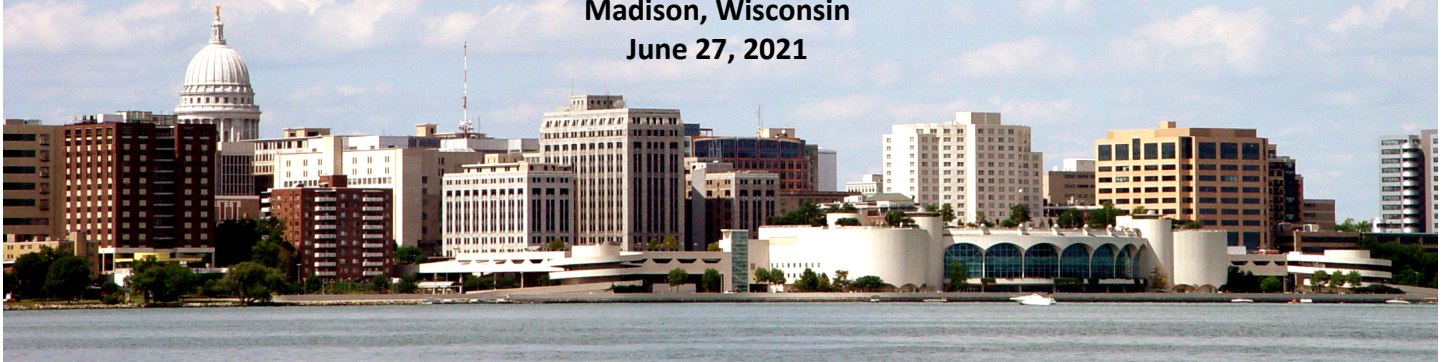


# Therefore, My Beloved Brethren

1 CORINTHIANS 15:58 • RESURRECTION (PART 7)

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Four Lakes Church of Christ  
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**\*\*COVID-19 SPLIT SERVICE\*\***

It is good to be together this morning! I hope all of us have the elements for the Lord's Supper (either from home or from the table in the entryway), as John/Aaron will be leading us in the prayers for the Supper right after our study today. And then, John/Noah will be leading us in three songs before we head outside to do our visiting outdoors.

As we begin, we want to make sure we at least briefly explain the good news. We sinned, but because he loved us so much, God sent his only Son to die in our place. He was buried and then raised up on the third day, and in response, we must believe this good news and obey it. We turn away from sin, we confess Jesus as being the Christ, the Son of God, and then we allow ourselves to be buried with him in baptism, for the forgiveness of sins. At this point, God adds us to his kingdom, the church, and the Christian life begins. If you have any questions about this, if you would like to study together, we invite you to get in touch.

As our tradition has been, we are passing along some good news today! The first comes from the personal Facebook page of Johnnie LeMaster, a former shortstop for the San Francisco Giants. Johnnie is a member of the Lord's church, he's from Kentucky, he speaks at Polishing the Pulpit from time to time. He posted a video of Erica being baptized. I'm not sure where this is, but we certainly rejoice with Erica this week.

Then, we have a post from a friend of mine, Danny Boggs, who directs a Bible camp session down in Arkansas. They didn't give a name, but they did post a picture. Camps are still happening somewhere out there this year, and great things are happening. So, we rejoice with them and with the good work being done down in Arkansas and Missouri.

And then, we have an update from Brad Harrub, who attends the church in Tennessee where Clint Oppermann, one of our former members, serves as an elder. Brad was at the Little Mountain Ministry Camp (in Winchester, Tennessee), and they had three baptisms during their session. It looks like Willie Franklin doing one of those baptisms. Brother Franklin is a former NFL player. We have a professional sports thing going on today!

And finally, we have an update from somewhere in Kenya. I think Sara might have told me about this one just over a week ago. This comes from a preacher named Fred. And like some of these others, I don't have names,

but we do know that two women were baptized in Kenya at some point over the past week or two. We rejoice with them, and we are looking forward to meeting them someday.

And we share all of this by way of encouragement: What these men and women have done this week, you can do today. Pull me aside after worship, get in touch with either one of our other elders, and we would be more than happy to open the word of God and study together.

