

SERMON NOTES
I Corinthians 15:58
“Is It Worth It?”

Intro:

- *Is it worth it?*
- Some of you have had a long and tiring and frustrating week – and even yesterday was a busy day with little time for rest
- *Some of you have already put in several hours at church this week on top of a busy schedule of work and family responsibilities and children’s activities*
- Some of you would love to have a morning to sleep in late, enjoy a leisurely breakfast, and read the Sunday paper
- Yet here you are – ready to worship the Lord at 9:00 followed by a couple of hours of working to show God’s love in practical ways to our community
- *Is it worth it?*
- Many of you know what it is to come home from work bone-tired, gulp down a quick dinner, and then rush off to AWANA or youth group or singles group or IPT prayer session or worship team practice or a committee meeting
- *Some of you were here until midnight Wednesday night and then back to work bright and early the next morning*
- Some of you have been putting in many extra hours at church serving on the Vision team or the Youth Task Force
- *Is it worth it?*
- Some of you have made major sacrifices of both vacation time and financial costs to go on STEM mission trips
- *Some of you regularly give of your time and resources throughout the week to meet the practical, emotional, spiritual or financial needs of others*
- Some of you have given sacrificially for years to support missionaries and to pay for the ROCK Center and to support our church budget
- *Is it worth it?*
- I hope most of you would say that you find most of your Christian service to be meaningful and rewarding – *if you are serving in the area of your spiritual gifting – that should be the case*
- But be honest: Aren’t there some times when there is no immediate pay-off and you wonder: ***Is it worth it?***

1 Corinthians 15:58 ⁵⁸So, my dear brothers, since future victory is sure, be strong and steady, always abounding in the Lord's work, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever wasted as it would be if there were no resurrection.

I. **Christ Is Risen: Future Victory Is Sure**

1 Corinthians 15:20-26 ²⁰But the fact is that Christ has been raised from the dead. He has become the first of a great harvest of those who will be raised to life again.

²¹So you see, just as death came into the world through a man, Adam, now the resurrection from the dead has begun through another man, Christ. ²²Everyone dies because all of us are related to Adam, the first man. But all who are related to Christ, the other man, will be given new life. ²³But there is an order to this resurrection: Christ was raised first; then when Christ comes back, all his people will be raised.

²⁴After that the end will come, when he will turn the Kingdom over to God the Father, having put down all enemies of every kind. ²⁵For Christ must reign until he humbles all his enemies beneath his feet. ²⁶And the last enemy to be destroyed is death.

- ***Christ is risen – future victory is sure***
- **Right now we suffer many setbacks and we seem to be losing many battles as our culture rejects more and more Christian truths and values**
- ***But Christ is risen – and coming again – and future victory is sure***
- **Right now we suffer many disappointments and spiritual defeats as other Christians let us down and as we sometimes give in to sin and fail to reflect the likeness of Christ to others**
- ***But Christ is risen – and coming again – and future victory is sure***

1 Corinthians 15:52-57 ⁵²It will happen in a moment, in the blinking of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For when the trumpet sounds, the Christians who have died will be raised with transformed bodies. And then we who are living will be transformed so that we will never die. ⁵³For our perishable earthly bodies must be transformed into heavenly bodies that will never die.

⁵⁴When this happens—when our perishable earthly bodies have been transformed into heavenly bodies that will never die—then at last the Scriptures will come true:

“Death is swallowed up in victory.

⁵⁵ O death, where is your victory?

O death, where is your sting?”

⁵⁶For sin is the sting that results in death, and the law gives sin its power. ⁵⁷How we thank God, who gives us victory over sin and death through Jesus Christ our Lord!

- *Right now we suffer many afflictions – and pray for healing – and there is no healing – or the healing doesn't last – or one part of our body is healed and then another falls apart a little later*
- *But Christ is risen – and coming again – and future victory is sure*
- *Right now our spiritual progress is three steps forward and two steps back – or four steps back – and the same with the progress of the Gospel in many places of the world—and the same with many church ministries*
- *But Christ is risen – and coming again – and future victory is sure*
- *Right now we sometimes feel overwhelmed by stress and temptations and fatigue and spiritual attacks and conflicts with others*
- *But Christ is risen – and coming again – and future victory is sure*

- *The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead proves these four principles that are the basis of our Christian hope: **Truth is stronger than falsehood // good is stronger than evil // love is stronger than hatred // and life is stronger than death***
- *Therefore: pursue and embrace truth // do good to others – even to those who hate you and wrong you // love one another – even your enemies // and lose your life for Christ and the Gospel – **Lose your life for Christ so that you don't waste your life on things that don't last and don't count***

II. Nothing You Do for the Lord is a Waste

- *During my sophomore football season, I suffered a minor knee injury that kept me out of a couple of games*
- *I worked hard the summer before my junior year and reported to the start of varsity football camp in the best condition of my life*
- *The second day of contact drills – I tore my ACL and missed the rest of the season – *In fact, I never played tackle football again**
- *All that labor – in vain*

- *Beth and I know a couple from another part of Iowa who recently drove down to Texas in order to bring home a newborn baby that they were in the process of adopting*
- *Unable to conceive children after several years of marriage, they had been waiting over a year to be selected for an adoption*
- *When they arrived in Texas to see their baby – they were informed that the birth mother had changed her mind and the adoption was being aborted*
- *All their hopes and dreams – crushed*

