

“BE YE STEADFAST, IMMOVABLE”

I Corinthians 15:58

I. INTRODUCTION: I

- I. 2 The admonitions of this verse are based on the preceding facts.
 - A. There is a resurrection of the dead (I Cor. 15:22).
 - B. If there were no resurrection of the dead, Paul would have admonished: *“Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die”* (I Cor. 15:32).
2. The Christian lives in hope of eternal life (Titus 1:2):
 - A. He must be steadfast; he takes a position and does not waver from it; he is firm in his Christian convictions.
 - B. He is immovable; he is (Thayer): *firmly persistent*; in that he cannot be shaken from his steadfastness.
 - C. He is the opposite of one who is a doubter; Jas. 1:7-8: *“For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; 8 he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.”*
3. He is to always be abounding in the work of the Lord (I Cor. 15:58).
 - A. He is always obedient (Phil 2:12).
 - B. He is always praying (Lk. 18:1; Eph. 6:18).
 - C. He is always ready to give an answer for his hope (I Pet. 3:15).
 - D. He is always rejoicing in the Lord (Phil. 4:4).
4. He is confident because he knows his *“labor is not in vain in the Lord”* (I Cor. 15:58).
5. Despite this, and other admonitions to be faithful, some Christians are not steadfast and are easily moved unlike Paul (**Acts 20: 24**: *“But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.”*).
6. 3 Let’s study some things we sometimes let challenge our steadfastness in Christ.

II. DISCUSSION:

- I. 4 Spiritual Despondency:
 - A. Despondency is to be hopeless, dejected, downcast and disheartened.
 - B. For example, the Bible often talks about one’s countenance falling (**Gen. 4:5**: *“but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.”*); in other words, you could see by the change in Cain’s facial expression that he was despondent.
 - C. God told Joshua to *“Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed; for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.”* Josh. 1:9 (dismayed = despondent)
 - D. God says to us today: *“I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee, so that we may boldly say, the Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me”* (Heb. 13:5-6); thus, we have no reason to be despondent and dismayed and having our countenance fall (i.e., long face).
 - E. Paul said, *“And let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not”* (Gal. 6:9).
 - F. Elijah became despondent when Jezebel sent a messenger to him telling him that she would have him killed just as he had killed the 450 priests of Baal (**I Kgs. 19:4**: *“But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he prayed that he might die, and said, ‘It is enough! Now, LORD, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers!’”*).

- G. God providentially sustained Elijah (1 Kgs. 16:2-6) and does not want us to become despondent (**Phil. 4:4**: “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!”).
- H. As Christians we have so much to rejoice about! We have found the truth! We have received the greatest gift ever given! Our destiny will bring us peace, comfort and bliss beyond our wildest imagination!

2. **5** Failure of Brethren:

- A. Paul said that one of the greatest perils (i.e., dangers) he had to deal with was “false brethren” (2 Cor. 11:26; cf. **Gal. 2:4**: “And this occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage).”).
 - (1) Paul had to deal with Peter’s compromising attitude and actions (Gal. 2:11-16).
 - (2) Paul was forsaken by Demas, who loved this present world (2 Tim. 4:10).
 - (3) Alexander the coppersmith did Paul much evil (2 Tim. 4:14-15).
 - (4) When Paul stood before a Roman court, all men forsook him (**2 Tim 4:16**: “At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me.”).
- B. But Paul did not let the failure of brethren shake his steadfastness and move him (**2 Tim. 4:7**: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.”).
- C. We must not let the failure of brethren move us today.
 - (1) Sooner or later you will most likely have a brother or sister in Christ that will really let you down in a big way (e.g., me when first converted).
 - (2) We need to realize this, prepare ourselves for it, not blame the Lord and remain steadfast, immovable in spite of such great disappointments!

3. **6** Problems in the church:

- A. Problems are going to always be in the church:
 - (1) Consider the church at Corinth! They were plagued by a host of problems!
 - (2) Consider the seven churches of Asia!
 - (3) If we expect the local church to always be perfect we will be sorely disappointed!
- B. God’s word even goes so far as to say that heresies (i.e., divisions) can serve a good purpose! **1 Cor. 11:19**: “For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you.”
- C. Difficulties in the church provide an opportunity for steadfast and immovable Christians to demonstrate that they are genuine followers of the Lord; that they are indeed steadfast and immovable!
- D. God never intended that any man should move through life in a constant environment of encouragement and spiritual delight—our faith is going to be tested from time to time and that’s ok! **Jas. 1:2-4**: “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. 4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.”
- E. Problems invariably identify those who are not truly committed to the Lord (identifies the “deadwood”). In any congregation, you will find some who do not follow the Lord with all of their heart—problems manifest who they are: **Matt. 13:21**: rocky soil “yet he has no root in himself (i.e., not really steadfast and certainly not immovable!), but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles.”; **Matt. 13:47-50**:

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind, 48 which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away. 49 So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, 50 and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.”

