



THE EXHORTER

“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40

The Palmer Road church of Christ, Westland, Mi. (prchurchofchrist.org)

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Jump Start # 1658

1 Corinthians 15:58 *"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord."*

Our verse today ends Paul's powerful chapter about the resurrection of Christ. He has proven the resurrection, both by Scripture and evidence of witnesses. He has detailed the implications of life without the resurrection. He has answered some of their questions about the resurrection. Now, as this section ends, he pleads with them to continue on. Paul uses a series of great expressions:

- Be steadfast
- Be immovable
- Always abounding in the work

These are expressions of dedication and commitment. Watching the Olympics, we see examples of those who have been dedicated to their sport. They are champions. They have poured hours and hours into training, competing and performing. They are at the top of their game. We see the finished product. What we don't see are the tired, sore athletes collapsing into bed after long hours of training. We don't see them practicing over and over with their coaches to get a specific move perfected. We don't see the hours in the weight room. We don't see the strict diet. We don't see the years of mom and dad driving them to practices when they were young. The Olympian stands triumphant because of dedication and commitment. He is the best.

The apostle Paul draws analogies from the ancient Greek games in many of his writings. Dedication. Staying with it. Put in the time. Don't quit. See the big picture. Those are the attitudes and the attributes of being steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work.

We can't quit. We can't quit because it's hard. We can't quit because someone is jealous. We can't quit because someone is talking about us. We can't quit because it's easier to do something else. We can't quit because we don't feel like it. We can't quit.

Most congregations have a few names that have been steady at the helm for many, many years. Folks have moved in and moved out of that congregation, but those few have kept things going. They have poured hours into teaching, finding preachers, cleaning the building, talking to neighbors and simply doing all that they could to make it successful. They have given up Saturday mornings. They have left their favorite TV shows to go out and visit people in the evenings. They have stayed up late at night studying and preparing lessons so they could teach classes. They have literally been steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. The congregation I grew up in as a kid had such names. One was a man named Dick Hoggatt. I always like that man. He and his dear wife did all that they could to make the congregation a success. He preached.

(OVER)

She taught lessons. They served. They had families in their home. They never, ever threw in the towel. When I was first thinking about preaching, it was this couple that just didn't give me a name of a place to go preach one Sunday, they took me. What a wonderful conversation we had on the way there and back. Dick has finished his journey here, but he has left amazing footprints of a life that was dedicated to the Lord. He was a champion in the kingdom of God. The lives he touched were made better.

Across the landscape of our lives are hundreds who lacked this special quality. There are those who were like a meteor flashing across the sky. They were there for a moment, and then gone. Some preachers have been that way. They have moved too quickly and too often to have had any real impact. Get a group of folks together and have them rattle off the names of the men who once preached there. They struggle remembering some, because they simply were not "steadfast, immovable, always abounding." They came and left even before they folks really knew them. But then there are the others. What a memory we have of them. They were there. They taught. They held the line with the Lord. They married the young and buried the old. Through the years those dedicated soldiers had become dear to us. We will never forget them. They worked and worked and did what they could for the Lord.

I believe this is what Paul was driving at with the Corinthians. Hang in there. Don't quit when it gets tough. Don't cry because you have sore muscles and want to go home. Stay at it. Stay at it. Stay at it. Be that backbone of a congregation. Be the one that everyone can count upon.

Have you ever looked at the opposite of Paul's words:

- Instead of "be steadfast" - it's UNSTEADY. Unsteady means not dependable. Unsteady in faith. Unsteady in attendance. Unsteady in the work. Are you with us or not? Why is that question even being asked?
- Instead of "immovable" - it's MOVING. It's not stationary. It's not anchored. It's not anchored to Christ. It's not anchored to Biblical doctrine. One might move into any of the latest spiritual fads. One might jump on the bandwagon of "what's happening now" church. Who knows what he believes or what he might be doing next? Who knows? He is not constant. He is not immovable. Can't use him to teach because everyone fears what he might say. Will he be with us in six months? Who knows?
- Instead of "ALWAYS ABOUNDING IN THE WORK OF THE LORD," he's not DOING MUCH. He's stopped. The work of the Lord has not become his main interest. He is into himself. He is much more interested in abounding financially or abounding in his career. He has little time for kingdom work. He is not interested in the success of the congregation. He'll leave as soon as he feels that he has gotten all the good he can from it. He does not feel any loyalty or dedication to the saints there. He is using them to get whatever he wants. When he has gone as far as they can take him, off he will go.

The spirit of the Olympians can remind us and illustrate for us the hard work and discipline that God wants from His people. The couch potato, with his hands in a bag of chips, watching the Olympics can be a cruel critic of talent, when the same guy gets winded just walking to the mailbox. It's easy to toss darts at others. Be the one who teaches, not just once in your life, but all the time. Be the one who helps out, not just one Saturday a year, but all the time. Dedicated. Committed. Dependable. Trusted. Faithful. Those are the components of winners spiritually.

Be-is what Paul said. Be steadfast. Be immovable. Be abounding in the work. Be means, getting off the couch and getting at it. Be means long hours, sore muscles and hard work. Be means, lowering your head as the Lord places a crown of righteousness upon you.

Be...

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