

## Steadfast!

Text: I Corinthians 15:58: “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”

This past week I had a great visit with my old friend, David Messick. We talked about everything. We talked about his upbringing, his salvation, his courtship with Cindy, his struggles, his victories and then our conversation took a more serious tone. Toward the end of our visit, I said something to this effect, “David, what comes to your mind at this time of your life, something you could leave with others.” His answer was quick and decisive. He said one word, “Steadfast!” Immediately, my mind went to I Corinthians 15:58. David Messick has been steadfast in the days and years that I have known him. There is not another man I would have chosen to be an influence in our young men’s lives in our church than David Messick. He is the perfect masculine role model for our boys. He is a balanced man. As Carl Sandburg said of Lincoln, “He was a man of steel and velvet.” Psalm 96:6: “Honour and majesty are before him: strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.” Our brother possesses both strength and beauty.

With David’s, and above all, the Lord’s help, I would like to challenge all of us, to be steadfast. Steadfast means unwavering or loyal; resolute, firm, fast, fixed, not changing, not fickle, constant, fixed in intensity or direction; steady, staying the same for a long time and not changing quickly or unexpectedly or as the philosopher who found this truth out too late in life, “The essential thing ‘in heaven and earth’ is that there should be a long obedience in the same direction; there thereby results, and has always resulted in the long run, something which has made life worth living” (Friedrich Nietzsche). The word steadfast comes to us from two words: “stead,” meaning, your place of standing and “fast,” meaning adhering firmly. So, let us be in the place of God’s will and hold fast in the place God has placed us. Taking I Corinthians 15:58 for our text, let us see what components are found in the Scriptural context that would help all us to live and even die in the steadfastness of God’s will.

### 1. THE MOTIVATION OF STEADFASTNESS

I Corinthians 15:58a: “Therefore...” When we observe the word “therefore” in Scripture, we should always ask ourselves, “What is the therefore, there for?” We need to see what was said previously. In the verses just before our text the apostle Paul is telling us some of the greatest truths of the resurrection ever found in Holy Scripture. Our Lord has risen and so shall we! Our corruptible must put on incorruption; our mortal must put on immortality. And then just before verse 58, we read in verses 55-57, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Through Christ we are living the resurrected life, which, according to verse 57, is the life of victory. It is so very reassuring to know that we are not living the

Christian life to obtain the victory, but we already have the victory! I John 5:4: "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

Paul said in I Timothy 6:12, "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses." And this is exactly what the great apostle did, as evidenced from his dying words in II Timothy 4:7, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." How was Paul able to say it was a "good fight?" I suggest it was because he was on the winning side! Back in 1921, the chorus of an encouraging song by Charles Naylor ends with these words, "...I've enlisted in the fight, for the cause of truth and right. Praise the Lord! I'm on the winning side!"

## 2. THE ATTITUDE OF STEADFASTNESS

The next word in our text after "stedfast" is the word "unmoveable." I think you will agree with me, this word doesn't need a lengthy definition, because it is so apparent in the word itself, i.e., "incapable of moving or being moved." I like one of the synonyms, "unbudging!"

Let us know what we believe and why we believe it! I Peter 3:15: "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." In this verse we see that a man with the answers is a ready, steady man. We also grasp that he is a man who is meek, possessing the fear of God. A meek man is not a weak man. The one attribute that Cindy Messick gave for her husband was "meekness." I agreed wholeheartedly. The Bible says in Numbers 12:3, "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth." I see Moses doing great exploits for God. A meek man is a strong man. Matthew 5:5: "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." The meek man is a humble man, relying wholly and totally on God to see him through. Daniel 11:32b says, "...but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits." The man or woman who knows their God will most definitely be steadfast.

## 3. THE CHARACTERISTIC OF STEADFASTNESS

We find this point surfaces from the phrase of our text, "...always abounding in the work of the Lord..." (I Corinthians 15:58b). The steadfast person never quits. Thomas Edison said, "many of life's failures are people who did not know how close they were to success when they gave up." "You do what you can for as long as you can, and when you finally can't, you do the next best thing. You back up - but you don't give up" (Chuck Yeager).

David sinned, but we read his prayer of renewal in Psalm 51:10, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." In verse 11 he prayed for revival: "Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me." Then he prayed for restoration in verse 12: "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit."

Elijah became seriously discouraged, thinking he was the only one left in the country who was serving God. God reminded him that there were in fact 7,000 who still loved God and were willing to serve him. So after God lifted the fallen spirits of Elijah, the Bible says in I Kings 19:19a, "So he departed thence, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat..." God brought Elisha into Elijah's life to help him. The help of godly friends will always be a boost to anyone tempted to give up the battle. Winston Churchill famously said, "Success is never final and failure is never fatal." I would tweak that first part of the quote in the next point because, as Christians we can say, Yes! those who live and die in the will of God have found the true finality and culmination of success!

#### 4. THE REWARD OF STEADFASTNESS

I Corinthians 15:58b: "...forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." If we have lived for Jesus, even death itself brings us into the reward of Heaven. In John 6:27 Jesus said, "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed." Revelation 14:13, "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."

Thank God! Our works will follow us beyond this life. Now, more than ever, we need to heed the final words of the wise Solomon in Ecclesiastes 12:13: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."

Just before Jim Elliot was martyred for his faith he wrote in his diary, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." How true!

Let all who know Christ be and remain steadfast unto the coming of our Lord, keeping in mind I Corinthians 4:5: "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, 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 God."

-Pastor Pope-