

I. Introduction:

- A. This will not exactly be a gospel message, even though that is my usual intention for a Sunday morning.
 - 1. Spurgeon once told his students: *“Every message should eventually come around to the Lord Jesus Christ and His gospel.”*
 - 2. And in a round about way, if you hang in there long enough, so will this message.

- B. I am currently reading a biography about the life of *“Eric Liddell.”*
 - 1. Liddell was one of the heros of the 1981 British movie *“Chariots of Fire.”*
 - 2. It’s a good, clean film that I don’t mind recommending to people, despite its flaws.
 - 3. I also recommend, perhaps a bit more, this book, even though it doesn’t have the catchy music.

- C. The film is about the months before the 1924 Paris Olympics & two British runners, Liddell & Harold Abrahams
 - 1. The Americans notwithstanding, Liddell and Abrahams were the two fastest runners in the world.
 - 2. But they were contrasting characters –
 - a. Abrahams would do anything short of cheating to win.
 - b. And if he had not won the gold medal at Paris, he would have considered his life a waste.
 - c. Liddell, the son of a Protestant missionary, ran for the glory of God, and nothing could make him break or bend his Christian principles – not even the possibility of Olympic gold.
 - 3. They were both 100m sprinters, but because some of the early races were to be held on Sunday, Liddell refused to compete.
 - 4. Eventually, he agreed to participate in a much longer race which did not take place on the Lord’s Day.
 - 5. For years he had been training to run the sprint, but in the months before going to Paris he changed his style slightly in order to run four times as long.
 - 6. No one gave him chance to win or even to show, because he was a sprinter not a distance runner.
 - 7. Nevertheless, he not only won the gold medal, but set a world record in the process.
 - 8. The film ends with the notation that Liddell went to China as a missionary and died there in a prisoner of war camp during the Sino/Chinese war and the rise of Chinese communism.

- D. James Liddell, Eric’s father, was a missionary sent out by the London Missionary Society, and it was in China that Eric was born.
 - 1. He was a Protestant, and Eric grew up in Congregational churches and schools.
 - 2. After Paris, and before returning to China, Eric began preaching to crowds throughout Scotland & England.
 - 3. His Olympic fame brought thousands of people to hear his testimony.
 - 4. (And here is where I am going with this long illustration.)

- E. According to both the movie and the book, Liddell’s message was an encouragement to live the Christian life – emphasizing honesty, piety, courage, Sabbath-keeping, abstinence from alcohol and tobacco – things like that.
 - 1. But, after reading summaries of his sermons, my conclusion is that either Eric Liddell was never born again, or that the author of the book didn’t understand salvation well enough to explain it.
 - 2. I am about 75% through the text, and Liddell has now been a missionary in China for some time, and I have yet to read a clear presentation of the gospel with a plea to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - 3. The author says several times, that Liddell’s ministry was one of action rather than word.
 - 4. His ministry was not according to Paul’s exhortation to Timothy to *“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.”*
 - 5. The preaching of the cross may have been foolishness to the Chinese and to the young people of Scotland, but it is the power of God unto salvation.

- F. As I have said, my message this morning is not about salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - 1. Rather than the gospel, I want to consider two characteristics of the godly man named Hananiah.
 - 2. Rather than the gospel, I want to highlight things which ought to be found in the person who is a Christian.

3. I can imagine Eric Liddell preaching from verse 3, implying that this is the way to eternal life. but it is not.
4. Let's not confuse the horse with the cart – there is a difference.
5. But hopefully we can work backward from the character of Hananiah to the source of his godly character.

