

More than a Dream



Pastor J.D. Hatfield

1 Corinthians 15:58

Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

There is so much uncertainty in the world today, and we often strive for things with no apparent results or we have to often suffer with worse, failing results. There seems to be vanity today and every day. There is so much that we do and try and struggle for and with that seems to be in vain. What's the use? When everything around us seems to be crumbling, why bother? If we are saved, why go the extra mile? Why do anything more if no one is going to appreciate it, what good will it do anyway, how will this one little thing make any difference? All this is going to do is cause me more trouble than it is worth. In the big scheme of things, why go through all the trouble when it really doesn't make that big of a difference?



Here's why. Paul says therefore. When looking at the context of 1 Corinthians 15, we see that Paul is speaking of the fact that Christ has risen from the dead, and that if He hasn't we are the most miserable of all people. However, Jesus has risen from the dead, and *therefore*, all our labor in the Lord has infinite value. In other words, because Christ has risen from the dead, we as Christians will also rise, and all of our work here on this earth in the Lord will not be in vain.

This is bigger than you might think at first.

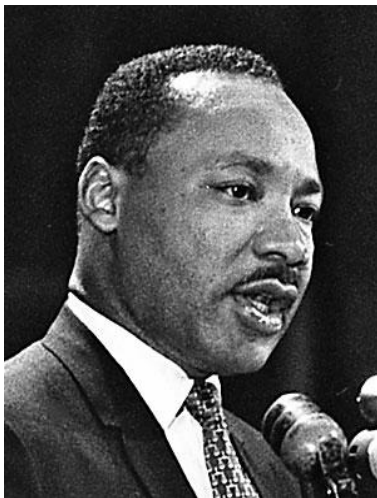
I want you to seize on this one promise, a promise that is as big as you want it to be, a promise that is as good as the character of our God, and a promise that is built upon nothing less than the person and work of Our Lord Jesus Christ, a promise that cannot fail. A promise that will undergird you, motivate and inspire you, guide you and grace you for whatever may

lie ahead in this life, no matter how great or how small, how difficult or how exciting, this one promise stands as a towering reminder of the promise of God to all His children. That promise is the reason for our practice.

Paul indicates several things by this simple yet sublime statement of promise.

- We should be convicted by this promise (steadfast)
- We should be controlled of this promise (immovable)
- We should be compelled by this promise (always abounding in the work of the Lord)
- We should be convinced by this promise (knowing that)
- We should be comforted by this promise (in the Lord your labor is not in vain)

Like most people, I love being inspired. Inspiring men, with inspired



dreams, and inspired words, and with inspiring ideas, this has always inspired me. Dr. Martin Luther King, Martin Luther, and Patrick Henry have inspired me, as well as countless others from



time to time. I appreciate the imagination to inspire, the will to win, the courage to convict and convince, and the desire to see men and women rise up to their potential.

But men and women are all a part of this fallen human race, and no amount of inspiration, imagination, vision, hard work, and unity of purpose will truly carry us to the Promised Land. We need something more, something sure.

I have found it.

This is about more than a man who has been to the top of the mountain, it is about the One who has been to the heights of heaven, down to the depths of hell, and He can lift us up, and help us to see God Himself. It is about the One who was anointed to proclaim good news to the poor, release to the captives, recovering of sight to the blind, and liberty to those who are oppressed.



I have more than a dream, more than a hope, more than a potential, more than an inspiring idea. I have a promise from God and so do you. I

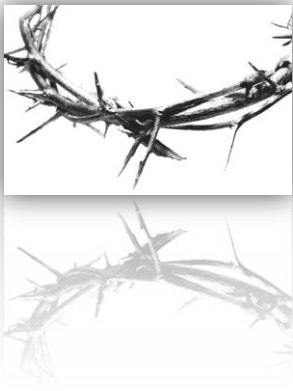


have more than inspiration, I have empowerment, the grace of God that adorns this promise; our work in the Lord is not in vain. Even when we do not rise, but when we fall, and when we fail, this promise still stands for it is based on our Lord's work, it is His grace that saves us and allows us to do anything good anyway. Our hope, our destiny,

our dream and our faith is not dependent upon our own power but it is rooted in God's power. He cannot fail even if we fail. We cannot lose because He cannot lose. I have more than a dream; I have a promise.

Why bother to labor? It is worth the work, because He is worth the work; even if it doesn't seem to work out it is worth it. God says your labor is NOT in vain! If we pray and nothing seems to happen (Habakkuk 3:17-19), having to put up with a bad boss (1 Peter 2:19-21), etc., it was still not in vain.

To continue on in the fight means that you have faith, you rest assured that Christ has won the fight, that is why you soldier on, even amidst disappointment and failure, struggle and battle. Jesus has won the war, and in faith we carry out the fight. To give up the fight is to give up the faith. Your struggle with trying to read your Bible / study your Bible / learn your Bible / your struggle with witnessing / prayer / giving to the church / people



in the church / sin / doubt / depression / pain / suffering / your health / your family / your finances / your marriage / with loneliness, lack, life, and love / when everything is a mess / when nothing is working / with God's will, none of it is in vain in the Lord.

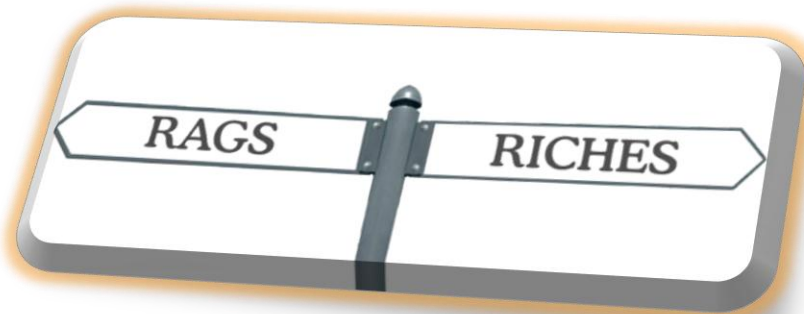
"Just one glimpse of Him in glory will the toils of life repay."

