

7.2 Life Is Like a Seed

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Date: 06 November 2022

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[0 : 0 0] Well, we're going to turn to our Bibles now, and we are once again with Josh in 1 Corinthians. And this morning we're looking at the second half of 1 Corinthians 15.

And then this evening we're going to be looking at chapter 16 and finishing off this letter together. So last week we looked at the first part of chapter 15, and I'm going to read this morning from verse 35.

But Paul says, 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 kernel, perhaps of wheat or some other grain.

But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body. But not all flesh is the same, but there's one kind for humans, another for animals, another for birds, another for fish.

[1 : 0 9] There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies. But the glory of the heavenly is of one kind, and the glory of the earthly, another. There's one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars.

There are different stars. The stars differ from stars in glory. And so it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable.

What is raised is imperishable. What is sown in dishonor is raised in glory. It's sown in weakness. It's raised in power.

It's sown a natural body. It is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

And as it's written, the first man, Adam, became a living being. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. But it's not the spiritual that is first, but the natural, and then the spiritual.

[2 : 2 0] 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.

So 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 all 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.

[3 : 3 6] 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. And may God bless to us this his word. Well, do open your Bibles once again to 1 Corinthians chapter 15.

Is there anything more unpromising looking than a dead body? In this world, death looks so final.

What on earth can a dead body do? Surely all that is left for a dead body to do is to rot. Well, not so, says Paul.

[4 : 51] Last week, we were seeing that whilst this chapter speaks a lot about resurrection, that is, the resurrection of humanity, and that often this chapter is thought of as the resurrection chapter, we saw last week that actually this chapter is perhaps most pointedly about death.

What does death do? What happens when we die? You see, the Corinthian problem is not some strange and alien idea that's so detached from us that we can simply shrug our shoulders and think, aren't we glad we're so much more enlightened than they were?

I'm not sure that the Corinthian problem really was sitting around having philosophical musings about metaphysics and disembodied souls and speculations about resurrection.

I think it's so much more down to earth than that. It's the age-old problem of living by sight and not by faith. It's the perpetual battle that every Christian faces of inclining ourselves to that which is eternal instead of the ephemeral.

It is living as if death will end all of our opportunities and so we must squeeze all we can out of our time here on earth. The Corinthians didn't want to accept that the truly spiritual Christian life is inglorious in this age.

[6 : 17] That it is often hard and unfruitful looking work. Throughout this chapter, Paul places death alongside his pattern of ministry. Remember he said last week, he dies every day.

That's what his ministry looks like. And a right view of death prompts a Paul-like ministry. And a right kind of ministry prompts a Paul-like approach to death.

And both death and Paul's pattern of ministry look as unpromising as each other. But the truth is that they bring resurrection.

The Corinthians' favorite words we've seen throughout this book were strength, wisdom, honor. They were the very personification and embodiment of what it is to be spiritual.

Or so they thought. This was a church that had grown to resent Paul. His gospel was all caught up with the cross. He bleated on and on about sufferings. He focused on a symbol of defeat, of weakness.

[7 : 23] No, Paul. You're not worthy to be called an apostle. We can't get behind you. And do you know why? It's your life. That's the giveaway. Perhaps we'd take more heed of you if your message wasn't so marked by weakness.

Weakness in yourself. That's what we saw back in chapter 2 when Paul was with the Corinthians. He was so evidently weak. He trembled amongst them. They could see him in all his weakness.

Again in chapter 2, he wasn't a very powerful preacher. He didn't have eloquence or oratory skill like others. Paul, you're far too unimpressive to be the real deal.

Back in chapter 4, what kind of apostle, what kind of truly spiritual person has to work in the most basic of manual labor to support himself as Paul did?

Paul, you're puny, you're puny, and you're pea-brained. Paul, your life and ministry have as much hope as a dead body. You even say yourself that you die every day.

