

Trinity Baptist Church Bexleyheath
Sermon Trinity 27 September 2020
David Linley – 1 Corinthians 15:58

Reading:

1 Corinthians 15:54-58 NIV (starting with the quote midway though verse 54)

‘Death has been swallowed up in victory.’ ‘Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?’ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 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 labour in the Lord is not in vain.”

1 Corinthians 15:54-58 (NIV)

I want to share with you today what I would call one of the Bible’s most motivational verses.

You could say that all of the Bible is motivational, because it’s ‘God breathed’ and that would be true.

Which of us who read the Bible have not had an almost random verse jump off the page and speak to us in a new and totally unexpected way?

2 Timothy 3:16-17

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

That’s why, for us who believe, it’s so important to spend some time in the Bible every single day.

Let me tell you about Mr Willson, a bachelor who was in his eighties when I knew him. He was a key worker at our mission centre in King’s Cross.

He’d been converted in his early twenties when he stopped at an open-air meeting being held outside Pentonville Prison. From then on, he began serving the Lord, mainly as a Sunday School teacher and then as Sunday School Superintendent until way after his retirement from business as a departmental manager at the Houndsditch Warehouse on the edge of the City of London.

Some people thought him to be a bit *different*. In fact it’s true, that in the more than 20 years that I knew him, I hardly ever saw him outside without his briefcase and without him wearing a grey three-piece suit. Everyone called him Mr Willson – you just did. But he was a very generous man who loved the people of King’s Cross and they dearly loved him. Generation after generation of children stretching back for 50 years, knew him as Mr Willson, the Sunday School man, and almost everyone saw him as their friend. Often, as I walked with him along the main Caledonian Road, a car would suddenly pull up beside us and someone would jump out and give him a warm handshake or a big hug. They’d say: ‘Do you remember me, Mr Willson? I was in your Sunday School class.’

When Mr Willson was teaching and preaching, he would often say with a twinkle in his eye: “I want to show you a love letter”. Then, after a pause, he would hold up the Bible and say, “This is God’s love letter to the world”.

The Bible is like a multifaceted diamond.

Back again to 2 Timothy 3:16 where we are told that . . . (It’s for) teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.

But today I would especially contend, with Mr Willson, that, above all, it is the Book that God has given to us out of His great and overwhelming love, that we might truly know Him. **Truly a love letter, written for us.**

And that is perhaps the most compelling reason why we should give time to study it.

(I'll be coming back to Mr Willson later)

So our verse today is a verse that you should read when the bounce has gone out of your Christian life or when you feel that you need to stir yourself to press on, to keep on going, especially if the task ahead of you is not a particularly easy one. Did you notice it from the reading?

1 Corinthians 15:58 (NIV)

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 labour in the Lord is not in vain."

Notice that Paul is writing here to his **brothers and sisters**.

His relatives in the faith.

Being a true believer brings you into an amazing family. It opens up a whole new world. I'm definitely not saying that every Christian is perfect. In fact none of us are perfect, but a lively, living church truly is a great place to be.

So Paul here is saying "I'm going to give you who believe a special word. It's a family thing. A private thing. Just for those of you who believe.

So let's be motivated by this verse today.

It starts with the word '**Therefore**'

And as great scholars (and others not so learned!) have said down the centuries: "When you see the word 'therefore' in the Bible, you should stop, and ask yourself - what it is THERE . . . FOR"

It appears here because what is proclaimed immediately before this verse is vital. It's a massive golden key that destroys death's power and opens the door to eternal life for all who will believe.

I think it would be really good now, if we could proclaim together these words (taken from the preceding verse – 1 Cor 15:57):

Thanks be to you O God! You give us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let's say it together from deep within our hearts.

With real conviction and assurance. As if the Living, Triune, Almighty God, was standing before us listening – Imagine Him just a few feet away (of course, in reality, He's much, much closer than that!)

Thanks be to you O God! You give us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

It's because we believe that Jesus who had never sinned, gave up His life and died for our sins on the cross, and then rose triumphantly from the dead, that we should be able, in great assurance, to live out what Paul is challenging us to do in the verse that we are about to look at.

Let's say it together again one more time:

Thanks be to you O God! You give us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

LET'S HAVE THIS ROOTED IN OUR MINDS AS WE LOOK AT THE BODY OF THIS VERSE

Before that, let's look briefly at the context surrounding the verse.

Corinth was a corrupt city.

It was immoral with pagan worship.

Most people who were converted came from this kind of background.

It was a young church. (Paul went to Corinth in about AD50 and stayed there around 18 months. He wrote his first letter to the Corinthians about four years later).

