

## **I Corinthians 15.58**

4 April 2010

Beloved, this text is an admonition to perseverance in the faith of the resurrection of Christ. And he appeals to the Corinthian saints to obey this exhortation. The first appeal is in the word, "therefore" which is in view of the verses that go before in verses 55 to 57. The triple enemy death, hell and grave have been overcome. Death with its biting jaw stands before every man and ready to devour. The grave which has the power to eat away at your flesh and consume completely. And hell is the place of eternal torment. And we have this victory through our Lord Jesus Christ who went to the cross and defeated the enemies. And the second appeal to obey this exhortation is by addressing them in the tenderest of words, "My beloved brethren". He appeals to them, not with the authority of an apostle but as his brothers and sisters whom he loves in the Lord. It is an appeal from love of God.

The theme is an exhortation to steadfastness in the Resurrection. First, the meaning. Secondly, the manner and thirdly, the motivation. Steadfastness has the idea that of standing, while unmovable emphasizes its strength as it is tested by the opposing forces to move them from its position. Steadfastness can be illustrated by a huge rock that is in the sea, while unmovableness is that same rock as it stands in the midst of the sea, which is battered by the waves and storms. And nothing moves the rock from its place. It is steadfast. But steadfastness and unmovable from what? The answer is in the truth of the resurrection of Christ. This is evident since the whole chapter is about the resurrection of Christ and of the saints. And our text is an implication of the truth of the resurrection of Christ, when our text begins with the word, "therefore". The truth of the resurrection of Christ is the foundation to the gospel, the good news of salvation. And so, it is not an unimportant truth that it is up to me whether I wish to believe it or not, for without the resurrection of Christ there is no gospel. This is why the apostle Paul argues from verse 14 onwards. Firstly, that if Christ did not rise from the dead, they are convicted to be false witnesses of God for the apostle are to testify what they do know about God and Jesus Christ. They saw the Lord when the resurrected Lord appeared before them. And their calling is to proclaim to others that Christ has indeed risen from the dead. And if Christ did not rise from the dead, then, they are liars, worse still tricksters and false witnesses. And so, their preaching is false and saves no one. Secondly, they are yet in their sins. The gospel in Jesus Christ is about the salvation and is dependent upon the truth of the resurrection. How do we know that Christ is indeed the sacrifice for our sins? The answer is the resurrection of Christ. And so, if Christ did not rise from the dead, He is not our Saviour from our sins. And therefore, we are still in our sins and we are bound to hell.

And so, the apostle urges upon the church to persevere in believing in the truth of the resurrection. This implies first of all, that the church has a place to stand and that is on the truth of the resurrection of Christ, from which the apostle says we must be unmovable. This truth is clearly defined for us in the Scriptures. That our Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins. He was buried and rose again from the dead, according to the Scriptures, as we read

in I Cor. 15.23, 4. And according to this truth, the church must continue to be steadfast and unmovable. God is the one who gave this truth to the church/. This truth is the gift of God to the church. And the calling of the church is to walk in that truth. And as such, we cannot but feel constrained that we stand upon this truth. We must stand on this truth with our very lives. We must not give up this truth simply because we are persecuted and even the threat of martyrdom for the faith. But, we do not stand alone, we stand with the church of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with or children and our children's children.

Secondly, this implies that you know and believe this truth, otherwise you will not be able to be steadfast. Believing in this truth means that you are convinced of its truth and the truth will lead us to treasure and keep this truth in your heart. And you do not forsake the truth, when it is a little inconvenient to do so, or it is not practical to keep this truth, believing is not merely with our mouths, but with deeds. There are many that say they believe in some truths of God but they forsake it as soon as it is not practical to hold to the truth. Thirdly, why must we persevere if it so easy to stand in this truth? The answer is that there are forces of spiritual darkness that will move you away from the truth. And so, we must not ignorant of Satan's devices that aim to move us from the truth of the resurrection. They are so depraved that they are utterly opposed to God and to every good thing. They are murderers to the utmost of their power watching to ruin and destroy the church and every member. And they do this by introducing false doctrine into the church that would destroy your soul and so that you are no longer standing on the truths of the gospel. They come to you as a person carrying the bible and teaching you the truths of God's Word even in the name of the Lord. But what they teach is not the whole truth, but truth is mixed with lies and that makes detection of the lie very difficult. And even your Christian friends will persuade you that it is alright for you to believe the lie since everyone is believing in the same thing. And the manner in being steadfast and unmovable in the truths of the resurrection is in the manner of abounding in the work of the Lord.

