

**EXAMPLES OF STEADFASTNESS
SELECTED SCRIPTURES**

Read Psalm 16. Did you hear what the psalmist said?

- “I take refuge in You.”
- “I have no good besides You.”
- “The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and my cup.”
- “The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; indeed, my heritage is beautiful to me.”
- “I have set the LORD continually before me.”
- “Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.”
- “In Thy presence is fulness of joy.”
- “In Thy right hand there are pleasures forever.”

Those are astounding statements, aren't they? And no doubt there are times when we can whole-heartedly affirm them. But what about in the tough times? What about the day we get laid off? What about the day our child runs away? What about the day the house is broken into or burned down? What about the day I get sick — really sick — go to the hospital sick? What about the day that I go to jail, accused and convicted of something I did not do? What about the day that we fall into some sin that we never thought possible? On that day, or any day like it, can you and I still say, “In Thy presence there is fulness of joy?”

As you think about steadfastness, it's easy to assume something like, “Yes, of course he didn't turn his back on Christ, his life is easier than mine...life is much harder for me; others don't understand the pressures I face.” Yet there is no temptation but such as is common to man — the pressures and temptations of life are regularly experienced by mankind. Your particular circumstances are unique to you, but the problems are not unique. Every problem is very typical. And because of that, the stories of our lives are told in Scripture as well. So this morning let us look at the stories of three individuals and how they remained steadfast in hard, but typical circumstances. As we look at these situations, we will learn...

STEADFASTNESS IS POSSIBLE IN EVERY CIRCUMSTANCE BECAUSE GOD'S GRACE IS SUFFICIENT.

Our goal this morning is not to consider every kind of circumstance when we are tempted to despair and give up, but to consider three common circumstances and then remind ourselves of one common principle (provision) for every difficulty. Likewise, we are not considering every example in Scripture; for each of these trials there are *many* more examples of faithfulness. These are only three examples that are designed to remind us of the commonness of our difficulties and the possibility of steadfastness. When enticed to despair, consider **three examples** of faithfulness in the Bible:

1. Joseph: He **RESISTED** When He Was **TEMPTED** (Gen. 39)
2. Philemon: He **FORGAVE** When He Was **SINNED**-Against (Philemon)
3. Job: He **WORSHIPPED** When He Was **SICK** (Job 2)
4. Summary: Your Circumstances May Be **HARD**, but They Are **TYPICAL** (and God's grace is sufficient) (1 Cor. 10:13)

1. Joseph: He **RESISTED** When He Was **TEMPTED** (Gen. 39)

- You remember the story of Joseph:
 - ✓ He was the 11th of 12 sons of Jacob, but the first son of Jacob's favorite wife, Rachel.
 - ✓ So while Joseph was among the last of the sons, he was also favored — and it was obvious (37:3-4)
 - ✓ Joseph was also unique in the favor/grace he received from the Lord in the dreams (37:5ff)
 - ✓ The brothers responded as you might expect — with jealousy, anger, and hatred (37:4, 8, 11)
 - ✓ They plotted to put him to death (37:18) and while Reuben (the oldest) was able to avert that decision, he couldn't keep him from being sold into slavery or his demise into Egypt (37:26-28).
- In Genesis 39, Joseph is in Egypt and immediately prospering:
 - ✓ He becomes a slave of Potiphar who was the captain of Pharaoh's bodyguards (39:1) — but he immediately distinguishes himself and becomes successful, even Potiphar's personal servant and the overseer of Potiphar's house (v. 4). He oversaw everything in Potiphar's life (vv. 4, 6).
 - ✓ And he was in good shape and good looking, too (v. 6b).
 - ✓ His brothers attempted to turn everything upside down in Joseph's life, but the Lord was with Joseph (vv. 2a, 3a, 5b).
- Just when everything was going well, Potiphar's wife attempts to seduce him (v. 7).
 - ✓ He resists in a most godly way (vv. 8-9) and she persists in a most ungodly way — daily (v. 10).
 - ✓ You can imagine the pressure he feels — while prospering, he is still a foreign slave. He can't leave. You can imagine the pressure of temptation, the sense of entrapment, and fear of loss of livelihood and life if she persists. And she does (vv. 11-12).
 - ✓ And again he responds wisely to temptation and runs (vv. 12-13).
 - ✓ While he ran, he was also caught and he suffered unjustly for his righteousness (without complaint; 45:5, 7-9; 50:20).
- There is much to glean from Joseph's life, but today let's notice the temptation and his responses:
 - ✓ His temptation was typical of many temptations:
 - It came at an unexpected time — both he and Potiphar were being "blessed" ("good times")
 - It came from an unexpected source — because of her marriage to Potiphar, she also had authority over Joseph (you don't expect that behavior from leaders)
 - It came with "favorable terms" — "no one" will know and those who do know won't dare talk
 - It came with cultural "blessing" — as in every age, there are always those who indulge desires
 - It came when he was young (25?), single, accomplished, and handsome — it came at a typical

