

Stedfast, Unmoveable, Always Abounding

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[0:00] I apologize. I was in jury duty today, and I expected to get out early, and I didn't. And I left my Bible on the table, and I left my sermon on the table, and I didn't make it home.

I wouldn't have been able to get here and do this also. So, I'm going to try to do this from my iPad. And already it says I need a code that I don't even know what it is.

So, oh, boy. I hope nobody's watching my code. Let's see.

Something happened. Wow. Okay. All right.

Here we go. If I can close that. All right. So, basically, and I apologize. I have to sit. Jury duty is not the same thing anymore.

[1:11] Okay. You used to get a thing. You got your summons. You drove down to the courthouse. You walked into the jury room, and you sat there. And maybe they'd call your name. Maybe they wouldn't.

And you report up to a courtroom. Well, these days, they give you the division, and you go straight there. So, I went straight there Monday to be there at 10 o'clock.

And at 1.30, they said, nah, this is going too slow. Come back Wednesday. And I'm like, great. So, I came back today. Got there. And they said, yeah, we're going to call you in at 1.30.

So, I went down at 1.30 and took care of business on work stuff and came back up. Sat through.

They called my name. And they said, you know, we didn't finish.

So, we'll let you know tomorrow if you're going to be on the trial. And it's a seven-day trial. And you just heard everyone go, oh. And she goes, well, no, no. It's seven days including the jury process.

[2:13] So, that means there's only four left. So, if I get chosen tomorrow, then I'll be on that. But anyway, I digress. Let's open with a word of prayer.

Heavenly Father, we thank you, Lord, for the opportunity to come here this evening. We're in a great land that we're free. Come worship in the house of God. We thank you for that. We thank you for the men before us that have paved the way and set this country up so that we could have freedom of religion and freedom of speech.

We pray that you watch over the powers that be. God, we get frustrated and we know we don't always get what we want. But your hands on it mightily and we appreciate it.

We pray for those that are out, those that couldn't be here this evening. But God, most of all, I pray that you might set me aside. That you might help me to give these folks what you've given to me.

And excited me, Lord, and I appreciate that. And I hope it will do the same for them. Bless this time now in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. All right. So, it already shut off.

[3:24] Steadfast, unmovable, always abounding. And that's what I'm going to try to give you a little bit of today.

Who knows where that verse is found? 1 Corinthians 15, 58.

All right. 1 Corinthians 15, 58. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

And, you know, I was thinking about when we started this and put this up, and I thought about unmovable and everything that goes always abounding.

But the thing that struck me is steadfast. And I think some of you know I'm a reader, and I enjoy reading. And this reminded me of a gentleman that stuck fast.

[4:33] And so what I'm going to try to do is tell you a little bit about a story about a gentleman. And some of you have probably heard pieces of it before if you haven't read it yourself.

And it's about Ernest Shackleton. Ernest Shackleton was called on what they called the last great polar expedition. His goal was to cross Antarctica by bobsled, an uncharted journey of 1,500 miles across the most inhospitable terrain on earth.

His crew of 27 were handpicked from a field of 5,000 applicants. The ship that would carry them there was named Endurance. For six weeks, they fought their way through frigid seas and ice flows trying to reach the continent.

But finally, their ship became frozen in the ice pack. So here they are struggling along. They're trying to get there so they can start their journey. And the ice is so thick.

I don't know if you've ever seen pictures of Endurance. It was under sail and they were trying to break through the ice and just get to the continent. And they couldn't.

[5:46] There was nothing to do but hunker down for the winter and wait for the spring's thaw to release the ship. After 10 months in their wooden icebox, spring finally arrived.

But instead of releasing the vessel, the shifting ice flow crushed it to pieces. So can you imagine that? Can you imagine here you are?

You got this crew. You got this great expedition. You have all this food. And you're on your way. And you haven't even got there yet. And everything just turns out bad.

So there they are for 10 months. And he's going around telling people, it's okay. We're going to make it. It's okay. Spring's coming. We're good. And what happens?

The ice flow starts shifting. And instead of breaking up around the ship, it starts breaking the ship. So it literally starts collapsing the ship, busting it to splinters.

[6:42] So what do they do? They grab everything they can. There are supplies and everything. They grab three lifeboats and they pull it off. And they get some food and stuff.

And now they're watching their ship get turned to splinters. And they're camping like they should have been on the continent. And things aren't looking good.

So he says, well, we're in trouble, folks, because now we don't have a ship. We're not going to get to the continent. So they start taking sightings with the sextant to see where they are.

And lo and behold, they find that the ice flow that they were trapped in has broke away from the continent and is moving out to sea.

And they're like, this isn't good. So now here they are. They're moving away from land. They only have three lifeboats. And when they determined it was for sure carrying them out to sea, Shackleton ordered the men into three lifeboats they had preserved.

