

SOUL FOOD

July 10, 2017

I Corinthians 15:53-58 **Believers Must Never Give Up**

One of my favorite lines from the movie, *The Shawshank Redemption*, is when the main character, Andy, after spending several days in the “hole,” tells his friend Red, “It is time to get busy living or get busy dying.” Red had been telling Andy that hope was a dangerous thing given their situation, because it can drive a man to deep despair and death because in prison there is no hope. Andy disagreed.

Obviously, the Apostle Paul was dealing with some people in the Corinthian church who were living as if there were no hope given the intensity of their struggles and temptations. How many times have you been tempted to think and say that it is just not worth living the Christian life because of all of the struggles living in a world in which it appears that darkness is winning the day?

People need more than simple pious platitudes at such times. People need to hear something better than, “Keep your chin up,” or “what doesn’t kill you makes you stronger.” No, we need power and eternal hope. This is what God gives us through His servant Paul. Paul concludes I Corinthians 15 with great encouragement to us. He told the Corinthians that they must be strong, stalwart, and steadfast, and to live a life that ABOUND (prosper) in the work of the Lord. Why? We are to do so because “in the Lord” our labor is NEVER worthless, hopeless, or vain (void of meaning and purpose).

Now, what makes this counsel so powerful is that it is connected to the most incredible, powerful, and historical event that ever occurred on earth. As you see the word “therefore” in verse 58, you must ask the question, “What is it there for?” Well, Paul had been proclaiming the centrality of Christ’s resurrection from the dead, which is so pivotal that if it were not true, there would be no Church and no hope. We would remain dead in our sins without hope of salvation. Paul teaches that if Jesus did not rise from the dead, we might as well “eat, drink, and be merry,” because this life would be as good as it gets!

But, Jesus did rise from the dead. Because of this reality we know that we as believers live in the reality of death being swallowed up in VICTORY and that we are redeemed from the curse and power of sin over us. So, we can truly live abundant lives characterized by peace and joy because Jesus GIVES US VICTORY. This is why we can struggle well and in hope. This is why we can put our feet on the floor every morning knowing that today our labor, which is to be done to the glory of God, is NEVER hopeless and in vain because we live IN CHRIST, the One who gave His life for us.