time when those sins are indulged, and at a time when indulgence might be expected/excused.

- It came when he was just trying to do his job — like many temptations, he didn't go looking for it; it came looking for him (to destroy his reputation and life).
- While the particulars of his temptation were unique to him and unlikely to be experienced by us, the general circumstances were not unique but very common (and will be experienced by us). So what did he do? How could he resist in such a dramatic and persist way?
- ✓ His resistance was empowered by his relationship with God:
 - One key to his resistance is given in **v. 9** — “how could I do this great evil and sin against God?” ... In the moment, he correctly identified the sin for what it was: an evil rebellion against God. ... Sin always comes dressed in beautiful clothes with promises of joy — and it will always destroy and kill. And because sin is always against God, it is also eternally damnable.
 - The other key is given at the beginning of the story: he lived in fellowship with God and in dependence on His grace. The key to the story is ***the Lord was with Joseph*** (vv. 2, 3, 5). And while it is not said in this context, later Joseph says, ***I fear God*** (42:18)
- I know the power of temptation is strong. But like Joseph, you and I can resist and be steadfast:
 - ✓ ***Cultivate a passionate love of Christ.*** “If you drive a brand new Cadillac, you won't be enticed by a 20-year-old Jeep with 300,000 miles on it.” If you cultivate love for the Lord, the enticement of sin will diminish (**Heb. 11:25**). Are we cultivating a singular passion for God (**Ps. 27:4, 8; 2 Cor. 5:14**)?
 - ✓ ***Call sin what it is — and see its end for what it is.*** Be aware of the cost and end of sin (**Prov. 7:22ff**).
 - ✓ ***Create a plan of resistance and carry it out.*** The text doesn't say that Joseph made a plan, but given that her temptations were daily, he had to have a plan; in the moment, he didn't hesitate to run.
 - We can't remove every temptation (Jesus didn't...), but we don't have to give in to temptation.
 - How will you resist sexual temptations? And gluttony? And conspicuous consumption (greed)? And anger? And jealousy? And fear/anxiousness? And resentment? And apathy? Make a plan. (And include a love for God in that plan: **1 Cor. 10:31**.)

2. Philemon: He FORGAVE When He Was SINNED-Against (Philemon)

- Philemon was a wealthy and prominent man in the Colossian church. The church met in his home, and both his wife (***Apphia***) and son (***Archippus***) were prominent members of the church (v. 2).
 - ✓ He had a slave by the name of Onesimus who ran away (vv. 11, 16), though we don't know why. (Many slaves were treated very well and had “professional” positions, like doctor or lawyer.)
 - ✓ Because the slave was a “commodity” of the owner when the slave ran away from the owner, it was significant financial loss and hardship to the owner. He incurred a debt. (The NT does not condone slavery, but it does recognize that it was a reality in which believers had to live and function.)

