

# The Uncomfortable Reality

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, good evening. Please turn in your Bible to 1 Corinthians chapter 15. I think you'll find that on page 961 if you're following in one of the Blue Church Bibles, 1 Corinthians and chapter 15. Now this is quite a long chapter. We're going to be looking at this chapter over the summer in four doses, but I thought this evening we'd read the whole chapter just to get a feel of what's there. So 1 Corinthians chapter 15 verse 1.

Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved if you hold fast to the word I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Kephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than 500 brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely aborn, he appeared also to me. For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God, I am what I am. And his grace towards me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them. That was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. Whether then it was I or they, so we preach, and so you believed. Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there's no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ hasn't been raised, then our preaching is in vain, and your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise, if it's true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if

Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile, and you're still in your sins. Then those also who fall asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead. The firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive, but each in his own order. Christ the firstfruits? Then at his coming those who belong to Christ, then comes the end when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father, after destroying every rule and every authority and power.

For he must reign until he's put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For God has put all things in subjection under his feet. But when it says all things are put in subjection, it's plain that he's accepted who put all things in subjection under him. When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him. That God may be all in all. Otherwise, what do people mean by being baptized on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on their behalf? Why are we in danger every hour? I protest, brothers, by my pride in you, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord.

[ 3 : 51 ] I die every day. What do I gain if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts in Ephesus, if the dead are not raised? Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die. Do not be deceived. Bad company ruins good morals. Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right, and do not go on sinning. For some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame. But someone will ask, how are the dead raised?

With what kind of body do they come? You foolish person! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And what you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare seed, perhaps of wheat or some other grain. But God gives it a body as he's chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body. For not all flesh is the same, but there's one kind for humans, another for animals, another for birds, another for fish. There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies. But the glory of the heavenly is of

one kind, and the glory of the earthly of another. There is one glory of the sun, another of the moon, another of the stars. The star differs from star in glory. So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable. What is raised is imperishable. It's sown in dishonor. It's raised in glory. It's sown in weakness. It's raised in power. It's sown a natural body. It's raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. Thus it is written, the first Adam became a life-giving, a living being. The last Adam, a life-giving spirit. But it's not the spiritual that is first, but the natural, and then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust. The second man is from heaven, as was the man of dust. So also are those who are of the dust. And as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven. I tell you this, brothers. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold, I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but 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 imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. [ 6 : 43 ] O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

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. Amen. May God bless his word to us this evening as we read it and think about it together.

Well, please do sit down. Please turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 15. Now, this is a passage usually preached on two sorts of occasions, and this is neither of those occasions.

It's usually preached at Easter time, because it's got stuff about the resurrection in it, and it's usually preached when some church dignitary or other makes a pronouncement about the bodily resurrection of Jesus not having happened. And so this chapter is rolled out in response to those. Today, as I've said, is neither of those days. It is not Easter, unless I'm grossly wrong in my calendar calculations. And I haven't heard any recent public examples of resurrection denial. Well, I hadn't.

[ 8 : 09 ] Until earlier this week, I made the unfortunate mistake of googling resurrection denial and came up with John Shelby Spong. John Spong is a retired U.S. Episcopalian bishop, a longstanding denier of all sorts of things to do with the Lord Jesus Christ, including his resurrection. This is John Spong on the resurrection of Jesus.

Paul, for example, writing between the years 50 and 64, or some 20 to 34 years after the earthly life of Jesus came to an end, never describes the resurrection of Jesus as a physical body resuscitated after death.

There is no hint in the Pauline corpus that one who had died later walked out of his grave clothes, emerged from the tomb, and was seen by his disciples.

Spong has hit the news again because he was recently, just last month, the guest of a church congregation in Glasgow, apparently provoking plenty of debate. But that isn't why we were looking at that. I discovered that after I decided we were looking at that. We're looking at this chapter because early in the year we looked at chapters 1 to 4 of this great letter. And as it's a long letter, chapter 15 tends to get left off.

And it tends to be dealt with in single sermons. And as we read earlier on, it's rather a long chapter and rather difficult to deal with in single sermons. This is not a passage for occasional use.