One aim in writing the letter was to deal with the different questions and problems that had come to light in this young church.

This particular chapter deals with the question of the Resurrection – is this life all there is?

Paul says: Jesus rose from the dead – and was seen by over 500 people at the same time – some of whom were still alive when this letter was written (1 Corinthians 15:6)

I once, as a London City Missionary, visited door to door in the East End of London, with a questionnaire about eternal life, asking people what they thought.

About 40% said “You’re dead and finished mate” but it turned out that over half of that group of 40% had said when they were asked, that they were Christians.

That’s not good!

Verse 19 of our chapter makes it clear that ‘If in this life only, we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable’.

Paul, though, went on to say that those who love Jesus and depend on the fact that He died and rose again shall rise one day, just like Jesus did.

Now we come to the heart of the verse

And I naturally thought when I first felt led to speak on this verse, that most of my time would be taken up in this segment, but when the time came to prepare, it turned out not to be the case, and we’re now going to go through it fairly quickly.

It begins: Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters,

1. Stand firm

I can’t read these words without thinking of Ephesians 6 and the passage about the armour of God.

Ephesians 6:11 Put on the whole armour of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

Verse 13. Therefore take up the whole armour of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day and having done all to stand.

Verse 14. Stand therefore . . .

We should be solid, anchored, unmovable. Sure and steadfast.

I WOULD SAY THAT WE WON'T BE ABLE TO DO IT, WITHOUT PREPARATION AND GOD'S HELP

Without ‘putting on the Armour of God’.

And I think that prayer is the key. But that’s not all. We also need RESOLVE. And that is given by God, through the Holy Spirit.

The verse then goes on to say, as if to reinforce the point:

2. Let nothing move you.

This is the resolve to keep on standing.

There should be no retreat – no matter what:

- In our faith
- Or in our good actions

I believe that we are on 'Holy ground' when we have to keep standing 'against all odds'.

It's the place of blessing, growth, and closeness with Him.

3. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord

That word 'fully' can also be translated abounding, excelling, more than is needed, doing your very best. All of which means going on to better and better things, to be over and above. That is really what God would want of us – the best that we can be.

4. Because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.

WE SHOULD NEVER THINK THAT ANYTHING THAT WE DO FOR GOD IS IN VAIN.

Sometimes we are privileged to see the results of our labour and the outworking of God's promises to us – but other times, I would say most times, we are not.

It's a tiny bit like Abraham in the Old Testament - He was promised that his descendants would be made into a great nation. It happened but long after he had died.

Back to Mr Willson. He served God faithfully at the Paget Christian Centre in King's Cross for almost 70 years. He affected hundreds of lives through how he lived and the story of Jesus that he sought to share, but he didn't really see much spiritual fruit. Was his labour in vain? Certainly not – because it was done for Jesus.

And we should be seeking, in everything, to do it all for Jesus.

Here's a couple of scriptures:

First – (1 Cor 3:13-15)

The test of a person's ministry, to be seen on Judgement Day:

“... and the fire will test the quality of each person's work. If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved – even though only as one escaping through the flames.”

O Lord, help us throughout our lives, to build what will last

Secondly – (Revelation 22:12)

'Jesus said: Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me and I will give to each person according to what they have done.'

This verse could be very negative or very positive – depending on what we have done in our lives.

Have you heard the saying that goes 'Some Christians can be too heavenly minded to be of any earthly use'.

That can NEVER be true.

Because the more heavenly minded we are – the more God will be able to use us here on earth.

SO WHERE ARE YOU ON YOUR JOURNEY OF FAITH??

- **Are you Searching?** Do you know that something is missing In your life?
- **Have you made the Discovery yet?** That God loves you so much, that He gave His one and only son, Jesus Christ, to die in your place.
And that if you believe on Him, you will not perish but will have eternal life?

- **Has that whole new world, that whole new life, opened up to you yet?**

YOU CAN START TODAY WITH THIS PRAYER:

Aloud or quietly in your heart

Let's pray:

**O Lord, You know that I've been searching for a long time.
Today I want to stop searching, and instead,
I want to put my trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, Your only Son,
who died to give me eternal life.
Thanks be to you O God! You have given me the victory,
through our Lord Jesus Christ.
AMEN**

If you prayed the prayer, and you're not in church with us today, please make contact with us to tell us.
And if you are in church please mention it to Andy or myself.

Now, one more prayer before I sit down

Let's pray:

**Lord, help us all to stand firm. Let nothing move us.
Help us to always, give ourselves fully to Your work O Lord.
Because we know, that our labour in the Lord is never in vain.
AMEN**