

Steadfast, Unmovable, Always Abounding

Text : **I Cor. 15:58** – cf – **II Cor. 8: 7**

INTRODUCTION :

A. The church in the city of Corinth was one that had many struggles.

1. It was located in Greece so most members were gentiles.
2. The city of Corinth was rich and extremely wicked. (*Las Vegas + New Orleans*)
 - a. It was located on both land and sea trade routes so foreigners passed through.
 - b. It was a center of idol worship with a host of temple male and female prostitutes.
 - c. They were a sports center and hosted games to rival the Olympics.

B. The Apostle Paul spent about a year and a half establishing that congregation.

1. After Paul left some began to pervert the teachings and to tolerate sin. (*culture*)
2. Others began to doubt the resurrection. (*Remember sneers on Mars Hill .. Acts 17: 32*)
3. Chapter 15 reaffirms the doctrine of the resurrection at length.
 - a. 1-11 The resurrection is an essential part of the gospel message.
 - b. 12-19 If Christ is not raised from the dead, He cannot save anyone.
 - c. 20-28 The resurrection is the proof of Christ's deity and power.
 - d. 29-34 The resurrection is the cause of much of the persecution. (*Sadducees*)
 - e. 35-41 Burial is like planting the seed from which the new body grows.
 - f. 42-54 An immortal body is required for eternal life.
 - g. 55-57 The resurrection is the ultimate victory over sin. (*defeat death powerless*)
 - h. 58 What should our response be to the anticipation of eternal life ?

The Apostle instructs us to respond in this way :

I Cor. 15: 58 – 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.

I. Our response to the resurrection and the anticipation of eternal life with God :

A. We must be “steadfast” in our faith.

1. Steadfastness is the ability to stay faithful in the midst of evil influences.
 - a. Peter was not steadfast when he went to meet Jesus on the water. **Matt. 14: 28ff**

- b. Later Peter would warn us not to waver in our faith.
II Pet. 3: 17-18 You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are **not carried away** by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness. **18** but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity.
- (*steadfast = not stray*)
- 2. James warned that the lack of steadfast faith would destroy one's prayer power.
James 1:6-8 But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. **7** For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, **8** being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.
- 3. Paul told the Ephesians that steadfastness comes as a fruit of spiritual maturity.
 - a. **Eph. 4: 14** – As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;
 - b. Thus two of the Apostles have warned us not to allow ourselves to be influenced.
 - c. *Like a perpetual storm , Satan is always trying to blow us off course,.*
- B. We must be “immovable” from our faith.**
 - 1. Paul makes emphasis by using a second word with a very similar meaning.
 - 2. Our anticipation of eternal life in Heaven is sure and steadfast so must be our faith.
Heb. 6: 19 – This hope we have as an anchor of the soul,
 a hope both sure and **steadfast** ...
- C. We must make an active physical response (“work”), as well as a mental assent.**
 - 1. The Christian must be **“always abounding in the work of the Lord,”**
 - 2. We understand what it means to be **“always”** doing something. (cf- **16:15** ... KJV)
 - a. It's a lifestyle, not just an occasional activity. *Something by which we're identified.*
 - b. The Christian is created to **“walk”** in good works. **Eph. 2: 10, Tit 2: 7, 14 ; 3:1, 14**
 - 3. Likewise, we understand what it means to be **“abounding”** in something.
 - a. It's the opposite of the attitude of many : “Do we have to ... ; How much do we...”
 - b. Those who abound in anything freely do more than the minimum.
 - c. *God never gives minimums and He doesn't accept minimums.*
- D. We all agree that we must DO “the work of the Lord”, but there are many opinions as to what that work is.**
 - 1. We must first observe that we are not discussing the work **FOR** the Lord, but the work **OF** the Lord.
 - 2. We are servants of the Lord and HE is the one who determines the works. **Eph 2:10**

II. The question then becomes, “What are the works in which one must abound ?”

A. In his second letter the Apostle Paul tells the Corinthians the answer.

1. **II Cor. 8: 7** – But just as you abound in everything, in faith and utterance and knowledge and in all earnestness and in the love we inspired in you, see that you abound in this gracious work also.

2. This verse is in the context of urging generous giving, but it gives a simple list of works OF God in which a Christian must abound :

- a. faith (*This is a list from God about His works.*)
- b. utterance
- c. knowledge
- d. diligence (earnestness NASB)
- e. love
- f. this gracious (*Sacrificial giving*)

B. “Faith” is listed first because it is the foundation of man’s relationship with God.

1. No one has seen God, but the evidence of His existence is all around us.

2. One’s eternal destiny depends upon the strength of his faith.

a. **Heb. 11: 6** – And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who ...

b. **Eph. 2: 8** – For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;

3. Jesus Himself defined faith as a “work of the Lord.”

John 6: 29 – Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.” (*Thus, faith is a work.*)

4. Faith is a work that is never complete. (*All relationships are fluid.*)

a. **Mark 9:24** – ... the boy’s father cried out and said, “*I do believe; help my unbelief.*”

b. **Jude 20-21** But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, ²¹ keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life.

C. As soon as one abounds in faith, he abounds in “utterance.” (*speaking & faith linked*) (*I tease my wife this is not a proof-text for being a gabby woman.*)

1. Of course, this “utterance” refers to the proclamation of the gospel.

a. Remember : We are instructed to be about “the work OF the Lord.”

b. Our Lord clearly told us what His work is : (cf – **Mt. 18: 11, Mk 10: 45**)

Luke 19: 10– For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.