- *Some of you know what it is to be pregnant and then to miscarry*
- *A couple we knew in Ely went full-term and then delivered a still-born baby*
- *Can you imagine the pain, disappointment and emptiness of going all the way through full-term pregnancy, labor and delivery – and then to go home from the hospital without a baby?*
- **Do you know what it is to labor in vain?**
- **Do you know what it is to pour your heart and soul and strength into something – and to come up empty?**
- *To feel that your best efforts were wasted?*
- **Do you know what it is to look over a whole season or chapter of your life – and feel empty – feel that whole chapter of your life was a waste?**
- *Or to look at a long-term relationship – or failed marriage – and feel that you wasted the best years of your life on that person and have nothing to show for it?*
- **Do you know what it is to labor in vain?**

1 Corinthians 15:58 (NIV) ⁵⁸Therefore, my dear brothers, 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 (LB) ⁵⁸So, my dear brothers, since future victory is sure, be strong and steady, always abounding in the Lord's work, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever wasted as it would be if there were no resurrection.

- **Christ is risen – and coming again – and future victory is certain – therefore – your labor in the Lord is not in vain – nothing you do for the Lord is ever wasted**
- *Even if your labor in the Lord includes great risk and sacrifice and even persecution and loss of life – your labor in the Lord is not in vain*

Luke 21:16 - 19 (NIV) ¹⁶You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death. ¹⁷All men will hate you because of me. ¹⁸But not a hair of your head will perish. ¹⁹By standing firm you will gain life.

- Did you catch that? *They will put some of you to death – but not a hair of your head will perish”*
- **What kind of double-speak is that?**

- *You may lose your life – you may be put to death – but no harm will come to you*
- **You see – death itself cannot harm the one who belongs to Jesus Christ**
- ***Christ is risen – and coming again – and future victory is sure***

Romans 8:35 - 39 (NIV) ³⁵Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁷No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- ***Christ is risen – and coming again – and future victory is sure – and nothing can separate us from the love of Christ – not even death itself***

For the one who belongs to Jesus Christ – to live is Christ and to die is gain!

Therefore – your labor in the Lord is never in vain – *nothing you do for the Lord is ever wasted as it would be if there were no resurrection.*

III. Give Yourselves Fully to the Work of the Lord

1 Corinthians 15:58 (NIV) ⁵⁸Therefore, my dear brothers, 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.

- ***Christ is risen – and coming again – and victory is sure – therefore – nothing you do for the Lord is a waste – therefore – give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord***
- **There are many passions and pursuits and causes in life – that if you give yourself fully to this or that cause or relationship or ambition – *you will come up empty – you will have wasted your life***
- ***But your labor in the Lord is never in vain – therefore – don't waste your life – make Jesus Christ the singular and supreme passion of your life - and give yourself fully to the work of the Lord***
- ***It's worth it – because Jesus is worth it***
- **Christ is risen – and victory is sure –**

- ***Truth will triumph over falsehood*** – therefore give yourself fully to pursuing truth and proclaiming truth and spreading truth
- ***Good will triumph over evil*** – therefore give yourself fully to doing good to others – especially to those who cannot pay you back and do good to you in return – ***pursue joy by serving others***
- ***Love will triumph over hatred*** – therefore give yourself fully to showing God’s love in practical ways – ***give yourself fully to loving those who are your enemies in the culture wars*** – give yourself fully to loving those who oppose you, disagree with you, insult you, ridicule you, and hurt you
- ***Life will triumph over death*** – therefore give yourself fully to risking all for the sake of Christ and His gospel – ***give yourself fully to the singular passion of displaying Christ’s supreme excellence in all spheres of life*** – give yourself fully to telling others about the gift of eternal life found in Jesus Christ
- John Piper – ***Don’t Waste Your Life*** – “*On the far side of every risk – even if it results in death – the love of God triumphs. This is the faith that frees us to risk for the cause of Christ. It is not heroism, or lust for adventure, or courageous self-reliance, or efforts to earn God’s favor. It is childlike faith in the triumph of God’s love – that on the other side of our risks, for the sake of righteousness, God will still be holding us. We will be eternally satisfied in him. Nothing will have been wasted.*”

1 Corinthians 15:58 ⁵⁸With all this going for us, my dear friends, stand your ground. And don’t hold back. Throw yourselves into the work of the Master, confident that nothing you do for him is a waste of time or effort.

(Conclusion):

- In a few minutes you will have the opportunity to put this into practice
- ***Before you do, I want to conclude with some clips (5-6 minutes) from a message given by Tony Evans at the recent Promise Keepers conference to help motivate us to make a difference in our community by our service.***
- p.s. at the end, you will see someone you know in the audience

Show clips of Tony Evans DVD

- **9:45 – 10:18**
- **13:30 – 14:20**
- **20:44 – 21:51**
- **22:39 – 24:31**
- ***Now you know why Brent Bullock is so enthusiastic about this DVD***
- **This may be the kind of vision assignment that God will give us**

- *To fulfill that kind of God-sized assignment, we will need to be a fully functioning body employing all the spiritual gifts that God gives us*