

Making the Most of the Moment – I Corinthians 15:57-58

I. Introduction:

- A. There are churches whose primary doctrine is to have no doctrine at all.
1. I know that sounds ridiculous, but what I mean is they deliberately have no doctrinal position on much of anything.
 2. For some denominations, like the Quakers, that is their official policy. They have nothing in print.
 3. But many others simply refuse to take a stand on specific Bible issues.
 - a. “What do you believe about the virgin birth of Christ?” It is unimportant, some say.
 - b. “Will there be a literal thousand year reign of Jesus Christ upon this earth?” Maybe so; maybe not.
 - c. “It doesn’t matter if there is a creature named Satan, because evil doesn’t need a face or personality.”
 - d. “Baptism: it can be by immersion, sprinkling, or pouring. Who cares what God says?”
 - e. “Let’s look at the Bible as a collection of allegories, where nothing is what it appears to be.”
 4. What **IS** important to churches of this sort is whether or not people behave in the way that particular church thinks they ought to behave.
- B. Of course that is not the approach our church has toward the Bible.
1. We believe in specific doctrines because the Bible teaches those doctrines.
 2. The Bible is a doctrinal book, and we are a Bible-based church, therefore we believe specific Biblical teachings, which is the literal meaning of the word **“doctrine.”**
- C. This chapter from **First Corinthians** is an important doctrinal study.
1. After beginning with a declaration of the gospel, Paul deals with a hotly debated question of his day.
 2. Did Christ actually arise from the grave? Was He resurrected?
 3. And in the light of that, what about **our** resurrection? Is there going to be a resurrection of **OUR** bodies?
 4. Some Saddusaic churches would say that it doesn’t matter. But it does matter.
 5. As Paul says, in **verse 19**, **“if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.”**
 6. Not only will there be a bodily resurrection, Paul teaches that the Lord one day will take away living saints.
 7. Those saints will be glorified, reunited with deceased believers, and presented to God the Father.
- D. This chapter is like many or most of Paul’s epistles: it begins with doctrine but it ends with practical Christianity.
1. **“THEREFORE, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord. “**
 2. What those Quakers & others fail to recognize is that a true Christian life **must be** based on doctrinal truth.
 3. Based on the fact that **“we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump... the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed...”**
 4. **“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast...”**
- E. In **verse 57** Paul tells us to be thankful for the upcoming victory with which we will be blessed.
1. **“Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”**
 2. But notice that this victory comes **through** our Lord Jesus Christ.
 3. In effect it is His victory, and we are only partakers of its blessings. And that is why we should be thankful.
 4. Not only that, we should be full of praise, glorifying the Saviour.
 5. And again, **“therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord. “**
- F. Building upon the doctrine of this chapter, after thanksgiving, what does Paul say should take place?
1. Let’s consider each piece of the verse.

II. “Therefore my beloved brethren.”

- A. “My **BELOVED** brethren” – this little introduction is almost as important as any of the rest of the verse.
1. To whom was Paul writing? Obviously, this was the church of God in Corinth.
 2. And **what sort of Christians** were in that church? They were **born again sinners** like everyone else.
 3. Many of them still carried with them years of sinful baggage, like everyone else.
 4. There were probably members of that church with whom you might find it difficult to fellowship.
 5. That is not how it should be, but it might be true.
 6. This book is filled with rebuke and exhortation based upon solid Bible doctrine, because those people were far from ideal Christians.
- B. And yet to one of God’s outstanding saints they were “*beloved brethren.*”
1. Paul wasn’t casting anyone to the curb.
 2. He wasn’t disfellowshipping anyone because their past – or their present.
 3. He practiced what he taught to the Romans, “*Let love be without dissimulation*” – **Roman 12:9.**
 4. To the **Thessalonians** he said, “*The Lord make to you increase & ABOUND in love one toward another...*”
 5. And by the way he used the same there that he used here – “*abound.*”
 6. He also said, “*Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you*” – **Ephesians 4:32.**

III. To these **BELOVED** brethren he said, “*Be ye steadfast (and) unmoveable.*”

- A. Don’t forget the context.
1. This exhortation was made in regard to the doctrines of the resurrection and the translation of God’s saints.
 2. “*Be ye steadfast (and) unmoveable.*”
 3. Like nearly every other Bible doctrine, there are critics and opponents to what he teaches in this chapter.
 - a. Similarly, Satan has raised up troops to deny the truth of a personal Devil.
 - b. Salvation by grace through faith is a hated doctrine within a large portion of Christendom.
 - c. A vast portion of Christendom would disavow my Sunday afternoon message about baptism.
 - d. The preservation of God’s word is denied by many, and so is the preservation of the saved soul.
 4. And as hard as it is for me to believe, there are false teachers – who deny Jesus’ resurrection and our future translation.
- B. “*Be ye steadfast (and) unmoveable.*”
1. Is it just me? Isn’t there a difference between these two words?
 2. Doesn’t one look toward inward while the other looks around at circumstances?
 3. Doesn’t one speak about being firm personally while the other speaks about resisting outside forces?
 4. Whether that is true or not, there is the fact that even our own hearts sometimes struggle against truth.
 5. For example, there is a natural propensity in us all to deny our sinfulness. Evil is only in the other guy.
 6. And isn’t it natural to want to contribute to our own salvation – to deny salvation by God’s free grace.
 - a. “*Be steadfast. Don’t move away from what God’s Word says.*”
 7. Our unbridled minds may think that miracles are contrary to logic.
 - a. “*Be steadfast; remember what the Bible says.*”
 8. Our own hearts are deceitful and wicked, and they sometimes rise up against the spirit.
 9. To be steadfast requires **resolution** on our part – we have to be stubborn.
 - a. “*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast...*”
 - b. “*I will not be, I will not be moved. I will not be, I will not be moved.*”
 - c. “*Like a tree planted by the waters, I shall not be moved.*”
- C. Partnering with “*steadfast,*” we have the word “*unmoveable.*”
1. This suggests to me a resolution not to let outside forces push me from the truth.
 2. For example, there are hundreds Christian authors these days – many of whom are quite famous...
 3. There are many who are telling us not to expect to be “*changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.*”

