

## Stay Steady

Good morning church! Let's continue in worship by getting into God's Word together.

Go ahead and open your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 15:58:

Before we begin this morning, I need to take a moment to thank the parents of high school students in here. You have afforded me a blessed opportunity to be a part of your students' lives.

They are an amazing group of students. Whenever I get the chance to talk about this group of High Schoolers to other ministry leaders, other parents; really anyone who will lend me their ear for a moment, I tell them what an amazing group we have in this church.

They are eager to learn, eager to grow, they are hungry for God's Word, and they are visibly striving to live out their faith.

Parents, to you, I say keep up the good work. Keep discipling your children, keep it up and keep on.

Alright, let's get started. Here we are, just a few short weeks after Easter. I don't know about you, but I love Easter, I mean, yes, it is resurrection Sunday and that is why we celebrate.

But it is one of those days that seems to be special the entire day. It's just different. God's presence seems palpable for the whole day, I hope that you notice that too.

I love our Easter celebration, because let's be honest, we don't pull any punches. From the worship to the bold proclamation of the gospel. Christ is honored every second of the morning.

Not to mention it is the one Sunday of year that I get to come from the back and shoot confetti...without getting in trouble. It's amazing.

But let's be honest, not every day is like that. Sometimes life drags you down, work is more than difficult, trials at every corner, you and your spouse just can't seem to get on the same page.

Not to mention your children are acting like heathens. Or maybe it is friends, small group. You just find yourself in a low and you plummet to rock bottom.

This morning, as we look at 1 Corinthians 15:58; I want to share the same encouragement that Paul shared with the church in Corinth; and that is to stay steady.

Look at the text with me, just one verse this morning.

*<sup>58</sup> Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.*

Paul begins his sentence with "Therefore," which should automatically tell you to look back to see the context.

This command comes on the heels of Paul explaining to the church in Corinth the importance of the resurrection.

At this time there were people trying to convince the church that there was no resurrection, either of Jesus or no hope for a resurrection for believers.

This is the context of the majority of chapter 15.

This morning my hope is that you leave encouraged and leave with some practical points that you can take with you Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and so on.

The first point we have this morning is:

- **Stand Firm in the Truth**

Stand firm in the "Capital T" Truth, God's Word.

One of the first things to note in this verse is Paul's family language.

Look at how Paul puts it; "Therefore my beloved brothers, be steadfast." He's talking specifically to believers. And he's telling them to stand firm, be steadfast, unshakable in your trust and adherence to what God says, the whole council of God.

Unfortunately, denying parts of Scripture has been an ongoing issue for centuries. Culture is squeezing tight the church and as a result there are "churches" who have bowed to the pressure of culture and allowed pagan and evil beliefs, not only in the doors, but to be proclaimed from the pulpit.

The adherence to sound biblical doctrine is rebellious in our society. It's called old fashioned, out of touch, bigotry.

So many read passages that may be hard, and instead of studying and believing the what the Bible says, they reject hard doctrine because it doesn't match up with their modern sensibilities.

Often the Bible gets reduced to being a road map. A moral guidebook to live a "good book."

Calling the Bible a roadmap is like calling Mount Everest a hill.

Does it guide us? Does it show us moral living?

Yes, 2 Timothy 3:16 tells us, *<sup>16</sup> All Scripture is breathed out by God [literally God's words] and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness*

The Bible reveals the way God requires his people to live, but it is so much more.

First, it is our way to know who He is. It is his revelation to us of himself.

All 66 books show us the patience of God, his goodness, his love, his mercy, his character. Without them, we have nothing. We do not have the ability to know the personal God we serve. \*\*\*\*

It shows us his sovereignty and control.

It feels like we have hit rock bottom in our culture, and it's easy to get bogged down in the news and media, and the seemingly never-ending battle against culture.

Whether it is war, the debauchery that continues to leak out from those that run our country, the anti-biblical worldviews, the murder, the seeming chaos... sometimes it doesn't really feel like anyone is in control.

Even though those feelings can be strong, stay steady. Stand firm in the truth, no matter the cost.

Know the God you serve. Don't just know about him...but KNOW him. Get into the Scriptures, see his character, see how he governs, see his justice, and see his mercy.

Hold tight to the Scriptures. Hold tight because they show us how to live as Christians, they comfort, they teach, they show us God's character.\*\*\*\*

In the days of TikTok, Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram, everyone has a voice. Be careful of the voices you listen to. Every day people are becoming better at conveying a message and making it sound legit. Making it sound like they actually know what they are talking about.

Believe it or not, not everyone on the internet knows what they are talking about.

Be careful, weigh their messages against Scripture. If Scripture disagrees, then they are wrong...not God.

God has given us the ENTIRE Bible.

This includes both NT and OT. Roman 15:4 says, *"4 For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction."*

In other words, don't neglect the OT in your personal devotions, in your study of God's Word. It was all written for our instruction and for our good.

Stand firm in the whole council of God.

Then Paul gives us another imperative, he says "be steadfast, immovable."

