

Marching Orders For Whatever Comes

By: Ken Ulmer

Ken Ulmer: We're called stewards, your Bible may say servant. Synonyms of different shades of meaning. What God has called you. God has called me, even in this Hollywood world. And even in this ungodly and unholy Pepsi generation microwave society. He's called us to be sanctified servants, he says in verse one, let a man let us be so accounted of as ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.

Your Bible may say servants, servants. Does the term. Does the term middle passage mean anything to anybody? Middle passage. That mean anything to anybody? Anybody? Yeah. Anybody? Nobody. Middle passage. Nobody. Yes. No. Stand up. Anybody if you know if you think you know. Yeah. The slave market, slave market. The trip from Africa to America or to the new America could have been the islands was called often the Middle Passage. The Middle Passage. It was a journey made in ships, and all of the slaves were put in the belly of that ship.

Sometimes you may have seen pictures of it. They were stacked almost like spoons in their sleeping quarters. They literally were stacked on top of each other. And they were kept virtually in the belly of this ship. These ships and their job was to propel, they were the rowers. They were the ones who propel the ships through the waters. There was no horse power that was slave power. And the slaves who are brought to Africa were the rowers, if you will, the rowers and the belly of these ships. Propelling the ships across the waters. Upon arriving in America, those who had survived, we're destined to life on plantations, for the most part, some of them, some of them were elevated. And I use it in quotes to work inside the houses of the Masters.

And they were given a sense of or kind of responsibility that was slightly different, slightly elevated, a little more than if you will, slaves that were working in the field. They were working in the houses, if you will. And they were working under the house, under the roof of the master. So there's a sense in which some of those same slaves who may have miraculously survived the Middle Passage and begun as rowers in the belly of the ship. Some were ultimately elevated. If you will. Elevated to work in the houses of the slave Masters.

Here's what I want you to see. I want you to see the juxtaposition. The comparison between a slave working in the belly of a ship rowing, if you will, and the few those who survive. Sometimes we're elevated once they got to the plantations, to working inside the houses and they became house slaves. Now put a pin in that cause I'm gonna come back to it in just a minute.

Let's go to the text. The Bible says that we are to be accounted as ministers and ministers or stewards. Let's look, first of all, at the responsibility that we have the responsibility that we have God has called us to be sanctified servants, Paul says, we are ministers. We are servants. Let's look, first of all, at the responsibility that we have, he says in verse one, let a man so account of us or let us be accounted as that word.

Account is a term *logariasmós* that means to take inventory or to figure out or to reckon. But to draw a conclusion from having received information to think through is a thought process that arrived at a conclusion is what Paul is saying. He's saying that the world looks at us, this

Hollywood weird world looks at us and as they perceive us as they as they examine our lives, they should be able to conclude that we are servants of God.

They should come to the conclusion. They should draw the conclusion. They should be able to figure out that we are servants of God. This should be. There should be something so significant, unique, if you will, about your life and my life.

That when the world looks at us and tries to figure out what's the what's the catch to our life, what's the explanation to the way we live. They should conclude, or they should account, or they should reckon, they should surmise, they should figure out that we are servants of God.

Remember I asked you yesterday if somebody followed you around with the candid camera.

What kind of conclusions would they draw?

Paul again, reemphasizes here. He says that they should account. They should. They should figure out they should reckon they should conclude that we are servants of God. Look what he says. He said that they should account us. King James says as ministers. That first word as ministers. New American Standard says as servants, one of several terms that are used synonymously in this phrase in this book. But he says this.

He says they should conclude, reckon, determine, figure out, surmise that we are servants. Now that's the key word, because it is a compound word. The root word means watch this. Now the root word of that word, servant here is the word that means to roll, as in row. The prefix means under, you stay with me because I'm going somewhere.