- ✓ Onesimus wants to get away, he wants to go somewhere where he can “blend in” to his surroundings, so Rome was a logical place to go. So perhaps he sold some stolen goods (v. 18), purchased a ship ticket and made his way almost 1000 miles to Rome.
- ✓ And when in Rome, guess whom he providentially met? The apostle Paul. Out of all the tens of thousands of men in Rome, he comes to know Paul! And you know what happens. He comes to faith in Christ (v. 10). And not only does he come to faith, but he is growing in such a way that he becomes helpful to Paul (vv. 11, 13). Now what would Paul do?
 - If Paul sends Onesimus back, he loses someone who is a help to him in prison.
 - If Paul sends Onesimus back, he may be putting Onesimus in danger for those who might want to redeem the bounty offered for a runaway slave.
 - If Paul sends Onesimus back, he may be consigning him to death, for it was not unheard of that runaway slaves were put to death when captured or returned.
 - So Paul sends him back, because confession and forgiveness is always the priority when believers sin against one another. Reconciliation and the restoration of the relationship is a far greater priority than any personal cost to Paul or Onesimus.
- ✓ So, Paul sends Onesimus back to Philemon and the Colossian church. But what does Philemon do with this one who has stolen from him, and now is affirming a faith in Christ? The temptation for Philemon would be to ask the question, “is his faith really genuine, or is he just saying this to evade his responsibility?” So Paul sends not only a letter to Philemon, but he also sends a letter to the Colossian church in the hands of Tychicus (Col. 4:7-9). So Tychicus, Onesimus, and others travel together to Colossae, taking these letters along with the appeal to Philemon to forgive Onesimus. And from this short, yet profound letter, we receive instruction for how we are to live with believers who sin against us.
- What does Paul ask Philemon to do? (We should note that these requests are made in the context of Onesimus repenting of his sin and seeking forgiveness, v. 12)
 - ✓ Paul asks Philemon to **accept him** (v. 17). **Accept** is being used as a synonym for “forgive.” The typical word for forgiveness in the NT means, “release, dismiss, send away, cancel an obligation, remit, or pardon.” Additionally, Paul says **accept him** — and “embrace” and “welcome him.”
 - ✓ Why accept Onesimus, the sinner? Because Philemon was to apply forgiveness, which means to let go of my right to “punish” another’s sin. The door to past is closed permanently. Forgiveness means I don’t hold the sin against the sinner. I make a promise to not hold it against him in the future and promise to rebuild and restore the relationship to what it was before sin.
 - ✓ Paul asks Philemon to **absorb the debt of sin** (vv. 18-20). When he says **if** (v. 18) it has the force of “since he has wronged you...” In other words, he certainly has wronged Philemon. It seems that in addition to leaving, he also took other items with him (confusing “mine” and “thine”).

- This phrase is a reminder that sin always costs the person who is sinned against. Often, greatly.
- Paul says that all those debts should be put on **my account**. It is an acknowledgment that the debt Onesimus inflicted on Philemon needed to be repaid. Because Onesimus was a runaway slave he didn't have the ability to repay the debt so Paul was willing to repay it for him.
- [Aside: that's a glorious picture of the gospel of Christ — Jesus, who had no sin and no debt with God, died on the cross to pay our infinite debt of sin. He washes away what we owe when we trust in Him; if you do not believe in Him, I urge you to repent of your sin and believe today.]
- ✓ **Paul asks Philemon to forgive beyond his "duty" (v. 21)**. When Paul says **having confidence...I know you will do even more...** it seems that he means for Philemon to work on restoring fellowship.
 - Perhaps he's suggesting that Philemon be even more gracious in his disposition than what Paul has asked — that Onesimus be even more than a brother and co-worker (v. 16).
 - Perhaps he is suggesting that Onesimus be freed from his slavery.
 - Perhaps he is suggesting that Onesimus could be sent back to Paul from Rome.
 - Perhaps he is asking for Philemon to entrust spiritual ministry to Onesimus since Onesimus has proved himself faithful in ministry to Paul.
 - Perhaps he is suggesting that Philemon forgive others who have sinned against him.
 - Conclusion: There are no further "obligations" for forgiveness, but the implication clearly is that forgiveness should be expansive and beyond our mere duties. We forgive because we love and because we love we will lavish others with gifts that are "unreasonable."
- The question is, "Did Philemon do it? Did he forgive Onesimus?" Like Jonah, we don't know with certainty, but we do have his personal letter, so he obviously didn't destroy the letter. Since the letter is preserved, it seems more than likely that Philemon did all that Paul asked and more. Paul had no doubt as to what Philemon would do (**vv. 8, 21**); it is almost certain that Philemon was restored to Onesimus.
- **What do we learn about repentance and forgiveness** from this brief letter?
 - ✓ **Relationships (even in the church) are difficult** because sin impacts every relationship.
 - ✓ **When we sin**, no matter the cost, our duty is always to repent and seek restoration.
 - ✓ **When sinned against**, our duty is always to prepare our hearts to forgive and restore (**vv. 8, 21**).
 - ✓ **While sin always has harsh consequences**, for the believer there is always hope because of Christ's ability to redeem and restore (e.g., **vv. 15-16**).

