

## Standing Firm

1 Cor 15:58

*Tim Anderson 30/5/21*

We've spent the last seven weeks talking about the resurrection, Jesus' resurrection and ours.

And for the most part, people I've spoken to have been encouraged by thinking about the wonderful future God has planned for us.

But I speak to a biased sample.

People are usually far happier to give you the good news to your face.

Some people would be thinking,

why should I spend time on the resurrection?

If not members of our congregation,

then people in the community.

"OK you believe in the resurrection of the dead.

So what?"

How does it change your life tomorrow?

And look you can say eternity matters till you are blue in the face,

some people want to know how it matters tomorrow,

or they won't pay attention.

Well as he usually does,

the Apostle Paul puts some application after he's covered the doctrine.

That's his usual practice.

Colossians 1-2 is doctrine 3-4 is application

Ephesians 1-3 is doctrine 4-6 is application.

Well here the application section is short.

It's just one verse.

But we'll spend today's sermon thinking about that verse.

So here's the application of the teaching about the resurrection.

15:58 "Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm.

Let nothing move you.

Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord,  
because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain."

That's the application.

And I want to look at four aspects of it.

If you are a note taker, you might like to use four headings.

The Greeting; the Exhortation; the Motivation; the Reassurance.

We begin with the Greeting.

"Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters,"

Look it would be easy to skip over.

But actually it's very important.

I could stand up at the community hall and teach about something.

Suppose I gave a little talk

about the differences between different covid vaccines.

I've done a bit of reading on it.

I could probably cobble together 5 minutes.

But I would conclude a talk like that with,

"So it's a very good idea to go and get yourself vaccinated."

I wouldn't finish with, "Therefore my dear brothers and sisters,  
go and get yourself vaccinated".

Why not?

Because it would seem

like I was assuming a greater relationship than is actually true.

The members of the community would think,

"You're just someone who has given a talk on covid vaccines,  
you're not my dear brother."

The fact that we might share the same views about covid vaccines  
doesn't fundamentally change the nature of our relationship.

But the fact that we share a view about the resurrection

does fundamentally change the nature of our relationship.

Do you remember the story of Lydia?

You can find it in Act 16.

Acts 16:13-15 "On the Sabbath we went outside the city gates to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. One of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. When she and the members of her household were baptised, she invited us into her home. "If you consider me a believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my house." Paul did some teaching. It would have been teaching that included the good news of the resurrection. Someone believed his message. And they didn't go away educated. Rather the fundamental nature of their relationship with Paul changed. Suddenly she started treating Paul and his companions like family. She invited them into her home to stay with them. That's what you do with your family, right? Instantly because of a shared commitment to the gospel, they became dear brothers and sisters. How does that happen? Romans 8 tells us, "And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his spirit who lives in you." Jesus resurrection implies our resurrection. That is what 1 Cor 15 has been all about. But Romans continues,

"For those who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God."

Faith in Jesus' resurrection means the Spirit living in us,  
and that makes us children of God.

You and I are God's children.

But if you are a child of God,

and I am a child of God,

what does that make the pair of us?

We are brothers and sisters.

We share the same Father,

we must be brothers and sisters.

The gospel message, this teaching about the resurrection

is not just information you learn.

It fundamentally changes your relationships with others who believe.

We are brothers and sisters.

Dear brothers and sisters because the love of the Father for us

overflows to our siblings.

Now think about that in the context of the Corinthian Church.

These guys were not an endearing bunch.

They were factionalised and strife ridden.

Some followed Paul, others follower Peter, others Apollos.

Some of them despised Paul because they thought he was weak,  
not up to their exalted levels of spirituality.

There was serious immorality in the church including incest.

Members of the church were suing one another in the courts.

Rich members of the church were pigging themselves during shared meals  
and letting poor members go hungry.

Their church meetings had become venues for spiritual one-upmanship  
instead of trying to build each other up in the faith.

These are the people that Paul calls,

"my dear brothers and sisters".

They say you can choose your friends,

but you can't choose your family.  
God chooses your brothers and sisters.  
If you've been made his child,  
then your fellow Christians are your dear brothers and sisters.  
That's the greeting.

Now the exhortation.

To exhort means to urge someone.

What is Paul urging the Corinthians to do?

Part a) Stand firm.

Let nothing move you.

Part b) Work tirelessly for Jesus.

That's the exhortation.

In every generation there are things  
that are going to throw people off course in their Christian faith.

It could be attacks from outside.

In Paul's day, it was getting thrown to the lions in the arena.

Or being rubbished as an atheist

because you refused to make statues of your God.

In Iran today,

they would put you in jail if you converted to Christianity.

The Boko Haram in Northern Nigeria wouldn't bother putting you in jail,  
they would just kill you.

Well it's not so physical in Australia.

But you will be branded intolerant.

Anyone who believes that Jesus is the only way to be saved  
will be branded intolerant.

In fact, I think Australia has probably moved past that.

Just believing that people need salvation  
is enough to get you branded intolerant now.

But it's not just assaults from the outside.

Some of the most destabilising things for your faith

come from inside the church.

