

## Four Faithful

### Introduction:

1. In the next week or so many of our young people will be going away to college.
2. This is a time of great excitement. There are going to be new circumstances and great opportunities. There will be grief (missing friends, parents grieving, even though they have been preparing for this time), and maybe some loneliness, new friends, and many adjustments. You may have to learn to live with a roommate.
3. It will be a time of testing for your faith. Is it really my faith or is it only the faith of my parents? You will have to make a decision about that sometimes in a hostile environment. For some of you your place of worship will be different. It will be new. You will have to decide whether you assemble to worship God or not. Where. And when. It may be with people you do not know and who do not know you.
4. It is a challenging time.
5. I want to look with you at four individuals who faced challenging times in their lives and make some observations for your consideration. But not just for your consideration—all of us here face challenges and need to consider the example of these four faithful that we are going to consider tonight.

### Discussion:

- I. Joseph. The more I study about Joseph the more impressed I am with this young man.
  - A. First, he was a dreamer.
    1. His dreams were given him by God. Make sure your dreams are consistent with God's purpose for your life.
    2. This "big picture" view of the Bible that we have talked so much about—"Our spiritual heritage," is about seeing yourself as part of the plan of God.
  - B. At first it must have been hard for Joseph to see his part in this plan. It may be for you too.
    1. Betrayed by his brothers and sold into Egyptian slavery. New place. New language. New culture. Separated from family and familiar surroundings.
    2. But the Lord was with him (Gen. 39:2-3) and blessed him.
  - C. Faced temptation (Gen. 39:7ff).
    1. Sexual.
    2. Betrayal. Lied against. Unfairness. Anger.
    3. Loneliness.
    4. Imprisonment.
    5. Even in jail the Lord was with him to bless him.
  - D. Ultimately he became ruler of Egypt, second only to Pharaoh himself.
    1. When his brothers came to buy food he at first did not reveal himself.
    2. Later he did and ultimately preserved the nation.
    3. He forgave his brothers saying, "You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good" (Gen. 50:20). People are going to sin against you and you are going to be challenged to forgive.

4. His father summarized his life (Gen. 49:22-26).
- E. If you remember one thing about Joseph remember that he saw himself as part of the plan of God (Gen. 50:24-25). See yourself as part of the plan of God.

II. Daniel. Daniel was on the other end of the history of the nation of Israel.

- A. Taken into Babylonian captivity as a young man.
  1. Challenged to give up the culture of Jerusalem and the people of God.
  2. It was a period of educational challenge (Dan. 1:3-5).
  3. Education itself is a very good thing. It is good for us to investigate and learn. But it calls for good judgment and critical evaluation of what we are taught. Recognize that you are going to be faced with questions you cannot answer. Does not mean there are not answers, just that you do not know what they are.
- B. Daniel made up his mind not to adopt the culture of Babylon (1:8).
  1. God granted him favor and compassion.
  2. Daniel rested confident in his faith in God.
  3. God granted him knowledge and wisdom that surpassed the others in the "program."
- C. If you remember one thing about Daniel remember this statement made by Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of the people: "Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever" (12:3). Shine brightly and lead people to righteousness.

III. Deborah. From Daniel I want to go back in time to the period of the Judges and note a faithful woman.

- A. Deborah is described as a prophetess who judged Israel.
  1. I take this to mean that she is thoroughly familiar with the word of God and is wise in making application of the teaching so that she can judge the people.
  2. I realize that men are given public teaching roles in Scripture. Ex. elders, deacons, preachers, etc. See. 1 Cor. 14:34; 1 Tim. 2:12.
  3. But this does not mean that women are diminished, nor do they have diminished responsibility when it comes to leading the people of God.
  4. I see too many women, for this or some other reason, I do not know, but they do not devote themselves to the word and are weak in leadership.
  5. Some men do this too. Perhaps that is the reason Deborah is doing what she is doing because men were not capable or not interested in doing this work (Judges 4:9).
- B. Deborah was a woman confident in the Lord.
  1. She said to Barak, "Arise! For this is the day in which the Lord has given Sisera into your hands; behold the Lord has gone out before you" (4:14).
  2. We need to honor women who have such confidence.
- C. If you remember one thing about Deborah remember what a leader she was because of her knowledge of the word of God and her faith in Him. Be a leader like she was.

IV. Ruth. Ruth was a Moabite woman.

- A. She was married to an Israelite from the tribe of Ephraim in Judah.
  - 1. Her husband died.
  - 2. Ruth clung to her mother in law Naomi.
  - 3. She is known for her loyalty reflected in her statement in 1:15-17.
  - 4. She committed herself to the God of Israel, returned to Bethlehem, with Naomi.
- B. She found herself in a humiliating circumstance of poverty, but worked, gleaning in the fields of Boaz.
  - 1. She found him to be a man of graciousness and kindness.
  - 2. Boaz and Ruth were ultimately married.
  - 3. The Lord blessed her to conceive and she gave birth to a son. Naomi rejoiced in this son and the women praised God who had restored life to her in her old age and they praised Ruth who loved her and said, "She is better to you than seven sons."
  - 4. The son's name was Obed, the father of Jesse, the father of David. Thus Ruth, the Moabite is mentioned here, and is one of only four women (other than Mary) mentioned in the lineage of Jesus (Matt. 1:5).
- C. If you remember one thing about Ruth remember the lesson of loyalty. Loyalty to God is first priority followed by loyalty to your family.

Conclusion:

- 1. There are, of course, many other great men and women that we could have looked at and many other worthy observations that could have been made.
- 2. One more thing. For you parents that are grieving the loss of your little children . . . It's O.K. This is what you have been planning for. Yes, things are changing. Grieve a little, but enjoy each stage. There are joys ahead that you are not even thinking about yet.
- 3. And for those of you who are wondering—yes you will ultimately get the college loans paid off.