

Broomfield



PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH MINISTRY OF THE WORD

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Well Done!

The Steadfast Christian Part 2

A most instructive passage when it comes to serving the Lord is 1 Samuel 15. Saul in obedience to the Lord embarks upon a campaign against the Amalekites. After an overwhelming victory, Saul and the people assembled the king of the Amalekites together with a host of articles in order to bring them to Gilgal as an offering to the Lord. In the midst of the people's rejoicing and celebration over their conquest Samuel approached Saul and essentially said, "Stop the music, the dancing, and the celebrating! Why have you done evil in the sight of the Lord? You have not done what He commanded!"¹

Saul responded this way:

1 Samuel 15:20-21, "Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and have gone the way which the LORD sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God in Gilgal."

In essence Saul tells Samuel, "Relax! We've got a mini-revival going on here. Don't blow it!"

Now family of God, this is inspiring until you read what God told Saul to do.

1 Samuel 15:3, "Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass."

God is not after self-styled devotion. He is not impressed by great acts of piety! He does not count the hours we spend in prayer, multiply them by a factor, and then determine how He is going to bless us. Rather, according to this text,² God is after a people who remain steadfast in their devotion to Him no matter the circumstances or cost!

The exhortation to steadfastness is such a prominent message in Scripture.

1 Corinthians 15:58, "**Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always**

¹ Compare 1 Samuel 15:10-19

² Compare 1 Samuel 15:22-23

abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”

2 Peter 3:17, “**Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness.**”

After the Gentile church was founded at Antioch, the Jerusalem church sent Barnabas to them.

Acts 11:23, “Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, **and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.**”

The first apostolic message to a new church was to be steadfast in their faith! In light of this, we are not surprised to find that a large part of Paul and Barnabas' ministry was to encourage disciples to stand fast.

Acts 14:22, “Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.”

Paul wrote these words to the Galatians:

Galatians 5:1, “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.”

2 Thessalonians 2:15, “Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.”

The universal theme of steadfastness is a warning to us of apostasy that will be abundant in the last days.

2 Peter 2:1-2, “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.”

And thus it behooves us to strive for steadfastness in our walk with Christ.

The Call to Steadfastness

Philippians 4:1, “Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so **stand fast in the Lord**, my dearly beloved.”

To stand firm in the Lord is to stand against any and all compromise in one's walk with Christ. It speaks of a whole-hearted, all-consuming, uncompromising passion and commitment to the Lord. It is as the Hebrew writer states:

Hebrews 12:4, “Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.”

You say, "To the point of shedding blood"? That's brutal!" Actually it is not brutal enough, for when we think of this calling, that which Paul would have us bring to mind is the front-linesman in a phalanx.

The Front Line

In Paul's day, phalanx warfare was well-known; Rome had perfected it. Soldiers were situated on a front line with a shield in one hand and a sword in the other. The phalanx was at times five to ten men deep and over a mile in width. Behind the front line the archers stood. They hurled rocks, arrows, flaming missiles and pots at the enemy. Yet, the secret to success in a phalanx was neither attacking nor retreating, but standing ones ground as the enemy hurled missiles of all kinds.

Now as we saw last time, the walk of faith is pictured as the front linesmen of a Phalanx.

Ephesians 6:13-14, "Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness."

The significance of this call is in recognizing that victory, success, and maturity in the kingdom of God is not advancing or retreating! Success is not measured by how much we do for the Lord, what we know, or our holy activities. Success is measured by standing firm in ones relationship with God. It is measured by continuous trust and reliance upon Christ when everything argues to the contrary. It is standing firm in the right. It is placing ones faith in Christ!

When temptation arises and one starts to question the goodness of God: stand firm in your trust of God.

When temptation comes to compromise the truths of Scripture: Stand firm in your conviction that Scripture is truth.

When temptation comes to become lazy in the things of Christ: Stand firm in your devotion and duty.

The Urgent Hour

Philippians 4:1, "**Therefore**³, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved."

When we ask what the therefore is there for, we are brought back to Philippians 3:20-21 and the Second Coming of Christ.

Philippians 3:20-21, "**For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:** Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

The urgency of Paul's command to stand firm is that Christ is soon to return! And when He does, He will transform His people into conformity with Himself. We can stand firm knowing that

Romans 13:11-12, "And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light."

³ ὥστε hoste

Standing firm has both a positive and negative element to it. The Second Coming of Christ should make us vigilant in our walks with Christ just as the soldier on guard duty at 3 a.m. knows that the general is soon to walk by. It should also encourage us that as strangers and aliens on this earth we are engaged in an all-out battle requiring sobriety at all times! We cannot afford to take it easy in our faith. We cannot afford to relax when it comes to knowing our Lord.

Thus when one becomes fatigued and lose heart, remember that Christ is returning soon. Hold on and do not compromise your faith! The next activity in God's plan of redemption is the Second Coming. Stand firm in the Lord; it won't be long now!

The Soil of Encouragement

Philippians 4:1, "Therefore, **my brethren dearly beloved**⁴ and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved."