Before we continue with our study from the word of God, I'd like to pass along just a bit of good news from the Bible correspondence course program. A week or so ago, I picked up my wife from her parents' house in Ohio, and as we were there, I answered a call on the church line. Diane was calling us from Florida, and let us know that she had been studying our courses before the pandemic. She had even told others about the courses we offer, all of her friends and several pastors. But she got away from it. She says, though, "I really need to get [back] into the word." "That was really filling my soul," she says. She is still too vulnerable to go out in public, even now, due to lung disease, and so she wants to get back into those studies. I gave this information to Patsy last week, and I'm sharing it with all of you now. Let's be praying for Diane, and let's be praying for the Bible correspondence course program. Hundreds of students are learning every month. Every time I stop by and check the mail, I bring in a stack of courses, ready to be graded and returned. Some great things are happening, hard work is being done, and your sacrificial giving is making this program possible. So, let us remember this in our prayers.

This morning, I would invite you to return with me (one last time) to 1 Corinthians 15. Several months ago, one of members asked for a lesson on a rather difficult verse in this chapter, we covered it a few weeks ago, but, we have been looking at the whole chapter, which is perhaps one of the first written accounts of the Lord's resurrection. And Paul writes this, because some members of the church in Corinth were questioning and perhaps even denying the possibility of a future resurrection. Today, we get to the very last verse, and it's a statement that begins with the word **"therefore."** As we have learned many times through our years together, whenever a passage in the Bible starts with the word **"therefore,"** we need to be asking ourselves what it is "there for." When somebody says, **"therefore,"** it's a reference to what has come before. And this is what we have been looking at for the past two months. Very patiently, Paul has been answering and anticipating their questions and objections.

In the opening verses, he combats the idea that there is no resurrection by appealing to the resurrection of Jesus. He starts with what they already believe, and he makes a series of appeals.

He then encourages these people to imagine what life would be like if Christ had never been raised.

He continues by reminding them, though, that **"...Christ HAS been raised from the dead."**

He then appeals to the resurrection as motivation – to obey the gospel and to live for him.

He continues by looking at some of the differences between this body and the next one.

And then, last week, we looked at a series of events that will happen at the end of time, and we learned that **"...in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet,"** the living will be changed, the dead will be raised, and God will give us the victory over death.

Today, because all of this is true, we finally come to the ***“therefore.”*** This is what this passage really means, and I hope we notice that even after all of these challenges, Paul addresses this passage to these people as his ***“beloved brethren.”*** These people are his Christian family. He cares for them. Let’s look, then, at the last verse – 1 Corinthians 15:58, where Paul says, ***“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.”***

As we look at what Paul says here, we finally come to something we need to DO. This is the ***“therefore.”*** Because Christ really has been raised, and because we will also be raised, this is what it means for us. Because the resurrection will happen, do these things.

### **I. And we start with Paul encouraging his beloved brothers and sisters in Corinth to “BE STEADFAST.”**

It’s the idea of being “firm” or “stable.” It goes back to a word referring to being “seated,” the idea of being stationary or steady, instead of constantly pacing or wandering. The word is only used three times in the whole Bible: It’s used in 1 Corinthians 7:37 with reference to a man who ***“stands firm in his heart,”*** who has made the firm decision to abstain from sexual sin. The word is also used in Colossians 1:23 as Paul encourages the church to look forward to the life to come, ***“if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and STEADFAST, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard.”*** And then, it is also used here in 1 Corinthians 15:58. With reference to what Paul has said about the resurrection, he is encouraging his beloved brothers and sisters to ***“be steadfast.”*** Do not wander from theory to theory, but settle down a bit, have a seat, be firm. Our faith is to be established in the truth of the gospel, the good news concerning the Lord’s death, burial, and resurrection. We are to remember the resurrection and never turn away from it. We are to ***“continue in [this] faith, firmly established and steadfast.”***

### **II. In addition to being “steadfast,” Paul also encourages his beloved brothers and sisters to BE IMMOVABLE.**

Based on everything we’ve learned up to this point in Chapter 15, ***“be immovable.”*** We might think of crossing a stream or a river, where we carefully plant our feet in a way that they will not move. We can’t just stroll across this river, but we focus on not moving, we have to focus on not getting swept away. This is why we wear shoes with good tread on the bottom. Back when my wife worked at the school district’s main kitchen on Pflaum Road, she always had to have non-slip shoes in that facility. Even with those shoes, I remember her almost dying on a frozen carrot disk. A frozen carrot on a tile floor can take you out in the food service industry! But shoes can help. We want to be ***“immovable.”*** We don’t need to be sliding, especially in our faith. “On Christ the solid rock I stand,” as we sometimes sing.

