

Steadfast

Series: Deep Dive Treasures: The Way of the Lord

1 Corinthians 15:58

September 19, 2021

Welcome again to worship.

We're doing a short series called "Deep Dive Treasures." We're looking at short passages of Scripture and the treasures buried deep within them.

I got a text from my brother about 10 days ago informing me that today is "National Talk Like A Pirate" Day. He said he would give me \$20 if I talked like a pirate during my sermon. He suggested I preach a message from a passage in Mark. Well, I thought about looking at a passage from Mark, but I decided that since my Sunday School class is doing Mark, I didn't need to redo a passage on them. So I marked Mark off the sermon schedule. Instead, we are going to look at 1 Corinthians 15:58. Arg!

If you are watching online, grab your spiritual journal, your Bible, your eyepatch, and turn to 1 Corinthians 15:58. If you are in the sanctuary, look at your treasure map – I mean bulletin – to page 5.

Let me read to you from the NRSV 1 Corinthians 15:58:

*Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.*¹

Let's look at the 6 parts of this verse.

First, Therefore.

You have heard me say this over and over, "When you see a 'therefore,' you have to figure out what the 'therefore' is there for." So, what is the "therefore" there for?

Verse 58 is the final verse of a section of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, and it deals with the resurrected body. Beginning in verse 35, Paul argues that if there is a physical body, there is a spiritual body as well. There were those back then, and even today, who believed that this flesh, this body, this existence, is all there is. Paul concludes his argument by saying:

*Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When this perishable body puts on imperishability, and this mortal body puts on immortality, then the saying that is written will be fulfilled: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*²

As such, the "therefore" of verse 58, is saying this: because we know that death has been swallowed up in victory, then the rest of verse 58.

Second, my beloved.

The original Greek is "beloved brothers" or *agape ad-el-fos'*. *Ad-el-fos'* is normally translated in King James as brethren or brother; modern translations use

¹ 1 Corinthians 15:58 (NRSV)

² 1 Corinthians 15:51-57 (NRSV)

“brethren” or “brothers and sisters.” The root word of *ad-el-fos’* means “the womb”, as in coming out of the same womb, so sibling could be used to translate it.

Now, clearly, we are not physical siblings. We do not share a mother. However, in the way of Christ, we are made part of the same family – the family of God. We have been adopted into God’s family.

Ephesians 1:5 reads:

*He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will,*³

Through the salvation of Jesus Christ, we are adopted into God’s family, therefore, we are brothers and sisters together.

Do not minimize this point. We are family around this room. You are no longer an orphan to sin and death, but a member of a holy and eternal family. When we get to heaven, it will not be just your earthly family members you will see; everyone in heaven is already family.

So, Paul’s instructions here are for the beloved brethren. The doctrine of the resurrection is not for the nonbeliever. The resurrection that Paul was talking about here is not something non-Christians will experience; only Christians. So, if someone says, “All religions lead to heaven” or “God is too loving to let you go to hell,” those are all lies of the devil who wants you to believe you can get to heaven without the need of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. No, my friends, unless you are a Christians, part of the beloved brethren, you will not see heaven.

Third, be steadfast.

Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast...

Be steadfast, or stand fast. The Greek word is *hed-rah’-yos*,⁴ which is a derivative of the word *hedzomai* which means seat. That’s right, seat. It means to be settled. *Hedzomai* means you are confident as you would be to sit in a chair. It’s solid, firm, and safe.⁵

So, Paul was saying this: you should be so confident in the truth of the doctrine of the resurrection, and everything that pertains to it, just as confidently as you are to sit down on a seat. You believe the doctrine of the resurrection so much that you will stand fast, be steadfast, in your faith. No “I hope there is the resurrection.” You believe it without a shadow of a doubt.

And therefore, you act like there is a resurrection. You behave like there is a resurrection. You reach out to others because of the fact of the resurrection for those who believe.

Fourth, immoveable.

What do you think of when I say, “immoveable?”

A huge rock buried in your yard, a rusted bolt, your wife.

We tend to think of mountains being immoveable, but we’re wrong. Earthquakes can cause mountains to rise and fall. Nothing in the world is truly immoveable.

Except, your belief in the resurrection. Paul told the Corinthians:

Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable...

