

# But Will You Love Me Tomorrow?

by David F. Maas

***Forerunner*, "Prophecy Watch," January-February 2013**

Back in 1961, the vocal pop group, the Shirelles sang a popular song composed by Carole King entitled "Will You Love Me Tomorrow?" The lyrics to the first verse went:

Tonight you're mine completely  
You give your love so sweetly  
Tonight the light of love is in your eyes  
But will you love me tomorrow?

The last line stresses the poignant concern that the relationship, which seems so permanent in the present, might fade or dissolve in the future. In the backdrop of the sixties, when Haight-Ashberry, Woodstock, LSD, and free-love were happening events, the prospects for a steadfast, rock-solid relationship seemed to be drifting away in a cloud of smoke. The popularity of Carole King's song may have actually been a cry of anguish concerning the uncertainty and temporariness of commitments.

In his book, *Future Shock*, Alvin Toffler describes a disturbing new phenomenon in the late-twentieth century called *modular relationships*. In such relationships, people, losing the security of the extended family and small community, would begin to form short-term commitments with barbers, mechanics, plumbers, bankers, grocers, doctors, dentists, etc., replacing them frequently as disposable modules rather than forming decades-long or perhaps lifetime commitments, as formerly would occur in small rural communities. This "disposable" aspect grew more prevalent when the entire society became more mobile and the extended family (Grandpa, Grandma, Dad and Mom, and the children all lived in the same locale—as in the old TV show, "The Waltons") was replaced by the nuclear family (Dad, Mom, and baby against the world). Now, sadly, in our morally relativistic culture, even the components of the nuclear family have become modular and recyclable.

This lack of commitment, an inability to stick with anything for any lengthy period of time, may have consequences in this end time.

## **The Seven Churches**

Interestingly, remaining committed and steadfast looms large in the commendations, reprimands, and recommendations for the seven churches in Revelation 2-3. We will see that all seven passages contain commentary from our Savior on this point.

### **The Ephesian church:**

» Commendations: ". . . and you have *persevered* and *have patience*, and have labored for My name's sake and *have not become weary*" (Revelation 2:3; emphasis ours throughout).

» A reprimand for wavering in the commitment: "Nevertheless I have this against you that you have left your first love" (Revelation 2:4).

» A recommendation to renew the commitment to steadfastness: "Remember therefore from where you have fallen [weakening of steadfast commitment]; repent and do the first works" (Revelation 2:5).

#### **The Smyrna church:**

» A recommendation to remain steadfast: "Be *faithful until death*, and I will give you the crown of life" (Revelation 2:10). Notice how steadfastness and reward have a cause-effect relationship.

#### **The Pergamos church:**

» A commendation: "And you *hold fast* to My name, and did not deny My faith" (Revelation 2:13).

» A reprimand for syncretizing or compromising with the doctrines of Balaam and the Nicolaitans (Revelation 2:14-15).

» A recommendation to repent of the wavering compromise (Revelation 2:16).

#### **The Thyatira church:**

» A commendation for past steadfastness: "I know your works, love, service, *faith*, and your *patience* [inextricable ingredients of steadfastness]" (Revelation 2:19).

» A reprimand for tolerating Jezebel leading to spiritual sexual immorality: (Revelation 2:20).

» A recommendation to be steadfast: "But *hold fast to what you have* till I come" (Revelation 2:25).

#### **The Sardis church:**

» A reprimand for letting what they had received become in danger of perishing (Revelation 3:1).

» A recommendation: ". . . *hold fast* and repent," warning them that He will come "as a thief" (Revelation 3:3).

#### **The Philadelphia church:**

» A commendation for past steadfastness: "Because you have kept my command to *persevere*, I will keep you from the hour of trial which will come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth" (Revelation 3:10).

» A recommendation to stay steadfast: "Behold, I am coming quickly! *Hold fast what you have*, that no one may take your crown" (Revelation 3:11).

#### **The Laodicean church:**

» A reprimand for their lack of commitment and lack of steadfastness: ". . . you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot" (Revelation 3:16).

» A recommendation to become steadfast: "Therefore be zealous and repent [of the wishy-washy lack of commitment and steadfastness]" (Revelation 3:19).

Christ had something to say to each of these congregations about steadfastness and commitment. *Steadfastness* could be defined as "doing things we have to do with the same ardor as the things we like to do."

### **The Father Sets the Tone**

One of my fond, early memories of my Dad was his passion for routine in so many areas of his life. One routine I recall was how he secured the car against the bitter Minnesota winter cold. I could almost set my watch by his predictable behavior.

After driving the car up to the pump house, Dad would open the hood, plug in the block heater, place the trouble light on top of the engine, gently close the hood so as not to latch it, throw a canvas tarp over the hood, grab the snow scoop next to the pump house, shovel one-two-three-four-five-six scoops of snow on the hood, place the shovel near the pump house, and trudge up the walk into the house. Through the winter months, whether in snow, high wind, sleet, or blizzard, the behaviors Dad exhibited were rhythmical, steady, and predictable, leaving me a sterling model of steadfastness.

Through his devotion to routine, method, and sequential order (in hundreds of similar tasks), Dad, as the head of our family, inspired a sense of trust, confidence, and well-being in all the family members.

Likewise, God Almighty as the Patriarch of our spiritual Family has developed the reputation for absolute, steadfast, routine-like behavior in all things. One of the most inspiring psalms, Psalm 121, focuses on God's steadfast watchfulness: "Behold, He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep" (verse 4). Psalm 119:90 affirms this steadfastness: "Your faithfulness endures to all generations: You establish the earth, and it abides."

