

A Cure for Carnality - a Call to Be Steadfast - Part 2

by Alan Martin

The sermon emphasizes the importance of being steadfast in our faith and trusting in God's strength, even in the face of adversity.

Scripture: Joshua 1:5-9, Joshua 1:18, Psalm 78:5-8, Psalm 78:32, Psalm 78:36-37, Ephesians 6:10-13

Topics: "Carnality"

Description

In this sermon, the primary mission of pastor teachers is emphasized, which is to prepare God's people for works of service and to build up the body of Christ. The speaker highlights the importance of maturity in faith and the key to achieving it, which is understanding and embracing God's love. The sermon also addresses the challenges of spiritual warfare and the need for a steadfast spirit in times of conflict. The speaker references the story of Joshua and the commands given to him by the Lord as an example of overcoming obstacles and entering into God's promises.

Transcript

Alright, turn your Bible to Psalm 78. Psalm 78, I want to pick up last week where we left off. This is, the title of the message here is A Call to Be Steadfast.

We talked about that, we're going to try to deal with this for the next several weeks. And in Psalm 78, we have the generation you do not want to imitate. This is a generation that is not steadfast and we just want to take a quick look at it.

Read with me again in verse, from verses 5 and down, Psalm 78 verse 5. He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God, that's what he was after. And would keep his commands, those two things.

And they would not be like their forefathers, the stubborn and rebellious generation, that set not their hearts aright, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God. And then as someone pointed out last week to me, that if I would have gone on and read the next verse, it would indicate one of the ways that they manifested this was here, it says, the men of Ephraim, though armed with bows, turned back on the day of

battle. You see, it's usually in the intensity of spiritual warfare, trial and testing, that we discover whose hearts have not been set aright, and whose spirit is not steadfast with God, because if we can't handle the conflict, things get heated up, things get intense, well, we tend to shrink back quick.

How many people love a conflict? If you're one of those that just love a conflict, you're kind of in the exception. No one likes a conflict, no one likes it intense, and when a minister or someone else wants to deal intensely with sin, or when there is spiritual warfare going on and severe trial and testing, we sometimes find out not everyone is comfortable with that. Certainly the men of Ephraim weren't.

They turned back in the heat of battle. What happens if we shrink back? What does it say in Hebrews chapter 10 verse 35? But we are not of those who shrink back, because if we shrink back, what happens does it say? God's not pleased with those who shrink back. I'll read it for you, you don't need to turn there, because we're not going to spend any time there, but just let me read that for you.

It says, remember those earlier days when you received the light, when you stood your ground in a great contest in the face of suffering. See, a person whose heart has been set aright, and whose spirit is steadfast, they stand their ground, even in the face of great suffering. It says, sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution, but you still stood your ground.

At other times, you stood side by side with those who were so treated. You sympathized with those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the confiscation of your goods. The King James says, the spoiling of your goods.

That'd be great. That means if someone came and forcibly took everything you had, what would you be doing? Praise God. The hallelujah, you know.

I remember one time I was staying with a guy in Arkansas. He was living there because he wanted to be safe. He had no electricity and no running water, other than one of these natural pumps that worked off pressure.

It was an interesting gadget. But he had no electricity. He was living up there to be safe.

He was telling me, he was asking me if I realized that the Chinese army was amassing south of the Texas border there on the northern end of Mexico. And I said, no. If you get a definite date and where they are, let me know so I can be one of the first to greet them.

He didn't like that at all. Because I'm not afraid of the Chinese army. I'm not afraid of the Russian army.

You know, the only thing they can do to me is send me to heaven early. In the face of suffering, if you have confidence towards God, you don't shrink back. It goes on to say here, because it says, you knew you yourself had better and lasting possessions.

Why should I fight over something I can't keep anyway? You can't take my life. You can't take my eternal soul. That's the only thing I can keep.

And since they can't touch that, we have no reason to fear. And he goes on to say, so don't throw away your confidence. It will be richly rewarded.

You need to persevere so that when you've done the will of God, you will receive just what he had promised. For in just a very little while, he who is coming will come and will not delay. But my righteous

one will live by faith.

And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him. And he goes on to say that we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed. But of those who believe and are saved.

So if we shrink back, we'll be destroyed. And if we shrink back, God will take no pleasure in us. You know what it says in Proverbs 10.35, there's this verse.

If you falter in times of trouble, how small is your strength? If you falter in times of struggle, or trouble, how small is your strength? You see, let me explain this. Acknowledging that we are weak in our natural selves is not a full confession of faith. You're not confessing the truth when you say we are weak in our natural selves, because that's only a partial truth.