[8 : 32] Whereas the Corinthian church was full of people with the truly spiritual-looking gifts, weren't they? They had all the speaking gifts. They were the people who were wise and powerful and rich.

If the world was looking for a church to join, if they were looking for a church that was happening and worth joining, they'd have joined Christ Church Corinth. In the quest to maximize this life, the Corinthians have spiritualized worldliness.

That's all that they were. They were worldly. And the worldly view of death is that it ends all of our achievements. It flattens and crushes what sets us apart as special.

And we saw last week that this kind of thinking, in Paul's words, verse 19, is utterly pitiable. Squeezing every drop of strength out of this life, every drop of glory and achievement is pitiable.

Verse 34, living as if death slams the door shut and ends the party, is being like the drunk who makes a scene and stumbles onto the road in front of passing cars.

[9 : 44] That was Paul's conclusion to the question, how can some of you say there's no resurrection of the dead? And in our passage today, Paul moves on to the second big question, verse 35. How are the dead raised then?

With what kind of body do they come? And so having settled the reality of resurrection, the question comes, what are the workings of resurrection?

And it's the sort of question that is mocking and supercilious, isn't it? We see that by how Paul responds in verse 36, you foolish person. They're saying, pull the other one, Paul.

How can something dead be anything else? How can it be raised? With what sort of body do the bones and dust suddenly turn into? Let's bring it back down to earth.

Well, Paul builds on what he has said about his own pattern of ministry. He's already said he dies every day, that this life is not to be held onto because death will end it. No, instead, it's to be poured out because there is full life to come, even if it doesn't look like it.

[10 : 55] Paul's life was dying every day. It was working harder than anyone else. That's the power of the resurrection in this age. And so he goes on to say that his dying everyday life is the only thing that will bear the fruit of resurrection.

And for those who scoff, it isn't as otherworldly as you think. And so Paul's first point in these verses, verses 35 to 42, is that creation itself preaches that resurrection comes from death.

Creation preaches that resurrection comes from death. And so this life is not the main event. This body isn't going to last forever. Transformation is coming.

You see, the Corinthians were so caught up with this life that what they were doing was tantamount to putting a seed in a vase, to display a seed in all of its seed-like glory.

Or it was like stocking up the food cupboards with not the fruit of the harvest, but the seeds. Unplanted seeds. The Corinthians don't see that a seed gives way to something far, far better when it's planted.

[12 : 09] Can you imagine arriving at someone's house for Sunday lunch? You walk into the sitting room and smack bang on the table. In front of you is a lovely vase. No flowers, just seeds. Then they tell you what's on the menu.

Some pumpkin seeds. Things like that. And then for dessert, it's apple seeds. You'd think they'd lost their mind. Well, verse 36, Paul would be with you.

Don't be a fool. How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come? Certainly not the kind that we have now. I have a friend in ministry who told me that a new Christian in their church, when they heard about the future hope of resurrection, included new bodies.

Well, this new Christian responded by saying, What? I don't want a new body. I've worked hard to get this one. Well, we all know that the passing of time, with the passing of time, that that will change.

And they'd be glad that the resurrection body is somewhat different. But it shouldn't be a surprise, or even seem to be otherworldly, that death can lead to resurrection, and in a better, more glorious, and different body.

[13 : 22] To prove his point, Paul dives into agriculture. He says, look at a seed, and then look at what it produces. Verse 36, What you sow does not come to life until it dies.

First observation, A seed must die in order to bear fruit. It is only once the seed has died and fallen away that the sprouting of life comes.

So, death leads to life in some way. Verse 37, And what you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat, or some other grain.

Second observation, what is planted is not the same as the end product. We don't generally plant the fully fritted crop.

So, what is planted gives way for something infinitely more impressive. Verse 38, Third observation, Whilst lots of seeds look the same when they're planted, when they fruit, they take on completely different flowers or bodies.