In other words:

- **Anchor yourself in the gospel**

We are moving from the broad to the specific. Broadly, stand firm in the Word of God, just like Paul does. Throughout his epistles, he consistently appeals to Scripture to direct the church.

But he also zeros in on the gospel.

Like at the beginning of this chapter, chapter 15, Paul gives us one of the clearest declarations of the gospel.

[3]For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, [4]that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,

That...that is what we anchor ourselves in.

The gospel is the foundation of our faith; it is the bedrock that hold us steady.

Like a ship in the sea that is held in place by a giant anchor, the gospel is the anchor that holds our Christian lives in place.

The gospel, defined, is the good news of Jesus Christ.

At the most elementary level, that is it.

However, there are five core tenants of the gospel that we must quickly cover to get the full scope of what it truly is.

- 1. Jesus is God in the flesh**

This is the incarnation.

John 1:1, Pastor Rob covered this all the way back at the beginning of our study of the book of John...

[1]*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

Then if you skip down to verse 14...John writes *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.*

Jesus is the most miraculous person to ever walk this earth. 100% God, 100% man. Two natures, one person.

You don't have the gospel without God becoming one of us.

- 2. Jesus lived a sinless life**

Hebrews 4:15 says, [15] *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.*

Jesus lived the perfect life, never once sinned, completely and utterly innocent.

He's the only person that could do it and he did it for us. He was the one true, spotless sacrifice to pay for sin.

Although he was sinless he:

- 3. Jesus died for our sins**

Once again, 1 Corinthians 15:3 – *Jesus died for our sins according with the Scripture.*

In his death on the cross he paid the debt we owe for our sin. He hung there to take on the wrath of God, the wrath that is rightfully ours.

In our place he died the sinner's death.

- 4. Jesus rose again** – this is where he won victory over death

Then verse 4 - 4]that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,

In this act, he defeated sin and death. He did not stay in the grave, he walked out!  
Once again, here we are on the heels of celebrating this!

But there's more. He didn't just walk out of the grave to aimlessly wander the earth, but he

And finally:

#### 5. **Jesus ascended to the Father**

Acts 1 tells that he ascended to the Father. And 1 Peter tells us that he sits at the right hand of the Father.

Not an ascension to just go home, but to rule as Lord overall.

He. Is. Lord!

That is the gospel. Spelled out. That is what we believe, that is what we are anchored in.\*\*\*\*

This gospel that we proclaim is an everyday gospel. It must saturate our lives every second of every day.

So often the gospel is diminished and decreased to the moment of salvation.

We think to ourselves, "Yes I believe in the gospel, I believed when I was 8." Or "Yes, I believe in the gospel, God pulled me out of my sin to save me."

But the gospel is not a one and done belief. We don't believe in the gospel, receive our ticket to heaven and then conduct life as if it doesn't exist.

We can't. It is by the gospel that we live our life. It is because of the gospel we know God's grace and his love for us.

To be reminded that God became one of us, gave up everything, should lead you to a love so deep that you want nothing more than to live for him.

To be reminded of Jesus on the cross must strike us so deeply that it causes us to turn from our sin.

To be reminded that Jesus willingly hung there for you, should cause you to strive for holiness.

To be reminded that Jesus died and rose again should instill an unshakable hope and excitement that one day we will see him face to face.

The gospel is not a one and done.

The gospel is not like a freshman who plays basketball at the university of Duke for one season and then declares for the NBA. It's like the 5<sup>th</sup> year senior that seems like they have been playing in March Madness at the turn of the century.

It's here for life. Anchor yourself in the truth of the gospel, anchor yourself in the hope it provides, anchor yourself in the constant reminder of God's love for you.

Be steadfast, be immovable. Then Paul gives the third command of the verse.

*58 Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord*

In other words:

- **Excel in your work for Jesus**

That's what Paul means by saying "Always abounding in the work of the Lord."

The obvious question is "What is the work of the Lord?"

In short...ministry.

There are two different angles that we need to look at when we discuss ministry.

The first and most obvious is, ministry within the church.

It amazes me when I'm driving down 53<sup>rd</sup> St. after 5 pm how many cars are in our parking lot. Doesn't matter the day of the week, it seems like there is always someone here.

The amount of discipleship that happens on a daily basis is evidence that God is doing a work in our church...and it's not just people coming to an event. But it is lives being changed!\*\*\*\*

Get involved. Serve. If you don't think there is anywhere you fit in to serve...come see me. We will get you involved.

Whether it is Men's or Women's ministries, college, students, kids, BSC...parking team, facilities, ushers, the list goes on. God has graciously given us gifts to be used, so use them!

My question to you is, are you abounding in the work of the Lord, or are you consuming content on a Sunday?

Don't simply consume but give back. Is it easy? Nah...but what's the fun in easy? Is it rewarding? Absolutely.

Your efforts, energy, time, resources are replaced with an inexplicable joy. When you abound in the work of the Lord you are doing what you were created to do. Glorify God.

If you are sitting in your seat feeling a bit uncomfortable then maybe it's time to get involved.

