

THE WORK OF THE LORD  
1 Corinthians 15:58

Intro: It has been a little over 11 years since we had our first meeting as a church on January 25, 1981. Actually our first meeting was a men's prayer meeting which was held at the old location of the Gresham Internal Medicine Clinic, 655 NE Hood Ave. in Gresham. Since then many things have happened. We had our first service in the Gresham Armory. Shortly after that we moved to the Performing Arts Center on the David Douglas High School campus. We were there only a few Sundays and the cloud moved east again to the Centennial High School on 182nd Ave. From Centennial High School we moved to the Parkrose School District where we have occupied the Thompson School, the Sacramento School, and up to the present, the Knott School.

We have sought to spread the Word of God not only through our Sunday services, but through radio, summer camps, Bible conferences, bike trips, the tape ministry, printed messages, as well as our involvement with other works at home and abroad. And we can add to all of this the personal witnessing that has gone on from our beginning.

Many of you who are here tonight have been with us from the beginning. Some who started with us have chosen for one reason or another to go elsewhere. During these years the Lord has taken some of our people to heaven, and we will always miss them. The Lord has brought many of you to us since we began. You have been a great encouragement to the rest of us, and you have become a vital part of our ministry together.

In many respects the work has not gone the way I had anticipated that it would go, but I am sure that it has gone the way the Lord intended for it to go. We have experienced many blessings for which we thank the Lord. Some of our blessings have come in the form of trials. We can thank the Lord for them because they have reminded us of our insufficiency and of God's sufficiency. Probably the worst thing that could have happened to us would have been for us to have experienced great growth in the beginning. Instead the Lord has been teaching us in many ways to trust Him, and hopefully we have become stronger in Him as a result. We will all readily admit that there is much that He still needs to do in our hearts, but we can praise Him for the way He has led us, provided for us, and blessed us.

I would say that these have been the happiest years of my entire ministry, but I would also say that they have probably been the hardest. Perhaps in the Lord's work those two words

go together: happy and hard. Our numbers are a little less than they were when we began, and we are still without a permanent meeting place. But we can be sure that we are right on schedule as far as the Lord's plan for us is concerned. We have much to look forward to. And for our encouragement tonight I want to direct your attention to a verse I memorized a long time ago, and a verse which undoubtedly many of you have memorized. It is 1 Cor. 15:58. Let us all read it or quote it together.

Let me point out four very simple, and yet very important truths which Paul has given us in this verse.

First, notice those four words in the middle of the verse:

I. "THE WORK OF THE LORD."

I would remind you that Trinity Bible Church of Portland, Oregon, and all that our name represents, is the Lord's work. We are not all that there is to the work of the Lord, but we are a part of what the Lord is doing in these days. He brought us together. He has provided for us. He has given us the opportunities that we have had. But He has never given the work to us. It is His work. While we are not all that we could be, and should be, yet everything about us which glorifies Him is because of His working in our lives. There would have been no Trinity Bible Church if the Lord had not brought it into being, and maintained it throughout these 11 years.

In times when I have been discouraged, it has been a blessing to me to remember that we are involved in something that the Lord is doing. This is, we are, "the work of the Lord."

Basically we are to seek to glorify the Lord. We do it by proclaiming His Word to saints and sinners alike, for the edification of the saints, and for the salvation of sinners.

A second thing I want you to see is this:

II. WE ARE ALL INVOLVED IN "THE WORK OF THE LORD."

When Paul wrote this, he was not speaking just to the elders of the church, not just to the deacons, nor just to those who ministered the Word. He was speaking to all of the Corinthian believers whom he called, "beloved brethren." Some may not have been doing all that they should have been doing, but no child of God is exempt from serving the Lord. We are all members of the body of Christ, and there are ways in which the Lord intends to use each one of us. If that has never impressed itself upon your heart, I hope that it will

tonight. We do not all have the same place, but we all have a place.

The third things that this verse tells us is that "the work of the Lord" requires:

### III. CERTAIN CHARACTERISTICS IN ALL OF US.

Paul mentioned three here, and I want you to understand what they are.

#### A. "Stedfast."

The verb that Paul used here could be translated "keep on becoming stedfast," etc. That is, we are not ever as steadfast as we can be, so we need to "keep on" becoming more and more steadfast.

What does this word mean?

It is a word which is likened by John Bengel in his work on the NT to superstructure of a building. It is that binding together of us, the Lord's people, which enables us to withstand all of the trials, inwardly and outwardly, that may be released against us. It is a word which indicates that "the work of the Lord" is not going to be easy, but that, as the saying goes, "united we stand." You and I are each to seek that inward strength which comes from the Lord so that by His grace we are invincible.

Paul was describing what it means to be "stedfast" in 2 Cor. 4:7-12.

#### B. "Unmoveable."

This means that we are not to be led astray by others. When you look at the work of the Lord today you see many different things going on. The professing church has become enamored with what is going on in the world, and so the world often has a greater influence on what is called "the work of the Lord" than the Holy Spirit does, or than the Word of God does. "The work of the Lord" is not what we may want to make it; "the work of the Lord" is carefully laid out in Scripture, and if we are to be "unmoveable," we must stand firmly by the Word of God. The cry of many in Christian work today is that we must adapt to the times in which we live, or we will perish. Paul would call such an idea nonsense! Times may change, but God does not change. The hearts of men are still the same. And we need to be "unmoveable" is doing "the work of the Lord" as it was planned by God and revealed to us in His Word.

C. "Always abounding."

This means that we are never to be satisfied that we have done enough, nor are we to be satisfied that what we are doing is being done as well as it could be done. "The work of the Lord" is to have the greatest priority with us, and we are always to be seeking to do more than we are doing, and to do it better. So we are not to be looking for a chance to get out of what we are doing, but "always" we are to give ourselves with greater intensity to the work that the Lord has called us to do.

Finally I come to:

IV. GOD'S PROMISE TO HIS WORKERS.

Here it is: **"Forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."**

This is a word for "labour" which is found some 20 times in the NT. It speaks of working until one is weary in the work, which is often followed by discouragement and depression. As someone has said, "We may get weary in the work, but we do not get weary of the work."

Concl: Let this be our verse, our orders, as we begin another year of ministry together. Let us not waste our time seeing if possibly there is something else that we can do. Let us continue to abide by the directions we have in Scripture, at the same time praying that the Lord will enable us to do more, and to do it better, than we have ever done before.