II. Hananiah was a faithful man.

- A. Nehemiah says, *“I gave my brother Hanani, and Hananiah the ruler of the palace, charge over Jerusalem: for he was a faithful man, and feared God above many.”*
1. Nehemiah was apparently preparing to return to the Persian palace and his king, Artaxerxes.
 2. When he had first asked permission to make this trip to Jerusalem, the queen specifically asked, *“For how long shall thy journey be? And when will thou return?”*
 3. I would guess that he had specified something like 6 months or perhaps a year, including time for travel.
 4. The wall has now been completed, taking 52 days, and it is time to return and report to the king and queen.
 5. I am getting ahead of myself, but it appears to me that Nehemiah made his report, at which time he was officially made governor – the permanent Tirshatha – and then he returned to Judah.
 6. The rest of the book describes some of the events which take place after his return from Shushan.
 7. Despite the nobles living in the city, and despite Sanballat's pretended rule,
 - a. with the temporary authority given him in regard to Jerusalem,
 - b. Nehemiah made his relative, Hanani, and the man who had been in charge of Nehemiah's house, Hananiah, co-captains over the city – until Artaxerxes designated someone else.
 8. Of course, Hanani was introduced to us in chapter 1.
 - a. He was the one who brought the sad report of the city.
 - b. He returned with Nehemiah and during the wall-building thoroughly earned his cousin's respect.
 9. As to Hananiah, this is our introduction, even though his name may have come up in chapter 3.
- B. Hananiah was a faithful man.
1. There may be several complimentary things which could be said of anyone, but this is a good one.
 2. May it be said of me – and of you – *“He/she is a faithful individual.”*
- C. What does that mean?
1. The Hebrew word is pretty common in the Bible, but this translation of that word is not.
 2. This is the only place where the Hebrew it is rendered *“faithful,”* but don't jump to any negative conclusions.
 3. Over one hundred times, it is translated *“truth,” “true”* or *“truly.”*
 4. If we use that rendition it doesn't change our understanding of the verse.
 5. *“I gave my brother Hanani, and Hananiah the ruler of the palace, charge over Jerusalem: for he was a TRUE man – a TRUTHFUL man – a TRUSTWORTHY man, and feared God above many.”*
 6. Can we say that *“faithfulness”* is a synonym of *“truthfulness?”*
 7. Might we say that *“faithfulness”* and *“honesty”* are twin brothers or at the very least cousins?
- D. I would like to be known as someone who is *“faithful.”* I hope that is your desire as well.
1. I want to be known as faithful to my wife and my wedding vows, even when society doesn't really care.
 2. I want to be known as faithful to my God-given responsibilities and to my promises.
 3. I try to be faithful to my church, because it is the Lord's church and an extension of Himself.
 4. There are many areas where we should strive to be true and faithful.
- E. And this *“faithfulness”* puts us into some very good Biblical company.
1. The Lord Himself said of **Moses** that he was faithful in all God's house.
 2. And several times **Abraham** is described as *“faithful.”*
 3. **David** is shown to be an example of faithfulness to his responsibilities even under the king who hated him.
 - a. *“Who is so faithful among all thy servants as David, which is the king's son in law, and goeth at thy bidding, and is honourable in thine house?”*

4. **Daniel** is the epitome of faithfulness – the poster child of trustworthiness.
 - a. **Daniel 6:4** – *“Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him.”*
 5. In the New Testament **Timothy**, **Tychicus**, and **Silvanus** are all described as *“faithful.”*
 6. And the Bible describes several, otherwise unheralded people, like Hananiah who were given important tasks because they were faithful, or their faithful service was recognized in the eternal Word of God.
- F. But more than establishing mere men as our examples, there is one much higher than Daniel or David.
1. **Deuteronomy 7:9** – *“Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, **the faithful God**, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations.”*
 2. To be truly godly, a person must be faithful – in every area of his life.
 3. **I Cor. 1:9** – *“God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.”*
 4. **I Cor. 10:13** – *“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: **but God is faithful**, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”*
 5. **1 Thessalonians 5:24** – *“Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.”*
 6. **2 Thessalonians 3:3** – *“**The Lord is faithful**, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil.”*
 7. **1 John 1:9** – *“If we confess our sins, **he is faithful** and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*
 8. **Revelation 19:11** – *“I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was **called Faithful and True**, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.”*
- G. These are just some of scriptures which speak of the Lord’s faithfulness to us.
1. And if professing Christians are truly children of their heavenly Father, then they will be faithful as well.
 2. If a man’s word cannot be trusted, you should wonder about his profession of faith in Christ.
 3. If someone is inconsistent in his worship and attendance in the house of God, we have cause to wonder if he possesses the nature of Christ.
 4. I believe that faithfulness is one of the products of the new birth.
- H. There is another verse from the pen of Paul which reminds us of the true definition of faithfulness.
1. **2 Timothy 2:13** – God *“abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.”*
 2. This is perhaps where the words *“faithful”* and *“true”* completely interlock.
 3. God is who He is because He cannot deny His true nature.
 4. He is faithful because He cannot deny Himself. For example, He cannot lie, because He is truth.
 5. And the reason why we should question the salvation of a dishonest person, is because the Christian, by his very nature – his regenerated spirit – should be faithful and truthful.
 6. That isn’t to say that Christians don’t sometimes live, even for long periods, in their corrupted flesh.
 7. But his saved soul – the new creature – demands faithfulness.
- I. On the other hand – it is possible for someone to so discipline himself to be consistent, honest and faithful to godly principles.
1. Isn’t it possible to be faithful to things through the strength of the flesh?
 2. Aren’t there people who work hard to wear the cloak of Christianity without having a regenerated heart?
 3. Haven’t we known people who appeared to be Christians, who later denied the Lord, or who did things which proved they were not children of God?
- J. Don’t pattern your life after Hananiah and think yourself that living his life is what you must do to be a Christian
1. Don’t go to Hananiah before you go to Christ.
 2. Don’t go to Moses’ law or a Christian book of etiquette before you go to the cross.

