



1 Corinthians 15 – focusing in on v58 – Persevering discipleship

Discussion Questions

It's true!

Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-8

1. Why is CS Lewis so insistent that the one thing Christianity cannot be, is moderately important?
2. Why are *you* confident, Christianity has its basis in truth?
3. The passage you've read (vv5-8) contain some of the earliest portions of the Scriptures, and could have been verified or denied by those alive at the time. How does this impact our understanding of how we can have confidence in the Bible?

Read 1 Corinthians 15: 12-19

4. What are some of the challenging implications if none of what we believe about Jesus' resurrection is true?
5. Read v20 and discuss Paul's rebuttal of the doubters claims.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:58

Therefore: stand firm let nothing move you

6. If Christianity is true and therefore of ultimate important, how can we ensure that we stand firm in the truth. What are some of the things Mark suggested can lead us astray? Would you add anything else (to what would cause you *not* to stand firm)?
7. When Mark and Susan retire back here (God-willing), will you be standing firm? How can you be sure?

Therefore: give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord.

8. What does Paul mean in v58, by 'give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord'?
9. Read Colossians 3:23-24. What does doing something in someone else's name mean? What does it mean to do something in Jesus' name? How can we do everything we do, 'as working for the Lord not for others'?
10. Mark warned that now that he is going, is not the time to slacken off! How can we 'step up'?

Therefore: your labour in the Lord is not in vain

11. Nothing we do for the Lord, and toward making and growing disciples, is ever in vain! Are you convinced? What difference might grasping this reality make?
12. Share and pray together about someone in your life, who you would *love* to see become a disciple of Jesus. Discuss ways you might make a difference in their lives, to that great end.

Mark's final sermon at Noosa

Date: 10 November 2019
Services: all
Series: We exist to glorify God by making disciples
Title: Preserving discipleship
Passage: 1 Corinthians 15:58
Outline:

1. **It's true!**
2. **Therefore, stand firm**
3. **Give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord**
4. **Because your labour in the Lord, is not in vain**

Christianity, if false, is of no importance, and if true, of infinite importance. The only thing it cannot be is moderately important. CS Lewis

Now of course, that's a quote you've heard me use before... but bear with me...

In my first few weeks here – in December 2009, I ran a course on Wednesday nights over at Sunshine Beach called "Jesus Explained". It was **Advent**... we shared communion first, and then I ran this **course**. Some of you will remember!

There were some great questions but one of them I've never **forgotten**: "Mark, are you saying then, that Jesus Christ was a **real person** who actually walked our **planet**?" And I was glad to answer '**yes!** – that's **exactly** what I am saying". That was **ground-breaking** for that person who had been **very** involved in **church!** /

Throughout my 10 years here, I hope and pray that one thing has been **absolutely clear**: that we can have **great confidence** that all we believe from the Bible, is **TRUE** – it's **reliable**.

...and that far from being a leap in the **dark**, trust in God – trust in Jesus and why he came - is based on **good** and **dependable historical documents**, reliably **preserved** and **translated**.

Because mark my words: if Jesus **isn't** real; and if Jesus **didn't** die for sin and if Jesus **didn't** rise from the **dead**... this is just a huge **waste of time!**

And THEN over 10 years in various ways... I've argued that **because** it **IS** true... because Jesus **is** God turned up on earth – because he **loves** so much that Jesus **died** to **reconcile** us to **his Father**... then it **follows**, that this CANNOT **possibly** be, JUST A LITTLE BIT IMPORTANT!

No – these **fundamental truths** impact the **whole** of **life**...

Jesus cannot be something **added on** to an **already busy life** – it cannot be a **compartment** of **life**... some **vague interest** on the **side**... like a **sport** you follow or being a member of **ADFAS**... or one of the service clubs..

...it can **ONLY** be central...

Like the **earth** revolving around the **sun** – our **relationship with Jesus** is that which the **rest of life circles**, and by which **everything else** in life is **understood** and **interpreted**...

Well might Christopher Hutchins say '*religion **poisons everything***'... I say – I have consistently claimed and taught – that **relationship** – NOT **religion** – **relationship with Jesus** – **sweetens** everything, **informs** everything, **influences** everything, **challenges** everything...**changes** everything...

