

Unmoved

1 Corinthians 15:58

Joel Pickett

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Introduction

When I think about what it means to be unmoved, I think of the life of Desmond Doss. Many you might be familiar with the incredible story put into a movie, Hacksaw Ridge. Desmond Doss had enlisted as a medic and refused to carry a rifle. Through a series of difficulties he was put through to the battlefield in April 1945. This specific battlefield was located on top of a sheer 400-foot cliff, was fortified with a deadly network of Japanese machine gun nests and booby traps, nicknamed Hacksaw Ridge, it was key to winning the battle of Okinawa. The mission was thought to be near-impossible, and when Doss's battalion was ordered to retreat, the medic refused to leave his fallen comrades behind.

Facing heavy machine gun and artillery fire, Doss repeatedly ran alone into the kill zone, carrying wounded soldiers to the edge of the cliff and singlehandedly lowering them down to safety. Each time he saved a man's life, Doss prayed out loud, "Lord, please help me get one more." By the end of the night, he had rescued an estimated 75 men. *(The always modest Doss reckoned he saved about 50, but his fellow soldiers gauged it closer to 100 so they decided to split the difference.)*

Desmond Doss was unmoved. Whether you agree or disagree, you have to respect how the man lived according to his convictions. He displayed this steadfastness as he was UNMOVED by both the known and the unknown.

As Christians, we are to be unmoved in Jesus. Unmoved by anything that comes our way because although we are promised trial and tribulation, we serve a King who overcame the world and offers us His perfect peace that passes all understanding.

Tonight, we come to an incredible chapter of the Bible, but we are going to focus in on the last verse that brings us instruction and encouragement.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:58 & Pray

1 Corinthians 15:58

⁵⁸ Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

Let's first look at the directive that is given in this last verse of chapter 15..

The Directive

"be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord"

Paul starts with this pair of what we are to BE. Steadfast & Immovable

- one word wouldn't quite communicate properly what Paul desired them to grasp so he uses two words similar to each other for emphasis

BE.... - The sense of this word isn't so much to become something new but to continue to be. He wasn't telling them they weren't steadfast but that they would need to continue to be steadfast and immovable.

Steadfast: to be fixed, settled, firm, and solid, to be steady, not subject to change or variation

This is a reference to one's inward stability. There are many who are like what James said of those who doubt... "like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.. like a double minded man, unstable in all his ways."

Colossians 1:23

²³ if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.

There are many who are moved away from the hope of the gospel who are like children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine.

Our heart is prone to wander which is why we must be even more diligent to be steadfast.

Hebrews 2:1

Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away.

This is why the author of Hebrews would later say that it is our hope in Jesus that acts as our anchor of the soul which is both sure and steadfast.

Spurgeon said to be steadfast is to know what you know, and, knowing it cling to it.

BE STEADFAST & IMMOVABLE

Immovable: not able to be moved, unshaken *Only place this Greek word is used in the NT*

It's to be unmoved from one's position. While steadfastness seems to refer more to one's inward stability this immovability seems to refer to the outward position that we are to hold regardless of what comes.

When speaking with the Ephesians elders who Paul would no longer see... he said this...

Acts 20:24

²⁴ But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

Translated Literally: *I make no account of them.*

Move me - Alarm me, or deter me from my purpose. I do not regard them as of any moment, or as worth consideration in the great purpose to which I have devoted my life.

Paul isn't saying that he is so cold to everything that it doesn't affect him but as much as it might affect him, it doesn't move him! Emotions still exist but we are not to be ruled by feelings but by faith!

BUT WHERE DOES THE ABILITY TO BE STEADFAST AND IMMOVABLE EVEN COME FROM?

Within the context of the chapter, it's clear that it comes from the resurrected Christ!

Look back at verse 10 of chapter 15...

1 Corinthians 15:10

¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God *which was with me.*

The only way that Paul was able to display a steadfast and unmoved life was by the grace of God, but it doesn't mean that he didn't do anything. Notice "*I labored more abundantly than they all*"

Paul told the Ephesians to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. We are only able to be steadfast and immovable as we are IN THE LORD. It was David who strengthened himself in the Lord his God!

Psalms 16:8

I have set the Lord always before me; Because *He is* at my right hand I shall not be moved.

Moved: to cause to waver, to be shaken, to totter back and forth

It's not in our predetermination but His presence that makes us immovable.

Psalms 55:22

Cast your burden on the Lord, And He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved.