It could be false teaching.

It could be bad behaviour that hurts you personally.

It could be bad behaviour that doesn't impact you personally but destroys your trust in the church.

Attacks from those outside the church.

Wounds from those inside the church.

Or it could be giving in to temptation in your own life.

I've lost count of the number of friends

who have given up believing the truth

not because of anything that convinced them that it was wrong,

but because they gave into temptation.

And because they did the wrong thing,

they didn't want to admit it was wrong,

so they changed what they believed to suit their behaviour.

You know, people don't decide

that Christians don't need to be part of a community of faith

because they read their Bibles and got confused.

They do it because they started taking their kids to sport on Sundays,

or working an extra shift at double time,

and want to justify what they are doing.

Lots of stuff aimed to upset your faith.

Here's a shocking truth.

The devil doesn't want people to go to heaven

and he will do anything he can to knock you off course.

So what do you need to do?

Stand firm.

Let nothing move you.

How does the resurrection help you do that?

Because it's a future reality that anchors our faith.

If we were always worrying

about what is working or isn't working in this life,  
well we could easily get knocked off course.  
Life hits you with some curve balls.  
But if your focus is on the resurrection,  
then you have a sure hope that cannot be moved.

That's part a) Stand firm. Let nothing move you.  
Part b) Always give yourself fully to the work of the Lord.  
Work tirelessly for Jesus.

We have people at Holy Trinity who do that.  
I'm not going to name names.

But week in, week out,  
some folk front up and work tirelessly.

And here's something else good about our church.

We have a variety of different ways  
of harnessing people's desire to work for Jesus.

Some people run an Op Shop, others cook a community meal,  
some do the admin that keeps modern life ticking over,

others make the music and the sound happen on Sundays,  
some get Bible Studies nurturing our faith,

others make sure the communion is ready on Sunday,  
some show the love of Jesus at local schools,

others teach the children at Trinity Kids or Youth Group,  
or love the mums and kids at Playgroup,

Some build relationships with folk at NA,  
others with people from their retirement villages.

That's actually a lot of stuff.

And its varied stuff.

Have you noticed that different people are different?

God made us that way so we would be forced to be interdependent.

It's good that it's varied.

That gives lots of people a chance

to find a way of working for Jesus that suits them.  
How does the resurrection lead to working tirelessly for Jesus?  
Because it dangles something in front of our eyes  
that's more important than other stuff.  
When something is really important,  
it motivates you to work hard.  
There's nothing more important  
than seeing people with their new resurrection bodies  
enjoying eternity.

OK we've done the greeting and the exhortation,  
now for the motivation.

What's going to motivate us to Stand firm?

What's going to motivate us to work tirelessly?

Paul says, "Always give yourself fully to the work of the Lord".

Of the Lord.

That's the motivation.

I work for Jesus.

You might think I work for Holy Trinity Hastings.

You might even think I work for you.

Maybe in some secondary sense I do.

But really, I work for the Lord.

And there's something very freeing in that.

I work before an audience of one.

At the end of the day,

God's opinion is the only one that matters.

But I'm not alone there.

If you are a Christian,  
then Jesus is your employer.

Are you bringing up children?

That is your labour in the Lord.

They might seem a trifle ungrateful at times.



"When's dinner going to be ready?

Well if you got off your screen and helped,  
it would be ready quicker."

Take heart, you are working for Jesus.

Does your husband not even notice when you do housework?

You clean up a pile of mess,

and he never even registered that it was there.

Yes that one is for you Cherida.

Take heart, you are working for the Lord.

Do you pick up the litter that gets dropped in the park  
as you go for your lockdown exercise?

Who notices, who cares?

Take heart, you are working for the Lord.

The resurrection provides us with the motivation for our work.

The resurrection unites us with Jesus by faith.

And so it transforms our work.

It's no longer just work,

it's labour in the Lord.

It's serving the one who will give us imperishable new bodies.

Ok we've had the greeting, the exhortation and the motivation.

Finally the reassurance.

Your labour in the Lord is not in vain.

Lots of people made plans in vain for this week.

They planned to do something,

and now they can't.

It was all in vain.

But nothing that you do for the Lord is wasted.

I might write a sermon on Friday,

and die on Saturday and never get to preach it.

Is it wasted effort?

Not if it pleased Jesus.

You might feel like you don't get results.  
You want to make a difference,  
but everything always looks the same.  
Your labour in the Lord is not in vain.  
If you are faithful, he is pleased.  
Remember,  
most of Jesus' followers turned around and left him at one point.  
He certainly looked like he was wasting his time.  
But the resurrection disproved that.  
Nothing done for His sake can be a waste of time.  
He's pleased.  
And his pleasure will last as long as our resurrection bodies.  
That's forever.

So there we have the application of the resurrection.  
Let me summarise in a sentence.  
Since our future victory is sure,  
stay strong and steady,  
form deep convictions that will keep you from collapsing or wandering.  
Get stuck into the work of the Lord.  
Nothing you do for the Lord is wasted  
as it would be if there were no resurrection.