We might think being ***“steadfast”*** and ***“immovable”*** are pretty much the same, and they are very similar, but ***“steadfast”*** seems to be a decision we make personally to not waver, but being ***“immovable”*** seems to be more the idea of standing firm in spite of some kind of pressure from the outside. Our faith in the resurrection will not be shaken, even in terrible circumstances. If I truly believe that I will come back to life in a life after this one, I can truly be immovable. The opposite of being ***“immovable”*** is what Paul would go on to notice in Galatians 1:6, ***“I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel.”*** The opposite of being ***“immovable”*** is what Paul also warned about in Ephesians 4:14, when he referred to being ***“...tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming.”***

And this seems to be what is happening in Corinth. At one time, they had believed in the resurrection, but they hit some questions, there were some aspects of the resurrection they didn't understand, and so they moved away from it. They were tossed like a kayak in the waves on Lake Mendota. I'm having a discussion with a man online right now who seems to be in a somewhat similar situation. Several years ago, he really struggled with a certain doctrine, he had some questions that could not be answered, and now everything is in chaos. Now he's not even sure God exists. This is what Paul is concerned about here. Instead of being constantly moved around, he encourages these dear brothers and sisters to ***"be immovable."*** It's highly arrogant, by the way, to completely abandon some belief, just because we don't understand every detail. But that is what some in Corinth were thinking: If I don't understand it, then God must not be able to do it. God, though, does many things we may not understand.

But the big idea here is we are to be ***"immovable."*** Outside forces shouldn't be able to push us around. We shouldn't doubt our faith every time somebody questions it. No, we believe what God has said in his word, and we are anchored to it. And if we need to, we avoid certain outside forces. This is what we learned a few weeks ago (from verse 33), ***"Do not be deceived: 'Bad company corrupts good morals.'"*** Part of being ***"immovable"*** might involve staying away from forces that are trying to move us. Be ***"immovable."*** It's almost like being stubborn, but in a good way. Stubbornly hold on to God, Paul seems to be saying. Do not get distracted or pulled away. Be unshakable, stubbornly faithful, not getting sidetracked or distracted.

I'm thinking of what I think is a pair of mourning doves who have made a nest on a woodpile about waist-high in our side yard. I noticed two eggs in that nest a few weeks ago, and I was nervous, because I had to mow. I didn't want to disrupt anything, but I also had to mow the grass. Even though I walked by within inches with a lawnmower, that bird did not move. Those eggs have now hatched, and I saw the baby birds fly for the first time a few days ago. But the point is: When it mattered, that bird did not move. Guarding those eggs, that bird was ***"immovable."*** And this is what Paul is encouraging in his beloved brothers and sisters: He wants them to be ***"steadfast"*** and ***"immovable."***

### III. We continue with Paul also encouraging them to be ALWAYS ABOUNDING IN THE WORK OF THE LORD.

The word Paul uses here (for ***"abounding"***) was also used to refer to the apostles picking up what was ***"left over"*** after the feeding of the five thousand and the four thousand in Matthew 14 and 15. When Jesus feeds the crowds, those passages tell us that, Jesus not only fed the people, but he fed them an abundance. He fed them more than enough. He fed them to the point of having ***"left overs."*** The food was ***"abounding."*** That's the word Paul uses here. We find the word used again in Luke 15:10, as we read about the Prodigal Son who came to his senses, and said, ***"How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger!"*** ***"More than enough"*** is the same word we have here. Several times in his letters, Paul uses the word as he encourages his readers to ***"abound"*** in their love for one another. It's the idea of going above and beyond.