It is God who does this work in us as we cast ourselves upon Him who cares for us!

Now we know that as Christians we have not just been given orders to hold down the fort but to storm the gates. Paul says we are to advance the work of the Lord. The first part of the directive is to BE steadfast and immovable but the second is connected as we DO the work of the Lord.

"always abounding in the work of the Lord."

How often? - Always: all the time and on every occasion (*win or lose, rain or shine*)

How much? - Abounding: plentiful, excessive

To abound yourself in the work of the Lord is to be constantly giving oneself to that work.

This is the idea that this work would be what we live for more than anything else. In whatever we do it would all be for the work of the Lord. Regardless of occupation, that our life would be about His work.

But what is the work of the Lord?

Well, if it is the work of the Lord then that means it is the Lord's work. It is any work that the Lord would do. Jesus initiated this work, and He will be the one who ultimately brings it to pass.

John 6:29

²⁹ Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent."

This is the ultimate work of the Lord. Gospel work. That men and women would put their faith and trust in the sent Savior. This of course is in line with the marching orders that Jesus gave the disciples before His ascension. GO AND MAKE DISCIPLES, to teach them what Jesus taught and show them how to follow Jesus in ALL areas of life.

Amplified

always excelling in the work of the Lord [always doing your best and doing more than is needed],

The implication of this command is that there will be that which will try to move us from always abounding in this work! **HOW TRUE THIS IS FOR THE LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN**

Whether it is our own flesh, the pressures of the world, or the enemy of our soul, these are that which will get us to move away from this work. Not just to do bad works but even good works that might not be God's works.

Like in the day of Nehemiah when those enemies of his tried to get him to stop the work that God called him to put his hands to.

Nehemiah 6:3-4

³ So I sent messengers to them, saying, "I *am* doing a great work, so that I cannot come down. Why should the work cease while I leave it and go down to you?" ⁴ But they sent me this message four times, and I answered them in the same manner.

They were persistent but Nehemiah was more.

Jesus said....

John 9:4-5

⁴ I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; *the night is coming* when no one can work. ⁵ As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

Though it is dark, it is not yet night and as long as we are in the world, we are to be the light of the world regardless of how dark it gets.

That was our directive but what is the premise behind this instruction? What is the rationale?

The Premise

Now this verse and its directive is not a stand-alone verse without context.

It's been said before that... "*Any text without its context is a pretext.*" Just like in buying houses it is all about location, location, location and so to properly understand any verse, it's all about context, context, context.

1 Corinthians 15 is one of the most foundationally important chapters in the entire Bible. This last verse that we are looking at is the final application of all that has come before it.

⁵⁸ *Therefore, my beloved brethren,*

Therefore: as a result of, a marker of purpose *In light of all that was just discussed...*

So what precludes verse 58?

1 Corinthians 15 is the best explanation on the reality of the resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of those who put their faith in Him. It is this that our faith entirely rests upon.

This is why when Lee Strobel (*a former atheist turned to Christ*) who was a journalist in Chicago sought to disprove Christianity because of his converted wife - he went after the resurrection. Now you can imagine how that ended up for Lee because it was through that pursuit that He came to the conclusion that there was overwhelming and compelling evidence even outside of the Scriptures that Christ did indeed rise from the dead and so bent His knee to the Lord Jesus Christ.

There were those in Corinth who claimed that there was no physical resurrection of the dead.

And so Paul starts at the beginning of the gospel that was declared to them. Reminding them that it is according to the Scriptures that Christ died, was buried, and rose again the third day and then was seen by many brethren before His ascension to heaven.

Paul's case is that if there is no resurrection of the dead, then there was no resurrection of Jesus Christ and if there was no resurrection of Christ then our faith IS EMPTY. It's all for nothing. We should just pack up and go home!

But it is at this juncture that Paul emphatically declares that Christ is risen from the dead and if Christ is risen from the dead then those in Christ shall also be raised from the dead!

Towards the end of the chapter, Paul shares the mystery that there will be some believers to never taste death in what we call the Rapture where the dead will be raised and those alive would be changed in the twinkling of an eye at the last trumpet.

AND RIGHT BEFORE OUR VERSE OF STUDY TODAY.....

⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is the premise. This is the rationale. It is in light of the resurrection of Jesus and the victory over death that we are to be STEADFAST & IMMOVABLE. Because guess what church? To live is Christ & to die is gain!

We've expounded the directive, we overviewed the premise, and now let's look at the motivation.