[ 9 : 42 ] It's not a passage to be brought out at high points of the ecclesiastical calendar or low points of gross doctrinal declension.

It's not that kind of passage at all. In fact, the resurrection of Jesus is not the big issue in this chapter. All the way through this chapter, the resurrection of Jesus is a taken for granted thing, not something that Paul is trying to prove.

No one in Corinth is denying that Jesus rose from the dead. It doesn't need to be proved to them. This is a passage all tied up with something much more everyday than that.

In fact, the most everyday subject in the world. A subject so ordinary that on one level it's like the air we breathe. We take it for granted so close that we can hardly see it.

So close that we can read the whole of this chapter without noticing that it's there. We may have done that. Something that's so much a given of life that you can go all the way through your life without raising significant questions about this subject.

[10:56] In fact, without really thinking about it at all. The subject is death. That's the subject matter of this chapter from beginning to end. And the issue that's being addressed in this chapter is not whether Jesus has risen from the dead.

The issue in question is whether a Christian believer can rise from the dead. The Corinthians know that Jesus has risen from the dead. What they're not sure is whether they will rise from the dead. Now let me point out some of the key landmarks. Look at verse 12. If Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?

If there's no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. Do you see how he argues there? He's not arguing, if Jesus hasn't been raised, we won't.

He's arguing, if we aren't raised, then Jesus can't have been. The Corinthians have a problem with the resurrection of dead people.

[11:57] In some way, they are skeptical about whether that can happen. Quite what they thought, it's difficult to be sure. Did they think that death was just the end of everything and then they stopped?

Well, perhaps, but that might be to read our modern assumptions into their mind. It might be more along the lines of verse 35. How are the dead raised exactly?

What kind of body do they come with? Faced with the reality of a dead body, it may be that the Corinthians think, it's not very promising looking.

What good can come of that? Let's face it, friends, that the dead body does not look like a thing with great potential. Think of illness for a moment.

We deal with illness in various ways, depending on the severity of the illness. If someone is very ill, we bid them retire to their bed and treat them nicely so that they'll recover. If someone has man flu, on the other hand, we tell them kindly, get up, man up, snap out of it.

[13:06] But none of us will ever tell the corpse to snap out of it. The dead body has not got potential to man up.

Now, it's impossible to say quite where the Corinthian mindset was. Somewhere between death is the end and resurrection is hard to get your head around.

Whatever they thought, it's clear enough that the linked subjects of death and resurrection seem to have slipped out of the center of their field of vision.

Just not something they think much about now. And I think that's a way of thinking that we can identify with readily enough. Let me ask you, what is on your bucket list?

Everyone's supposed to have one. A list of all those things you need to do before you die. Whether it's trekking in the Amazon or building your own home or swimming with dolphins or establishing your career or just getting married.

[14:08] The assumption behind the bucket list is that death stops everything useful. The only chance we have to do things is now.

I need to live the dream now. I need to do some cool things before I die. And there's no opportunity to do any more. Perhaps you're a bit older or iller.

Or you have inescapable responsibilities that keep you from bucket list type activity. And instead of seeing life as all those things I really need to do, you've started to see life as all those things I'm never going to get to do before I die.

The dream, you're no longer living it. You've been to it some time ago. As life's possibilities narrow down, do you feel smaller as a person?

One very ill friend said to me, I'm no longer a player in life. I'm a spectator. And every day I watch from further back in the stands.

[15:17] Resurrection hard to imagine. Death difficult to think about. So life now has to be where the action is. It's easy to identify with, isn't it? As you read through this letter, it seems that the Corinthians had a spiritualized view of that sort of way of thinking.

Here and now is where the Corinthian focus lies. Here and now is where the spiritual action is. Here and now is where spiritual victory lies.

Here and now is where power and wisdom is demonstrated in Christian lives and in churches. Here and now is where true freedom and spiritual riches are to be had.

The dead, we can't think about them much. Why talk about pie in the sky when you die, when you can have spiritual stake on the plate right now?