[7:47] And after seven harrowing days and night fighting powerful currents, freezing rain, and massive icebergs, they made it to an uninhabited slab of rock called Elephant Island.

And Elephant Island, if you ever get a chance, what's the saying now? Google it. Elephant Island is just a gigantic rock sticking out that looks like an elephant.

And that's why it was named. And people would sail by the early explorers. And they chartered the island, but there was nothing on the island, no food, hardly any fresh water.

And they just wasn't in the main shipping lanes. So the ships didn't normally go that way going south. So for the first time in 497 days, they set foot on land.

But they were far from safe. They had to carry what supplies they had left inland about a half a mile to get shelter from the raging seas and winds. Elephant Island was far from any shipping route.

[8:56] No one on earth knew where they were. With morale and provisions running out, Shackleton determined their only course of action was to take one of the lifeboats and head off for a whaling station in South Georgia Island for help.

It would mean a journey of 800 miles in a lifeboat. We're not talking about his ship. We're talking about in a lifeboat.

So he shoved off with a portion of his crew, and he promised the rest that he'd come back for them. And the 22 men left behind assured themselves that if anyone could save them, it was Shackleton. Shackleton was the kind of leader that he would go tent to tent when they were on the ice flow. The guys would start getting down as their ship was breaking up. And he says, I got this.

I'm under control. It's under control. I know where we're going. I know where we're at. I can handle this. And they'd get all bummed out, and he'd tell the cook, he'd say, boil something up hot for them. [10:02] And they were trying to kill seals and stuff and get different things, and he just kept assuring them, it's going to be okay. We'll make it. It's okay. So he got in this little lifeboat, leaving those 22 men behind, and for 14 days he battled gale force winds and 20-foot seas.

They took only four navigational readings during the entire 800-mile journey because the weather was so bad. To get a sighting, you have to see the sun or you have to see stars, and you have to know the exact time of day in order to learn where your position is.

So here they were. If they were off even by a degree, they were going to miss South Georgia entirely and be lost out to sea. On the 14th day, they spotted land, but the outgoing tide wouldn't allow them to get to shore, so they had to spend another night in a waterlogged boat.

That night, a hurricane hit, and for nine hours they fought for their lives. When daylight broke, they were able to land on a rocky cove, only to discover they were on the wrong side of the island.

So what a beating, huh? Hey, we found it. Can you believe it? There it is. And you get there, and it's like, oops, we're on the wrong side of the island. The island's 22 miles across.

[11:27] So they had to start hiking. So the only way to get to the station would be to hike the 22 miles of mountainous terrain that had never been charted or crossed before.

Shackleton and two others trudged 36 hours straight before stumbling into the whaling cap like a walking corpse. They were out of food.

He left the men there and said, hey, we'll send people here. You can have this food. We'll 22 miles. We can get there in a day. Well, it didn't happen. 36 hours. Shackleton allowed himself one night's sleep before setting about the task of rescuing the rest of his men.

He'd have to acquire a ship and recross those hazardous waters. The first three attempts failed as sea ice prevented him from reaching Elephant Island.

During those months, Shackleton's hair literally turned from brown to gray with worry over his men. On his fourth try, Shackleton made it through the ice, and as he approached the island, he saw men standing on the shoreline to greet him.

[12:36] Anxiously, he counted one, two, three, but until he reached 22, the number he left, that's when he breathed a sigh of relief, and he said to his mate, they're all there.

They're all well. Shackleton kept his word, and he delivered every one of his men safely home. So that's loyalty, that's commitment, and that's faithfulness.

Loyalty. Loyalty is not a Bible word. You look up loyalty, and I think it was mentioned once in the Apocrypha or something. You know, it's not in your King James Bible.

But the idea is, to be loyal, one must be a follower. Loyal is not a Bible word, but it's a principle. When one is loyal to someone, they follow them. They follow them. Webster's 1828 defines loyal as, One who comes, goes, or moves after another.

[13:44] In the same course, a follower. A follower. You've heard that before. That's in the New Testament all over. Turn to Hebrews 6.12, please.

Hebrews 6.12. Hebrews 6.12 says, Be that ye be not slothful, but followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Followers through faith. Ephesians. Turn to Ephesians 5.1 and 2. Ephesians 5.1 and 2.

And like I said, I don't have my Bible. If I messed up the reference, I'm in the wrong verse, which has happened before.

So Ephesians 5.1 and 2. Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and has given himself for us, and offering in a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling Savior.

[14:57] Proverbs 15.9 says, The way of the wicked is an abomination in the Lord, but he loveth him that followeth after righteousness.

To be loyal, you have to be a follower. Proverbs 20. 21.21 says, He that followeth after righteousness and mercy findeth life.