He says this, let them so conclude, let them look at your life, look at my life and draw the conclusion that we are servants. But it's an interesting word for servant. It's not the regular word of the normal word of the common word diakonos, which means servants, that we get our word Deacon, a concept. It's a different word. This word for servant means the root word means to be a rower. The prefix means under. It is a word that was used in military circles are in nautical circles to imply those who rowed in a war galley or a war ship, if you will, who were in the belly of that ship rowing as opposed to soldiers who fought and worked on land.

He says this let men reckon, conclude, surmise, determine, figure out that we are serving God. Watch it as under rowers. We are under rowers. He metaphorically speaks of the Church refers to the Church as a ship. A ship has an old song and the black history and the tradition of the black Church.

Old song called speaking of the Church, say tis the old ship of Zion. Speaking of the Church as a ship, Paul says the Church is spoken of as a ship metaphorically. He says that if the Church is a ship, then you and I are the ones that propel this ship through the waters of time. See we're servants of God, we're under rowers. We're the ones who are propelling God's people, propelling the ship of the Church, if you will, through time. It is obviously a position of humility, of service. One who is under authority.

What? Who takes orders? Because when those slaves were in the bottom of that ship, they were constantly under orders from the captain of the ship. You see, those who are rowing, those were

rowing had no sense of determination. They were not the ones who determined the direction of the ship. The rowers did not determine the direction of the ship they rowed, but they were not at the controls. Did you get that? No, you didn't. You still sleep. You missed that one.

I said the rowers. We're not at the control. The rowers do not determine the direction of the ship. Only the captain does the rowers do not determine the destination of the ship. Only the captain does. It is a position of humble service, humility of being under the authorities. When Paul says here that they should reckon that we are, that we are sermons, he uses his interesting word to suggest that we are those who are under the authority of God in our lives. Listen. And the direction and destiny of our lives is in the control of the captain of the ship. Is that good news?

No. Anytime you want to say, man, I'll be all right with me. Just kind of throw one in there every now and then. Okay, look what he says. He says. He says that they are to reckon, determine. Draw a conclusion that we're under the authority of God. So what else? He says? He says this. Secondly, he says that we are ministers and stewards. Another synonym for for serving. King James says, first of all, we are ministers. Secondly, it says we are stewards. We are stewards. Now, watch this very carefully, because this word for steward is the word from which we get our English word economics.

The word from which we got English word economics. It means one who is a a manager, if you will, or an overseer, one who has who has received trust, who has been entrusted with the responsibility. It speaks of one who is a servant in the house. But although he is a servant in the house. He or she has been given responsibility for managing that house.

It's kind of it's a management term, the one that has management over the affairs of the master's household. Let me give it to you again. Give it to you again. We are seen as stewards, is another word for servant, but with a different twist to it. This word for steward is one who has been entrusted with responsibility. The responsibility of overseeing or managing something.

Someone has invested trust in them, and they're responsible for being, they have been given the responsibility of overseeing or managing the household of the master. They are, in fact, often seen as one of the family, not necessarily born by blood and to the family, but they become a part of the family is what God says to us. The man ought to see us, the world ought to see us as those who are stewards.

Now look what he says. He says, stewards of the mysteries of God. We talked about mysteries yesterday. The inner things, the inner workings of God, the word of God, the will of God, the direction of God, the concerns of God, the priorities of God. We are the managers, the stewards, if you will, the things of God.

We are entrusted with the responsibility of serving to the world the things of God. A part of our calling is that we are the ones who distribute, if you will, to the world, the things of God. We are the channel, the vehicle through which God reaches the world. We are serving Him and we are managers.

We are in a sense, in control of. We are in a sense, overseers of the things of God. Dispensing them, if you will, serving them, if you will, to the world. We are stewards of the things of God. God has called us to be ministers or servants.

God has called us to be stewards, which is a dual role. Here it is, first of all to be a sanctified servant is first of all to be in a position of humility under rowers. Secondly, in a position of responsibility, did you get that to give it to you again? Serving God is at once a position of humility and a position of responsibility. I told you about the slaves.