3. Job: He WORSHIPPED When He Was SICK (Job 1-2)

- To say that there is a lot of suffering in this world is like saying "there is a lot of water in the ocean" or "there is a lot of heat in Texas in August" or "there are a lot of sick people in the hospital."
- ✓ We are surrounded by suffering of various forms; at times it feels overwhelming (like when we

would regularly go to Cook's Hospital with Emily for her hearing impairment).

- ✓ The physical pressures in suffering tempt us to discouragement, despair, and departure from God.
- ✓ That seems to be the story of Job — it is a story of suffering and God's action in our suffering: "is the world well-managed by God?" But it's not only a story of suffering; it's a theology of worship.
- ✓ Job's question is "does man worship God for convenience, or conscience?"

"Job is not about the problem of pain at all. Details of suffering serve as the ingredients of the story, the stuff of which it is made, not the central theme. A cake is not 'about' eggs, flour, milk, and shortening. It merely uses those ingredients in the process of creating a cake. In the same way, Job is not 'about' suffering but merely uses such ingredients in its overall theme." [Yancey, in *CT*, 6/13/86, 19.]

- Here is the message of Job — he worshipped God when he was sick — not just sick, but suffering unrelentingly. And when his friends accused him. And when his wife (who was also a sufferer — her children also died...) exhorted him to curse God and give up on his faith. But he was steadfast.
- Remember all the tragedy of job's life (1:6-22; 2:1-10) —
 - ✓ All his sons and daughters were together for a celebration and the Sabeans attacked and killed all the oxen, donkeys, and all the servants (except for one who escaped to tell Job, 1:15).
 - ✓ Fire from heaven burned up all his sheep and servants (except for one who escaped to tell Job, 1:16).
 - ✓ Chaldeans raided and killed all his camels and servants (except for one who escaped..., 1:17).
 - ✓ A great wind (tornado?) blew against the house where his children were celebrating and destroyed the house and killed all the children and servants (except for one who escaped to tell Job, 1:18-19).
 - ✓ Job was afflicted with boils and illness that took him to the edge of death (2:6-8). He had inflamed ulcerous sores, persistent itching, disfigurement of his face (2:12), loss of appetite (3:24), despondency (3:25), loss of strength (6:11), worms in his boils (7:5), difficulty breathing (9:18), foul breath (19:17), weight loss (19:20); perpetual pain (30:17), blackened and peeling skin, and fever (30:30).
 - ✓ Satan was the greatest (most powerful) of the angels and Job was the direct recipient of Satan's greatest attacks (not just the demons); likely no one on earth, apart from Christ, has ever had more satanic force and power unleashed against him. But he was steadfast (though sometimes shaky).
 - ✓ Calamity didn't just come "calling" for Job — it "kept calling." The suffering was relentless.
 - ✓ And just in case we think Job is unique in his physical suffering, remember Heb. 11:36-38. Suffering and death are one-out-of-one in this world. It is the norm. And it is possible to be steadfast in it.
- How did Job remain steadfast in his worship?
 - ✓ *Before any calamity struck Job, he was found to be faithful to God*, fearing (loving) Him and resisting temptation (1:1). Like Joseph, Job did not wait until the trial to figure out what to do. His heart was attentive to God from the beginning. And *Job lived out his faith in God...*

- ✓ Job had no moral blemishes, did not deviate from God’s standards, revered and submitted to God & avoided anything contrary to God (affirmed by God, 1:8; 2:3). His character was innocent: he was highly respected (29:7-11), a fair and honest judge (29:7, 12-17), a wise counselor (29:21-24), and honest employer (31:13-15), hospitable and generous (31:16-21), and a lover of God (1:1).
- ✓ Job’s suffering proves that “Job’s reverence is not mercenary as though God himself were of no value. No, Job’s reverence is based on the value of God for who God is in himself. The revelation of this truth is so important that God is willing to subject his prize servant to grief and poverty in order to make it known.” [Piper, “Reverent in Suffering.”]
- ✓ **Job lived out his faith in his suffering.** Though he complained, his response at the beginning of the trials is overtly godly and he is rewarded by God for faithfulness at the end. Yes, he did complain, and yes, he did misunderstand things about God’s nature, but the overall trajectory of his life was towards faith in God and God considered him righteous and faithful (42:7, 10).
- ✓ When suffering, our calling is to be faithful to the One who is faithful to us (1 Thess. 5:24).
- ✓ Don’t give up in the dark what God has revealed in the light.

