

## Steadfast

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1 Kings 15:9-16

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If you read Solomon's prayer during the dedication of the Temple, I think you'll agree that he really had a heart and mind focused on God. It seemed like his faith was safe and secure. And I suppose it was, up to a certain point. But Solomon does something; by our standards it seemed completely harmless, not a big deal. He marries the daughter of the Egyptian Pharaoh. However, apparently Solomon knew that there was something not right about all of this. The Bible says, *Solomon moved his wife, Pharaoh's daughter, from the City of David to the new palace he had built for her. He said, "My wife must not live in King David's palace, for the Ark of the Lord has been there, and it is holy ground."*<sup>1</sup> (2 Chronicles 8:11) Okay, so Solomon realizes that this woman he has married is less than holy. But this was Solomon we're talking about here, and surely his faith would remain steadfast and immovable. Maybe he could convert her! But instead, it is she who turns his heart away from God (1 Kings 11:4). If only God had given him a hedge of protection, all would have been well.

There is a fear among some Christians that we must keep a hedge between ourselves and Satan. We dare not let him get a foothold. Things are shunned; many are demonized. There are some who are quick to identify what is holy and what is evil. And I meet a lot of Christians who feel that if we could just rid our nation of these wicked things all would be well. The thought is that if we could just get godly leaders in office, things would finally start going our way. But I doubt it would work. At best it was only a temporary fix for the nation of Judah.

Solomon's son and his grandson both did what God said was evil. It's not until Solomon's great grandson becomes king do we see any kind of reform taking place. Read [1 Kings 15:9-15](#) and [2 Chronicles 15](#) and you'll see what King Asa does for the nation.

Now when I read about what this King did, my heart says way to go King Asa! I'm so happy that someone finally came along to clean things up. It's about time

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<sup>1</sup>Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

someone set these people straight. But you know, this change does not last. By the time Asa's grandson becomes king, the nation falls right back into that same old ungodly routine. And I got to thinking that maybe it should be the people who sway the kingdom instead of the king swaying the people.

If you continue reading through this section of the Bible you'll find Judah swaying back and forth between wickedness and godliness (although Israel was just continually bad). But I've always wondered why the people were so easily swayed by their king. Why did the godliness of a nation depend upon the godliness of their king? Maybe it's the whole Monarchy thing, as goes the King, so goes the Nation. I mean, hey, if you don't follow the king, he can make things quite difficult for you. And maybe my understanding of why these people were so easily swayed is clouded because I'm looking at this through the eyes of democracy. But it just doesn't seem to make sense that a person would abandon their faith in God just because some bull-headed king comes along and worships Baal (that's a pun, by the way. Go look it up). Why did these people not remain steadfast in the faith? Why were they so easily moved away from God? And sadly, I could ask the same question of us today.

I know that some hide behind a hedge to keep their faith from being swayed; they withdraw from the world. And there are those who try and find a king that doesn't exploit the workers, who doesn't hang on to outdated imperialist dogma which perpetuates the social and economical differences in our society. But hiding from society or fixing our leaders is not the problem. The problem rests in us, especially when we find our faith in God through others and not within ourselves.

Jesus actually prays that God would not *"take (us) out of the world, but to keep (us) safe from the evil one"*<sup>2</sup> (John 17:15). We actually disobey Christ when we run and hide from the world; when we build this hedge of protection around us. We are supposed to be the light of the world so that the world may glorify the Father through us. *"Just as you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world."*<sup>3</sup> (John 17:18)

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<sup>2</sup>Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>3</sup>Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

Like the people in Judah, our relationship with God is so easily swayed by the faith of those around us, and it should not be. Since when should the faith of our leaders determine the faith of you or me? As Christ turns to His apostles one day, He says *"If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross, and follow me."*<sup>4</sup> (Matthew 16:24) You follow Me. You follow Me regardless of the circumstances or hardships (your cross). He turns to Peter during the same conversation and asks, *"But who do you say I am?"* (Matthew 16:15) As you read through your Bible, not once does God ever asked you to have faith in Him through others. He is asking you to find faith in Him within yourself.

The Apostle Paul challenged us when he said, *"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord."*<sup>5</sup> (1 Corinthians 15:58) And the thought here is that we do not allow ourselves to be swayed by opposition, by coercion, by the size of the task, or even the lack of faith in those around us. We do not let the wisdom of man turn our hearts; we do not let the fear of men sway our faith. We know better than to fall for all the 2012 hype. We shall not be swayed; we shall remain steadfast in our faith. But I tell you the truth, you will not be able to do this if your faith in God is based upon what you see of Him in others.

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<sup>4</sup>Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. "Text edition"--Spine. (2nd ed.) (Mt 16:24). Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>5</sup>*New American Standard Bible : 1995 update*. 1995 (1 Co 15:58). LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.