

# Steadfastness in Conduct

by Duncan Campbell

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*Duncan Campbell emphasizes the critical role of steadfast conduct in reflecting one's faith and influencing others for Christ.*

**Scripture:** Job 16:19, Proverbs 24:21, Hebrews 11:5, Hebrews 13:20

**Topics:** "Steadfastness", "Conduct in Faith"

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## Description

Duncan Campbell emphasizes the importance of steadfastness in conduct, urging believers to live in a way that reflects their faith and pleases God. He draws on biblical examples such as Enoch, Elisha, and Barnabas to illustrate how consistent and godly conduct can influence others and glorify God. Campbell warns against the dangers of neglecting prayer and the need for a disciplined life that seeks God's presence, as our actions serve as a testimony to the world. He concludes that true discipleship involves imitating Christ and living out our faith in practical ways, as our conduct can either draw others to God or lead them astray.

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## Transcript

"My son, fear thou the Lord and the king: and meddle not with them that are given to change" (Proverbs 24.21).

I came across an arresting statement in the Book of Job: "My witness is in heaven, and my record is on high" (Job 16.19), of which the Gaelic version reads as follows: "My witness is in the heavens, and He who bears testimony of me is on high."

Enoch had this testimony "that he pleased God" (Heb. 11.5), and the prayer of the writer to the Hebrews is in the following words: "The God of peace ... make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in His sight" (Heb. 13.20, 21). This passage surely refers to the way we live and act, as those who profess to be followers of Christ.

There are two characters in Scripture, whose CONDUCT emphasizes this quality of life. In the Old Testament, the testimony of the woman of Shunem concerning Elisha is of interest in this connection: "I perceive that this is an holy man of God, which passeth by us continually" (2 Kings 4.9), There was a consistency and STEADFASTNESS about his mode of living that marked him out as a holy man whose walk was well-pleasing to God. In the New Testament, it is said of Barnabas: "He was a good man," again indicating that there was something about his life that spoke of goodness or godliness. How many of us

would rather have that said of us than that we were good preachers or good organizers! I believe the greatest contribution we can make to the cause of Christ is in the impact of our unconscious influence. Today we are inclined to think a great deal of cleverness, and even of smartness, but the day is coming when there will be a startling reversal. Goodness will be first and greatness last. Here I would recall the testimony of one Christian worker concerning another: "She is all she professes to be and much more." The writer of the following verses puts this very aptly:

"I'd rather see a sermon than hear one any day,

I'd rather one would walk with me than merely show the way;

The eye's a better pupil, more willing than the ear,

Fine counsel is confusing, but example's always clear;

The best of all the preachers are the men who live their creeds, For to see good put in action is what everybody needs; I soon can learn to do it if you'll let me see it done, I can watch your hands in action, but your tongue too fast may run; The lectures you deliver may be very wise and true, But I'd rather get my lessons by observing what you do; I may not understand the high advice that you may give, But there's no misunderstanding how you act and how you live."

The late Dr. Stuart Holden, speaking of the early disciples, said: "Here were men who were with Him long enough to capture His spirit, and so were made competent to go forth to reproduce Him in the world." The success or failure of our work as a church or mission depends, in the last resort, largely, not in the number of preachers we put into the field, nor on the size of our congregations, but rather on the character of Christianity we and our work produce.

So we see that CONDUCT is the way we act or live. You have heard it said: "I do not care what people think of me." By way of comment, someone has said: "That may be all right as a statement of consecration, but it is a poor rule of conduct!" We ought to care what people think of us. Scripture clearly declares that we are called upon to be 'lights', so that men seeing our good works may glorify God. It is a solemn thought that God's character before the world is committed to His people so that in a true sense, His reputation is in our hands. This can be illustrated by the story of the traveler who, some years ago, called at an hotel. The appointments were the finest and the service the best that he had ever known. The proprietor was considered the most successful man in that business in that part of the country. One day the traveler found the secret. In the staff quarters, unseen by the public, but where it was visible to his employees, hung a card with the words: "My reputation is in your hands."

My appeal is for a more practical expression of our faith, the practical aspect springing from a pattern of life based on New Testament standards, as represented by the Sermon on the Mount. The average man whom we are anxious to win, will not be impressed by anything less. Whitefield was once asked: "Is such and such a man a Christian?" "I do not know," was the reply, "I never lived with him," suggesting that he was basing his judgment on CONDUCT rather than hearsay.

This theme often engages the powerful pen of the apostle, mention of which has already been made in the preceding chapter, where he clearly states that "none of us liveth to himself" (Romans 14.7), suggesting that our CONDUCT is touching others at a thousand points. Was it the CONDUCT of Nehemiah that impressed King Artaxerxes, and led him to act as he did? Nehemiah was the custodian of God's interests

in the palace, and his CONDUCT must reflect that. We, too, are the custodians of God's interests in the world. We would do well to ask ourselves: "Do men see Jesus in us?"

Henry Ward Beecher, when asked what was the secret of so much blessing in his ministry, replied: "I have good reflectors in the pew!" Nehemiah was a 'good reflector' in the King's household. Notice that as the King's cup-bearer, he realized that his position was an opportunity of furthering the cause of God. His conduct did but reflect his burden and his sense of responsibility. That, I believe, led the King to ask: "Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick?" (Neh. 2.2), to which Nehemiah replied: "Why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?" (Neh. 2.3).