A full confession of faith is one who says, they are weak, but he is strong. See, even the children know this. We really, and David Berg has pointed out, we really should be singing, we are weak, but he is strong.

So a full confession of faith is saying, I may be weak, but I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. That's a full confession of faith. Not just admitting you're weak.

We are weak, but Christ strengthens me in my weakness. That's a real confession of faith. As a matter of fact, did you know that weakness by faith is turned to strength? Turn to Hebrews chapter 11, if you will.

Hebrews chapter 11. Our weakness is supposed to be turned to strength. It was here for these in Hebrews chapter 11.

Once you find chapter 11 of Hebrews, then find verse 34. This is describing some of those men in the first covenant who lived by faith and were found pleasing to God. We'll start in verse 32, because it's kind of difficult to jump right in the middle of a verse.

And what more shall I say? I don't have time to tell about Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah and David and Samuel and the prophets who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, gained what was promised, who shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword, and whose weakness was what? Turned to strength. You see, the full confession of faith is in His strength. God has turned my weakness into His strength because we are commanded as Christians to be strong.

Turn to Ephesians. Do you have your New Testament? You're still in the New Testament? Turn to the book of Ephesians chapter 6. Ephesians chapter 6. I'm going to be reading from verse 10 to verse 13. Ephesians 6, 10 to 13.

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Who is this written to? This is written to Christians. Everybody here, if you wouldn't mind, look at me.

I want to tell you something. Be strong. Be strong.

Don't go around confessing how weak you are. Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. We are called to be strong.

Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. Our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against the principalities and powers and authorities and against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Therefore, put on the full armor of God so that you may be able to stand and after you have done everything to stand stand therefore. How about that? A full confession of faith is not simply acknowledging what we are presently. It's acknowledging what we are to be.

It's not what you are. It's what you are to be that God expects of us. You are weak and God expects every one of us to be strong.

Be strong. Having done everything to stand stand. Put on the full armor of God.

Take your stand against the devil and don't shrink back. That's what we are called to do. And that's what the Lord expects of us.

Paul said this and I'll just read a couple of verses for you. You don't need to turn there. In 1 Corinthians 16.13 it says this Be on your guard.

Stand firm in the faith. Be men of courage. Be strong.

I like the way the King James says this. It says Watch stand fast in the faith. Quit ye like men.

Be strong. What do you think that means? Quit ye like men. Stop acting like you are just a man.

Stop acting like all you have is natural power available to you. Is God with you or not? Is the very author of life himself in the form of his son Jesus Christ to the Holy Spirit dwelling in you. If he is dwelling in you quit acting like mere men.

And act like a spirit filled child of God. Be strong in the Lord. Be strong in the power of his might.

Be steadfast. In another place it says Paul told Timothy Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. You be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

Turn with me to Romans. Let's look at Abraham. How did he do this? How can we do this? How can you just be strong? How do you do this? This is what we are commanded to be.

How do you do this? How did Abraham do it in chapter 4 of Romans? Look with me. Look at verse 18 and 20 and see how Abraham did it. Because he had to do it against all hope.

In verse 18 against all hope Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations just as it had been said to him so shall your offspring be without weakening where? In his faith. Follow this. Without weakening in his faith he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead since he was about 100 years old and that Sarah's womb was also dead yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God but was strengthened and strengthened where? In his faith.

See without weakening in his faith he was strengthened in the faith and gave glory to God being fully persuaded God had power to do what he has promised and that's why it was credited to him as righteousness. Yes. Then you had better not be weak in your faith and you better be strengthened in your

faith.

You had better be strong in the faith you better be strong in the graces in Christ Jesus and you had better not shrink back in adversity because if you shrink back the Lord shall take no pleasure in you. It is a day for Christians to be strong in their faith be strong in the Lord be strong in the power of his might this will create that heart that is set aright and a spirit that is steadfast with God and then we won't be like that other generation.

