

SETTLED, STEADFAST, AND SECURE**THE PLEASANT VIEW PLUMB LINE**

God desires that we live our lives with peace and comfort, knowing that He is faithful and just to forgive, to protect, to instruct, and to save those that are committed to Him and His Holy Word. Despite God's desire many live their Christian lives in constant fear, worry, and doubt that they are not good enough or strong enough to maintain a relationship with God Almighty due to their own weaknesses. As a result, their service to God becomes erratic and inconsistent. Faith is replaced by fear. Assurance is replaced by anxiety. Consequently, service to God is replaced by sin.

To alleviate this problem, God continually reminds us (through His Word) of His love, grace, mercy, concern, and readily-available blessings. However, many of these Christian comforts are dependant on our faithfulness to Him. For this reason, Paul encouraged the Corinthians to "*be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord*" (I Corinthians 15:58). Through the pen of inspiration, Solomon charged us to "*take firm hold of instruction, do not let go*" (Proverbs 4:13). To this end, David pleaded with the Lord to renew a "*steadfast spirit*" in Him (Psalm 51:10).

With all the advantages of being steadfast or of persevering to the end, there are many who do not. Why is that? It is our intent to answer this question in the space remaining. Some do not remain steadfast to the end because...

Some are not Planted

Paul wrote to the Colossians and encouraged them to "*continue in faith, grounded and steadfast*" so that they would not be moved away from the Gospel (Colossians 1:23). Remember the blessed of Psalm 1? Consider why he chose not to walk the path of the sinner: "*But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water...*" (Psalm 1:2-3; emphasis mine). Our ability to sustain faithful service to God is primarily dependent upon how deep our roots run and how firm our anchor is cast (Hebrews 6:19). What happens when our anchor of faith does not hold firm? What happens to us when our roots do not run deep? In view of these questions, Paul gives a warning that we should "*no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitfulness...*" (Ephesians 4:14-15).

Sadly, some do not remain steadfast until the end because they are not firmly planted in the hope and assurance that comes with a rich knowledge of God and His Word.

Some are not Serious

Christianity is a serious religion which demands that we be serious in our approach toward it. That is why Peter would charge: "*Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ*" (I Peter 1:13). Those who lack seriousness regarding the commitment they have made to Christ will also lack seriousness when considering subjects such as death, judgment, and the eternal realm.

Paul emphasized a serious approach to Christianity when he wrote to the church at Rome (Romans 12:1). Paul urged those in Philippi to be mature in their minds (Philippians 3:15). Paul also demanded that those in Corinth not to "*be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature*" (I Corinthians 14:20). The level of commitment that we attain when we view the Christian life through sober/serious minds will prompt us to be steadfast, settled, and secure in Christ.

Some are not Watchful

"...then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel..." (Amos 7:8)

LET NO MAN DESPISE THY YOUTH

Text: _____

I. Be An Example of the Believers in _____

Notes:

II. Be An Example of the Believers in _____

Notes:

III. Be An Example of the Believers in _____

Notes:

IV. Be An Example of the Believers in _____

Notes:

V. Be An Example of the Believers in _____

Notes:

VI. Be An Example of the Believers in _____

Notes:

HAVING ANSWERED THE CALL

Text: _____

I. Answering in a _____ of _____

Notes:

II. Answering with _____

Notes:

III. Answering in _____ of _____

Notes:

IV. Answering in _____ of _____

Notes:

Peter forever connected the need to be serious to the need to be watchful: *“But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers”* (I Peter 4:7). The word watchful is used in some form 90 different times in Scripture. Sometimes it was used when giving a command. Sometimes the Spirit used this word in connection with a warning. Regardless of the situation or circumstance in which it was used, when you add all these instances us, the need to be watchful ought to be evidently apparent!

The warning and command to watch is connected to many different aspects of the Christian life. For example, we are to be aware of and watchful for our enemy (I Peter 5:8-9). We are to watch out for times of temptation (Matthew 26:41). We are to prayerfully watch in anticipation for the return of the Lord (Matthew 24:42). We are to carefully watch for times of weakness that we might be strong (I Corinthians 16:13). We ought to earnestly watch for time to pray to our Heavenly Father (Luke 21:36). Realistically, if a man were watchful in all these areas, would he not also be settled, steadfast, and secure in Jesus Christ?