At all times, then, based on what they know about the resurrection, Paul is encouraging his dear brothers and sisters to go above and beyond in their work for the Lord, doing more than is expected, more than the bare minimum. Most of us have worked with or have gone to school with those who always seem to do the very least they can get away with, "This is what I need to do? I will do this and no more!" And they will only do that when somebody is watching. A few years ago, I mentioned someone I had the great displeasure of supervising as an election official. She was always on her phone, and it was a constant struggle to get her to do even the minimum,

even to the point where we had to let her go. But most of us have also worked with those who always go above and beyond. One of my regular election officials is a professor of education at Edgewood College, a highly educated man with a great deal of responsibility training teachers. But when he shows up at 6 a.m. on election day, his attitude is, "Use me and abuse me! I will do whatever it takes, and more!" And he will do anything. Nothing is beneath him. And when I give him an assignment, I know I don't ever need to think about it again, because I know it will be done. This is the attitude Paul is encouraging here. We are to be ***"always abounding in the work of the Lord,"*** always going above and beyond the bare minimum.

And I should probably at least mention that there is some ***"work"*** involved. We'll get to the ***"labor"*** part of this verse in just a moment, but for now, we need to notice that we are doing ***"the work of the Lord."*** We are not just working ***"for"*** him, but we are joining him in HIS work. Somebody commented on this passage and suggested, "Instead of just asking God to bless what you're doing, find out where God is at work and join him there." I love that. Find out what is important to God, and do that! Give some relief to the poor, help the fatherless, speak up for the captives, take someone out for dinner, drop off a meal, make a call, send a text, preach the gospel, go the extra mile, ***"...[for] the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve..."*** (Matthew 20:28). And if we lose the fire, if we lose the enthusiasm, let's re-read one of the gospel accounts with the mission of finding some way to be more like Him, ***"...always abounding in the work of the Lord."***

#### IV. As we come to the end of this verse, Paul adds something: We are to do all of this, KNOWING THAT YOUR TOIL IS NOT IN VAIN IN THE LORD.

Notice how Paul transitions from ***"work"*** to ***"toil."*** To ***"work"*** is to do something, but the second word here refers to "laborious toil." This is the kind of work that really has the ability to make us truly tired. This is ***"toil."*** We need to know, though, that our ***"toil is not in vain in the Lord."*** Some forms of work ARE vain. Some kinds of toil DO feel useless. This past Friday, I got down on my hands and knees and scrubbed the floor in our kitchen and dining room. It needs to be done, but the worst part of it is that it will need to be done again, and again, and again. It's like washing the dishes, or vacuuming, or weeding the garden, or doing laundry. It keeps coming, and it's hard to see the eternal significance of it. It has to be done, but it is laborious. And sometimes, we can start to look at the Lord's work like that. We work, and work, and work, but sometimes it's hard to see the benefit of it. We think of Jesus who trained the apostles night and day for three and a half years, but at the end, he left behind a group of men who barely seemed to be any better than they were at the beginning – not getting it, even fighting with each other right up to the very end. Paul reminds us, though, that our ***"toil is not in vain in the Lord."*** Our work for him is important. We might not be able to track our work on a chart or a graph, but when we believe in the resurrection, our work for him is significant. Going to Aldi with a young mother and buying her groceries for a week is eternally significant when done in the name of the Lord. Going to Farm & Fleet and buying steel toe boots for a young man so he can start a new job on Monday is eternally significant when done in the name of the Lord. Grading a Bible correspondence course and taking the time to answer a question from an inmate in Missouri is eternally significant, even though it might not seem like it at the time. Our work for him makes a difference – not just in this life, but in the next as well.

#### Conclusion:

Over the past two months, we have looked at the resurrection. We've looked at inspired word of God, and in this chapter we've learned that the gospel is the good news concerning Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. We've learned that those who obey the gospel have every reason to believe that we will also be raised. The sting of death has been removed. And today, we've learned that our belief in the resurrection changes the way

we live. Because Jesus was raised, and because we also will be raised, we are to therefore be, ***“...steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that our toil is not in vain in the Lord.”***

Before we partake of the Lord’s Supper, let’s go to God in prayer:

Our Father in Heaven,

You are the one and only living God, the God of the living and the dead, creator of heaven and earth. Thank you for making a way for us to spend eternity with you. Even though we have sinned, you sent your Son to this earth as a perfect Savior. Through him, we have forgiveness and the hope of a future resurrection. As we look forward to that day, we pray that we would be steadfast, always abounding in your work, knowing that our labor is not in vain.

Thank you for Jesus. We come to you in his name. Lord, come quickly, AMEN.

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