Righteousness and honor. Shackleton was following orders from above. The above said, Hey, we want you to go out there and see what the heck's going on with Antarctica.

And he took those orders and he took them faithfully, seriously, and said, I'm your man. I can do this. I'll go. Let me pick some guys and we'll head off.

Proverbs 16.3 says, Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established. He took those thoughts and he said, I'm going to do this.

[16:07] And I'm going to get there, and I'm going to do what I need to do. But most of all, I'm going to report back and let you know what's going on. Romans 12. If you, 12.1, I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

When you decide to take on something and you're going to be loyal to it, you've given your word that you're going to do what you said. And as a Christian, there's certain things that we said we're going to do.

Amen. We need to be loyal to it. And it is our reasonable service. When those men walked up and, and Shackleton was standing there with his list and said, I need 20, what was it?

25 guys. Tell me why you're going to be one of them. And he said, you know, they said, man, you've never met a sailor like me. I'll be faithful to you. I'll do what you tell me to do.

I'm not going to give up. I'm not a quitter. Everything. And I start, I strive to finish. And that's what we need to be. We are to be committed to our pastor.

[17:24] Who is the captain of this ship. Amen. As well as to other crew members, because that's what they had to take on. Not only did they say, I'm going to be faithful to you, but I'm going to be faithful to the rest of us to get there.

Amen. And we're required to do that. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office. So we being many are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil. Cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectionate one to the other, with brotherly love and honor, preferring one another.

Be not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. Those are the things that we need to do. And when we say we're going to do that, we have to be loyal, and we have to be committed.

Amen. And that's our commitment. Our commitment says, you chose us, I'll do it, I'll be loyal to you, and I'll be committed to your cause. Loyal, followers of God and our pastor, committed to God, our pastor and each other.

[18:41] Amen. And then lastly, faithfulness. Faithfulness. Fidelity, the definition of faithfulness, fidelity, loyalty, firm adherence to allegiance and duty, as the faithfulness of a subject, truth, veracity, as the faithfulness of God.

God has veracity to keep us. And we have to have the same, back to him. Amen. Strict adherence to injunctions and to the duties of a station.

You know, on a ship, you report to your station, your duty spot. Your station is where you're assigned to be. And if your station's on the helm, then at 0600, you're supposed to be at the helm. You're supposed to be there. You're supposed to go. And if it's in the KP, in the kitchen, you're supposed to be there. If it's to the latrine and keeping them clean, you're supposed to be there. Amen. You're supposed to do it. You're supposed to, you take on strict adherence. Then strict performance of promises, vows, or covenants as the faithfulness of a husband or a wife.

[20:09] When you say, I do, it's supposed to be forever. Amen. Till death do us part. And that's what we're supposed to do in this calling. When we signed on to the endurance, we pledged that we would carry forth and do it.

Luke 16.10. Turn if you will there, please. Luke 16.10. Luke 16.10. He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much.

When you first sign on to a ship, when you first sign into your duties, you have to prove yourself.

Amen. And the way you prove yourself is by faithfulness.

You say you're going to be there, you be there. They tell you to clean the latrine, you clean the latrine. And I'm mixing nautical terms. I should say the head.

When you clean the head, you clean the head, which is the latrine or the bathroom. Amen. You're supposed to do it. You're supposed to be there. When they say go chip the ice off of the forecabin, that's where you're supposed to be.

[21:23] And until you're proven, you're not going to be counted on. That's why Shackleton interviewed all 1,500 of those people.

So he could ask them, what have you proven it? Oh, well, I've been on this journey. I've been on that journey. I've gone here. I was with Captain so-and-so for this many years.

Excuse me. I did this and that and that. And he picked the best. And they're to be proven. They were to be proven. And that's why he talked to them.

1 Corinthians 4.2. I'll make you turn there because I'm winding down. We'll take a little time.

Moreover, it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful. The captain has a steward.

[22:22] Amen. And he takes on the things that are, we won't call them menial, but we'll call them things that he shouldn't have to do.

When he says, Russ, take care of song leading, that's what I'm supposed to do. Amen. And to the best of my ability. When he says, Andrew, can you help out over here?

You do it to the best of your ability. Because if the captain is doing those tasks, he doesn't have time to take the sightings. In the five-minute window when the sun's actually clear and he can get it and figure out where he's at.

If he's down swabbing the decks or cleaning out the kitchen, the galley, it's not going to happen.

Okay? So that's why we're here.

We're here to help and to assist. 1 Corinthians 10.13 There hath no temptation taken you, but such is common to man.

[23:24] But God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it.

Some of those guys, when that ship started crunching up, they lost it. We're never going to get home. We're going to die here. The polar bear is going to eat us.