Didn't I remember that they went from being from a position of humility, rowing in the belly of that ship, some of them to positions of responsibility overseen, managing in the household of the master. Now watch this, he says. Look what he says to us. Next verse verse two. Moreover, it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful.

I don't miss this. We just looked the responsibility that we have. Now let's look at the requirements that we have the requirement. The requirement, he says in verse two, it is required in stewards that they be found faithful. The phrase required in towards is the idea of an inward trait within, it is required and an inward trait outwardly expressed.

In other words, listen, it is required as a part of the character that's it the personality, the nature of steward. It is required as a part of the essence of your life that you be found faithful. Now, listen, we got a problem here. Have a problem because he says that we are to be counted as ministers and stewards, servants and stewards. But he only says that we are to be found faithful.

As stewards look at that. He says in verse one we're two things. When in verse two, he says, it is required that we be faithful. But he specifically says in only one of those roles. Don't miss that. He says, we are to be under rowers or servants. Secondly, we're to be stewards. But he does not come back in verse two and say it is required of servants and stewards that they be found faithful. He only says it's required of stewards.

Why emphasize one over the other? He said it is required that they be found faithful. Why one over the other? Well, let's see. Let's go back to the slave ship when those slaves were in the belly of that ship as under rowers.

Watch this. Now they were under constant surveillance. There were guards watching them, literally 24 hours a day. Someone had a watchful eye on their every activity as they were rowers in the belly of that ship. There was a guard there who changed the ships. There was a guard there who told him how fast to row. There was a guard there who told him when to row. There was a guard there who told him when to stop rowing. There was a guard there who told him when the ship was going to be standing still.

A guard who told him when to make the ship go, when to make the ship stop. They were always under constant surveillance. Flip side. But that slave of that servant that worked in the house had a degree of freedom. They were given the job, the responsibility of overseeing the things of the master's house. And they were trusted to the degree that there were times when the master would be away.

And he had given, invested so much trust in those stewards, that the steward was left on his honor without anybody looking over his or her shoulder. They were being trusted to do their jobs. Now it makes sense, because what God says, you and I are required. We are called to be servants. We're called to be stewards. And as stewards, it is required that we be found faithful. Why? Because that stewards. God trust you. He trust you to be faithful with His word.

He trusts you to be faithful with His will. He trusts you to be faithful with his way. He trusts you to be faithful with your gifts. He trusts you to be faithful with your time. He trust you to be faithful with your treasure. He trusts you to be faithful with your ministry, so much so that as he sits in heaven preparing to return. In the meantime, he says, you'll be faithful because he trusts you.

How many of you live on campus or you don't live with your parents... You don't live with your parents? Okay. How many of you your parents are paying your bills or they're trying to pay your bills? They're praying to pay your bills.

They're working in the belly of a ship, trying to pay your bill. Now, when your parents sent you to school, you made a dramatic shift in your relationship with them. Because when you were at home and going to elementary school and junior high school, and high school, they were there with you. And all of us can remember times when we were young, we were in elementary school or whatever. And mom and dad said it's time to study.

Or have you done your homework, or have you done this? Have you done that? And they were there, in a sense, overseeing us. Let me see the hands of all of you who get a phone call every night from your mom asking, have you done your homework? No one, no one, because they trust you. I trust you. And they're not here looking over your shoulder. They're not here following you every step. But they sent you to the school.

And when they sent you, they not only invested their money and their prayers, they've invested their trust. And when grading time comes, it is required of a student that you'll be found faithful. And when graduation time comes, it is required of a student that you'll be found faithful. Why they're not here with you. And they're not looking over your shoulder. You've been given a position of responsibility and no one's gonna look over your shoulder and make you study or make you turn off the TV or make you come home or whatever it is necessary to fulfill your job.

You have a position you have a job to do, and someone has invested trust in you. That's what God is saying. He's saying. He has called you and called me to live for him in this world. And until he comes back to get us, or until he calls us home to be with him is required that we be found space. Even though we have the freedom to disobey him. He expects us to obey him. Even though we have the freedom to turn from him. He expects us to obey him. Look what else he says.

