

The necessity of being steadfast in Christian practice (Quality: Very good)

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[0 : 00] venture again this evening to ask you to the text we considered together this morning. The 58th verse in the 15th chapter of the first epistle of Paul to the Corinthians.

Corinthians chapter 15 and the last verse which is verse 58. Therefore my beloved brethren be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord for as much as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

I think most of you were present this morning and there's very little need for me to recap on our meditation this morning that I venture to refer to the deep affection which underlies the preceptive instruction that the Apostle Paul gave to his beloved friends, his beloved brethren in the church at Corinth.

My friends it is a wonderful feature in the constant ministry of the Apostle Paul, how his life and affection was so strong for the well-being of the church, even that church which initially he would have blotted out from the face of the earth if his personal energies were sufficient to attain to such a terrible thing.

He hated the Lord and he hated the people of God. But he was brought to love them and it seems that his love was somewhat excessive in various directions that he spent himself to a very great degree serving the cause of the Lord in his day.

[2 : 45] Now, therefore my beloved brethren, be steadfast unmovable. You know, a person under the teaching of God and a person possessing the fear of God is not a person that can easily be moved.

Some people that maybe profess to be Christians, but when it comes to difficulty, sacrifice, personal disadvantage, their strength of profession immediately diminishes.

If not withers away. But surely under God in the strength imparted by his spirit through the graces enables his people to be strong in deep heartfelt conviction.

Of the truths into which they have been led by the reading and reading of scripture and the teaching of the Holy Spirit given to them.

A Christian is not a person that's easily led. If so be that person is in a healthy spiritual condition.

[4 : 40] It seems here that the apostle completes, as it were, this particular chapter by focusing the counsel upon the necessity of steadfastness.

And my friends, if ever there was a day over many years when the church of God needs to be steadfast, surely it is today.

Because there are so many influences present in the world. Not all carrying the garb of Antichrist, but sad to say some wearing the garments of profession as if they belonged to Christ and were ready to follow Christ.

But in practice, there's a terrible weakness. A terrible commitment of practices, ways of life that savour more of worldliness than godliness.

Now, if there's one thing that the Spirit of God brings into the heart and life of a person in sanctification, is separation.

[6 : 10] And especially those things that are in the world that are not according to the mind of God, that indeed create all sorts of problems.

Those problems in society can be a general title to my thought. But also, we come into the church of God.

And there are problems within the church of God. And there are problems within the church of God.

The church of God.

So did not I. Because of the fear of the Lord. There is, with that principle, a solidity, a definite mind and a definite purpose.

[8 : 03] None can read the Apostle Paul's life after his conversion. But what we realize, he was actuated by a very firm principle himself.

And he wasn't just seeking, as it were, the admiration of all the people with whom he was brought into contact.

He was willing to suffer. If the point of principle required a difference. There he was, standing firm upon his principles and maybe in some ways offending others that expected something different from him.

My beloved brethren, be ye steadfast. Be ye steadfast. Be ye steadfast. And you know, I'm sure that if we're steadfast in a scriptural teaching, we are united.

The unity of the Spirit. The unity of the Spirit is as the people of God walk together according to the perceptive and doctrinal truths that are given to us in Holy Scripture.

[9 : 33] What saith the Scripture? Oh, in a time of difference or a time of suggestion that changes should come, let us go to our Bibles and work out there what we feel to be right and what we know to be wrong according to the teaching of the Lord.

Because all things necessary to the church surely are given to the church by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

Well now, therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast. Unmovable. Unmovable. Unmovable. Unmovable. Unmovable. Double.

Unmovable. Unmovable. Unmovable. Unmovable. Unmovable. Unmovable. Unmovable. Unmovable. Unmovable. Unmovable. Unmovable. Unmovable. Unmovable.

Unmovable. Unmovable. Unmovable. Unmovable. Unmovable. Unmovable. Unmovable. Unmovable.

[10 : 39] Unmovable. Unmovable. Unmovable. Unmovable. Unmovable. in unity together that it's known which way we ought to go in a united fellowship on certain questions that may and do arise.