Often in our weakness we want to know what God has given to encourage us, and the answer is found in the soil from which our steadfastness arises.

In this exhortation, Paul gives three different words of encouragement to the Philippians — words which constitute the most affectionate and enduring language he ever uses in his letters. The first of these is **beloved**. Paul did not write just to the good-looking or the even-tempered believers at Philippi. He loved all the Philippians as brothers and sisters.

This is an amazing fact considering the state of the Philippian church. The church in Philippi was being torn apart by petty and silly divisions. The brethren fought with each other. And Paul buttresses his exhortation to the Philippians to stand firm with this truth: We are all family!

Paul writes, "love you all! ALL OF YOU ARE MY "BELOVED BRETHERN!"

Philippians 4:1, "Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved **and longed for**⁵, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved."

Why was it that Paul longed to see anyone in his day? What was the purpose for any church gathering?

Romans 1:11- 12, "For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, **to the end ye may be established**. That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me."

The Hebrew writer concurs.

Hebrews 10:24-25, "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; **but exhorting one another**: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."

When the church gathers for any reason, chief in our minds and hearts must be the edification and building up of each other! Thus, Paul longed to see the Philippians because he longed to encourage them

⁴ αγαπητος agapetos

⁵ επιποθητος epipothetos

in their walk personally! He wanted to be there among his brothers and sisters- to pray with them. He wanted to worship beside them. He desired to exhort them in the Lord. He longed to walk with them.

He wanted to do each of these things because they were his joy and crown.

Philippians 4:1, "Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, **my joy and crown**⁶, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved."

Another word that describes this soil is joy. Joy is founded in knowing that the God of this world loves you and that you are at peace with Him. Understandably it blossoms when we behold brothers and sisters in the body of Christ growing in their walk with Christ.

3 John 4, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth."

1 Thessalonians 2:19-20, "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy."

Yet the Philippians also were Paul's crown. The crown of our text is not a royal crown, but the laurel wreath given to victors of athletic events.⁷ These crowns would be given by the king on a platform situated in the view of everyone present. Thus what Paul is saying here is that on the last day when he approaches the throne of grace and there stands before every man, woman, and child that has ever lived, the crown to which he would cling would not be his acts of service to the Lord, or the tally of converts attributed to his efforts. Neither would the number of hours he spent on his knees count. Not even the deep and rich understanding he had of the word of Christ would be his crown. Paul's crown would be the people he labored to love, encourage, grow, and die with!

These are such incredible words of encouragement!

Yet how do they relate to Paul's exhortation to "Stand firm in the Lord?"

The soil from which steadfast Christianity emerges is the working out of the relationship that we have with each other as brothers and sisters in the Lord!

Paul here says, "Be steadfast!" And to encourage and uphold you, know that I love you. Know that you are my brothers and sisters. Know that you are the essence of my joy. You are crown to which I will cling as I approach the throne of grace on the last day. Life for me is encouraging and strengthening you in the faith!

It is from this soil of Biblical fellowship that steadfast Christianity arises!

The Spartan Phalanx

Five hundred years before Rome perfected the phalanx, the Spartan's used it for war. The Spartan society revolved around the military. Their society was molded and shaped by what produced the best soldier. The most valued relationship in Spartan society was not the marriage relationship, the parent relationship, or the family relationship. The most valued relationship was between soldiers.

⁶ χαρα chara και και στεφανος stephanos

⁷ Compare 1 Corinthians 9:25

Accordingly, Spartan men got married and had children, but their closest and most trusted friends were their comrades in arms. These comrades experienced the fiery missiles of war. They saw the flaming jars of pitch shattering next to them. They knew the rocks and swords that struck their shields. They stood in the same soil that turned to mud on account of blood of fallen soldiers. They were closest of comrades because they had invested their lives in one another.

Steadfastness in one's walk with Christ does not occur in a vacuum. Rather, it arises from the soil of faithfulness and devotion to the body of Christ! It arises from genuine love and commitment to each other! It is deep and abiding fellowship!

This is the bane of our modern culture. Fellowship is viewed as optional! We put up with the body of Christ. We approach worship as consumers. And the rest of our lives is lived according to felt needs and pleasure. Now while on the surface it is safe one never really gets to know anyone in the body, and the body never really gets to know them. Nevertheless when the temptation arises to give up, no one is there to encourage us on! Consequently the church today is filled with a mass of disconnected, lonely, self-sufficient Christians who, if they were honest, are miserable!

Such was not the case or the luxury of fellow believers in past generations. In Paul's day, converting to Christ meant for many the loss of their income. Much of the trade that went on occurred in trade guilds. For example, if you made pottery, you wouldn't sell much if any unless you joined the local guild- which meant that you agreed to certain stipulations, committed to be true to the guild, and sacrificed to the god of the guild.

When someone became a Christian they typically had to leave their trade guild because they no longer sacrificed to the god of the guild. Of course this plunged them into financial ruin —.we're not talking about inconvenience here; but possible starvation.

It was in this context that the body of Christ very important. For all practical purposes the church now became their trade guild. It was their family. It was their strength, support, and encouragement!

