

Congregational handout; outline sermon text on following pages  
Sermon Notes & References

“Fulfilment”

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always  
abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is  
not in vain in the Lord.

I Corinthians 15:58 (AV)

August 18, 2013

A. Introduction:

1. The Pursuit of Fulfilment
2. God’s Plan for Fulfilment – to be Co\_\_\_\_\_ in any situation (Philippians 4:11)

B. “My Beloved Brethren”

1. The Church, a Family – because we are born of one Fa\_\_\_\_\_
2. Service, an Effort in Common – is the underlying meaning of Fe\_\_\_\_\_

C. “Therefore”

1. 15:1–11 — Christ really Ar\_\_\_\_\_ from the dead
2. 15:12–19 — Christ’s resurrection, evidence of our own Re\_\_\_\_\_
3. 15:20–35 — Christ’s resurrection is the first fruits, the start
  - a. of the destruction of the La\_\_\_\_\_ En\_\_\_\_\_, De\_\_\_\_\_
  - b. and is a call to us to Aw\_\_\_\_\_ to Ri\_\_\_\_\_
4. 15:35–57 — Christ’s resurrection
  - a. was in a Sp\_\_\_\_\_ body
  - b. so, there awaits for us a Sp\_\_\_\_\_ body
5. the gospel of the risen Christ gives Ev\_\_\_\_\_ results

D. “Stedfast, unmovable, always abounding”

1. Steadfast–Immovable
  - a. not mere Ob\_\_\_\_\_
  - b. describes the person who ...
    - (A) Ephesians 6:10 ... is St\_\_\_\_\_ in the Lord
    - (B) 2 Timothy 2:3 ... endures Ha\_\_\_\_\_ as a good soldier
    - (C) Hebrews 10:23 ... Ho\_\_\_\_\_ Fa\_\_\_\_\_ to his confession
2. Always–Abounding
  - a. abounding comes from calling upon God’s Re\_\_\_\_\_
  - b. not for man’s honour but the Pr\_\_\_\_\_ of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:13–14)

E. “Work and Labour In the Lord” — this labour

1. is founded upon Ab\_\_\_\_\_ in Christ (John 15:4-5, 8)
2. not for our own but for God’s Pu\_\_\_\_\_ and Pr\_\_\_\_\_
3. not merely for a local Ch\_\_\_\_\_ but for the Lord
4. not in our St\_\_\_\_\_ but in the Lord’s (Philippians 4:13)
5. not performed Al\_\_\_\_\_ but in fellowship with the Triune God

F. “Not in Vain”

1. The Preacher (Solomon)
  - a. examined every En\_\_\_\_\_ man can pursue under the sun
  - b. and found that all was Va\_\_\_\_\_ (Ecclesiastes 12:8) and grasping for the Wi\_\_\_\_\_ (Ecclesiastes 2:11)
2. but work for the Lord, though now unseen, lasts for Et\_\_\_\_\_

G. Conclusion – Lord, are you leading me to serve you by ...

A. Introduction

1. The Pursuit of Fulfilment

- a. Bertrand Russell could equally well describe himself as an atheist in respect to Christian revelation and philosophically as an agnostic. But his own words reveal the results of this stance: *'The centre of me is always and eternally a terrible pain – a curious, wild pain – a searching for something beyond what the world contains, something transfigured and infinite, the beatific vision – God. I do not find it, I do not think it is to be found, but the love of it is my life; it's like passionate love for a ghost. At time it fills me with rage, at times with wild despair; it is the source of gentleness and cruelty and work; it fills every passion I have. It is the actual spring of life in me.'*—{2}.
- b. Russell, without being able to give a solution, hits upon one truth about the way that God has created us and sin has destroyed us: the Lord never does anything without a purpose, and He created mankind for His purpose, and until a person finds that purpose, he will ever be incomplete, unsatisfied, unfulfilled
- c. even if he did not invent the assembly line, Henry Ford sponsored it refinement in making the workers stationary and the work-piece move
  - (A) with each car moving through every stage in 93 minutes
  - (B) but because it did not stay long in any one stage
  - (C) he was able to manufacture a great many cars every day
  - (D) and also reduced the price cars making them more affordable
  - (E) but the job was very unfulfilling – one worker would put the same part or parts on car after car, day after day, so that Ford had to hire over 900 people to add 100 trained people to the lines
  - (F) as a result, too, quality of the finished car would be affected, so that over the years much effort has been put into associating each worker with the importance of his or her task, to give to them a sense of purpose and fulfilment

