

Eternal Labor

“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.” 1 Corinthians 15:58

Paul's words are surprisingly simple yet surprisingly profound because it addresses a basic human need: To be a part of something meaningful. The human heart will not be satisfied until it accomplishes this.

The interesting part of this passage is that it sums up previous verses concerning the resurrection of the dead and finds its greater context in the subject matter of the gospel itself. In dealing with the contents of the gospel, Paul reminds the Corinthians of the gospel he preached: That Christ died, was buried, was raised, and appeared to many witnesses. Paul then transitions into the fact of Christ's resurrection compared with the Corinthians' illogical conclusion: That there is no resurrection of the dead. To reassure the Corinthians of the resurrection of the dead, Paul then goes into detail concerning the future moment of the resurrection and the kind of bodies humans will have after the resurrection. It is concerning this, then, verse 58 appears.

What makes this verse so profound is the eternal nature of its context. This means that the fear of spending our lives engaged in futile activities is removed because, in the Lord, no activity is futile. No person needs to look to political causes, art movements, building businesses – the things which change local communities or even human history – as the means of working for something meaningful. Laboring for the Lord is as monumental as maintaining political office, though it be as simple as praying for someone. The *loudness* of our lives doesn't automatically equal its value.

This also means that being a Christian is a lot more complex than waiting to die and go to heaven. It means (and this should concern us very much) that our work now on earth has consequences – both good and bad – in the hereafter. The kingdom of God is something in which we live and labor *right now*, not just after we die, which means it is something we affect *right now*. Our labor in the Lord is not in vain – either in this life or in the next – *because of* the resurrection of the dead.

Laboring for the Lord can be discouraging at times, especially when we don't see the results. But we can take great comfort in knowing that laboring for the Lord is never meaningless, even when people say otherwise, because we labor for an eternal gospel and a living God.

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