Now we've got four weeks in this chapter, two weeks this month and two weeks next month. It's a long chapter and it's not easy to read. And I want you to introduce you today to the chapter and the issues it raises.

[16:22] In the next three weeks, we'll look at some of the detail. But today we're doing a kind of overview. What is this chapter here for? That's the question. Well, let's look at the shape of this chapter for a moment.

It falls into three sections. They're fairly easy to see. The first is verses 1 to 11. And in 1 to 11, we get an introduction, which is all about Paul and his gospel.

And you'll notice that it starts and ends on the same note. Look at 15.1. I'd remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received.

Look at verse 11. Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and you believed. Paul's preaching the Corinthian belief tops and tails this introductory section.

The rest of the chapter divides into two. And the two sections start and end in the same sort of way. They start with something the Corinthians have said or are likely to say about the resurrection.

[17:26] And it ends with a command. So look at verse 12. Here's something the Corinthians have said. How can some of you say that there's no resurrection of the dead?

That's the thing they've said. And the command is in verse 33. Don't be deceived. Bad company ruins good morals. Wake up from your drunken stupor as is right and do not go on sinning.

For some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame. We start with something about the resurrection that they've said. We end with a strong negative command.

Wake up. Stop doing what you're doing. And then verse 35. We get another thing that they're likely to say. But some will say.

With what kind of body do they come? And this section goes all the way through to the imperative in verse 58. Therefore, my beloved brothers.

[18:26] Be steadfast. Immovable. Always abounding in the work of the Lord. A big, strong, positive thing to do. So, let me summarize. An introduction.

A statement about the resurrection leading to a negative command. A statement about the resurrection leading to a positive command. In addition, notice that the very end of the chapter, verse 58, and the very beginning of the chapter have strong similarities.

Verse 1 and 2. He raises the question of whether the Corinthian belief is in vain. Unless you believed in vain.

Verse 58. Therefore, my beloved brothers. Be steadfast. Immovable. Always abounding in the work of the Lord. Because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

There is a kind of labor that is not a waste of time. Corinthians, are you believing? Is your belief a waste of time?

[19:38] So, let me suggest to you that the shape of this chapter and these two commands ought to make us sit up and pay attention. This is not a vague theoretical of academic interest only chapter to do with the resurrection.

It is not here to tell the Corinthians that the bishop they were listening to recently was wrong and the resurrection of Jesus really happened. It is a bang, bang, wake up you drunkards.

Give yourselves to the work of the Lord. It's that sort of chapter. Wake up. Stop doing this. Start doing this. That's what it's there for.

Stop getting wasted in spiritual living the dream now and start doing something that will last. That's what this chapter is here for.

Now, next week we'll look at the first 11 verses and the following two sessions we'll look at the first of those commands and the second one. But for the rest of this evening, I want to introduce you not to the detail, but to the subject matter in general.

[20:47] Death is the theme that weaves itself all the way through this chapter. And I want to make three observations from this chapter about death that were very important for those in the Corinthian church and are very important for us.

Three observations about death, the subject matter of this chapter. One, as obvious as you care to imagine, death is an unavoidable reality.

We think of this as the resurrection chapter, and so it is. But if anything, death gets more airtime than resurrection in this chapter. I did a quick count earlier in the week. Just looking at the words, I found over 30 referring in one way or another to death. And just over 20 referring in one way or another to resurrection. That's just a word count. Never mind a count of ideas. This chapter zooms in on death. Big time. It doesn't say that every human being without exception will die. [ 21 : 55 ] Look at verse 51. There will be some who are alive at the coming of Jesus who will not sleep before his coming.

However, apart from that small exception, the chapter emphasizes all the way through that death is universal. Verse 22.

In Adam all die. Or verse 48. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust. Adam was made from the dust and Genesis chapter 3, he returned to it. And we like him are of the dust. Namely, we will all die like he did.

Well, that's obvious. You might say, how obvious is that? Well, it is. But it's amazing how that most obvious thing can simply drift out of focus.

[ 23 : 01 ] It had for the Corinthians. As you read through this letter, the Corinthians are portrayed not as those who are living life with an awareness that death is coming.

