

Steadfastly Setting our Face

“And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem”. Luke 9:51

The Scriptures are filled with examples of godly men and women who “steadfastly set their face”. We watch Father Abraham walking with his son towards the mountains of Moriah; we hear Ruth declaring to Naomi that she will never leave her; we see Daniel going into his house and kneeling before the windows opened to Jerusalem; and we observe Nehemiah, quietly going out at night to survey the ruins of the same city that Daniel prayed towards. Perhaps most meaningful to us is our Lord Jesus who set his face towards Jerusalem, fully determined to complete His earthly journey to the cross.

In these examples, their determination was borne out of the convictions they held in their heart. We can see similar examples in the previous generations of our beloved fellowship. There too we find godly men and women who, when faced with the challenges of their day, steadfastly set their face to do what was right.

This idea of “steadfastly setting one’s face” calls to mind the following qualities: loyalty, commitment, and determination. It is worth our while to think carefully about these things. Consider these definitions:

Loyalty: Steadfast in allegiance to one's homeland, government, or sovereign. Faithful to a person, ideal, custom, cause, or duty.

Commitment: a pledge to do; the state of being bound, emotionally or intellectually, to a course of action or to another person or persons.

As noted above, these traits are usually accompanied by:

Determination: Firmness of purpose; resolve; a fixed intention or resolution.

As we ponder these things, it is easy to recognize how necessary these qualities are in every area of life. How much difference is made by either their presence or their absence in our families, our relationships, our careers, and our congregations! Though it is easy to see their importance, are these things found within us and among our churches?

Surely, *we are* blest with many brothers and sisters who are both loyal and committed. Each congregation has those whose dedication can be counted upon. In both work and in worship, they are involved and supportive.

Society also values how vital these qualities are, especially since there is an epidemic of broken relationships due to their lack. It seems an increasing number of people believe their obligation to keep their commitments is optional. The consequences of abandoned commitments and a lack of loyalty are obvious all around us. One might wonder if the blind pursuit of absolute freedom has led many to change their view on loyalty and commitments.

Has this type of thinking affected us within the Church? Do we tend to think of personal independence as an ideal that overrides the value of loyalty and commitment within a community of believers? This worldly mindset is confronting us at a time when spiritual needs around us are mounting ever higher.

Do we sense these great needs as we look about us? Have we felt a burden to put our gift to use in a measure that exceeds what we have hitherto? Has there been a quiet conviction that gnaws within, that we must do much more than we have done until now? Do we recognize that there is work awaiting us as a fellowship, both to build up within the Church and to carry a true message to those without?

In the face of the alluring delusion of absolute freedom, the Spirit is calling for those who are willing to turn away from worldly pleasures and set their face towards the work of Christ. The call is for many more to rise up and search for ways to become engaged in the great work the Lord has left His Church. It is not enough that there are some, in each congregation, whose dedication can be counted upon. Congregations must be filled with believers who are both loyal to the truth and committed to serving one another in spite of what comes our way. When we flourish as a Kingdom community, the Spirit will accomplish much through us.

If our hearts are stirred about these needs, let us consider the following observations.

The need is for servants. Those who wish to answer His call to service must know their place. If our Master washed the feet of His disciples, we too must become comfortable with a towel and basin. God's Kingdom is no place to imitate the world's practice of making celebrities and superstars out of the gifted or talented among us. A true servant has true humility. There is no place for a proud, demanding attitude. (Luke 17:10) He desires praise from his Master, not the praise that belongs to his Master.

The need is for loyalty. The call for servants within our fellowship presupposes they will be loyal. The work is for those who are settled as to the doctrine, practices, and standards of the fellowship. It is puzzling why some have the idea that the basic tenets of the fellowship should be continually negotiated and spend much time and talent trying to re-invent church doctrine. The work is for those who are willing to be equally yoked together.

The need is for commitment. True servants do not drift from place to place, looking for better opportunities or a more suitable environment. They work where their Master has placed them and they find fulfillment in their work. (Galatians 6:4) If we have the heart of a committed servant, then we will have the eyes of a servant – zealous to find and do any good thing that needs to be done. (Ephesians 2:10, Titus 2:14)

The need is for determination. To answer this call requires the type of commitment we have seen in Abraham, the loyalty of Ruth, the quiet resolve of Daniel, and the tireless determination of Nehemiah. In short, it will require that we “steadfastly set our face” to go forward and do what the Lord is asking of us.

It may be that the demands of the busy life, or the attractions of the comfortable life, have divided our attention. Perhaps we think that most of the work in the church is to be done by the elders and ministers. Perhaps we are too weighed down with the problems of life. Perhaps we are content to live a happy life, believing that it is more blessed to receive than to give.

Regardless of what hinders us, the call goes out to this generation of Apostolic Christians. Holy and eternally vigilant, the Spirit has in times past ignited the hearts and minds of those who greatly humbled themselves and renewed their dedication. This can be seen in the days of the Reformation, when the Anabaptists, despised by all, were used in a mighty way to advance the cause of the Kingdom. This can also be seen in the lives of our Eastern European forefathers, many of whom endured much hardship and persecution because they were determined to love their enemies instead of fighting them. Will our children be able to say of their parent's generation, that they were a people who "steadfastly set their face" to do the will of the Lord?

Truth for our Time is prepared by the Apostolic Christian Church (Nazarean) Communications Committee. Comments or questions can be directed to: ACCNcommunications@gmail.com