The work of the Lord definitely does not refer to your work, not even your work in the Lord. This is not the work that you must abound, but that you must abound in the Lord's work. Never should you interpret to meant that we are God's little helpers, God's co-workers, as many would explain it. Rather this is the Lord's work. This is work, which God has done and is still doing as the God of our salvation, and this work is entirely His work from beginning to the end. This work is the work of his counsel, where he has chosen his people in Christ from eternity. In that counsel, he also ordains Christ, the only begotten Son, to be our Mediator and Saviour. And Christ was revealed in time in time, when he came in the world, assumed our human nature and came under the curse of the law, in order to redeem us who were under the curse. And that work he performed in his suffering and death on the cross, and his resurrection and ascension to God's right hand, where he reveals the Spirit without measure. That work of the Lord is the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, regenerating and raising us up from spiritual death unto eternal life and glory. And it is accomplished when he makes us to become partakers of all his saving benefits, which is to be declared just, sanctification and eternal life. This so powerfully operates in us that we are able to know and love the

truth and to take our stand on the basis of the truth of his word in this world. And when the work of the Lord shall be completed, we shall be raised from the dead and transformed completely into his perfect image, and we shall see him as he is, and we know him.

And concerning this work of the Lord, we are to always abound in it. This means that consciously and spiritually we respond to that work of the Lord. That we experience that work overflowing in our lives, so that we desire it with all our hearts, speak of it and sing of it all the days of our lives. And we those who cannot get enough of it, not only on the Lord's day in the house of the Lord, but all the years of our pilgrimage. And we confess this truth, in our witness for the Lord and also in our godly walk in this world.

And we do it always: all the time. At no time must we cease in abounding in the work of the Lord. And when we are abounding the work of the Lord, we remain steadfast and unmovable in the faith in the resurrection of Christ. But, when we are not abounding in the work of the Lord then we are not obeying the exhortation of the apostle: to be steadfast and unmovable. After all to be steadfast is not only in our words, but is also seen in our lives that we experience the power of God in our lives. And we live in our lives in that power and by setting our affections on the things above and not on things on the earth. And finally, we obey this command of the apostle because we know that our labours are not in vain in the Lord. This acts as the motivation to obey the word of the apostle. .

Your motivation is that your labours are not in vain in the Lord. Notice, the word used is not work, but labours. Labour is work that is difficult. It is difficult for the flesh because it involves suffering, intense toil and work. And so, when we labour, we must expect much suffering. This labour is extremely difficult because often you have to stand alone in the truth against the whole host of enemies. Elijah, the prophet stood alone against the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and four hundred prophets of the grove at Mount Carmel, though later God revealed to him that there were seven thousand who had not bowed their knees to Baal. And standing on the truth involved being persecuted and even being martyred for the faith. And when Queen Jezebel heard what had happened at mount Carmel, that Elijah called fire from heaven to consume the sacrifices and defeated the gods of Baal and the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal were killed. She threatened Elijah with death about the same time the next day that Elijah became so discouraged that he was depressed and told the Lord that he wanted to die.

But notice; though your labours are very difficult, they are not in vain in the Lord. Vain means empty, fruitless and not achieving the goal. And when our labours are not in the lord, our labours will be in vain. And this takes place when we perform our labours not according to His will and which does not glorify God and hence are not pleasing in the sight of God. Sometimes, we do it with wrong motives or for selfish reasons and when it is not done out of love God and for the love of His church. But, our encouragement is that when we perform our labours in the Lord, our labours are not in vain but it will bring forth fruit. First of all, fruit unto this sanctification of God's people. That the

remnant of God's people will be preserved through your steadfast faith in the truth. And your faith in God will be strengthened and you will be encouraged to stand for God. Secondly, fruit unto everlasting life. That non-believers who witness our faith will be touched your courage and boldness to stand for the truth and will lead them to glorify God. And this is enough incentive for us when we see just one believer being strengthened in his faith, and that makes all the difficult labours worthwhile.

And we know this by faith. This knowledge is the knowledge of faith, which is based upon the Scriptures. This knowledge is not what we see with our eyes, for if we see with our eyes, we will not remain steadfast in the truth. The enemies of the resurrection are all around us and it may be a great temptation to give up the faith. And it all seemed that our labours are useless and encourage no one. But, thanks be to God, this knowledge is according to faith in the Holy Scriptures, not what the naked eye can see but what the eye of faith can see. This provides all the motivation to continue to be steadfast in the faith of the resurrection.

That our labours are never in vain in the Lord are due to the fact, not that you and I are so faithful, so steadfast, so unmovable, so always abounding the work of the Lord, but in the fact that the Lord, the loving Lord who dies for us is alive and risen from the dead. That the risen and glorified redeemer keeps us in and upholds us by his right hand. Amen.