But those who are living in life as though it's not coming. Look, for example, at chapter 4, verse 8. Just keep a finger in chapter 15. Turn back to chapter 4.

Here's what the Corinthians think of themselves. Paul's words about them.

Already you have all you want. Already you've become rich. Without us, you've become kings. Well, would that that were true, says Paul.

You see, the Corinthians are spiritually satisfied. Spiritually rich, they think now. Spiritually reigning, they think. On the throne.

[ 24 : 00 ] People who focused in on what they had now. And were not really thinking forwards to anything beyond this life. So many other passages in this letter could be pointed out that demonstrate that the Corinthians thought they had now.

Great wisdom, great power, great honor, great knowledge, great freedom, great strength. They did really good stuff in their church, they thought.

Satisfied. And this chapter, chapter 15, is a very important antidote to that. Paul gets death out on the table. And he mentions it again and again and again and again.

Even some of those, verse 6, chapter 15, verse 6. Even some of those who saw the risen Lord have already died, he says.

Why does he do this? Well, he's pricking the bubble of their satisfaction with what they have now. Death is not something that he's going to let them leave out of their theological landscape.

[ 25 : 13 ] Death is not something they can afford just to pay no attention to. Death is coming. And of course, the most obvious thing about death is that it will undo everything about life now.

Everything. Think for a moment of some of the words that the Corinthian church seems to have loved. I'm going to just think briefly of four key words in this letter.

Words that the Corinthians obviously loved to attach to themselves. One. Wisdom. It's a key word in this letter. They thought themselves very wise indeed.

They knew things. They knew more than Christians elsewhere. Question. How wise does the corpse look of the person who thought themselves wise?

Well, of course, the answer to that is no wiser than any other corpse looks. Not wiser. Not wise enough to do any better in the end than the stupidest person.

[ 26 : 17 ] Look around the room, brothers and sisters. Look around the room. The cleverest people in this room will look in the end exactly the same as the most foolish ones when death comes.

The Corinthians thought themselves wise. The Corinthians thought themselves strong. Strength is a big word in this letter. They thought they had power. They thought themselves more powerful than their apostle who brought the gospel to them.

Especially they thought they had spiritual power and authority. Question. How powerful does the corpse look? Well, what a daft question is that?

No power at all. No power to do what it wants or to choose where it goes. In fact, no power to do anything. Look around the room.

Look around the room. The strongest, most vigorous looking person in this room. The most authoritative looking person in this room. Will in the end be indistinguishable from the weediest and wettest.

[ 27 : 32 ] Spiritual. Another Corinthian word. A word some of them would have attached to themselves. Rather looking down on others who they thought of as less spiritual. Especially they thought themselves more spiritual than their apostle who brought the gospel to them.

How spiritual does the corpse look? Well, it looks the very opposite of spiritual. It can't even breathe in. Never mind be inspiring.

Look around the room, brothers and sisters. The most spiritually impressive looking person will in the end look as dead as the most spiritually unimpressive looking person.

Final word. Speech. Speech is a big Corinthian word. Chapters 12 to 14 are all about speech. They love their speakers in Corinth.

They love their special speech. They're speaking in tongues. Their speech was a big marker of who was a spiritual person and who was a less spiritual person. How good are the dead at speaking?

[ 28 : 37 ] How memorable are their words? My mother died when I was 18. I can no longer call the sound of her voice to my mind.

I can't hear her words anymore. Look around the room. All the speech of all the mouths in this room will disappear.

Our words will vanish. In a generation, it will be as if none of us ever spoke a word ever. For nobody will remember us.

Death takes everything away. And that puts this current phase of life in sharp perspective. Look at verse 32.

As Paul says, If the dead are not raised, well, you better enjoy it while you can. Because it's all going down the gurgler.

[ 29 : 41 ] Why is death such a big feature in this chapter? Because the Corinthians have to be woken up from the folly of thinking that this phase of life is where it's at.

In this age in which we live, where perhaps more than any age, the focus is on the now.