Now it's interesting turn with me to the book of Joshua and look at the Lord's commands to Joshua he was about to have to lead the nation of Israel into the land of milk and honey there was just a few things they had to do first they had to destroy nations that were larger, stronger, bigger and more equipped than they did that were living in high walled cities that had been there for years that's all they had to do first so in order to prepare him for this mission here in Joshua the first chapter of Joshua Joshua is given the charge Moses is speaking to him but he is giving him direction straight from the Lord and he tells him in verse 5 Joshua chapter 1 no one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life as I was with Moses so I will be with you I will never leave you

nor forsake you be strong and courageous because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them be strong and very courageous be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you don't turn from it to the right or the left that you may be successful wherever you go whether it be day and night so that you may be careful to do everything written in it then you will be prosperous and successful have I not commanded you be strong be courageous do not be terrified do not be discouraged for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go what is the one thing Joshua was told three times in this passage be strong and be courageous you know you know what discouragement is what is discouragement what does it mean to be discouraged thank you what

business does a Christian have being discouraged that is not something we are supposed to be we are supposed to be men and women of courage don't give in to discouragement that is not for us the world has their reasons to be discouraged let North Korea develop nuclear weapons what is that to us we don't have to be discouraged by that we don't have to be discouraged by the Chinese economy the fact that we are now 50 billion dollars annual trade deficit does it matter what is there on earth enough to discourage a person with God with them we have no reason to be discouraged we need to be strong many people excuse their actions by simply saying well you have to understand I'm discouraged what have they just said why don't they say you just have to understand I'm not believing I'm just in

unbelief right now you'll just have to excuse me because I don't have any faith today because that's what you're saying is God with you still has he promised to never leave you nor forsake you has he promised to provide all the grace you could ever need then let's call discouragement what it is unbelief lack of courage lack of being strong we must not be weakened in our faith we must be strengthened in the faith in order to give glory to God that's what we must be we must be strong in the Lord in the power of his might we've forgotten the words of Jesus Christ the words of Jesus Christ that he said to his disciples he was getting ready to be crucified and they weren't quite sure of what was going on and then he was telling them that he was going to be going away and he told them something

about their hearts he said let not your heart be troubled that's true that's true let not your heart be troubled hey is anybody troubled why we're told let not your heart be troubled don't let your heart be troubled believe in God he said believe also in me so what's the key to not having a troubled heart believe believe

don't be weakened in the faith be strengthened in your faith give glory to God God has power to do what he's promised against all hope be like Abraham in hope believe don't stagger at the promise of God be strengthened in your faith be steadfast now here turn back with me to Psalm 78 because I want you to see this the reason the Israelites had not set their heart aright and I didn't read this last week and I want to come back to it before we go on to the solution to this

matter because we're not going to stay on just the problem we want to go to the solution but we need to see it in them first in Psalm 78 we see that the reason the Israelites had not set their heart aright and their spirits were not steadfast towards God is that despite all of his miracles and it was wonderful Sunday school went such along with this for the purpose of miracles to get the people to do what? to believe so despite all the miracles that God did for Israel in spite of all of that what did they not do? they didn't come to believe they did not come to a strong faith look here in Psalm 78 look with me in verse 22 for they did not believe in God or trust in his deliverance and look down with me in verse 32 in spite of all this in spite of the fact that it said in verse 25 they ate

the bread of angels despite the fact that he rained down meat upon them from the middle of nowhere it says they ate until they had more than enough despite all of this it says they kept on sinning in spite of his wonders they did not believe and this is what the grace of God the power of God and the goodness of God is to lead us to do God is wanting us to believe so can we do this? and I like this word because if you believe you will be alive if you believe you will be living be strong don't don't be discouraged don't be troubled don't be unbelieving because that's what this generation was and what happened to them you know what God's final verdict to them of this generation was? on the very border of the promised land I mean they are standing one little river the Jordan river is

separating them from the land of milk and honey they have already defeated the nation of king Og of Bishan and king Sihon of the Amorites they have already defeated two nations and part of Israel has already had their inheritance despite this they are not going to believe God fully I am going to take that back that happens a little bit later but they are standing on the verge of crossing the promised land they send 12 spies out 10 of the spies come back and give a very accurate report of the land there are large cities large people very strong very powerful and more numerous than all of us very accurate report and what does that report do to the people? it discourages them they lose their courage and this is God's reaction to it you don't need to turn there but listen to God's response to

them verse 1 everybody tells to Moses and he says the whole assembly talked about stoning Moses and Caleb and Joshua because they were trying to encourage the people who had become discouraged by the report it says the glory of the Lord appeared at the meeting to all the Israelites and the Lord said to Moses how long will these people endure? so you know what he said he will do? this is what he said and this is in Psalm 78 it says in verse 33 after the verse where it says in spite of all his wonders they did not believe so he ended their days in futility their years in terror can I describe how that is? what it means he ended their days in futility for 40 years said for 40 years but dead in the wilderness outside the land of promise led, said, but dead you see the futility of that? what