It's a wonderful thing to know where you stand personally and collectively. That doesn't mean to say that we're all of the same mind in everything but it does mean that there is a characteristic that is unifying and in the spirit of love and of grace we're ready as it were to listen to the opinion of others as well as we express our own opinions and in conformity with our understanding of the word of God we're ready to give in a certain particular and in a certain way graciously to promote the peace and prosperity of the fellowship.

I don't believe the apostle here encourages a rigidity that is I was going to say somewhat possessed of pride and arrogance well if you don't listen to me you must be wrong because if we're under the influence of the spirit there's always that great question am I wrong am I wrong and especially when others that are thought well of and esteemed people of appointment and position in the church have a contrary viewpoint surely it's only right that we should humbly withdraw and go and search the scriptures prayerfully and practically to ensure that our objection is right and their position is not all it should be then of course we've got the responsibility of communicating in the spirit of love and grace that a unity may be realized and practiced therefore my beloved brethren be ye steadfast unmovable we look around ourselves at the world don't we and to my mind the distinction between an earthly spirit and a heavenly spirit is getting progressively wider and wider as time goes on and that makes us wonder if we're not in the last days when the

Lord warns us there shall be a falling away first and it seems doesn't it that while certainly some in the professing church desire to continue in those ways that are pleasing to God the world seems to be almost in almost a landslide without any reference to the standards of scripture whether in precept or in practice I do say that if you depart from the ways of God it brings no happiness as we have been singing about in our hymn now let me steadfastness unmovable always abounding in the work of the Lord you know the church is not the responsibility of one member the church as constituted by the

Lord is like a body and in the Corinthian epistle we have the simile of a body the hand cannot say to the foot I have no need of thee the ear cannot say to the eye if I don't use the correct simile perhaps but one part of the body can't claim to be able easily to dismiss the function and office of others round about the church is a body the body that the Lord in his providence brings together and by his grace unites in the fellowship of those who love and fear the name of the Lord and always abounding in the work of the Lord always abounding in the work of the Lord you know if you are a loving member of the church of Christ duty becomes privilege carrying various responsibilities is not a task it's a pleasure what a wonderful thing to be permitted of God called of God to occupy some position that is constructive in his church to his own glory and to the promotion of the well-being of the fellowship here upon earth the united exercise and endeavor of a membership a membership not as it were just coming to chapel and at the end of the service going home that's my contribution that's all that I expect to do but how can

[18 : 06] I help what is it right for me to do in the name of the Lord and for the promotion of the peace and prosperity of the fellowship that doesn't mean to say that with natural understanding you suggest this that and the other and cause so much trouble in consequence of a most unseemly suggestion it is that as you feel opportunities are presented to you you sacrifice and show a readiness to contribute to the church of God to which his providence has led you you know sometimes I'm talking about a situation over which

I've had considerable experience now for over 50 years because I've been among the churches for over 50 years but some places there seems to be a readiness for the people to come to the chapel take all the advantage of the situation that prevails in a natural way it's nice and warm everything is comfortable and they come and they take their seat and they enjoy the singing of the hymns and the ministry is either to their like or dislike but that's just their own personal affair but at the end of the service out they go out they go and they don't think that the maintenance of the fellowship calls for contributions of effort not only of prayer but there is a practical aspect that things have to be done things have to be attended to commitments have to be made sacrifices sometimes are essential an essential part of this work of the Lord of this work of the Lord always abounding in the work of the Lord a burden shared is a burden halved isn't it it's a wonderful thing to feel that we have the practical support of one another as the occasion may arise within the general running of the church in a practical way but over and above that in a sense there is the work of the

Lord that as a member we're interested and involved in the care and the temporal and spiritual condition of the people that join with us shall I say a constructive approach ready to contribute as may be within our measure but there's a sense of calling into the fellowship of the church there's a sense of love being exercised in a practical way I don't walk about my home saying to my wife all the time my dear I do love you I do love you but I hope she knows I love her why because if I can contribute and lend her a hand it's my pleasure so to do now project that principle to the higher principle as the fellowship of the