4. They tell us that Paul was not referring to himself, or to us, when he said, *“For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that **WE** which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.*
 - a. *For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:*
 - b. *then **WE** which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the cloud, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall **WE** ever be with the Lord.”*

- D. As self-serving as this might sound, after your own reading of God’s Word, the majority of your Bible instruction should come from the church into which the Lord has placed you – not from the internet or other churches.
 1. The more time you spend reading books by today’s prominent Christian authors, the more likely you are going to be moved.
 2. If, when you are sick and miss a church service, you are more apt to listen to some preacher on the other side of the country than to find and listen to the message you missed, the more prone you are to be moved.
 3. I know that sounds like pride, or jealousy, or fear on my part, but I assure you that it is not.
 4. There is great danger out there.
 5. One reason the Lord has established churches is for the protection of the saints.

IV. Paul says, while standing firm in these & other Biblical doctrines, persevere in your service of the Saviour.

- A. *“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, **always abounding in the work of the Lord.**”*
 1. In studying the word *“abounding”* it occurred to me I had previously looked at Paul’s exhortation incorrectly.
 2. My first thought for tonight’s title was *“Unmovably Going Forward,”* or *“Going Forward Unmovably.”*
 3. Then I realized this has nothing to do with moving forward, even though other scriptures might teach that.
 4. This is talking about making the most of the moment we are in and in the place where we are.
- B. *“Abounding”* is an interesting word.
 1. We have it three times in **II Corinthians 9:8** – *“And God is able to **MAKE** all grace **abound** toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may **abound** to every good work.”*
 2. And when the Lord miraculously multiplied the fish and bread, the Greek word each time was this word.
 - a. The miracle **abounded** so that there was a **surplus** of food.
 3. It is found again in **I Corinthians 14:12** – *“Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may **EXCEL** to the edifying of the church.”* To excel is to abound.
 - a. And notice, it was Paul’s hope that their abounding would be unto the edifying of the church.
 4. Another example of the word is found in **Acts 16:5** – *“And so were the churches established in the faith and **INCREASED** in number daily.”*
- C. What is it to abound? Simply put, it is to prosper under the hand of the Lord.
 1. Among other things, it is to grow in faith, in love and in practical service.
 2. But keep in mind, any victory we ever have comes through our Lord Jesus Christ.
 3. And what ever prosperous labour we render to the Lord, it is **not in vain BECAUSE** it is in the Lord.
- D. Specifically, in what does Paul hope that we abound? *“In the **work of the Lord.**”*
 1. It is not that other areas of our lives are unimportant, but his point right here is our work.
 2. It is not that our prayer lives are not important, and it is not about our worship of Christ.
 3. But in the midst of these other things, we have work to do.
 4. And remember, this letter wasn’t addressed to the bishops and deacons, but to the entire membership.
 5. Every single one of us have been given gifts, and there are responsibilities which go with those gifts.
 6. *“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord...”*
 7. We are exhorted to abound in the work which ultimately belongs to the Lord.

V. *“Forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”*

- A. It is interesting that Paul uses two different words for work – “work” and “labour.”
1. Is there a difference between them? I think that there is.
 2. In *1 Thessalonians 2:9* Paul tied “labour” to a related Biblical word: *“For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.”*
 3. Even today, when a woman is about to give birth, it is said that she goes into “labor,” and it is not uncommon to speak of her *“travailing in labor.”*
 4. Giving birth is not like ordinary house work, or even working at the office.
 5. The word “work” is taken to a higher level when expressed as “labour.”
 6. It is work which involves pain; it is work that requires more than a minimal effort. It is more than a mere job.
 7. And in that context there is a great verse in *Revelation 14:13*.
 - a. It is found in the context of the tribulation.
 - b. *“And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.”*
- B. Paul tells us, based upon our upcoming translation from this world, or at the very least our resurrection, when *“this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality...”*
1. *“Be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”*
 2. We have so very few days to serve the Lord in this life and in this world.
 3. *“Let us not be weary in well-doing for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not” – Galatians 6:9.*
 4. *“For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister” – Hebrews 6:10.*
- C. *“Be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”*