** *According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.* He must become greater and I must become smaller. Of course, Christ is the greatest, we know that. But the world needs to know it, and that's where our life comes in. We are here to magnify Him. As a telescope, our life makes Jesus seem closer instead of distant. As a microscope, our life makes Jesus seem larger instead of trivial and insignificant. **Psalms 34:3** *O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together.*

4. THE CONVICTIONS OF A FAITHFUL SERVANT (vs. 31-35)

- Jesus is above all and came down from heaven

He was not called from heaven or empowered by heaven. He came down from heaven. No other one came down from heaven to represent God. This was the claim that the Jews disputed because they knew it was a claim to be God (Jn. 6:41-42).

- Jesus speaks what He has seen and heard, the very words of God
- Jesus has absolute fullness of the Holy Spirit – He has all authority and power.
- Jesus has the Father's special love and blessing – We usually think of God's love for the world, but John reminds us of God's love for His Son.

John had a high view of Christ. A faithful servant will have a high view of Christ. That's why he is motivated. That's why he is obedient. That's why he is loyal to Christ. Jesus said, **Matthew 6:24** *No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.* The reason why people try to serve two masters is they haven't decided who is most important. We want to serve and obey Christ because we know who He is and we know He is worthy of all that we are and all that we have.

5. THE CONCERN OF A FAITHFUL SERVANT (vs. 36)

John stated this final verse as a burden. This is the ultimate reality: belief and unbelief, everlasting life and the wrath of God which means eternal punishment in hell. John knew that serving Christ was a serious matter. The stakes could not be any higher. Paul understood the gravity of serving the Lord, **2 Corinthians 2:15-16** ¹⁵ *For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish:* ¹⁶ *To the one we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?*

The eternal destiny of the people we know depends on whether or not they believe in Christ and that decisions in large part will depend on whether or not we serve Christ as we should. The way we serve Christ or fail to serve Christ speaks volumes about Him.

I love to read and hear about great men and women who served Christ. It inspires me to serve Him. One faithful servant of the Lord was a lady named Frances Ridley Havergal, a hymn writer who lived in the mid-1800s in England. I was reading about a time when she was 36 receive a little book called, *All for Jesus*. She had known for a long time that something was missing in her Christian life, so she made a fresh and complete surrender of her life and it wasn't long after that she wrote the hymn, *Take My Life and Let It Be*. In the years that followed she often used this hymn in her own devotions.

On one occasion she thought about the words, "Take my voice and let me sing, always only for my King," and she decided to give up her singing in secular concerts. She had a beautiful voice and sang with a famous orchestra of that time but from that moment she devoted her voice to the songs of the Lord.

On another occasion, she was praying over the words, "Take my silver and my gold, not a mite would I withhold." She had accumulated a lot of jewelry, but she now felt led to donate it as a gift for missions. She said, "I had no idea there was so much jewelry and I never packed a box with such pleasure." I read the powerful words to that song and thought about how we really understand it and apply it. The song says, "Take my life and let it be consecrated Lord to Thee," but what we really mean is "Take my life and let me be." The song says, "Take my silver and my gold, not a mite would I withhold," but what we actually do is keep our silver and gold and hold it with all our might.

How we need a fresh and complete surrender of our lives to serve Christ as John served Him and as Frances Ridley Havergal served Him. Such a good Master deserves faithful servants.