Lord's people and realize how constructive it is how comforting it is how uniting it is for us all as it were to realize that God in his grace his love and mercy has brought us together now can we in some humble measure contribute to the glory of God and the smooth running of the fellowship as the Lord may give opportunity and suitable ability therefore my beloved brethren be ye steadfast unmovable always abounding in the work of the Lord we might say well surely there were people in the church of Corinth that were to be preachers and he was talking about the work of the

Lord in respect to the ministry of the word my friends the ministry is only one part it's an important part I'm not going to minimize the responsibility of the preacher and especially of the pastor because that's a tremendous burden held by those that are called to that particular office in Zion but there's an abounding of the work of the Lord yes it's not only to be ministers there's to be deacons there's to be Sunday school teachers there are to be those that attend to this somebody's got to look after the financial side somebody's got to look after the clerical side writing as is needful in the name of the church in matters that concern the work of the church always abounding in the work of the

[24 : 35] Lord the church in a prosperous healthy condition working together working together in their various functions and with their scattered contributions because the opportunities to contribute are so many and various I believe some people are eminent in contributing prayerfully prayerfully some of the women in Zion are such laborers if you like in the cause of Jesus Christ that they pray for the peace and prosperity and they pray for the presence of the Holy

Spirit sanctifying using the means that God sends to them for the worship of his holy name you know it's not just coming to chapel and having a name to live among the people of God it is what can you do real religion faith without works is dead James tells us that there is essentially the active commitment to the point sometimes of sacrifice not only monetary sacrifice but your time your interest you can't do this and you can't do that that you'd like to do naturally or other people do and you don't see why you shouldn't but you don't do them because there's a call upon your energies there's a call upon your time you're wanted in a certain way and you're ready to sacrifice your own pleasure for the benefit of the fellowship of the people of God and of course project the principle it's the work of the Lord it's the work of the Lord look what the Lord has done for his church and what a little little almost undiscernible contribution we make we make when we can do something in the cause of him who has done so much for us for now therefore my beloved brethren be ye steadfast unmovable always abounding in the work of the

Lord for as much as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord the Lord acknowledges and rewards that which his people are enabled to give by his gracious enablings and the leadings and guidings of the spirit in their heart and in their life I was going to say the church of God can be like a field that is subject to sowing and reaping whatsoever man whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap and sometimes we find that some of the happiest people in the fellowship of the Lord's cause are those that are committed to considerable giving and sacrifice in the interest of the whole fellowship what I'm really trying to do this evening is commend to you the practical side of church life not to just complain when the chapel's not to the correct heat or make some difference difference because the person that sits near to you is not all that you think they ought to be all these little foxes that spoil the vines for the vines have tender grapes says the scripture now it's it's the difference between constructive contribution and destructive contribution and what

I'm trying in my simple way to lay before you this is that there is great benefit and great reward by God for a church that is lively in the cause of God and of Jesus Christ whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap now for as much as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord the Lord grants his rewards the Lord gives to his people that are walking according to his will a sense of his presence and his peace and his prosperity I think

I've mentioned these before but when I was a lad at Coventry we had deacons that well were very practical men in various ways you didn't feel that they were all the time seeking to escape while others got on with what needed to be done there was there was a kind of commitment you felt that if there was anything to be done well oh I'll see to that yes leave that to me and you know there was a readiness to rise to a need that I believe was a spirit of love for the Lord love for his cause love for his people love to the truth the principle behind it was absolutely in harmony with the gifts of the spirit in a way of prosperity now we read from the epistle of Paul to Timothy and there are two letters what a counsellor what a father in the faith was the apostle Paul to his son in the faith all the counsel that he gives to him my friends it is good for us to meditate in the letter that Paul wrote to Titus as well as the two letters that he wrote to

[32 : 18] Timothy and you can read into it not just as it were the influence of Timothy and Titus to the fellowship over which the Lord caused them to exercise their ministry and gifts but the benefit through their instrumentality that found its expression in the whole working together of the fellowship over which they were to minister the work of the Lord the work of the Lord if anything should give us more zeal and pleasure it is to be involved in the work of the Lord what an honor to have any small contribution to make what an honor to be able to feel instrumentally under the good hand of God his cause is benefiting by your simple yet influential contribution don't look at things in shall I say singular way just think of the variety there is in nature just think of the variety there is in the seed that is sown and the church being a seed bed then all sorts of different seeds different contributions can unite together to the health and fruitfulness of the cause of Jesus