* *Therefore, if we are doing the work “OF” God, we are seeking and saving.*

2. Before going into the far country (*Heaven*) He entrusted His ministry to us.
 - a. **Mk 16:15** – And He said to them, “As you Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. ...”
 - b. **Matt. 28:18** teaches us that this command is based upon the authority of Jesus to rule. **Thus**, to fail to obey is to reject His Lordship.
 3. Christians are called out of the world to proclaim Christ to lost people.
 - a. **I Pet. 2:9** – But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; (*We have a purpose in life, proclaim.*)
 - b. No one else has been tasked with the proclamation of the gospel.
 - c. Satan seeks to prevent it, **but *the eternal fate of the world is in your hands.***
 4. The Apostle instructed us to prepare ourselves for this “work of the Lord.”

I Pet. 3: 14-15 But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled, **15** but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;
 5. What is the response God expects to the gift of Heaven ... **ABOUND** in sharing it.
- E. Our abundance of utterance is to be guided by an abundance of “knowledge.”**
1. Salvation is through faith (**Eph 2:8**) but faith comes by hearing. (**Rom. 10:17**)
 2. For this reason, the Christian must “long for the pure milk of the word,.” **I Pet 2:2**
 3. Our primary motivation for studying is to learn how to please God. (*not pride*)
 - a. **Eph 5: 9,10** ... walk as children of Light ... trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.
 - b. **II Cor 5: 9** – Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him.
 4. *The more we abound in knowledge of God’ will, the more confidence we have to abound in utterance.*
- E. God expects us to apply our full strength to the task, to abound in “diligence.”**
1. [*spoude* /spoo·day/] to give all diligence (KJV), interest one’s self most earnestly.
 2. Christians are commanded to serve with diligence. (*Must be hard workers for God*)
 - a. **Col. 3: 23-24** Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, **24** knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.
 - b. **II Tim. 2: 15** – Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.
 3. God has never accepted less than the best we can do.

- a. **Eccl. 9: 10** – Whatever your hand finds to do, do *it* with all your might; ...

ILL – *Little flower girl placed precisely placed peddles then beamed with pride.*

- b. **Rev. 3: 15-16** I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. **16** So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth.

4. ONLY those who choose to serve with diligence CAN be His disciples.

- a. **Luke 9: 23** – And He was saying to them all, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. ..”

- b. **Luke 14: 27** – Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.

c. **THEREFORE** : *A daily commitment to active service is prerequisite to discipleship.*

F. Above all, the Christian must abound in “love.”

1. Love is the cornerstone of Christianity.

- a. *Love is the Rosetta stone by which we can understand the bible.*

- b. **I John 4: 8** – The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

2. Jesus emphasized that love was the foundation upon which Christianity was built.

Matt. 22: 37-39 And He said to him, “ ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ **38** This is the great and foremost commandment **39** The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ **40** On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.”

3. He said that love was to be the distinguishing feature that set His disciples apart.

John 13: 34-35 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. **35** By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.

4. The Apostles picked up teaching the same doctrine :

- a. **I Pet. 1: 22** – Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, ferently love one another from the heart.

- b. **I Pet. 4: 8** – Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.

5. Love will motivate us to abound in all these things

- a. Loving God creates **Faith**
- b. Loving our neighbor causes us to share the gospel with them. (**utterance**)
- c. Loving God causes us to seek the **knowledge** to please Him.
- d. Loving God motivates us to serve Him with **diligence** ... not out of duty.

* *Loving us motivated Jesus to die for us.*

III. All of our work for the Lord will be worth the effort we have put into it.

A. Knowing that your toil is not *in vain* in the Lord is a promise of God.

1. Sometimes we feel all of our efforts are for nothing.
 - a. All Spring we mow the grass and within days it needs it again.
 - b. Every evening we wash the dishes, but the sink is full again the next evening.
2. Year after year we invite the people we know to church and to church activities.
 - a. Year after year we pray for lost people.
 - b. Year after year we teach bible classes only to see our students drift away.
 - c. Many preachers give up and quit. (Remember: **Heb. 6:19** .. *our hope is steadfast*)

B. The Christian's destiny is as sure as God is real.

1. The resurrection of Jesus is tangible proof that Jesus can fulfill the promise of our resurrection. *Heaven does await us !*
2. If we stay faithful to Him until He returns.

Christian .. this is why we urge you to take Paul's admonition to heart.

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.

And

just as you abound in everything, in faith
and utterance
and knowledge
and in all diligence
and in the love we inspired in you,
see that you abound in this gracious work also.

INVITATION :

- A. You cannot remain steadfast in and immovable from a faith that you have not believed or accepted.
- B. We urge you to place your full faith and trust in Jesus Christ today.
- C. Turn from sin, proclaim your faith, and be united with Him in baptism.

Lesson Texts :**I Cor. 15: 51-58**

51 Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, **52** 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. **53** For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. **54** But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "DEATH IS swallowed up in victory. **55** O death, where is your victory? O death where, is your sting?" **56** The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; **57** but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. **58** 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.

II Cor. 8: 6-11

6 So we urged Titus that as he had previously made a beginning, so he would also complete in you this gracious work as well. **7** But just as you abound in everything, in faith and utterance and knowledge and in all earnestness and in the love we inspired in you, see that you abound in this gracious work also. **8** I am not speaking *this* as a command, but as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity of your love also. **9** For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich. **10** I give *my* opinion in this matter, for this is to your advantage, who were the first to begin a year ago not only to do *this*, but also to desire *to do it*. **11** But now finish doing it also, so that just as *there was* the readiness to desire it, so *there may be* also the completion of it by your ability.

Read again for emphasis as texts :

I Cor. 15: 58 – 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.

II Cor. 8: 7 – But just as you abound in everything, in faith and utterance and knowledge and in all earnestness and in the love we inspired in you, see that you abound in this gracious work also.