If you're thinking, 'I need to pray about it,' we've already been praying for it. It's time to get involved.

The harsh reality is that ministry stalls out without you, without the people of God being willing to work for the Lord.

That's the first angle.

The second angle we must approach ministry is from your everyday life. Ministry does not only happen within the four walls of this building.

If your labor is compelled by God, fueled by him, under his authority, and for his glory, then that is ministry. That is the work of the Lord.

Whether it is vocationally, personally, or in the context of family, if God is in it, over it, and it is for him, then it is working for God.

If you have been called to a specific vocation, no matter what it is, and if within that vocation you glorify him, you continue to live for him, then be the best at that job you can be.

If you have children, be the most God honoring parent you can be. Raise your children under God's authority, raise them to be giants of the faith.

Work for the Lord and excel.

The world needs God's people in the workforce. The world needs Christians to step up and do a job, not for a paycheck (although that is a necessary perk), not for the accolades of a boss, not for pride, but for Christ.

If you are in here and maybe you're too young for a job, this still applies. Whether it is sports, music, school...whatever it is, do it for Jesus.

Colossians 3:23 says, <sup>23</sup> *Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men,*

My boys love sports. Basketball, football...they eat, sleep, and drink sports. And they all have a different mindset when it comes to playing.

One of them has a mindset of, 'this is my field or my court, and you're just playing on it.' Not much gets under his skin.

Two of them just love playing. They don't have super high highs or super low lows. They just love to play.

And the fourth, plays to impress. Which weighs heavy on a young mind. He plays to impress the coaches, gain acceptance from his teammates, he plays to please others.

I wish I would have come up with this phrase, but the first time I heard it was from Pastor Rob talking to his girls.

It's, "Play for an audience of one."

We now preach that to all four of our boys, but that is so fitting in all aspects of life. \*\*\*\*

Work for the Lord, live for an audience of one.

When your focus is on glorifying God, in whichever aspect labor you do, you will stay steady.

Finally, Paul ends this verse, and this chapter... not with another command, but an encouragement.

He says, *knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.*

He's encouraging the church to:

- **Know it is worth it**

That is, know the toil that we go through, striving to do our best to live for Christ, it is absolutely worth it.

Not because our work for the Lord is the foundation of our salvation...no, remember, that's the gospel.

No, we toil and strive, we labor because we love our God, not to mention we have a reward.

The reward we receive is an already-not-yet sort of deal.

Living for Jesus, serving him in ministry, resting in his gospel, standing firm in his Word brings unspeakable joy.

Joy that surpasses all understanding, as Paul writes in Philippians 4:7.

To understand this concept and see it in your own life you must understand what joy is.

Joy is a quiet confidence that says, "God is working in my life, and I trust him continue to do so."

Joy is knowing without a shadow of a doubt that when hard times come, they are for a reason, and we can rejoice that God is growing us.

That when the good times come, we can rejoice in God's gracious gift of a good season of life.

However, joy is not happiness.

Happiness is a fleeting feeling, an emotion. Although feelings are very real, they can be a very deceiving.

Especially for those of us who tend to be on the moody side. One minute we are happy and right as rain...the next, the sky is falling and we realize that the rain is just getting us wet.

Joy is not that...joy is a choice.

This joy we have, the world simply does not understand it.

Quite a long time ago I worked in a bullpen of sorts where 12 or so of us had cubicles. The job was wretched, everybody in there was miserable. Except for me.

I did not enjoy the job, it was not a good job, but I was thankful to have it because as a young dad I was able to provide for my growing family.

There was one summer night when I worked the late shift a guy name Chris and I were walking out together.

Chris was a staunch atheist. He used to poke at me, try to get me all riled up because I was...am...a Christian.

As we walked to our cars he stopped me and said, "I don't get you. We all hate being in there, but you don't show it. Why are you different?" I don't remember if he named it joy, but I knew that's what he saw.

I said, "You're not going to like my answer. It's because of Jesus, I'm living for him."

He scoffed and said, "Yeah I figured you would say that."

The joy of the Lord was worth it then and is worth it now.

But that's not all! There is a future reward that is coming our way!

There is a day coming where we will get to see Jesus face to face! No more toil, no more struggle...Just an eternity to spend with him!

I've had students ask me what our rewards in heaven will be like. I'm not entirely sure all the details of what those will be, but for one...I get a glorified body! And as I age, the more excited I become.

No more waking up from a great night sleep just to find out that my body didn't like how I slept, so to punish me it says, "Guess you're not looking left this week."

No more limping because I thought I could still play basketball. No more panic attacks because I can't find my inhaler!

But all that...pales in comparison to seeing Jesus.

Jesus is enough, he is all the reward I need.

Knowing that I get to see him, touch him, hug him, walk with him, joke with him, I will get to be by his side...that is enough.

That right there means that we work for something. We work to make him proud.

When we work for the Lord, there is no futility, there is purpose.

So church, stay steady. Stand firm in the Truth, anchor yourself in the gospel, excel in your work for Jesus, and walk out of here encouraged because it is all worth it.

Let's pray.