We too desperately need to remember that death is coming. It's an unavoidable reality. That's the first thing this chapter teaches us and taught them.

Second thing this chapter taught them and teaches us, death is much more serious than we often think. Listen to the words of that famous philosopher, Albus Dumbledore.

After all, to the well-organized mind, death is but the next great adventure. That way of thinking that death is merely the gateway to another mode of being, another great adventure, a better one, is very common indeed in the age in which we live.

[ 30 : 50 ] It's incongruous, of course, because many of us live as though death is the end and then pretend somehow that the dead are in another realm. Listen to the words of a famous poem, Do not stand at my grave and weep.

I am not there. I do not sleep. I am a thousand winds that blow. I am the diamond glints on snow. I am the sunlight on ripened grain. I am the gentle autumn rain.

When you awaken in the morning's hush, I am the swift, uplifting rush of quiet birds in circled flight. I am the soft stars that shine at night.

Do not stand at my grave and cry. I am not there. I did not die. Written in 1932, Mary Fry's poem was voted Britain's favorite poem in 1996 in a poll.

It expresses precisely the vague hopefulness that so often attaches to thoughts of death. So much so that death is not really a thing at all.

[ 31 : 53 ] Just a transition of mode of being from one state to another. And so we are an age where people don't want to have funerals, but rather celebrations of life.

And where there is a relentless pursuit of euphanatos, the good death. This chapter blows a loud raspberry at such ideas.

Not only does Paul keep mentioning death all the way through, all the way through, he links it to another idea. He does that from its very first mention, verse 3.

Why did Christ die? Well, he doesn't say, as I heard in the daily service on Radio 4 this morning, he died in solidarity with those who experience violence in this world.

He doesn't say he died as an example of God's love for us, though of course he did. He doesn't say, as a tragic accident, he says, Christ died for our sins.

[ 32 : 58 ] That's why Christ died. And in saying that, he agrees with the testimony of the angel who announced Jesus' birth to Mary. You'll call his name Jesus because he will save his people from their sins.

First and foremost, that's what Jesus' death is linked to, human sinfulness. Now, sin does not get lots of mentions as a word before this in this letter, but in this chapter, sin is a very prominent word. And all the way through, it's closely linked to death. Look at verse 16. If the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised, and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you're still in your sins.

Then those also who've fallen asleep in Christ have perished. The language of perishing is a wholly negative word in the New Testament, descriptive of being under God's judgment.

It's not a positive word. You'll see the same sort of association of ideas in verse 56. Turn on to verse 56. The sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law, but thanks be to God who gives us the victory.

[ 34 : 23 ] That triad of death and sin and law working together is a reality that God has, verse 57, thankfully, won a great victory over.

This emphasis on the link between sin and death is especially brought out in this chapter by Paul's use of Adam.

Look at 21 again. Verse 21. As by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead.

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. As in Adam all die. Why do all die in Adam?

Well, because Adam sinned and died in judgment. And we are deeply, deeply linked to him. And we sin and we die. And that's a judgment on our sinful humanity in general and our own sinfulness in particular.

[ 35 : 27 ] The same idea is there in verse 49. Look at verse 49, please. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust.

You see, like Adam, we are all subject to returning to dust, to dying. And that indicates that we, like him, are under the power of sin and we, like him, are subject to judgment because of our sin.

In this chapter, not only does Paul talk repeatedly about death, it's a real thing, he also deliberately links it to sin and to coming judgment.

They're jammed together in this chapter. Now let me say, that is a totally, totally different perspective than you'll get anywhere else in the world on death.

Death is usually described in our world as just a natural thing, part of the way things are. That is not the Bible's view.

[ 36 : 27 ] It's only natural in the sense that it happens to everyone. It's a normal thing. However, it is an alien intruder into this world. Here in this chapter, death is called an enemy.

Verse 26, the last enemy, the ultimate enemy, the last one that will fall before the final victory. And not only is that contrary to everything you'll hear in the world out there where death is just a normal thing, it is also contrary to what you'll commonly hear in church.

I was at a funeral not all that long ago where the minister said, death of course is a normal God-given part of the way things are in this world.

