

Be Found Faithful

March 2, 2025

1 Corinthians 4:1 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.

There was a man by the name of Hiroo Onoda, who joined the Imperial Japanese Army in 1942 and trained as an intelligence officer specializing in guerrilla warfare. His training emphasized survival tactics, self-sufficiency, and unwavering obedience to orders. After his 2 years of training, he was commissioned as a second lieutenant, and in December 1944, as World War II was nearing its end, Onoda was sent to Lubang Island in the Philippines. His mission was to gather intelligence and disrupt enemy operations. He was ordered to stay at this post, along with three other men, until his commander returned for him.

Before his commander left, he gave Onoda strict orders: 1. Avoid engaging the enemy and never surrender. 2. Never take his own life. 3. Continue fighting until the Imperial Army returned. 4. Survive by any means necessary.

These orders became the foundation of Onoda's unbreakable loyalty to his mission. On August 15, 1945, Japan officially surrendered. WW II had ended, however, Onoda remained in the jungle for 28 years awaiting evacuation orders to be personally delivered by his superior. He refused to leave the battlefield he had sworn to occupy until his commander returned. No such orders came.

All attempts to retrieve the soldier by the Americans was unsuccessful, and even though the Philippine government had brought his mother to the island to plead for him via a bullhorn, he would not surrender. After nearly 3 decades, a Japanese explorer named Suzuki set out in 1974 to find Onoda, completing the mission in four days. He told Suzuki that he would not surrender unless his orders were rescinded by his CO. The Japanese government tracked down his commanding officer-turned bookseller and had him squeeze into his old military uniform and return to Lubang. Then and only then did Onoda come out of the jungle and surrender as ordered. This is a good example to the rest of the world regarding dedication and commitment to a mission.

Ten days before Pentecost, Jesus Christ gave specific instructions to 12 apostles regarding their assignment to be carried out after his ascension into heaven.

Luke 24:45 Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, 46 And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: 47 And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 And ye are witnesses of these things. 49 And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high. 50 And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. 51 And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. 52 And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy.

There is also a record in Acts 1 that builds upon this record in the Gospel of Luke.

Acts 1:4 And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye

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have heard of me. 5 For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. 6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? 7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. 8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. 9 And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. 10 And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; 11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

The Gospel of Luke simply summarizes events that happened over a long period of time at the same location with basically the same people.

The book of Acts begins where the Gospel of Luke left off, recounting Jesus' final instructions to his apostles. This passage, much like the closing records of the four Gospels, marks the conclusion of Jesus Christ's earthly life and ministry, culminating in his ascension.

During his final forty days on earth, Jesus spoke to his apostles about the kingdom of God and the coming gift of holy spirit, which would soon be given to them. Both Jesus and John the Baptist had previously spoken about the gift of holy spirit, which was the promise of the Father. Shortly before ascending, Jesus assured his apostles that the holy spirit would come upon them within a matter of days.

As he was giving them these instructions, there is more to the narrative given in the Gospel of Mark. He was preparing them for that great and wonderful day known as Pentecost.

Mark 16:15 And he [Jesus] said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He that believeth and is baptized [with holy spirit] shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned [judged by evidence]. 17 And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; 18 [And if...]They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. This entire verse is a conditional clause which begins with "If." It should read: "IF they take up serpents, If they drink any deadly thing" etc.

By their believing, the apostles would be able to stop the ill effects of any poisonous liquid they might accidentally drink, and if they were accidentally bitten by a snake, it would not harm them. By believing, they would be able to cast out devils and speak in tongues. By believing, would be able to receive revelation to lay hands on people and heal them. These are some of the great ways by which God would confirm His Word as they preached the Good News to everyone. These powers would be available to those who would be filled with the power of the holy spirit and believe.

Did these things happen that Jesus spoke about? Yes! In **Acts 2:4ff**, first the 12, then thousands more manifested this gift of holy spirit by speaking in tongues; just as Jesus had prophesied to them. In **Acts 3**, Peter and John ministered healing to a man at the Temple Gate

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Beautiful who was lame from his mother's womb. In Acts 5, many were healed from all kinds of sickness.

Acts 5:12 And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch. [A roof-covered porch or portico on the East side of the Temple at Jerusalem where people could gather and be protected from the weather, also locale of Acts 2] 13 And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them. 14 And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.) 15 Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid *them* on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them. 16 There came also a multitude *out* of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed everyone.

This section marks a high point for the believers in Jerusalem. After Peter and John healed the man at the Temple gate called Beautiful, great excitement spread among the people, drawing many to join them. Even those who opposed them could not deny that a significant miracle had taken place.

The believers shared their material resources so that no one among them lacked, and all who needed healing were healed. Their prayers for healing, signs, and wonders were undeniably answered. The growing community of believers showed unity of purpose and devotion among all the people.

Notably, this level of widespread acceptance and response had not occurred in Jerusalem during Jesus Christ's earthly ministry. While Jesus saw great multitudes follow him in Galilee, Decapolis, and beyond Jordan, such an overwhelming reception in Jerusalem was unprecedented. Yet, in this moment, many were healed in the very city that had rejected him.

The Word of God, the message of the gospel, the Good News was getting out to multitudes, not only in the city proper, but also in the cities all around Jerusalem. So much so that the "temperature of believing" of these people who were healed was very high, to the end that they acted on their conviction to see the results and enjoy the benefits of the Word God believed.

When we read Acts, chapter 8, we see that after a great persecution of the Church began at Jerusalem. Philip, one of the seven, went down to the city of Samaria and spoke God's Word to them. Bear in mind that Samaria was considered "no man's land" to the people of Judea. Samaritans were considered "dirty," according to their traditions. God did not see it that way, and neither did Philip.

Acts 8:5 Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. 6 And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. 7 For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed *with them*: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. 8 And there was great joy in that city.

Even though Philip was not one of the 12 apostles, he too carried out the mission that was assigned by the Lord Jesus Christ. First, he went to Samaria. Next, he spoke the good news about Jesus Christ. Next, they believed! Next came the signs, miracles and wonders just like Jesus Christ spoke about.

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As we continue through the book of Acts, we see these sorts of things occurring over and over again. They would speak, they would bring others to the Lord Jesus Christ, and signs were following. In Acts 9, we see a man that caused the persecution of the Church at Jerusalem was converted to Christ. As a result, he too preached Christ. In chapter 10, we see Peter to Caesarea and preach Christ to Gentiles in the household of Cornelius. As a result, Gentiles were now part of the movement of God's Word. More and more people were added, even multiplied to the body of believers, the Church. Then we come to Acts 19, where there is a great statement regarding the movement of the Word of God believed.

Acts 19:8 And he [Paul] went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God. 9 But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus. 10 And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

The Word of God was being held forth with great boldness, so by the end of 2 years and 3 months, everyone who lived in Asia Minor, heard the Word of God. Did they all believe? No. But they heard it, and that is the most important part of this process.

And then comes that great verse which exemplifies how much of the Word of God was believed when spoken on the lips of believers.

Verse 19:20 So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.

During this time, the Word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed, and everyone living in Asia heard the message of Jesus Christ. The actions and practices of the Ephesians began to change as they witnessed the acts of those manifesting the gift of holy spirit, walking according to what they had received from God's Spirit.

We started off with seeing the Word of God teaching that "stewards of the mysteries of God" were required to be faithful. Faithful to the message of the Good News of Jesus Christ. Faithful to walking with the power of God and with the love of God.

I Corinthians 4:2 Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.

God bless you, I love you



Jack