Now today's message in our series on making disciples, was **meant** to be on the **cost** of being a disciple... but really, Kevin Simington covered that in his **first** sermon in the series – when he spoke of the absolute **nature** of the commitment we are to **make** to **Jesus**, and the **searching** nature of the **sacrifice** involved - to put everything **else** in **life**... second – so that **Jesus** is **first** – **all the time!**

So what I want to today then, is talk about **persevering** as a disciple. ///

Let's face it, some days – we **want** to **give up!**

It can be **hard**... as the church finds itself now on the **margins**... and as you as an individual are **ridiculed** for following Jesus...

The **cost** of discipleship is becoming more and more **clear**...

So how do we **persevere** and ensure that we are not among those who **give up**!?

First, we remember that the good news of Jesus **IS true**... that we are not on about some fairy-tale...

1. It's true...

In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul has been arguing that the **gospel** is **true**.

It's **true** that Christ **died** for sins,

true that he was **buried**,

true that he was **raised** on the **third day**,

true that he **appeared** to **many people** – most of whom are still alive **30 years later** and if you were around when this letter was read out at church - you could go and ask **them**!

And if you want to argue that **dead** people **don't** rise – as some were doing – then before you buy in to **that** argument – **think** through the **implications**....

...because if **dead** people **don't** rise...

- **Christ didn't rise**,
and if **Christ** didn't rise says Paul:
- ...our **preaching** is useless – because it's based entirely on **Jesus' resurrection** – v14
- Your **faith** is **useless** (v14) – **futile** in fact... (v17)...
because it's founded **entirely** on **Jesus' resurrection**
- You're inferring we are **lying** about **God** – because we keep saying God **raised Jesus**
- You're still in **sin** – and therefore **cannot** stand in **God's presence**...
- And if Jesus didn't **actually** rise from the dead, then **Christians** are a **complete joke** – in fact - **pathetic**.... to be **pitied** above all people (v19) – because they've been completely sucked into a **lie**...

So friends, let's be clear... just in case you've been tuned out for the last 10 years...

if Christianity is false, it is of **no** importance...

it's a **lie**, a **deception**;

a **trap**, a **waste** of **time**, a **delusion**.

Why give any **money**, any **time**, any **energy**... to something that's **false**?

why **live** for a **lie**? Why **die** for a **lie**??

Why give up the right to run your **own life** your **own way**, if it's a **lie**?

But the Apostle Paul in this chapter, comes back with a very strong claim to those who are raising **doubts** about **Jesus' resurrection** – or **any** resurrection: - v20 - *Christ has **indeed** been raised from the dead!*

Go ask those who **saw** him, **touched** him, **ate** with him, heard him **speak**; says Paul to his readers...

Now – we can't do that 2,000 years later, but I have argued that what we **have** here in our Bibles...

accurately reflects **ancient Greek texts** kept in **libraries** and **museums** all around the globe... and that even **secular historians** argue that the **NT documents** are among the most **reliable** documents in all the **ancient world**!

The **message** of **Jesus Christ** – **life**, **teaching**, **miraculous deeds**, **death**, **resurrection**... is **true**, **dependable**!

FRIENDS, this **IS gloriously** and **wonderfully true**!

Christ **died** for sins.

Was **buried**.

Was **raised**.

And **appeared**....

And will **one day** come again to **reign forever**!

And THAT HAS TO BE, of infinite importance!

How can we persevere?

First, we remember that it is true... we're not wasting our time – our life... and secondly... we

2. ... stand firm, let nothing move you.

Having been convinced that this is **true** and seeing its significance both now and for **eternity**... then stand **firm**, let **nothing move** you.

If you step on to a stage or platform... that is uncertain – rickety – wobbly – you can't actually stay still or stand firm... but step on to something **firm** and **sure** – standing firm is **easy**!

Stand **firm** on the truth of the **Gospel**...

Become **obsessive-compulsive** about it.

Don't **swerve**, don't be **distracted**, don't be **put off**... or pushed aside... don't **wander off**, **drift away**, go to **sleep**!

Don't let

- **Ridiculing family** move you
- **Worldly friends** move you
- Mocking **work colleagues** move you
- doubting **school** or **uni friends** move you
- don't let **distracted children** move you
- **don't let an unbelieving spouse move** you
- non-Christian **boy friend** or **girl friend** move you
- very important **work commitments** move you
- That promotion **opportunity** move you
- your **sex drive move** you
- Your **drinking habits** move you
- **Don't allow materialism, hedonism, chasing the next great party, or selfishness** move you.

Because, Christianity, if true, is of infinite importance.

Nothing else is **more important**!

Everything else in your life must take its cue and know its place in relation to your relationship with Jesus!