After God created our world, He set Himself the task of faithfully executing the daily routines of maintenance. Notice Psalm 104:10-14:

He sends the springs into the valleys; they flow among the hills. They give drink to every beast of the field; the wild donkeys quench their thirst. By them, the birds of the heaven have their home; they sing among the branches. He waters the hills from His upper chambers; the earth is satisfied with the fruit of Your works. He causes the grass to grow for the cattle, and vegetation to grow for the service of man, that he may bring forth food from the earth.

The Patriarch of our spiritual Family has undertaken—without complaint—billions of repeatable, cyclical chores, including maintaining the steady lub-dub of our heart chambers, turning the earth on its axis, and maintaining the stars in their courses. Sir Isaac Newton was so impressed with the cyclical regularity of the universe that he referred to God Almighty as the "Divine Mechanic." Years ago, my son rarely forgot to give the cat his daily bowl of water, but when he did forget, my wife and I pointed out the myriad daily chores that God has set Himself to perform without ever forgetting.

## Even When We Don't Feel Like It

Steadfastness (doing things we have to do with the same ardor as the things we like to do) is one of the most essential principles in Christian character. The apostle Paul admonishes us, "Therefore my beloved brethren, be *steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord*, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (I Corinthians 15:58). In the same vein, Paul encourages the Galatians, "And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart" (Galatians 6:9).

Doing things that *have to be done* on a routine basis is not always enjoyable or fun. For years and years, my grandfather would adhere to a self-imposed schedule of waking up every morning at 4 o'clock to feed the livestock and take care of routine chores. It seemed that he actually accomplished more in those early hours before breakfast than some individuals accomplish the entire day. One time, when I asked him where he got the energy to keep on keeping on, he replied with a resigned tone, "Somebody has to do this."

For sure, steadfastness does not involve doing things when we *feel* like it. Occasionally, we may feel a strong desire to pray and do our Bible study, but most of us realize that many times we do not feel like it. Herbert W. Armstrong once claimed that prayer to him often seemed like an arduous chore, but he did it anyway. The steadfast individual will execute his spiritual obligations whether or not he is in the mood or feels like it. Many students disappear from graduate school because they have not developed the *sitzfleisch* (literally, "sitting flesh"—padding on the backside) to endure long hours of dull, routine research.

Dr. David Burns in his book, *Feeling Good*, has identified *emotional reasoning* as a major cognitive distortion (twisted thought). In this distortion, the individual is tempted to say, "I don't feel like doing the assignment or chore, so I won't do it." This attitude is prevalent among young people in the public schools, as a large segment of the present generation are governed by their feelings and have developed no tolerance for discomfort or inconvenience. Dr. Burns aptly points out that the motivation to continue doing something occurs only after we have started the project. If we wait for the right moment or the good vibration, we may never feel inclined to do anything. Axiomatically, we should expect that the motivation to do something irksome will only come after we have initiated that action.

We can be sure that Jesus Christ did not always feel like going through what He obligated Himself to do, but He always moved steadfastly toward the task at hand. In Mark 14:36, His emotions do not exactly correspond to His steadfast commitment to duty: "Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will." By contrast, His weary disciples gave in to their feelings, shirking their obligation to remain watchful in prayer (verse 37).

## Hold Fast!

A large number of Christ's parables focus on the quality of steadfastness and commitment. The Parable of the Talents measures spiritual success in terms of faithfulness and steadfastness more than native skill or exceptional accomplishments. The Lord commended both the recipient of many talents and few talents with the same approbation: "Well done, good and *faithful servant*; you were *faithful* over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things" (Matthew 25:21).

Steadfastness involves continuing to do a thing even when the novelty wears off and it is no longer fun to do it. Keeping watch over our spiritual condition is fairly easy when we have peak energy in the middle of the day, but can we maintain the same intensity of watchfulness during the graveyard shift? God the Father does (Psalm 121:4). Our Elder Brother does (Hebrews 13:8). But are we expected to maintain this same steadfastness when we are weary and do not feel like it?

Apparently, Jesus puts a high priority on this character trait. In the Parable of the Faithful and Evil Servants, Jesus commends those servants who steadfastly keep alert during the second and third watch (Luke 12:38). Can we maintain steady perseverance if we find ourselves on the graveyard shift? Our Lord may have it in mind that we need to "keep on keeping on" when it is no longer fun, when it is no longer novel.

At this stage in the history of the greater church of God, many individuals no longer want to hold fast or maintain iron-clad commitment. Too many of our brethren have allowed the lack of fun and the lack of novelty to lead them to be "tossed to and fro, carried away by every wind of doctrine" (Ephesians 4:14, Jude 12). In the words of the Carole King song mentioned above, we have already arrived at "tomorrow." The novelty has perhaps worn off, and we may find ourselves in an advanced state of fatigue, feeling weary of well-doing. What we need now more than ever before is some spiritual *sitzfleisch* or steadfastness.

Many years ago at Rangers Ballpark in Arlington, Texas, our family endured nine innings of a disappointing game in which the Rangers trailed the Kansas City Royals 3-0. By the top of the seventh inning, disheartened Rangers fans started trudging to their cars. With my son's binoculars, I tried to catch Manager Johnny Oates' facial expression. He maintained a stoical wry smile. To bolster the crowd, film clips of Ronald Reagan as George Gipp telling Knute Rockne, "Win just one for the Gipper," played on hundreds of television screens throughout the stadium.

And something electrifying happened in the bottom of the ninth. The Rangers, through dogged persistence and steadfastness, tied the game, and in the tenth inning, they won it by one run.

In a similar way, we must in these times take to heart Paul's admonishment to Christians in Ephesians 6:13, "Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." By standing firm to the end, we win!