3. It is possible for unregenerated Pharisees to rigidly cling to good practices – godly practices.
4. I may be describing Eric Liddell, I can't be sure – but I'm not describing you, am I?

III. The second thing Nehemiah said of his friend was that Hananiah feared God above many.

- A. We have touched on this several times over the last year, so I'm not going to hammer it very hard this morning
1. As I have said, this has very little to do with terror, trepidation, trembling behind a cold sweat when someone thinks about the Lord.
 2. There may have been some of that in his youth, & it may still continue lurking there somewhere in his flesh.
 3. But the truth is, for the Christian, this kind of behavior indicates sins of ignorance and a lack of faith.
 4. As children of God, we may come boldly to God's throne through the merits of our Saviour/Intercessor – the Lord Jesus Christ.
 5. When we again sin against His will, we should be ashamed and fearful in that sense, but it should be the fear of child who has disobeyed his Father.
 6. As John says, *“If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.”*
 - a. *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*
 - b. *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*
- B. Nehemiah's statement doesn't speak of terror.
1. This means that Hananiah's **reverence for God** exceeded the majority.
 2. It means that his worship of Jehovah was not fleshly, memorized, habitual or hypocritical.
 3. In the temple services, when the appointed singers began to praise God, Hananiah's heart was right there with them and perhaps he joined them in song.
 4. When Ezra read from the book of God, Hananiah's ears pricked up and he tuned his heart towards those words, taking them in as the revelation of God to him personally.
 5. Under the Old Testament law this man, in faith, brought his sacrifices to the Lord, and perhaps he helped defray the cost of the daily sacrifices.
 6. And he tithed just as Abraham did before Moses and the law.
 7. And he did these things *“above many.”*
- C. What made Hananiah different from the majority in Jerusalem?
1. I would guess that just about everyone in the city was religious. There were no atheists in Jerusalem.
 2. And there were probably no atheists serving as missionaries in the London Missionary Society either.
 3. But that doesn't mean everyone was a child of God.
- D. What made Hananiah different from the mob?
1. The only answer could be: It was **the grace of God**.
 2. His parents were like most of the other Jews in that day.
 3. Perhaps his father wore a prayer shawl, and there were regular family devotions.
 4. He went to the synagogue sabbath school just like everyone else.
 5. He witnessed the blood sacrifices and heard the same sermons that everyone else had seen and heard.
- E. But reading between the lines, one day the Holy Spirit came upon him, blessing him beyond his companions.
1. One day his heart was changed and his perspective on life, on God, and on himself – changed.
 2. He saw himself as David saw himself – *“Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.”*
 3. At some point in this life he said, *“I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.”*

4. The way to become known as a man who *“fears God above many,”* is first to fear God as a sinner worthy of judgment. That was Hananiah.
- F. Without putting David’s words into Hananiah’s mouth, and by changing David’s intent just a little, I can hear Nehemiah’s friend saying....
1. *“Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: & in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.”*
 2. The word *“truth”* is the same one with which we began this study – *“faithful.”*
 3. David said – and I think Hananiah echoed – *“Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.*
 - a. *Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.*
 - b. *Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.*
 - c. *Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.*
 - d. *Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.”*
 4. It was after the Lord had created a new, clean heart in Hananiah that the man could become exceedingly *“faithful and fearful.”*
 5. In the New Testament sense, it was after he had been regenerated that he began to display the characteristics of the Christian life.
- G. My lesson this morning is this:
1. Don’t trust in the **characteristics** of godliness and Christianity to make you righteous in God’s sight.
 2. Don’t strive for faithfulness, honesty and religiousness – expecting these things to provide you with salvation and eternal life.
 3. Salvation is not found in the perfecting of ourselves, but in the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ.
 4. Deliverance from sin is not attained through fleshly diligence, but through faith in the finished work of the Saviour.
 5. Don’t become a missionary in order to be saved and pleasing in God’s sight.
- H. Once again, I implore you to trust in Christ Jesus, the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.
1. *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.”*
 2. And then will follow faithfulness and reverence for the Lord.
 3. After God’s sovereign work of saving grace – then we should see the characteristics of the saint of God – like faithfulness and reverence towards the Lord.