One cannot read this interesting record without being profoundly impressed by the prayer life of God's servant. Often we have the words: "So I prayed to the God of heaven." His mode of living, his CONDUCT, indicated that his was a disciplined life. He found time to pray because he lived with a sense of responsibility and urgency. He was a trusted servant, but he found time to pray in the day-time and in the night (Neh. 1.6).

I know of nothing that demands greater discipline than prayer, i.e. if we are to remain STEADFAST, but I know of no place where the "lure of the lesser loyalty" is more felt. We must ever remember that there is a sufficient latent power in the most trifling neglect of anything God shows us, to put an eternity of difference between us and His eternal purpose for our lives. Here is an entry in Robert Murray McCheyne's diary, dated February 23rd, 1834: "Sabbath. Rose early to seek God and found 'Him whom my soul loveth'. Who would not rise early to meet such company!"

Is it not remarkable, if not disturbing that we, as Christian workers, should often lose interest in the company that McCheyne loved to keep? It was also he who said: "No amount of activity in the King's service will make up for the neglect of the King Himself. Here, I would stress the need to guard carefully the morning watch. We should ever aim at coming into contact with God in the morning, so that hearing His voice we may be made conscious of His presence, and know the inspiration that comes from such a meeting.

I am fully persuaded that every man who has to speak for God to his fellows must first learn in himself to be silent before God. "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from Him," is the heart-cry of David (Psalm 62.5). He had come to learn that the way of duty, comfort, strength and stability was in fellowship with God. The prophet Isaiah also has an assuring word in this connection: "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isaiah 40.31). Away from the din of men to be lost in the full realization of God and the wonder of His saving grace, is surely what is suggested in this passage. This, surely, is the essential qualification for responsible service; for all the powers of heaven are ready to co-operate with the man who thus waits. How many there are whose lives are weak and whose service is poor and ineffective, just because they have not zealously guarded the time and place of prayer! It is well, therefore, that we should pause and ask ourselves the question: "What place has prayer in my life?"

The history of many a moral and spiritual tragedy is the history of the man who, because of his failure to maintain close fellowship with God, has lost out, and has become that which Paul dreaded to become -- a castaway! The tragedy could have been avoided, if only through waiting upon God there had been infused into his Christian character the 'rock' quality of which David writes: "In God is my salvation and my glory:

the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God" (Psalm 62.7). It is instructive to learn how practical such a life is in which such characteristics express themselves in a walk that is pleasing to God. There is a sincerity that is transparent, a goodness that is impressive, a walk that is upright and works that are righteous. Such a man lives in harmony with the truth he professes to believe.

When I want to discover the secret of a life that has left its mark on its day and generation, I find myself asking what lay behind that life; what was the motivating power that produced such character? The apostle answers that question: "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (I Peter 1.8). Peter suggests that the root and fruit of Christian character springs from a belief in the invisible God becoming the supreme reality, and it is this indescribable awareness that controls CONDUCT, and exerts an influence that is far-reaching.

In his Corinthian Epistle, Paul makes a bold statement: "Be ye followers of me" (I Cor. 4.16). Matthew Henry, commenting on this passage, says: "It is plain that Paul not only preached such doctrine as they ought to believe, but lived such a life as they ought to imitate." It was Dr. Chalmers who said: "There is more moral persuasion in a good man's life than in the highest efforts of an orator's genius." This leads me to a consideration of the power of influence.

When Paul exhorted the Corinthians, "Be ye steadfast, unmoveable . . ." (I Cor. 15.58), he surely had in mind that quality of life that often creates in others a desire to emulate the CONDUCT of the person whose actions are governed by high principles. Is it not true that a disposition to imitate is observable in the human race? The boy, seeing his father chopping wood, must have an axe and a saw. This desire is in the very heart of man, for God has put it there, and it is this desire which, when actuated by the Holy Spirit, leads on to higher heights and deeper depths, creating a hunger, such as finds expression in the prayer of the apostle: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3.12), or in the words of the hymn writer:

"More about Jesus let me learn,

More of His holy will discern;

Spirit of God, my teacher be,

Showing the things of Christ to me."

I read somewhere that in a certain cemetery a small white stone marked the grave of a young child. On the stone these words were chiseled: "A little child of whom her playmates said, 'It was easier to be good when she was with us'." Such was the conduct of a little girl.

During the revival in Lewis I was led to speak to a company of young converts from the text: "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Gen. 4.9), stressing the point that men judge us, not by what we say, but by what we are and do. At the close of the meeting an elderly man who had recently found the Saviour, came to me and said very brokenly: "I am a living evidence of the tragedy of a wasted influence. What would I not give to recall the wasted years!" If to be forewarned is to be forearmed, let us heed the warning: "He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption" (Gal. 6.8).

Our Lord used His teaching as a guide to our CONDUCT, and we would do well to remember that there is no discipleship without the attempt at imitation. "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (I Cor.

11.1) is a Scriptural injunction. What is the worth of a discipleship which, day by day, contradicts Christ's life? It was John Stuart Mill who said, as quoted by Alexander MacLaren: "There was no better rule for life than to do as Christ would have done." Christ's own words to His disciples are clear and emphatic: "Ye call Me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am... For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you" (John 13.13-15).

So let us bow to His kingly rule, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.

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