We don't have any food. The seals aren't coming in. We can't get this. We can't get that. But we had a faith. They had a faithful captain that said, guys, guys, it's going to be okay.

Here. Here's some hot chocolate. And then when that ran out, they said, you know, we don't have any coffee, but I got some hot water and we dipped some whale fat in it. And it tastes good.

Amen. So carry on. Keep doing what you're supposed to do. Second Corinthians 5:7, or I'm sorry, Second Corinthians 5:7 says, for we walk by faith, not by sight.

[24:25] Amen. So even though they had Shackleton there coming around and telling him, it's going to be okay, it's going to be okay. At one point, they got to Elephant Island and he said, I got to take off.

And those crew members, they had to have faith that he would come back for them. They're on an island with limited food. They got nothing going on.

And he says, don't worry guys, I got it. I'll be back. The New Testament is filled cover to cover on how important faith is. We have been taught that faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God.

Amen. That's where it comes from. And we just have to, we have to do what we read to do.

Shackleton set out with the team.

They had a mission and a goal in mind. He was faithful to the sender because he promised to do whatever it took to get back home and report on his travels. And he never said, I'm going to go to the Antarctic.

[25:38] I'm going to cross on a dog team. I'm going to get there, plant a flag, and come back. He said, I will do whatever I can do to make this mission happen and to get back to report to you.

And that's what he did. Sometimes it just doesn't work out. Sometimes you don't get the whole way you're supposed to be going. He was faithful to his men. He'd send, he'd get them home again safely, and he didn't rest until he counted 22 and cried, they're all here.

Amen? There's one part of the story that's very important that I'm not sure you caught. If you recall, when they got to Elephant's Island, they had to move inland to seek shelter.

Yet when Shackleton came back and was approaching the island, he saw the men standing on the shore, packed and ready to leave.

They had to hike a half mile inland up over the boulders to get out of the storm to get shelter. Yet here it is, months later, and as he finally gets through the ice and he can get a glass on the shore, he says, hey, there's guys standing there.

[27:00] And as he gets closer and closer, he starts counting. One, two, three, 22. They're all there. When he finally made it to shore, he asked how the men knew he was coming today.

They said, well, they figured it'd take him five or six days to get there. And then a day or two to find a ship and then five or six days to get back.

But cap, we know you. So at 10 days, every morning, we packed up camp and we carried it down to shore. And when evening came, they packed everything back up, walked back up to the place where they could have shelter, put their tents out, and in the morning did it again.

And they did that for weeks. They did it for weeks. His men had faith in the captain. Amen.

That he would fulfill his commission. Loyalty to God. God, I don't even know how to explain it.

[28:20] Do you realize how loyal God is has been to you and I? Amen. And then you have Christ came to the earth and did he not do the Father's will?

And did he not say, I'm not sure I want to do this, Lord, but if you want me to, I'm there. And he gave his life, didn't he?

Christ was loyal to God and he followed his will. Christ is committed to his Father in heaven. Christ is faithful to God and his ambassadors.

Who's his ambassadors? It's the crewmates, isn't it? Isn't that you and I? And God put certain people in charge and when they become in charge, to obey the will of Christ is to obey the will of those put head over you.

Amen? And that's our duty that we're supposed to do that. But I just ask you, are you?

[29:31] Are you? Are you? Are you? Are you loyal? Are you committed? Do you have complete faithfulness in Christ and his work?

Because that's what we're part of. Amen? Christ and his work. So, if you think of those things, steadfast, unmovable, this is what I think of.

I think of men like Ernest Shackleton and how they're a picture. Did I mention that Shackleton prayed for his men every day?

I mentioned that his hair turned from brown to white because he was so worried in that short journal journey. He went completely white because he wanted to get his men home.

and Christ has done the same for you and I. And I wonder, are we looking? Are we carrying our baggage down to the shore?

[30:37] Are we ready to be picked up? Are we looking for his return? Amen. We're commanded to. But first, you've got to get ready.

You've got to pack up. You've got to get your gear. And you've got to do your job. And then head down to shore and wait for the Lord Jesus Christ. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, I thank you for the opportunity to come this evening. I don't take it lightly, Lord. I appreciate all you've done for me and my family and in my life.

And Lord, I can't tell you that I've always been loyal, committed, and totally faithful. But Father, I do strive to do that.

And I thank you so much, Lord, that you gave us an avenue to come to you and daily said, Lord, I didn't make it today. I got weak in this area.

[31:40] I started whining or moaning or I didn't show up for this or that. But God put it behind you and helped me to be more faithful. I thank you for that, Lord.

I thank you that we can start every day anew and keep our eyes focused on him. Help us to be loyal, committed, and faithful followers of the Lord Jesus Christ in his work.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. All right. You're dismissed six minutes early. Amen. Amen.