was 40 more years for? they just died just so they could wander the wilderness and die because they did not believe God he ended their days in futility leading them around the wilderness to the last of them dying this is the real danger of not having a heart that's been set aright and a spirit that's been steadfast when God takes no pleasure in a people it is because they have refused to come to a mature faith towards him despite all that he has done to enable them to believe this is my concern for all of us we must become a

people who refuse to become discouraged we must become be a people like Abraham who was strengthened in our faith and not weakened in our faith we must become a people who refuse to shrink back we must become a people who put on the full armor of God and having done

all to stand this is my primary calling as an elder pastor this is the primary calling it is to strengthen the saints it's to see that faith is developed, is matured turn with me and you'll see this in Ephesians chapter 4 this is the primary mission it's not preaching funerals that's a part of it it's not marrying people that's a part of it but judges can do that you don't even need a minister to do that although I believe in Christian marriage and it should be done in the name of Christ look in Ephesians 4 this is the primary mission of pastor teachers look in verse 11 of chapter 4 it says it was he who gave some to be apostles and some to be evangelists and some to be pastors and teachers to prepare God's people for works of service so that the body of Christ may be built up until we

reach unity in the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God and become what? mature attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ then we will no longer be infants tossed back and forth by the waves you see that's we need to come to full maturity as believers turn with me real quick to 1 Peter and let me illustrate this by a verse in 1 Peter 1 Peter chapter 2 look in the second verse of chapter 2 1 Peter 2.2 like newborn babes crave the pure spiritual milk so that by it you may grow up in your salvation I looked at this interesting phrase in the Greek and it is that you may grow eis soterion you may grow unto salvation we need to grow in salvation we need to grow in salvation and growing in salvation is going to be achieved by growing in faith for example 2 Peter you are right

near there to 2 Peter chapter 1 and we are going to read verses 5 and on in a minute but you see it is very important for our faith to be developed strengthened enhanced enlarged until it becomes mature and productive Christ must be more than just the author of our faith I don't doubt right here in this room that Christ for most of you is the author of your faith that he cannot merely be the author Christ needs to be the finisher he needs to finish what he has begun and he wants to finish what he has begun and part of how he has done that is he has given ministers to equip the people until they become mature no longer infants tossed to and fro until they become stable steadfast strong encouraged people putting on the armor of God people that stand their ground and don't shrink back and

part of this is achieved by reminding the people like Peter did to do this look in 2 Peter chapter 1 for this reason make every effort to add to your faith goodness or virtue knowledge to knowledge self-control to self-control perseverance to perseverance godliness to godliness brotherly kindness to brotherly kindness love for if you possess these qualities in increasing measure they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ but if anyone does not have them he is nearsighted and blind and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins therefore my brothers be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure for if you do these things you will not never fall isn't that wonderful I want all of us to enjoy the

security of never worrying about falling but the only way that I can give you genuine security about not falling is to bring you into the place where you are diligently and daily adding to your faith virtue and knowledge and self-control and perseverance and godliness and brotherly kindness and love if these things are in you and abounding you will be very secure you won't fall you will be steadfast you won't shrink back but only under these conditions because it says if you don't have them you become unproductive and blind and nearsighted now a true spiritual shepherd think about this here is Peter the shepherd a true spiritual shepherd is not content to merely know you are a sheep is he? do you all want

me just to be content to say well come on Mother El I am a sheep isn't that enough?

is that enough? no quiet it's not enough no it's not a true spiritual shepherd here is what the scripture says be sure to know the what of your flocks? condition a true spiritual shepherd is not satisfied for a person to say I am a sheep what kind of condition is a sheep in? are they in their maximum potential?

I mean Kenny Kenny is a worry wart he's got cows they are good enough he don't think pond water is good enough he wants to give him well water what a worry wart he ought to just be happy he's got cattle he can be satisfied with he's got some pasture why isn't that enough? why is he always trying to achieve excellency in their condition? because that's when you get the highest productivity the best growth it's not enough to be a Christian it's not enough to be a sheep my concern is to bring us into productivity maturity and excellence as Christians do we come to what the scripture calls perfect now this is best seen in first Corinthians chapter 14 turn there I'll try to wrap this up in the next few minutes 1st Corinthians chapter 14 1st Corinthians 14 verse 20 what I'm talking about is the

biblical word that our translators translate perfect be perfect you'll see this the Greek word is teleos and it's found here in 1st Corinthians 14 verse 20 look with me it says this brothers stop thinking like children in regards to evil be infants but in your thinking be adults that's how it says it in the NIV I want to read it to you from the New King James in my Greek Interlinear New Testament I have it here and I have some notes I want to read straight out of here so that you can see these are not just my ideas but Greek scholars ideas with me here's what it says in the New King James brethren do not be children in understanding however in malice be babes but in understanding be mature here's the Greek word teleos and their comments about it they say teleos is a frequent adjective