It is required in student stores that they be found faithful is required. The word required suggest that there is a hopeful expectation. God expects you to be faithful. Now listen to me very carefully. God expects you to be faithful. I'm not so sure that this world expects you to be

faithful. I'm not even sure. Did you expect each other to be faithful? I don't really know today if Holiness is an expectation. I'm not sure in this Hollywood world, in this weird world, I'm not sure if righteousness is even expected among the saints.

Dr. Dallas Willard wrote a book that has a profound effect on my life is changing me. He says this. He raised this question. What do you think would happen if you announced all your friends tomorrow that you're going to stop sinning and be like Jesus? Think about that. Think about it. What if you announced tomorrow that you've made a decision? You made a plan and you say my plan is that I'm going to live my life as Jesus did. I'm gonna stop sinning a live like Jesus.

Many would label you a fanatic. Jesus freak gone off the deep end. Flip side. What if you got up tomorrow and you announced to your roommate. I've made a decision. I'm not going to stop sinning. I don't plan to stop sinning. It's not on my agenda to stop sinning. I know I am sinning, but I don't plan to stop, but I still want to follow Jesus.

Imagine the kind of response you would receive. Now, listen, many of us will allow you not to follow Jesus as long as you don't say it. Give to you again. In other words, many don't expect you to follow Jesus. Don't expect you to be Holy, but you only become unrighteous or ungodly when you say you're not. But is there a lot of difference in planning not to sin and not planning to sin?

In other words, isn't the bottom line pragmatically about saying this world does not expect us to be truly people of God. I guess my major concern is I'm not even so sure that the Church expects us, people of God. Why is it that the person who has integrity is the weird one?

Why is it the person who is faithful to his wife, and why is it they're the weird one? This is the person who values virginity and righteousness and purity is the weird one? Because in a sense, no one in this world really expects us to be like God. And yet God says is required that you be faithful. Here's the third thing. Look at the recognition that you receive, the recognition that you receive, he says in verse three, it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you. It's a very small thing that I should be judged of you or of man's judgment. Yeah, I judge not my own self. It's a very small thing. Is the word mikrós.

It means the very least. It is a, Paul says it is no big deal to me. It is the very least thing to me. How you judge me, now listen, he does not mean that he does not accept. He disregards council doesn't mean that. But his point is in comparison to whose judgment really counts. He says, I cannot allow others to set my agenda. I must recognize that I'm called ultimately to be faithful to him. Look what he says, he says in verse four, for I know nothing of myself yet. Am I not hereby justified?

But he that judges me is the Lord, he says. He says, I can't even judge myself. I don't even I don't even ultimately rely upon my own judgment of myself, not just your judgment. I don't even rely on my own judgment of myself. Usually when I look at me, I see stuff that isn't there, and I miss stuff that is there.

My ego gets in the way, and I oftentimes see stuff that is not there. Some of us are in bondage because of things that we've done in the past, that God has forgiven us a long time ago, and we're still dragging those things around with us, things that have been forgiven and cleansed and watched a long time ago. Other times we don't see stuff that is there. We don't see our attitudes, we don't see our temperament, we don't see our arrogance, we don't see our self-righteousness.

So Paul says, I cannot, I cannot rely upon your judgment of me. But I also cannot rid of my own judgment of me. But he says, the one that will ultimately judge my faithfulness as a servant, the one that will ultimately have the final word on my faithfulness in my walk with the Lord is the Lord himself.

In verse four, he that judges me is the Lord. Verse five, therefore judge nothing before the time until the Lord comes, 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 him? That's a great verse. Don't miss it what he says.

He says only the Lord when he comes and hits a point of time when he comes. God is the one who will have the final say, and he's able to do that because he is not one who will judge before the time. In verse five, judge nothing before the time. See the the reason that I cannot always rely upon my own assessment of myself and upon your assessment of me is because both you and I are operating with limited information. You only see me where I am. You didn't see me where I

was, and you won't see me where I will be. Did you get that? You went to sleep? You missed it again.