[14 : 46] Sunflower seeds and pumpkin seeds don't look massively different. One slightly darker, the other slightly bigger. But on the whole, they have the same seed-like qualities. But when they have been sown and borne fruit, they couldn't look more unlike each other, could they?

And they couldn't look more unlike the seeds that were planted. And so, Paul is making clear that nature itself preaches the great transformation that is coming.

And he could use more examples than just seeds. Think about butterflies. Similar thing happens. And he's introducing the idea that not everyone is the same here.

And he will develop that in the next point. But for now, verse 39, he says, Not all flesh is the same. Humans are different from animals and from birds and from fish. Verse 40, There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies.

And they each have different kinds of glory. Verse 41, The sun, moon, and stars, they all differ in glory. Well, Paul's answer to the question, How are the dead raised?

[15 : 56] With what kind of body do they come? Well, his answer is to talk about seeds. He hasn't forgotten the question. Because look at verse 42. As it is, with all these seed-like things, so it is with the resurrection of the dead.

Paul is saying that nature has other examples of what will happen at resurrection. Death leads to life. And the body that is planted is different to the body that is raised.

Way back in lockdown, a few of us were involved in a sunflower growing competition. And it was a fascinating thing to see a tiny seed when planted and watered. And my tip is to add your used coffee grounds.

It's fascinating to see that little seeds then sprout up into a plant that's the size of a person. But how does it happen? One of our pots fell over early on and a seed was dislodged from the soil.

And you could see that the seed had started to open up. And the little green shoot was coming through. The shell was breaking away. It was dying. And out was sprouting life.

[17 : 08] That was the beginning of the seed falling away. And it died as the green shoot sprung up. That is what happens with resurrection. A seed can look as lifeless as a dead body.

But despite the unpromising look, it can both lead to life. And what is planted looks different.

So different from what grows. Paul's pattern of ministry was as unpromising looking as a dead body. The Corinthians were just so turned off by such a ghastly looking life.

But it is Paul's dying everyday passion of ministry that leads to an altogether more glorious looking future. It's Paul's ways in Christ that when planted leads to life.

My life in this age has to be inglorious. It has to be hard and costly because that is what leads to life. So verse 37, what we see is completely different to what will be raised.

[18 : 15] If this life is filled with strength and honor and riches and wisdom all by the world's standards, then in eternity, it won't produce glory.

Paul says back in chapter one that God has turned wisdom upside down. The way God works isn't to take what is good and great in the world's eyes and to make it better or to make sure that there is more of it.

It's not a quantity thing. God has turned it upside down. What looks utterly foolish to this world will be proven to be utterly wise.

The gospel, Paul's ministry of pouring himself out, of sacrificing, that looks crazy to the world. It looks like a waste of a life. It looks like we might as well be dead.

But, it is a life planted like that that will prove to be the liveliest thing that there is. Friends, if our lives are planted in glory, they won't be raised in it.

[19 : 23] Well, it's a fitting illustration, isn't it, to use seeds and planting? For Paul has already described Jesus' resurrection as the first fruit of ours. The first seed has been planted.

Jesus picked up his cross and he died. And that seed sprouted forth into glorious resurrection. We know what the seed produces.

The first fruit has sprouted. But what will we do with the seed? What we sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare kernel.

Who would put a seed on display? The time for us to marvel at what we are, the time to be seen as glorious is not nigh in these bodies. These are bare kernels, seeds to be planted, to be invested in a grand harvest that is to come.

A harvest from which we've already seen the fruit. The Corinthians were putting their seeds in a vase. They were putting the seeds on display. Nice, shiny seeds to be sure, but seeds nonetheless.

[20 : 35] And so Paul goes on to say that there are different kinds of glory. And we want to make sure we take hold of the right one, didn't we? Paul says, secondly, there are two men and two glories, verses 42 to 49.

There are two men and two glories. The shadows of two men, Adam and Christ, loom over all of mankind.