³ Ephesians 1:5 (NRSV)

⁴ ἔδραϊος

Strong’s Talking Greek & Hebrew Dictionary.

⁵ Adam Clarke’s Commentary - 1 Corinthians 15:58

Let nothing shake your faith; let nothing move you away from this hope of the Gospel which is given unto you.

What Paul was saying was that what he wrote he received from God. False teachers could not say that. This doctrine of the resurrection is a declaration of God you may unshakingly receive.

Troubles, persecution, and difficulties may come, and they can often cause one to compromise and move away from the right position. But Paul says, "Do not move. Don't let anything push you off that spot. Be immovable.

Fifth, Always excelling in the work of the Lord.

Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord...

We are to work for the Lord. The Greek word here means to superabound (in quantity or quality), be in excess, be superfluous; excel.⁶

Paul says to always excel. No taking off. No half measures when you are working for the Lord. And this work of the Lord is obedience to His holy word. Every believer in Christ is a workman of God. The person that does not work to bring glory to God and good to others, is not acknowledged as a servant of Christ.

So, we must not only work, but abound in that work; be ever exceeding in that work.

So, if you are doubting the resurrection, then get to work. The best answer to doubt is work.

Finally, You know your labor is not in vain.

Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

Not only must we work for the Lord, we must labor, which means putting forth all your strength towards it. There is some work that is easy, but there is other work that takes everything in you to accomplished. Paul is saying work and labor for the Lord.

And your work and labor is not in vain. It will be rewarded. It is not as if you were to die and never live again. There will be a resurrection, and you will be suitably rewarded then. What you do for the honor of God will not only approved by Him but it is rewarded with happiness here on earth and glorious and eternal rewards of heaven.

An American lawyer was dispatched to negotiate for the release of several prisoners, including a civilian named Dr. William Beanes. Although the negotiation for prisoner exchange was initially successful, Francis Scott Key and the American official, Colonel Skinner, were detained because they had overheard the British plan to attack Baltimore. The British Admiral smugly declared to Key that soon there would not be a United States of America. (Which explains why the War of 1812 is sometimes called the Second Revolutionary War.)

The British stormed Washington, D.C. and destroyed government buildings. Dolly Madison famously rescued many valuables, including a portrait of George Washington and original drafts of the Declaration of Independence and the US Constitution. She and President James Madison were forced to flee to safety.

The British commanders sat down and ate the supper that had been prepared for the President before they burned the White House. In addition to the devastation left by the British, a furious storm also hit DC that evening. Tornadoes added to the

⁶ Strong's Talking Greek & Hebrew Dictionary, #4052

destruction, but the rain did at least put out the fires. American morale was at an all-time low. Many Americans had not wanted to enter the war anyway.

The British fleet of 50 warships arrived in Chesapeake Bay with the intentions of invading Baltimore, Maryland. To get to Baltimore, they must pass Ft. McHenry. The British ships were better armored than the fort, which allowed them to fire while remaining out of range. Key and Skinner were forced to watch from British ships as the British shelled the fort from the morning of September 13 until the early morning hours of September 14, 1814. Ft. McHenry returned no fire while the fort was bombarded. At one point, a gun powder depot was hit, but the shell never discharged. Throughout that night, the only light came from the shells exploding over Fort McHenry, illuminating that the American flag was still flying, but it appeared that the Americans were outnumbered and outgunned. Surely, that flag could not continue to fly for long.

As the morning began to dawn, the first light of day revealed to Key that the 42 x 30 foot American flag sewn by Mary Pickersgill still flew over Ft. McHenry. After suffering heavy casualties, the British determined that the harbor could not be breached and beat a retreat. Key quickly jotted down a poem on the back of a letter that immediately became popular and has now been memorialized by our government as our national anthem, the "Star Spangled Banner."⁷

Paul wrote:

*Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.*⁸

Your labor for the Lord is not in vain. Your withstanding the fiery darts of the devil and the assault of an evil society will be rewarded. So be steadfast and immovable.

⁷ From a sermon by Tommy Burrus, Upholding His Standard, 7/4/2010, downloaded from sermoncentral.com

⁸ 1 Corinthians 15:58 (NRSV)