

## Daily Devotional, October 5, 2021 The Courage to Advance God's Mission

***Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. 1 Corinthians 15:58 (NIV)***

Our culture is seemingly fixated on instant gratification. We want results, and we want them now! Culturally, we are conditioned to focus on worldly matters. While anxiously focusing on the here and now of the day-to-day affairs of our lives, it is important not to lose our eternal perspective.

The appeal in this verse is phrased as a conclusion. To understand its context, we need to backtrack a few verses. In verses 56-57, Paul poses a pair of rhetorical questions which he then answers. He asks, "Death where is your victory? Death where is your sting?" He explains that "the power of death is sin, and the power of sin is in the law," and he contrasts this by thanking God for victory through Christ.

Paul is pointing the Corinthians to the resurrection, not so much to persuade them of something but to re-inforce something they presumably already knew—that Christ already conquered death and sin. I don't know about you, but I still need to be reminded just how powerful the resurrection is. The eternal significance of this miraculous event cannot be overstated.

There is, however, more going on here than a simple reminder about the resurrection. The overall context of this letter communicates some tension in Paul's relationship with the church. It does not seem that they had been good stewards of what Paul was trying to teach them. While the relationship was undoubtedly strained, Paul knew that victory over all of life's trials had been achieved through Christ's resurrection. Therefore, he tells the church they should "Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain."

Perhaps Paul was dealing with some questions in his own heart. "Am I writing this in vain? Will they receive what I am saying?" Nevertheless, Paul was steadfast. He wrote this letter as a testimony to the risen Christ, and because of this, he realized that his work was not being done in vain. His words were not wasted.

Maintaining an eternal perspective means understanding that we will not always see the immediate results of our efforts. Believing that Christ won the ultimate victory affects the way we live today. No singular event in all of history has more eternal significance than the resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ. None of the pagan religions offer an eternal reward based on the grace of their gods working in and through their followers.

Even though his relationship with the church at Corinth was strained, Paul offers them hope. He is encouraging them towards a deeper relationship with Jesus, and this is never done in vain. Even though he had not been treated well—to the point of enduring attacks on the legitimacy of his ministry—Paul did not let that distort his eternal perspective towards the church at Corinth. Nothing we do on this earth that glorifies our resurrected Savior will ever be done in vain.

***Prayer: Jesus, we pray for humility in leading the ministry you've called us to. Let us live by your humble example, serving others as the Son of God. Let our hearts be free from arrogance and pride. Let us be faithful servants to your people and concentrate on the spiritual growth of all around us. Give us true words when preaching to others. May we serve You in everything we do and say. Amen.***