In another 8 years when God-willing, Susan and I retire **back** here – or even in 1 or 2 years when I come to **visit**... – let me see that you have been **immoveable**... that you have not stopped **serving** the Lord and **living** for him... that you are **pressing** on to **know him** and **love him, more and more**.

The greatest joy a **pastor** or **shepherd** could know, is to see that his **people**, the **sheep** he has loved and **cared** for, are **pressing** on to **follow** and **serve** Jesus the good shepherd.

And brothers and sisters... let me see that you've **grown** in your **passion** and **desire** to make **MORE disciples**...! For that is why we **exist**!!

How to persevere? Remember it's true; be determined to let nothing move you...

And third,

3. ... give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord

Hold **nothing back**.

Remember – this cannot be only **moderately** important.

It cannot only be important on **Sunday** and **Wednesday** night.

It cannot be only important when you are with **other Christians**, and **moderately** important the rest of the time.

It cannot be **moderately** important at home behind closed doors.

It cannot be **moderately** important when you are operating, when you're in a business meeting or playing golf

it cannot be **moderately** important when you're lecturing or being lectured,

it cannot be **moderately** important when you're on holidays,

it cannot be **moderately** important when you are leading and loving your children...

it cannot be moderately important at the **movies** or on the **internet** or down the beach or at the **pub**.

Because It's of **ultimate significance ... ALL the time!**

...give yourselves **fully** to the work of the Lord.

Or as Paul says in Colossians 3 – *whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it **all** in the name of the Lord Jesus... whatever you do, work at it with **all** your heart as working for the Lord not for others.*

Seek the **glory** of the Lord – at **home, school uni, work, club, sporting field...** in whatever fills your days...

give your **heart**, your **life**, your very **self**...

...to live **godly, holy, Christ-like lives... every moment, every day... in every way...!**

One expression of that – will be to give yourself to the life of this **congregation...** of which you are a vital member.

The **Anglican Church of Noosa** needs you.

If this church is to **grow** and **develop**, if we are to reach **Noosa** and **Peregian** and beyond... if we are to make new **disciples...** it will take **YOU**. //

And now that the Calders are leaving is **not** time for you to **leave** or **slacken** off...

Rather - it's a time to band **together**, grow **united** in **focus** and **purpose**, keep **going**, play your **part**, step **up**.

Don't lose **heart** or **hope** and keep your **eyes fixed** on **Jesus**. //

so... how to persevere? You remember it's true, you let nothing move you, you give yourselves **fully** to the work of the Lord; in the certain knowledge that...

4. ...your labour in the Lord is not in vain

There are lots of things in life which are in vain... we might say – are a **complete** waste of **time...**

- **washing** the **car**, the endless round of cleaning **house**, sometimes our **work** feels like a waste of time, or **weeding** or **mowing**... or picking **nits** out of **hair**...
- but **nothing** you do in the Lord's name – nothing you do for **HIM** could be considered a waste of time...nothing **IS** a waste of time.
- Nothing you do in the **life** and **ministry** of this church will be **wasted**...
- Nothing you do at **home** working for the honour of his **name**; nothing at **school, uni, work, sport...** when you do it for the **glory** of **God...** can **ever** be a waste of **time**.
- Nothing you do in your effort to see **more** people become **disciples...** will be in **vain...!! //**

I'm nearly **done**...

but cannot finish this morning without speaking to those among us who have **yet** to give your life to the **Lord Jesus**.

This is not a **judgment** call on my part – some of you have **told** me you are not Christian.

Why **aren't you**? // Why are you still hanging out and pushing God aside?

There is **new life, forgiveness, hope** and a **future** with **Jesus**... life **itself** to be gained...

oh yes – it will cost you your **independence**, your **self-sufficiency**, may cost you your **pride**....

But Jesus is calling you today '**follow me**'. //

Today is the day of **new life and a new chapter** for you.

Come like the **tax collector** and say '*Lord, have **mercy** me a **sinner***'...

Cry out like the thief on the cross... who recognising Jesus as the King, asked to be **remembered** in his **Kingdom**!

...come find **life** and **forgiveness**... and the joy of **knowing** where you **stand** with God... //

Brothers and sisters...

This is **true**...

And **because** it's true, stand **firm** – let **nothing** move you

And **because** it's **true** – give yourself **fully** to the work of the **Lord** – to the work of **making disciples**

And **because** it's **true** – know that your **labour** in the **Lord** – whatever you do for him and his cause – will **never** be in **vain**!!