John Steven Aquari represented his country of Tanzania in the marathon even of the 1968 Olympics held in Mexico City. Mr. Aquari was not the winner of that race, in fact Mamo Waldi of Ethiopia won many hours before John Steven Aquari ever made it back to the arena. When he reentered the arena the few spectators noticed his leg was bandaged and the bandage was soaked with blood. John Steven Aquari crossed the finished live to the roar of the small crowd and was immediately asked by one reporter why he did not just give up. After all, he was hurt and the race had been over for hours. Mr. Aquari responded with these words: *“My country did not send me seven thousand miles to start this race. They sent me seven thousand miles to finish it!”*

May we be planted, serious, and watchful so that we persevere through the trials and finish our race.

-Wayne Jones

RAISIN’ BOYS

One father made his sons work in the cornfields while their peers spent the afternoon at the swimming hole. Someone scolded the father saying, *“Why do you make those boys work so hard? You don’t need all that corn.”* The wise father replied, *“Sir, I’m not raisin’ corn. I’m raisin’ boys.”* - Ephesians 6:4

THE DEMAND OF GODLY LIVING

Most often expectation is not very high. The lower the expectation the less effort required to succeed, and the easy road is often the one most traveled. No this may not be the norm in most jobs, schools, hobbies, or activities, but it is the predominant religious message being heard today. It seems that the less some want to do the less they are told they must do, and the result is peace and serenity among those circles, but no spiritual growth. Paul, though, took a different approach in relating the expectations of God regarding His faithful children and heirs of salvation. He said: *“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works”* (Titus 2:11-14). If anything is gathered from those four verses, it has to be that there is a demand of godly living. Now, many see the word “demand” and are immediately turned off because to demand implies an insufficiency in present personal conditions. However, a demand should only be feared when the sacrifice simply is not worth the result. For instance, most likely if one’s employer made a demand in some area of their given job, the sacrifice would probably be worth fulfilling in order to keep that job. On the other hand, if a boyfriend made an unjust demand of some sort to a young lady, that demand may be worth not fulfilling if it means ridding herself of that young man in whom she no longer finds interest. But, when it comes to things spiritual, surely in the interest of the soul, any demand is worth enduring for the purpose of its salvation.

Well, the point is that regardless of whether it is appreciated or not, God demands certain things of godly living. If those demands are not fulfilled then that life has not met the Divine standard. If those demands are met then that life looks forward to the blessed hope and the glorious appearing of Jesus Christ. Of the many demands, though, what underlying expectation does God have of all who would live godly in Christ Jesus? Perhaps to answer this question it would be beneficial to see the actions of one such heir of glory.

King David was near the end of his life and kingly reign when in II Samuel 24 the Lord’s anger was kindled against him because of his numbering of the people. The Lord’s wrath came by means of a great pestilence sent upon Israel that killed 70,000 men. David, with need to make retribution for this great sin, was instructed to go up to the threshingfloor of a man named Araunah who was a Jebusite. It is with David’s arrival at Araunah’s that II Samuel 24:20 begins: *“And Araunah looked, and saw the king and his servants coming on toward him: and Araunah went out, and bowed himself before the king on his face upon the ground. And Araunah said, Wherefore is my lord the king come to his servant? And David said, To buy the threshingfloor of thee, to build an altar unto the Lord, that the plague may be stayed from the people. And Araunah said unto David, Let my lord the king take and offer up what seemeth good unto him: behold, here be oxen for burnt sacrifice, and threshing instruments and other instruments of the oxen for wood. All these things Araunah, as a king, give unto the king. And Araunah said unto the king, The Lord thy God accept thee. And the king said unto Araunah, Nay; but I will surely buy it of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing. So David bought the threshingfloor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver. And David built there an altar unto the Lord, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. So the Lord was intreated for the land, and the plague was stayed from Israel”* (II Samuel 24:20-25). What did David know was demanded of godly living? Sacrifice. Though it was freely offered to him to do as he knew to be good, David realized that he truly was not sacrificing unless it cost him something.

The question is not if Christianity will cost us anything. True Christianity **will** cost us something. The question rather is what are we willing to give up for Christianity? Whatever the Lord demands of us will be worth the price, whether it be possessions, a particular lifestyle, friends, and even family. The early Christians recognized that true Christianity was worth sacrificing their lives, the ultimate demand of godly living. It was unto those in that precarious predicament that Christ stated, *“Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life”* (Revelation 2:10). God’s promise is always greater than His demand. Thanks be to God for those willing Christians who stand faithfully in the pathway of truth. Their end shall be according to their works (II Corinthians 11:15).

-Andy Brewer