Why did he say that? Well, I imagine because he didn't want to talk about sin. That's why death is in this world. But Paul talks about sin. Because we've mentioned him already, here is John Spong on death.

We do need to embrace death as a friend, not an enemy. Death is as natural as our birth. Here he is on the subject of sin.

[ 37 : 40 ] We have evolved through hundreds of millions, even billions of years of evolutionary history so there is no fall. The whole concept of original sin is gone.

Our hymns that reflect this and the preaching that reflects this and our doctrines that reflect this no longer translate. And so it's really devastating because we don't know what to do.

You cannot be rescued unless you fall. You cannot be restored to a state that you've never enjoyed. So the whole way that we've told the Jesus story has now become inoperative.

Death is a friend. Sin doesn't exist. And there's nothing for Jesus to rescue us from. Paul disagrees violently in this chapter. Death is a reality.

It's strongly linked to sin. And that is what Jesus died for. Death is there because of sin. So friends, can I encourage you, when I die, that needs to be a time of mourning.

[ 38 : 41 ] Not because you're sad not to see me again, but because my death represents a verdict on what I am as a natural person. And indeed, on what you are as people.

We die because we're under the power of sin. At one level, death seems such a normal thing because it happens all the time. But it's an everyday reminder of the real human problem and the reason Jesus came to save.

Two things then. Death is an unavoidable reality. It is much more serious than we usually think. And third, and very briefly, the solution to death is a death-shaped solution.

Now, this is why this is such an important chapter in the Corinthian letters. There are two ways in which the solution to death is death-shaped in this chapter.

The first is in chapter 15, verse 3. We've read this one already. The solution to our death is Jesus' death-shaped.

[ 39 : 52 ] It took his death to rescue us from ours and all that that entails. But perhaps more importantly for this letter, chapter 15, verse 31.

I'll start at 29. What do people mean by being baptized on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on their behalf? Why are we in danger every hour?

I protest, brothers, by my pride in you, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord? I die every day. You see, the apostles' ministry is death-shaped.

And that's the problem in Corinth. Because the Corinthians do not like his dying everyday pattern of ministry.

They think it looks not very powerful, not very spiritual, not very wise, not very impressive. All the things they don't want to be. He is.

[ 40 : 56 ] He is embarrassing. He's in trouble all the time. And they do not want to copy him. They do not want to have to take on his way of doing things.

That is why this chapter is here. Look at the two imperatives. Verse 34, wake up from your drunken stupor.

As is right. Stop doing things your way. Verse 58, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

That's what he wants them to do. And they have to do it according to his pattern. And that pattern is a death-shaped pattern. It's got the stamp of the Jesus on the way to the cross all over it.

It's not something they want to embrace for themselves. And I imagine that it's not something that we are all that comfortable embracing for ourselves. A lifestyle that's reminiscent of Jesus on the road to the cross.

[ 42 : 05 ] Not everyone's cup of tea. It certainly wasn't the Corinthian cup of tea. And that's why this chapter has been written. Death is an unavoidable reality.

Death is much, much more serious than we think. And the solution to death is death-shaped. Jesus died for our sins. And those who take his message to others have to embrace his pattern of doing things.

That was deeply distasteful for the Corinthians. It is a deeply distasteful idea in a pleasure-loving culture like ours. And I imagine it's something that we too will find it difficult to embrace.

This is a great chapter, not for occasional use, but for every day. Let's pray together. Amen. Listen to this fantastically encouraging word.

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.

[ 43 : 31 ] Just a few minutes to respond in the quiet ourselves, and then I'll lead us in prayer. advance and don't honor her.

Let's find a good event. I know you won't be crível, just a few attempts, men to have control of my interest wanted to stranger and in the other Thank you.

We thank you that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures.

We thank you also that there is something to be done in this world that is not in vain, that will not be destroyed by death, that will indeed last forever.

And we pray that as we read this chapter and study it over the next weeks, you would please give us growing confidence that in the Lord, that labor so often unimpressive looking and death shaped is really not in vain.

[ 45 : 24 ] Help us, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.