The Motivation

"knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

The **MOTIVATION** to remain steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord is **KNOWING** that it will count for something. That this work isn't a waste.

Knowing: to be cognitively aware of a fact or a specific piece of information

To realize and recognize that it is worth the work! Worth the labor!

The greatest motivation to continue doing something is to know that what you are doing will have some benefit. There is nothing that gets us to throw in the towel quicker than when we think what we are doing is waste of time.

When you tell a student that it won't matter what he does, he isn't getting a better grade, all motivation goes out the window. When you tell a worker that there is no chance for a raise or promotion, hard work will decline.

God has wired us in a way that looks for motivation. We ask the question, is it worth my time? It is worth my effort?

Some would say that it is wrong for us to think about our heavenly reward, yet it is the Lord who came up with this in the first place and packs His Scriptures with this very motivation!

Earlier in this letter Paul talked about this concept of labor in chapter 3...

1 Corinthians 3:5-8

⁵ Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? ⁶ I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. ⁷ So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. ⁸ Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor.

Notice the ending there – though God is the one who gives the ultimate increase, God still chooses to reward those who are involved in His work according to each one’s labor **regardless of role and regardless of outcome.**

Hebrews 6:10

¹⁰ For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, *in that* you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

Some of the last recorded words of Jesus are these....

Revelation 22:12

¹² “And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.

NOT IN VAIN

Vain: empty, devoid of any advantage or benefit

- worthless, for nothing, a waste

PHILLIPS (*paraphrase*)

Be sure that nothing you do for him is ever lost or ever wasted.

Paul uses a figure of speech and verbal irony here called a litotes. It is a type of understatement in which an affirmative is expressed by the negative of its opposite. To say that our labor is not in vain is to say that our labor will be fully rewarded.

It is to say that this work is wonderfully productive with everlasting results.

This truth is an inspiring assurance that what we do for Jesus will not only last, but it will be the only thing that lasts!

IN THE LORD

This phrase applies to the type of labor. It is labor done in the Lord or for the Lord or as to the Lord.

I believe we can do “*the work of the Lord*” in **absolutely anything** as long as we do it as to the Lord!

Colossians 3:23-24

²³ And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, ²⁴ knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.

WHATEVER YOU DO. Regardless of what, where, or when. Is it for Him? Regardless of what role you play or what outcome there is. Did you do it for him? HE SEES IT AND HE WILL REWARD

There is no better use of our time. There is no better use of our efforts. Jesus put it like this....

Matthew 6:19-21

¹⁹ “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; ²⁰ but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

The labor that is in vain is any work not done in the Lord! There is only one type of work that makes it to eternity and that is what is done for Jesus.

C.T. Studd

Only one life, 'twill soon be past, Only what's done for Christ will last. Only one life, yes only one, Now let me say, “Thy will be done”; And when at last I'll hear the call, I know I'll say “'twas worth it all”

The reason that Paul has to emphasize this truth is because this is where our mind tends to go. The reward and results of our labor in the Lord are often not seen on this side of eternity.

In the realm of physical work and labor, you can often see the results of the work you put in. But this is spiritual labor, which means the results are spiritual though they might have physical results over time.

And so we walk by faith and not by sight, trusting that the Lord sees and the Lord knows. As he said to church at Philadelphia in the book of Revelation... *“I know your works”*

THIS IS THE TYPE OF GOD THAT WE SERVE...

Hebrews 11:6

⁶ But without faith *it is* impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

Do we believe it?

THE DIRECTIVE IS CONVICTING

THE PREMISE IS CLEAR

THE MOTIVATION IS COMPELLING

⁵⁸ Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

God told Joshua before entering the promise land to not turn to the right hand or to the left, that he might prosper wherever he goes. There will be many things in our lives that will seek to get us off that prepared path that God call us to walk down.

But Jesus said this to those who desired to follow Him....

Luke 9:62

⁶² But Jesus said to him, “No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.”

We aren't to look back, to look left, to look right, but rather look to Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.

We are to be like 12-year-old Jesus in Luke 2 that poses the question to his anxious parents, *“Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?”*

As there will be those around us that live anxious and worried lives, we must remain unmoved from being busy about our Father’s business.

SO, WHAT DO WE DO? As in the parable in Luke 19, a certain man told his servants before he left to a far country to receive himself a kingdom, **“DO BUSINESS TILL I COME”**

We are to occupy till He comes.

And we look forward to the day where we hear our Lord...

‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’