Christ in the local context well now you heard me read from the epistle of Paul to Timothy his concern for Timothy as a person in a sense he was detached in the fact that he wasn't present always when Timothy was present but he had a concern he had an exercise he had a contribution to make and he was ready to give to that particular fellowship through Timothy the Lord's servant that he felt it right and under the Spirit's guidance to make in that particular context what a wonderful thing it is is it not to have a place in the hearts of not only shall I say those that are immediately part and parcel of the fellowship but you know it's a good thing in your favour if those of us that come occasionally to minister can go away with a feeling sense the

Lord is there the Spirit of the Lord is quickening and strengthening certain activities that are according to scripture and for the glory of God and the good of the whole fellowship I'm glad to hear and feel there's a Sunday school here and there are teachers willing to give their time and attention to the spiritual welfare especially directed to the young and tender members of the flock now I go to some places and they don't believe in Sunday schools well I believe benefit has been given many many times by the good hand of God through the teaching in fact when I went to Old Hill as pastor

I was exercised about the strength of the church and so on I had a good lady in my church wonderful character now in heaven and Mrs.

Burgess her name was Grace Burgess there was a book written about her life but she was a wonderful woman and I went we had I think it was four girls come forward very young comparatively and I listened to their testimony and felt it was the work of the spirit and I would be quite at liberty to recommend to the deacons that they heard them for themselves and then if all was well we would call the church together and listen to their testimonies for the church to decide and remember the church you know church order is the authority the church to decide whether they were ready to receive them or not and

[38 : 21] I realized that these young people coming to our fellowship would eventually change the balance that if we took too many young people in and the old ones died off we should have shall I say what I was considering the younger element carrying the chief weight and authority in decision I was very very concerned prayerfully about the situation I went down to this good lady one day I said you know about my exercise she was the sort of character whose opinion I valued and I unbosomed quite confidentially my concern I said I'm a bit worried about the young people coming into our church like this she said Mr.

Crowter can you tell me a better place for a young believer than to be in the fold of Jesus Christ that a healthy church fellowship can have a sanctifying influence upon the heart and life of youthful members and I was amazed how the progression of time proved the wisdom of that good woman's council because we saw the young people growing up in stature and in grace and there is to be expected and there is to be appreciated the need of a growth in grace young people must not be judged by the standard of mature

Christians because there's got to be room for a growth a child is born a child is given into the church and as long as it's the work of the spirit and they've got the life of God in their soul there's no better place for them to be than in the fellowship with as witnesses of the influence of grace in the decisions and directions and the unity of the fellowship of the people of God now steadfast unmovable always abounding in the work of the Lord for as much as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord I hope you'll take on board the principle that I've been seeking to present before you and I believe it's within the compass of the work of the

Lord the work of the Lord a church walking in the fear of the Lord will inevitably possess an attraction to young believers church but the church that's shall I say divided and not at peace together and always crissing that size in one look it it forms a barrier it creates a situation that is far from attractive what did Ruth see in Naomi that caused her to leave her own people and go and join this person who had what to offer what to offer she was a widow and she was a native of a different people but

Ruth saw the grace of God and was attractive this people shall be my people and thy God my God what a wonderful thing in this fellowship if there was such a spirit that the young people saw the benefit of belonging and said hinder me not ye much love saints and I will go with you now I leave this I've got to leave it time requires it I've got to leave it but I hope I leave it for your prayerful consideration look don't leave everything to a minority but seek as a gospel privilege the opportunities of paying your contribution however small however small but remember that the young people are looking at the old people for a practical older people for a practical fruit of the spirit that is according to the word and has an attractive characteristic that young people will feel

[44 : 25] I'd love to be with that body of people because they truly fear God and in practical things they mark out the way of godliness heaven Lord may the Lord forgive everything that I said that is contrary to the good of every soul that is present here and I hope you'll forgive me forever touching upon such a practical presentation of the truth Amen