

"BE YE STEDFAST"

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Let us spend a moment studying one of the splendid summary statements of the New Testament. The passage under consideration is I Corinthians 15:58. It reads, "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." This passage might be viewed as laying within the categories of admonitions to faithfulness, discipleship, perseverance, conviction, assurance, and possibly others, but in order to develop any of these thoughts it must first be appreciated within the context in which it appears.

The apostle Paul was writing to the church at Corinth about several areas of concern which they of the household of Chloe had at least partially informed him (I Cor. 1:11). Generally speaking, the areas of concern were division among brethren (chapters 1-4), fornication (chapter 5), sinful litigation (chapter 6), marriage (chapter 7), eating meats offered to idols (chapters 8-10), the Lord's supper (chapter 11), spiritual gifts (chapters 12-14), the gospel in general and the resurrection in particular (chapter 15), and the collection (chapter 16). It is in his remarks following mortal man putting on immortality at the resurrection and the victory through the Lord Jesus Christ that Paul urged the Christian's faithfulness, perseverance, dedication, and steadfastness in I Corinthians 15:58.

The word "therefore" couples verse fifty-eight with the foregoing thoughts and based upon them this demanding charge is given. Select words and phrases in the text are "stedfast," "unmoveable," "always abounding in the work of the Lord," "ye know," "not in vain," and "in the Lord." Every Christian should not only have these words as part of his religious vocabulary but also, and even more important, as part of his character. A major point in this study is that Paul was writing by the inspiration of God addressing spiritual problems which were hindering the church at Corinth. And, through his writings the Christians could be spiritually strengthened as those problems were corrected. Elsewhere in the New Testament Paul wrote, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). The nature of the word of God to strengthen spiritually by producing faith in them that believe (Heb. 4:2) was at the heart of the Corinthians being "stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

Are there any problems in the church today? Are there any that have grown fainthearted? Are some living a worldly life that is only tinted with Christianity? Then, what the church needs today is the word of God. It must be read, taught, preached, and lived with greater fervor and zeal than has become observable in recent years. Man is an immortal being who will exist eternally in either heaven or hell. Admittance into the one and avoidance of the other requires a power greater than man with all he can do for himself. The word of God is the answer “for the word of God is quick [living, ASV], and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even of the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb. 4:12). Who then shall keep us from God’s source of life giving power? Shall misunderstanding it, or shall tribulation or persecution yield offence at it? Shall the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke away the life from it? (See: Matthew 13:18-23). Aware that the Christian is receiving a command of God that will cause him to be productive in the kingdom of God, will he take into a good and honest heart Paul’s words, “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always bounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”