No, no, no. You can't judge me because you only have limited information. You only see me where I am. You didn't see me where I was, and you won't see me where I will be. And we all have a tendency to judge before the time, to judge too quickly, to judge with inadequate information, because because we we don't realize it, that when we make determinations on incomplete data, we often make erroneous conclusions there was one who was deemed the King of gospel.

Great gospel singer in the Black Church edition called Dr. James Cleveland. James Cleveland, that a couple months ago, it was a song one time said this, he says, please [inaudible] made a song said this, please be patient with me. God is not through with me yet. Isn't that a great song? God's not finished yet because every one of us in this room is under construction. Were like partially like a building that's going up. God has laid the foundation. But he has not topped it off yet.

And as God has called us to be faithful to Him, you and I must be careful how we judge both our faithfulness and the painfulness of others. Because for the most part, we are trying to make that judgment with incomplete data. We're trying to determine what the house will look like while it's still under construction. I don't know about you, but God is still working on me. I know most of you been saved and sanctified.

All your lives, been walking with the Lord, have your hand in Jesus hand. You've already arrived, but I still have some rough edges. I still have some spots that need smoothing out. They have some places that need to be fixed up and shaped up. And the danger that we have is drawing conclusions with incomplete data, he says, don't judge before the time. Why? Because first of all, circumstances change.

Circumstances change. Prophets. They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. You may catch me when I'm weakened down. But as I wait upon the Lord. Prophet says, I'll renew my strength. You may catch me when I'm discouraged and downhearted. So Psalmist says, weeping may endure for a night, if you hold on joy comes in the morning. Why? Because circumstances change not only that, but but but but but don't judge too quickly.

Because not only do circumstances change, but your vision changes. God has a way of shedding more light on your situation. You and I, you and I, you and I are limited in our vision. We could only see so far down the road. We are so myopic in our vision, we can only see so far somebody's in here right now and you got a problem in your life.

You got to deliver in your life. You have a situation in your life. And if you're not careful, it's going to get you down. Why? Because you're looking at that situation for where it is right now. You're judging too quickly. See, see, see, you and I because of the limitations of our humanity. The finitude of our dustness.

You and I can only see so far with just dust. Dust with just dust dust. And because of the finitude of our dustness, we can't see so far. So when the enemy attacks you and you're facing a problem, watch it now. You can only see that problem in the right now.

But God is a God who the Bible says is Jehovah Jireh, which means that God is a God who provides. Listen and because he provides he is a God who makes provision. Now provision is a compound Greek word that means it from the root word means video, which means to see and pro is the prefix, which means before. To say that God is a provider means that he is able, to watch it, to make pro vision because he has prevision. Did you get that? You went back to sleep?

You missed that again. I said to say that God is your Jehovah Jireh means that he is a God who makes provision, and he can make provision because he has provision. So that while you are wrestling with that problem in the right now, because you can only see in the right now while you are stuck back there trying to make a decision in the right now, God is way down the road. And while you are wrestling in the right now, God is handling the problem in the not yet.

And by the time you make it from the right now to the not yet, God has moved the problem from the not yet to the no longer, why? Because he makes provision based on his prevision, which means he saw you coming before you got where you are. He knows where you're going before you get there. And when you bring a problem into the now, he's already dealt with the solution before you got there. And you be careful that you don't judge your dilemma, that you don't judge your ministry. Don't judge your problem.

Don't judge your life based on where you are now. You're judging too quickly because only God can do that. And he says when he comes, he will bring to life even the motives of our hearts, the councils of our hearts. God is not only concerned about what you do, but He's concerned about why you do what you do. And only he can judge that you can make judgments on what I do. You cannot judge why I do what I do. You have incomplete data. Oh, but God does. When he comes, he says he will come and he will judge those things and manifest those things, even the councils of our hearts. Now here's the shouting time.