meaning complete perfect mature full-grown it's derived from the noun telos which means end or goal and so the basic meaning is to reach the end designed for what end were we designed for we were designed not to just be born again a babe God designed us to not just stay a babe but to what to grow up into a mature son or daughter that's the end we were designed for and so that's part of my job is to bring us as a congregation and that's our job with one another to encourage one another to let Christ finish our faith let him bring us to the end to where complete mature entire isn't that what James says in James 1 my brothers counted all joy whenever you face trial of various kind for patience must have her what perfect work that she be mature and complete not lacking anything so I do desire

a level of maturity and consistency and stability and steadfastness in us all that I know is pleasing and brings glory to God and along this line I've been asking Lord what what's the key ingredient to this you know in a in a recipe you'll have a main ingredient you'll have many ingredients but one will be principle one will be the foundation of the product you're making and I've had I've been asking the Lord for stability for this process for for Christians coming to maturity and completeness what is the foundational element that's necessary and this is a verse that I that gave me a great hint at what it is turn with me to Colossians Colossians chapter 3 and find verses 12 to 14 therefore as the elect of God holy and beloved put on tender mercies kindness humility meekness long

suffering bearing with one another and forgiving one another if anyone has a complaint against another even as Christ forgave you so you must also do but above all these put on love which is the bond of what it says it's interesting it's the bond of unity but in the Greek it is the same word for perfect love is the bond of perfection so now follow me this is Paul saying it's important to have tender mercies kindness humility meekness long suffering forbearance with one another forgiveness towards one another forgiving any

No, I don't know. Never met him. You can know, you can have heard about the love of God all your life and not know it.

It takes, and we'll find out more of this next week, we're going to spend some more time in Ephesians, it takes being strengthened with power by the Holy Spirit in the inner man to even be able to grasp this. It's not natural. I mean, how could Christians, the early Christians, be convinced that God loved them when they were being mauled by lions, burned at the stake, crucified upside down, ripped apart by two trees being tied together and let go.

All these things they did without weakening in their faith. It's possible. And it's possible for the weak to become strong.

So if you feel weak, this is not going to be a season of condemnation for the weak. This is going to be a season when the Word of God and the ministers of God are going to stand up here and say, Now, let the weak say, Now, let the weak say, You got it. Now.

How do you say that? By faith. You say that by faith. You say that I am weak, but He is strong in me.

I can do all things. It doesn't say, I will be able to do all things. It says, I can.

You can be steadfast. You can be an overcomer. You can come to maturity.

You can. I believe everybody here can. I believe everybody here should.

I believe everybody here better. Let's pray. Father, if we have been, any of us, to any degree that we have been weak too long, we want to come to the full confession and be just as convinced of how strong you are in us.

And for your own namesake, so that you can be recognized by our neighbors, by our friends, by our fellow family members, so that they can see your grace at work in us. We want to be finished. We want you to continue to work to be the finisher of our faith.

We want to be strengthened. We want to be changed from one degree of glory into another. We want to go from strength to strength.

We want to see that we are not the same, because you have changed us and are changing us. I'm asking you now, Father, and I'm assuming right now that many brothers and sisters here along with me, we can humble ourselves and we can acknowledge that when we have been unsettled, when we have been discouraged, when we have been troubled, when we have faltered, the truth of the matter is we were very weak in faith. And we cry out to you like the father of that young boy, Lord, we believe.

Help thou our unbelief. Strengthen us. Bring us to that place.

Bring us to the finishing place. Be the finisher of our faith. Bring us to maturity.

Make us strong, Lord. Make us steadfast, Lord. Make us stable.

Put it in your own namesake. In Jesus' name we pray. Let's stand and sing a song with me.

You probably know it. The Bible says there is one thing we must do to do the work of God. What must we do to do the work of God? They asked Jesus, what must we do to do the work of God? He said the work of

God is this, to believe.

That's the work. So we're going to sing a little song. And without music we're going to sing it, what they call acapulco.

You know that's not the way it is, but it's good enough. Acapella. We're going to sing it acapella.

And here's the song. Only believe. Only believe.

All things are possible. Only believe. And sing it again.

Only believe. Only believe. All things are possible.

Only believe. Sing with me. Only believe.

Only believe. All things are possible. All things are possible.

Only believe. Amen. Brother Brian, would you close us in a word of prayer?

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