- F. When trouble comes brethren of this stripe will separate themselves from the true followers of Christ because they are not steadfast and immovable; they are not grounded in the cause of truth, but only want to do what does not require sacrifice and dedication!

2 Tim. 4:2-4: *“Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; 4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.”; 1 Jn. 2:19:* *“They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.”*

4. **7** Unjust Criticisms:

- A. Both John and Jesus were criticized unjustly: **Matt. 11:18-19:** *“For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon.’ 19 The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ But wisdom is justified by her children.”*
- B. Paul was unjustly criticized: **2 Cor. 10:10-11:** *“‘For his letters,’ they say, ‘are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible.’ 11 Let such a person consider this, that what we are in word by letters when we are absent, such we will also be in deed when we are present.”*
- C. You and I will be unjustly criticized: **Matt. 5:11-12:** *“Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. 12 Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”* (letters to editor, etc. concerning What Saith the Scriptures)
- D. Don’t let criticisms move you! **Matt. 10:24-26a:** *“A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. 25 It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household! 26 Therefore do not fear them.”*

5. **8** Losing Our Work in the Lord:

- A. Paul recognized this possibility:
- (1) To the churches of Galatia, Paul expressed this fear (**Gal. 4:11:** *“I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain.”*).
 - (2) To the Thessalonians he expressed his concern (**1 Thess. 3:5:** *“For this reason, when I could no longer endure it, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted you, and our labor might be in vain.”*).
- B. Paul also deals with this in 1 Corinthians 3:
- 1 Cor. 3:12-15:** *“Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13 each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. 14 If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. 15 If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.”*
- (1) Some folks I baptized didn’t remain faithful very long (newspaper kid, jailer; Nick Romzek).

- (2) Some remained faithful, grew spiritually, then later fell away; some still remain faithful.
- (3) Even though I did not convert any of you here, I strongly feel responsible for you!
- C. Jesus deals with the loss of work in the parable of the sower (**Lk. 8:11-15**).
 - (1) Three of the four soils are ultimately unproductive.
 - (2) The loss of our work can be very discouraging and disappointing. Perhaps you have experienced such a loss (e.g., close friend or relative).
 - (3) We need to keep a positive attitude! **Phil. 2:16**: *“holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.”*
- D. We must not be moved when we lose our work.

6. **9** Evil Associations:

- A. Our associations have an influence on us (**1 Cor. 15:33**: *“Do not be deceived: ‘Evil company corrupts good habits.’”*; Prov. 1:10-17).
- B. Our associates influence us morally and doctrinally (e.g., husbands→wives; influential preachers, influential educational institutions).
- C. Many are moved by these associations (esp. parents→children).
- D. We must not be moved by our associates (**2 Cor. 6:17**: *“Therefore ‘Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.’”*; **Matt. 10:37**: *“He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.”*).

7. **10** Personal Setbacks:

- A. There are a number of things that “just happen” that can severely challenge our steadfastness: problematic personal relationships, difficult work situations, financial setbacks, illness/health problems, etc.
Eccl. 9:11: *“I returned and saw under the sun that — The race is not to the swift, Nor the battle to the strong, Nor bread to the wise, Nor riches to men of understanding, Nor favor to men of skill; But time and chance happen to them all.”*
- B. We have to keep all of these things in the right perspective:
2 Cor. 4:16-18: *“Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. 17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, 18 while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”*
- C. Along this vein, one of the greatest challenges I’ve seen are the difficulties brought on by old age.
 - (1) In my experience as many Christians have difficulties handling the problems of old age than those who handle the problems of old age gracefully.
 - (2) We cannot hide our heads in the sand and pretend it will never happen to us!
 - (3) We need to heed Solomon’s advice (**Eccl. 12:1-8**).
 - (4) We need to anticipate these problems descending upon us and prepare ourselves spiritually.

III. CONCLUSION: II

- A. Let all of us determine to *“be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.”*
- B. Let us not be discouraged and overcome by the forces of the Devil (recall 2 Cor. 4:16-18: *“light affliction”*).

I Peter 1:3-5: *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”*

- C. Invitation

Adapted from a sermon (*“Be Ye Steadfast and Immoveable”*) by Donald Townsley.