Watch this. Right here's the last verse. He says this, and when he comes, he says, then, shall every man watch this now? Don't miss it. Every man have praise of God.

I love that. He says that when, listen, listen, when Jesus comes, when we are, when we come to be with him, he says, because we've been faithful. I love this, he says, then shall you have praise of God. Every man is the idea of every individual shall have praise of God. You know whole lot emphasis now in the Church today about praise and worship.

You know, a part of what's called a renewal movement has to do with the great emphasis on praise and worship. Some of you go in churches then, and you've seen a shift in emphasis in your worship services for the last year or so the last couple years, where there's a stronger emphasis now on praise, praising God. And we ought to do that. But look what this verse says. This verse says, this verse says, as as we are faithful to him, listen, the day will come when he will praise you.

Look at that. Look at that. He says, every man, every individual, we'll have praise from God. Now, I don't know about you, but I get blown away just as the idea of me praising him. I mean, I get caught up. I get excited. I mean, that plows my ground. Just be praising him. That ought to ring you. But if that doesn't ring your bell, your clappers broken. You and I become involved in praising him. Look what the book says. Look at the book says, God says the day will come when he will praise you. Hallelujah.

Look at that. When every man will receive praise from God. Remember I told you about the fact that we'll call servants and stewards that there is suggested we ought to be faithful even in the absence of the master. He just gave a parable one time, talked about stewards that he gave and trusted responsibility into it. When he came back, he said this to one. He said, Well done, thou good and faithful servant. You've been faithful over a few things. I'll make you rule over many. Ah, I want to hear Him say that.

I want to hear Him say that to me. Well done. It does not really matter what the newspapers say. Ultimately, it does not matter what I think. But I want to live my life in such a way. One day I will receive his praise. Well done now, good and faithful servant. And so until he comes, I'll be his steward. I'll do all that I can by the power of the Holy Spirit to be a good manager of the mysteries of God, to be a good representative of Him. That men might see my life and conclude, if there is a man who's walking with the Lord to be faithful and not equivalent to being perfect, being faithful does not mean that you are sinless. But if you are faithful to him, you may not be sinless, but you should sin less.

I want Him to one day say to me, you've been faithful over a few things. I want to make you rule over many. And so until he comes, I'll keep rowing in the belly of that ship. Old Saints used to say, says the old ship of Zion. Talking about the Church to the old ship of Zion.

Then it says this, get on board, get on board. Next line says this. It has landed many a thousand. It has landed many thousand. Old slaves used to sing it has landed many thousand. Get on board. Get on board. Next line says this, ain't no danger in the waters. Ain't no danger ending waters ain't no danger in dem waters. Get on board, get on board. Why, why, why, no danger?

Last verse, King Jesus is my captain. Oh, there it is, King Jesus is my captain. King Jesus is my captain. Get on board. Get on board.

That ship has a destination. We're on our way home, on our way to be with him. Story is told about Teddy Roosevelt coming home one day from Africa in a big Safari. And when Ted Roosevelt got to the support in New York, the bands were there and people were there. President came off and people were shouting and they were cheering and the music began to pray and play and streamers were going off and people were throwing confetti and waving flags and waving signs. The President is home. The President is home. The President is home. They were cheering. They were yelling. They were rejoicing because the President was home.

But on that same ship, there was a missionary who had served over 40 years as a missionary in Africa. When I got off that boat carrying his old tattered bag, nobody cheered. No music played. Nobody waved at him. No one yelled shouts of rejoicing. No one seemed to be rejoicing over his

home coming and the devil spoke to him. And said see there you spent 40 years of your life serving this God. You spent 40 years in Africa as a missionary. Nobody cares.

Nobody is concerned about what you've done. You've just wasted 40 years of your life. And with tears streaming down his eyes, he heard the Lord speak in very simple words. God said this, fret not my son you're not home yet. When we all get to heaven, what a day of rejoicing that will be when we all see Jesus, we'll see and shout the victory.