2. God Intends Fulfilment

- a. regeneration – being born again by the Holy Spirit in salvation by faith in the Lord, Jesus Christ – has an intrinsic result of fulfilment

- b. for it has an eternal result – a purpose in itself – of restoring a person to their purpose in creation – a vital relationship with God
- c. so every step and every activity of the Christian life as motivated by the indwelling eternal Holy Spirit of God gives purpose to our lives
- d. so that on the one hand, Paul could say, even when festering in prison, 'Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.' (Philippians 4:11 NAS95)
- e. as well as to encourage us with the words of today's text, 1 Corinthians 15:58 (AV), 'Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.'
- f. this is a very important reminder as we approach the fall and begin once again to take up some of the opportunities for service that God has entrusted to us as a body of believers, His church, to know that these are not mere busy work but have eternal purpose
- g. let us consider this verse for a few moments together

## B. "My Beloved Brethren"

### 1. The Church Is a Family

- a. on a very human level, a large proportion of the fulfilling moments in our lives take place in the context of family: childbirth, marriage, reunions, and even, strangely enough, the celebration of a passing life
- b. even when there are difference of opinion, the relationship between family members is a bond that overcomes most such difficulties: Esau made peace with Jacob despite all the latter's chicanery
- c. there is a stronger such bond amongst Christians:
  - (A) each of us has experienced God's gracious salvation
  - (B) by it we are brought into God's family as His children
  - (C) we are made part of a fellowship, first of all by our fellowship with the Father, and with the Son, and thence with one another
  - (D) behind that word fellowship is the meaning of commonality – the point is that we have things, thoughts and purposes in common

### 2. Service Is a Common Effort

- a. in the days of the earliest translations of the Bible into English – by Tyndale, Wyclif, then the Bishop’s Bible and later the Authorised Version – one of the forms of employment was that of guilds
  - (A) apprentices would be attached to a guild to learn a craft, and upon achieving proficiency would become members
  - (B) the relationship between those who were members of the guild was described as a fellowship
  - (C) members would be chosen from within that guild to oversee the products produced met a certain standard and fit to be sold
  - (D) since the guild members had a common interest in its reputation
- b. you can perhaps see, then, what an appropriate word it was to translate the Greek word, koinonia, because the members of the local body of Christ have a fellowship: a common interest in the manner and ways that we render service to our Lord, Jesus Christ

C. “Therefore”

1. when you see “therefore” you should ask yourself “What it’s there for?”
  - a. to understand this verse we have to look at the context
  - b. and, in the case of this verse, that is all of chapter 11
2. This chapter is about Christ’s resurrection and its implications
  - a. verses 1–11, Christ really rose from the dead; really!
    - (A) Paul tells us first that this was all prophesied, that it took place “was according to the Scriptures”
    - (B) Paul also lists the witnesses to the event
      - (1) witnesses then alive (including himself)
      - (2) witnesses who could then be questioned
      - (3) witnesses that confirmed this chapter 11 for if they hadn’t then we wouldn’t find it here in the Bible
  - b. verses 12–19, Christ’s resurrection is a proof of our resurrection
    - (A) the resurrection is fundamental to the gospel — “if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is in vain”
    - (B) without the resurrection
      - (1) the gospel is defunct

- (2) instead of good news, it would be miserable news
- c. verses 20-24, then begins, 'but now is Christ risen from the dead'
  - (A) so that Christ's resurrection "has become the first fruits"
  - (B) it is the start of the destruction of the last enemy, death ... "in Christ shall all be made alive"
  - (C) and the call to us to "awake to righteousness"
- d. verses 35-57, Christ's resurrection was in a spiritual body