Accordingly, I challenge you to go to the Apostolic age and uncover the cavalier attitude toward fellowship that occurs in our day. Find Christians who really didn't need the body. Find men and women of God who were happy simply attending church on Sunday.

It is because of our cavalier attitude that we find mass defection from Christ, the word, and God's worship as is present in our day!

See it is not an accident! Steadfast Christianity does not occur in a vacuum. Steadfast Christianity arises out of a body that genuinely loves each other and is committed to each other. That is the soil out of which arises Steadfast Christianity!

The Basis of Standing Fast

Yet, we are not finished. For Paul closes this verse by calling the Philippians "*my dear friends.*"

Philippians 4:1, "Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so

stand fast in the Lord, **my dearly beloved**⁸.”

It is important to note that Paul does not say, "my beloved" as many translations read — or for that matter, "dear friends" or "my dear friends." The Greek text just ends with "beloved."⁹ This is a word that in times past obviously caused some scribes difficulty. In this context it is important to note that emphasis in the Greek is made NOT by bolding, outlining, or underscoring, BUT by word-placement — specifically the first or last position in a sentence.

Paul is not being redundant; rather he is emphasizing a very important truth. The last thought that Paul would have the Philippians and us meditate upon when it comes to steadfastness in our walk with Christ is the fact that they and we are, "Beloved!"

Now I will admit that on account of the fact that Paul just called the Philippians, "my beloved brethren," it is tempting to carry the concept over to this word — as most commentaries and translations suggest. However, it is equally possible that by omitting "MY" and placing this word alone and at the end of the sentence that Paul is emphasizing another very important truth!

I would suggest that not only were the Philippians the "beloved of Paul" but they also were the "beloved" of God! The context of this passage is this: The body of Christ, the kingdom of God, the cross of Christ, and the predetermined plan of God whereby He set His love upon us before the foundation of the world. This leads us to the conclusion that we are the beloved of God!

And that is exactly how this phrase is used elsewhere in Scripture. "Beloved" is another name for the Christian.

Romans 1:7, “**To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints:** Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

1 Thessalonians 1:2-4, “We give thanks to God always for you all. . . Knowing, **brethren beloved, your election of God.**”

Paul refers to the Corinth church as the beloved.

2 Corinthians 7:1, “Having therefore these promises, **dearly beloved**¹⁰, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

In fact, another name for the child of God is beloved.

Romans 9:25, “As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and **her beloved, which was not beloved.**¹¹”

When Paul in this passage exhorts the Philippians unto steadfastness in their walk with Christ and ends

⁸ αγαπητος agapetos This is rendered *dearly beloved* in the Authorized version 9 times of the 62 it is used. The term *dearly* is used in the 9 times because the term is in the emphatic position; this is the translator's way of showing additional emphasis to the term. Also, the term *my* is italicized indicating that it is not in the Greek text, but was added to aid the readers' understanding.. The ESV, NAS and NAS95 render it *beloved* 60 times and *very dear* once.

⁹ This is the sense given in the NKJV.

¹⁰ Once again the beloved is in the emphatic position in the KJV. The *dearly* is added to aid the reader in this understanding.

¹¹ Compare also Ephesians 5:1, and Colossians 3:12

with this pregnant pause, "beloved," it is clear that he is not returning to the fact that they are the beloved of Paul, but he is emphasizing that they are the beloved of God!

The basis of steadfastness in one's walk with Christ is that we are His beloved. Just like the energizer bunny, the Christian keeps on going through persecution, fire, flood, torture, and threats because the child of God lives with the knowledge that before the world began, God set His love upon them. Our steadfastness is placed firmly on the firm foundation of Christ's person and work.¹²

Isn't that amazing!

Enter Into Joy

Over the years, I have collected and enjoyed the last words of dying saints. However, Matthew 25 contains, if not the words that God will speak to us on the last day, at the least the spirit in which every child of God will pass into glory.

Matthew 25 declares that it is not the person who is basing his salvation upon his own diligence, faith, sacrificial deeds, wealth, martyr status, or green-beret theologian status who will receive these words. But is those who are in Christ that hear this passage:

Matthew 25:21, "His lord said unto him, **Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.**"

You say, "How can this be? I have so often times failed!"

Where you have failed, Christ has succeeded in your behalf!

When your hope and trust is placed in Christ, you may be tempted to say, "I've been such a poor example!" Christ will say, "Enter into the joy of your master."

Having placed your faith in Christ, you may have failed as a parent, Christ will say, "Enter into the joy of your master."

As a Christian, you may have wasted so much time! Christ will say, "Enter into the joy of your master."

While I need the body of Christ and it is clear that we cannot remain steadfast without it, nevertheless the basis of all steadfastness is the assurance that my soul is secure in Christ. All is well.

God is a loving Father who is working all things together for my good and His glory.

Armed with this simple truth, standing next to Christ I do not doubt that we could go to hell and back again without flinching!

Listen to and live in light of the appellation by which you are called by Christ this morning, "Beloved!"

Family of God, with this, "Stand Firm In The Lord!"

¹² Compare Hebrews 11

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About the Preacher

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