4. Summary: Your Circumstances May Be **HARD**, but They Are **TYPICAL** (1 Cor. 10:13)

- Whatever your situation, it is not uncommon. It may be hard, but it is typical. These three stories (and thousands more) affirm that. And in every trial, there is sufficient grace from God for it.
 - ✓ **Temptation** means “temptation” — an enticement or allurements to sin.
 - ✓ But it can also mean “trials” and weights (cf. **Is. 1:2**). While it appears that Paul is thinking about our inward desire for and inclination to sin (e.g., vv. 6-10), every difficulty on this earth is in connected in some way to the fall into sin (Gen. 3). The world became broken at that point and not only were all people made sinners, but illness, suffering, and death also resulted.
- Paul is very clear: there are many (various) trials and temptations in this world, but they are all **common** — **there is nothing unusual in your life**. It’s all typical of this world.
- Solomon was exactly right — “There is nothing new under the sun.” People’s lives are made up of the same kinds of temptations as they always have been. Particular circumstances may change (lying on tax return), but the base temptations are the same. Read Genesis:

✓ Pride and blame-shifting	✓ Unbelief of God
✓ Depression	✓ Drunkenness
✓ Anger and murder	✓ Lying and deceitfulness
✓ Greed and covetousness	✓ Manipulation & self-justification
✓ Worry and anxiety	✓ Family feuds — favoritism

- ✓ Sexual sin — adultery, fornication, incest and polygamy
- ✓ And into that mess steps God — **and God is faithful**. Paul means just that — **God is constant**; He is always what He is. He is unchanging and undeviating. He is trustworthy. In your temptation, you can trust Him to provide you with what you need. In your trial and burden you can trust that He will always do what is good for you. That God is faithful is a great comfort to those who love Him and want to honor Him (but still struggle with sin).
- In His faithfulness, **God will give you what you need** — **He will provide the way of escape...**
 - ✓ It is because God gives a way of escape that Paul also says, **you will not be tempted beyond...** You don't have to fail in your trial because God has provided what you need for that (common) trial. He is not perplexed about how to get you out. He knows what to do and is able to do what He knows.
 - ✓ Jay Adams has rightly observed: "Every box has its way out; every problem has a solution; every trial will come to an end for God's children." ["Christ and Your Problems."]
 - ✓ There is much discussion about the various escapes that God provides (notice imv's of **vv. 7-10, 11, 14**).
 - ✓ I think there is an even bigger principle — God will give you what you need — Himself (vv. 1-4). Those verses refer to the salvation of the people of Israel and God's spiritual provision for the nation. They had what they needed in Him. Their problems began when they were dissatisfied with Him (**v. 5**). So the solution to endurance is salvation and sanctification — to know Him and to love Him. To be saved by Him and to stay with Him. We have faith for salvation and we follow in love.
 - ✓ That doesn't mean our difficulties will go away; to live in a fallen world means that until we get to Heaven there will always be problems of various kinds. But it does mean that in every difficulty, the way out (and the way to perseverance and steadfastness) is to cultivate affection for Him. That's always the starting point in our problems.

CONCLUSION: **Your Circumstances May Be HARD, but They Are TYPICAL. (And God's grace is sufficient).** You aren't alone in your trouble. Others have suffered also. And others are suffering with you. And many have experienced God's gracious provision and been faithful to Christ. So **be steadfast**. Hold onto God.

- ✓ Don't be enticed by the temptations of sin.
- ✓ Don't be embittered by the difficulties of relationships.
- ✓ Don't be discouraged by the persistence of pain and death.
- ✓ Do cling to the Lord in every circumstance of your life. Do cultivate your love and affection for Him, and He will see you through and equip you to be steadfast.

BENEDICTION (Rob): **1 Cor. 15:58**