- (A) that this natural body
  - (1) with its sin, its corruption
  - (2) with its aches and pains
  - (3) with all of its accomplishments, all its failures
  - (4) will indeed pass away
- (B) but there is a new spiritual body waiting to take its place
  - (1) that body will be incorruptible; that body will be immortal
  - (2) "we shall all be changed — in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."
  - (3) death and the grave will be forever defeated
  - (4) and eternal victory ours: "thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

3. 'Therefore, my beloved brethren, ...' because the gospel of the risen Christ gives everlasting results, 'be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding'

#### D. Two Word-Pairs

- a. the first pair has to do with our character
- b. the second pair has to do with our effort

##### 1. Steadfast-Immovable

- a. we are not talking about mere obstinacy — no, what we are talking about here is linked closely to the

qualities of faithfulness and endurance

- b. It describes the person who
  - (A) has a strong, enduring conviction about his faith
  - (B) has applied Ephesians 6:10 (AV): "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."
  - (C) has learned what Paul sought to teach in 2 Timothy 2:3 (NIV) "Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus."
  - (D) has followed Hebrews 10:23 (NAS): "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for" ... he knows that ... "He who promised is faithful;"
- c. in the days of sailing ships, when a storm arose that was too fierce to sail through, they let storm anchors out of the fore ship — large conical bags with a hole in the end — and face the ship to the storm; by this the ship would stay safely in one position; so it is with the believer: clinging to our Anchor, Christ; trustingly facing the storm; the Christian can hold his position, steadfast, immovable, and safe
- d. stresses, trials, problems will certainly come, keep looking to Christ, the Anchor of our soul, our forerunner, already entered heaven

## 2. Always Abounding

- a. Pastor Dave Payne, of the Campus in Aurora, has written a book called, 'Run! The Amazing Race' – it's a good read, especially if you have an interest in marathon running, and available in e-book form
  - (A) in it he describes how that steadfastness – determination – of which we have just spoken works out during a gruelling race
  - (B) the sugar in the body is soon exhausted as energy, the body needs to turn to burning that fat, of which all of us have sufficient to keep us going for days – and some of us, somewhat more
  - (C) it is then that a person hits that runner's wall – it feels as though the body can go no further, but the mind must overcome this to call upon those abundant resources in order to continue
  - (D) finally as the finish line appears deceptively near – be it after a matter of hours or of days – complacency and weariness can lull the runner into stopping and then be unable to start again
  - (E) hence the necessity to continue to call upon those remaining resources in the body to finish the race

- b. but this effort, this Christian effort, this work in the Lord
  - (A) is not some mere human accomplishment or glory
  - (B) is not to meet some personal best
  - (C) is not from our own, but from God's resources
  - (D) and is the very purpose of salvation: Philippians 3:13b-14 (AV): ... this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

3. so with these two pairs of qualities Christians are encouraged to ...

## B. 'Work and Labour In the Lord'

### 1. An Activity Focus

- a. western culture is frequently centred on activity
- b. 'what did you DO today?'
- c. so our eyes immediately leap to those words "work" and "labour"
- d. in response to this challenge we then ask, "what shall I do?"
- e. that is is good; that is why they were written
- f. but in so doing, we often blur over the phrase

### 2. "in the Lord"

- a. the Holy Spirit through Paul's words has it repeated here: "work in the Lord" and "labour ... in the Lord" – otherwise we might ignore it
- b. there is an important, contemplative side to this verse
- c. Jesus said in John 15
  - (A) verses 4-5 (NAS): "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing."
  - (B) and verse 8 (NAS): "By this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My

disciples.”