We aim to please God, not to get something from Him, but because we have already received something, His love. We try to imitate Him because it is the right thing to do, because it glorifies God, because we love Him, and because we want to, or at least we want to want to...but even when we fail, we look to Him with faith and realize the reason we can or want to do any of this anyway is because He has already done it for us, and it is His righteousness, His glory, His love, His "want to", and His perfect life that

counts for us. Our labor is not in vain, why, because His labor was and is not in vain.

All my eggs are in this one basket, I am “all in” based on His promise, His life, His death, His resurrection; it shows His character, and I am banking my life, my soul, my all on it! He is worthy of the work! I am not holding anything back; He is worth the work! Our work does not save us, but it does praise Him, and it is not in vain.

Every little thing you did for God’s glory you will be eternally grateful for. He is so wonderful; He gives you the power to do it! He lives through you that you might give glory to Him. The more you treasure Him here the more treasure you lay up in heaven. You may not see it now, but the exchange rate is very well worth it (Romans 8:18).



People talk of Christianity and say they “have tried it but didn’t like it”. Some Christians, when exhorted to grow in the grace of God say, “it doesn’t work for me”. However, it is not if it “works” for us, but that we are to be working for Him, and it is not in vain. You have to be patient (Hebrews 6:10-12). You cannot grow unless you are stretched. The time in transition is the time for transformation. You can learn from your mistakes. Your struggle for excellence instead of settling for more than mediocrity, to be a man or a woman of quality rather than just going with the flow, to get good grades, to have a godly marriage, to stand firm in the faith and not just compromise to avoid confrontation, is it worth it? Yes it is not in vain.



Why do anything extra when I'm saved anyway? Because we have a sure word from God that all our effort, our energy, and our existence is not in vain in the Lord. Paul says "Therefore" – All of this promise is based on the work of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:14,17). The work of Christ was and is not in vain. Not one drop of the most precious

commodity in the universe, the blood of Christ (1 Peter 1:18-19) was spilt in vain. He arose from the dead to prove it.

Romans 3:25-26 – the preaching of the cross, the power over death and sin, and the vindication of God's righteousness is never in vain. Jesus life and death were not in vain, it gave God glory, it showed His love, and of all who God gave Christ, He has lost none (John 6:37-39, 17:2). We cannot stop the power of God. The world may not see the truth but your work in the Lord is not futile but fruitful. Your work is not in vain because His work was not and is not in vain (Galatians 6:7-10 / Ephesians 6:7-8 / Colossians 3:17,23-24).

Christians should not be known primarily for what we *don't* do, but what we *will* do. The ministry of helps is just as valuable as all the other ministries God calls us to. 1 Corinthians 12:27-28 – He has appointed and so He has anointed. It is tremendously important that is why we have and need so many with these gifts. In all the little things you do it may seem like no one cares, but believe me, God's secret service men and women will be highly paid in heaven. The unnoticed things God notices, He will appreciate all your unappreciated work; it is not in vain.

As a pastor I struggle. Understanding this promise changes our perspective and motivation. If we believe and act in accordance with this promise it helps keep us from compromising the truth.

The proper motivation is God's glory, we need to change our ideas, and we need to leave the results to God. Don't compromise to get results; your labor is not in vain. It is worth it, in heaven you will see that it was but you need to realize that now and be more concerned for Jesus and His glory than for people and your glory. Are you aiming to please the crowd or the Crown?

Without a proper esteem and love for Christ Himself, and an understanding of His covenant love for His church, we will lack the motive and power to serve Him in the world. If our ultimate motivation for service for God is simply because we love people,

Life Often Seems To Be In Vain

Our Work For The Lord Is Not In Vain

The Work Of Our Lord Was Not In Vain

Your Life Doesn't Have To Be In Vain

we will never be able to sustain the call to service that God has given to us because the very people we are called to serve will break our hearts. It is only the grace of Christ that enables us to persevere. Jesus had His heart broken but His love for His Father kept Him on course.

All of the hardships our missionaries have to suffer, the demonically inspired ethnic cleansing, the killing of hundreds of Christians, burning churches, burning people, all in the name of lies, but the truth is that all of this is not in vain. Hebrews 13:3 – Their destiny is tied up with our destiny (1 Corinthians 6:17). Their hope is our hope. Their God is our God, and their labor is not in vain!

Even though we have our trials, and our tribulations, we face a difficult life, pressure and persecution are always near, and death knocks on every doorstep, still we can know in no uncertain terms that our labor in the Lord is worth it all, it is not ever in vain. I know that one day in eternity I will see members of the congregation that the Lord has given me, members who have lost loved ones, members who have had cancer and died, members who lost their jobs, their homes, their health, their spouse, their children, their minds, that found themselves the enemies of the world, and our friends overseas who have gone to jail and given their very lives for the sake of the



gospel, I know that one day in heaven we will all be glad, grateful, and glorifying the great God of our salvation in eternal bliss together, forever. We will sit down and feast at the great marriage supper of the Lamb and we will know it was all worth it.

These things may be above and beyond our understanding but they are not above and beyond our God, and He says that all our struggles, our hurts, our losses, and our work will not be in vain. He sent His Son to make that promise sure. He has made provision for our every mistake. We can look to Christ, we can look to the Cross, and we can know that God will make it all right (Acts 2:23 / Romans 8:28). He is greater than our failures. It is all by His grace, and that grace is not given in vain. *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all* (2 Corinthians 13:14). Amen.