### 3. Nature of the Work

- a. first, it is service or work which is being carried out
  - (A) not for our own purpose, but rather for God’s
  - (B) it seeks not our own praise but God’s glory
- b. second, it is not service for Faith Fellowship Baptist Church, for Awana, for a retirement home; it is service for and in the Lord
- c. next, it is not service or work which is being carried out in our own strength, but rather in God’s
  - (A) for little (our strength) is much, when God is in it
  - (B) for in Paul’s words, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13, NKJV)
- d. and, finally, it is not work in which we labour alone
  - (A) how tempting it is to complain “they’ve left it all to me to do,” or, “why isn’t someone helping me with this!”
  - (B) but we are never alone – remember this! we’ll need it!
    - (1) never one step of service that we take
    - (2) never one frustration or heartache experienced
    - (3) but that Jesus has first taken that step
    - (4) and the indwelling Holy Spirit prays on our behalf

### C. “Not in Vain”

#### 1. Ecclesiastes and Vanity

- a. was written by the “Preacher,” Solomon, with great wisdom and wealth to spend in pursuing every endeavour that a man can pursue
- b. he examined the gaining of wisdom and knowledge
- c. he sought out mirth, entertainment and pleasure — to hear some fans complain about the Blue Jays’ season, you would think it was the end of the world; it isn’t; it’s only a game
- d. he looked at seeking social justice and good

- e. he gave his efforts to labouring on great works
- f. he gained great wealth
- g. he won for himself honour and renown
- h. so, what was his conclusion
  - (A) “Vanity of vanities,” — that’s a Hebrew way of saying “it is totally and completely vain; empty; meaningless; unfulfilling” — says the Preacher, “All is vanity.” (Ecclesiastes 12:8, NKJV)
  - (B) for the “man under the sun” — Solomon’s term for natural man — all of life no matter how great his efforts or accomplishments will be found to be totally empty, “indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind” (Ecclesiastes 2:11) – can you picture that?

## 2. The Contrast: God’s Service

- a. living, working, growing and striving in the service of the living and eternal God is completely different
- b. rather than vanity, or emptiness, or transience
- c. every effort expended has eternal purpose, fulfilment
- d. as you obey His word in service, using what God has given to you, though you may not see any result today, nor tomorrow, be assured it is not in vain; it will be used by the Holy Spirit of God in a fashion that will only be fully evident in eternity

3. A gardener, with tremendous care, planted a rare vine that promised the most magnificent blooms. Carefully she set it in the rich earth at the base of a stone wall where it would get just the right amount of rain, sun, and shade. The vine grew, flourished, spread — but no blooms! Standing there one day, contemplating the vine, disappointed and discouraged she considered cutting it down. At this point that her invalid neighbour, whose back lot adjoined hers, called over to her, “You can’t imagine how much I have been enjoying the blooms of that vine you planted.” Stretching, looing over the wall she saw the most beautiful blooms ever. Creeping through a crevice in the wall, the vine had fulfilled its promise. —{4}.

- a. the effort you make in preparation and doing
  - (A) in the leading of a Bible study
  - (B) in the conducting of a group in prayer

- (C) in the playing an instrument in public ministry
- (D) in the upholding of the ministry in prayer
- (E) in the teaching of a class
- (F) in the leading in worship
- (G) in the sharing of your testimony
- (H) and in countless other ways
- (I) if done to and for the Lord
- (J) though its results may not be seen in the here and now

b. will reveal its blooms, fulfill its promise, in the annals of eternity when God's full plan in them is revealed

D. Conclusion: 1 Corinthians 15:58 (AV): "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

1. As one poet has put it

"Only one life, will soon be past  
Only what's done for Christ will last"

2. What a marvellous privilege that our God and heavenly Father gives to us his children,

- a. He entrusts to us the beautiful task of serving Him
- b. a fulfilling task because every breath of effort affects eternity

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2. '*Bertrand Russell's Description of Inner Longing*', Christianity Today, 1985-09-06 – Kerux illustrations #773
3. Adapted from illustration about Richard Fuller, Fredericksburg Bible Illustrator, Kerux Illustration #13600
4. Adapted from "The Other Side of the Wall!" by Glen Young, Kerux Illustration #7628