The best that can be had through Adam is a perishing glory. What we looked at in verses 38 to 41, the different bodies, well, that comes into focus now.

Paul begins to explain what he meant in verse 40, that there are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, and that the glories of each are different. Verse 42, Paul says, what is soon is perishable and what is raised is imperishable.

Think for a moment about how you measure your life. What is it that distinguishes you? What's the mark? What is it that would mark out your achievements?

[21 : 43] Is it your work? How far up the career ladder have you climbed? Is it university? Which one did you get into? What degree classification did you get?

Is it money? Well, how healthy is your bank account? How inflation-proof is it? How big's your salary? Are you beating the stock market this year? Is it family?

What is it that you long for for your children or your grandchildren? children? And here's a question. When you think about all those things, what will death do to them? What will any of that mean when death strikes?

How much of it will perish? Turn back to chapter 4. We've been here many times throughout our series. But we'll look at it again.

4 verse 8. Paul says, Already you have what you want. Already you've become rich. Without us, you have become kings. The Corinthians were living now, in this age, as if they have everything.

[22 : 55] They are living as if resurrection has already happened. Every day for them is a day of victory. Whereas, Paul's life is cross now and resurrection to come.

And look at the difference it makes. 4 verse 10. Paul, well, we are fools, but you are wise. We are weak, but you are strong.

You are held in honour, but we in disrepute. And on it goes throughout the rest of chapter 4. We'll turn back to chapter 15.

Verse 43. We see these exact same ideas, these same words, but reversed. it is soon in dishonour, it is raised in glory.

It is soon in weakness, it's raised in power. Paul is clear that whilst his life and ministry look unpromising, they will bring with them true and lasting glory.

[24 : 02] In the end, he will see power unlike anything that this world knows. And why is it better that this is enjoyed in the future? Well, his answer to that is because there are two kinds of glory.

One linked to Adam, which is earthly and from the dust, and one linked to Christ, which is from heaven. The Corinthians have bet the house on this world.

But notice verse 42. Paul sows what is perishable to enjoy that which is imperishable. So for Paul, what will perish is dishonor.

For Paul, what will perish is his weakness. What will perish is this natural body that's riddled with decay. What will perish for Paul is all that he inherited in Adam.

What will perish for the Corinthians? Glory, power, and the spiritual body. The perfected body, the body that will have no scars, no sickness, no sin.

[25 : 08] That's what they're giving up. There are two glories, perishable glory and imperishable glory. The Corinthians have put on display the seeds. They've gone for the perishable glory.

And so they'll lose out on the one that lasts. Paul works hard. He dies every day because he's going after the imperishable. Now these two men, Adam and Christ, they don't just represent two different kinds of glory.

They represent two ages, creation and new creation. Verses 42 to 44 are all parallels. It's sown, it's raised, it's sown, it's raised.

But that pattern slightly changes at the end of verse 44. Paul then says, if there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

And at this point, Paul is zooming out from what will happen to any individual believer and he's focusing on things at a cosmic level. The bodies that you and I have are perishable.

[26 : 17] They're ravaged by sin. The staining effects of the fall are so evident. We can't go through life without feeling pain and sadness, about struggle, about battling sin.

We are in decline. When you look in the mirror, is it a prettier sight now than it was five years ago? Now, I take it that up to verse 44, Paul has been talking about these sins to end bodies, but then there's a change.

Because the agricultural or gardening metaphor gives way to the shadows of these two men and the two men wield more influence on humanity than any others. Verse 45, there is the first Adam and the last Adam.

And Paul reasons that if there is a natural body, which is, I think, Adam before the fall, then there is a spiritual body. But notice, the spiritual body is not a now thing, despite what the Corinthians might like to think.

they might like to think that they are the spirituals, but not according to Paul. The quote in verse 45 is from Genesis chapter 2.

[27 : 34] Paul says, there is a natural man, God created him from the dust, and he breathed life into him. And so he became a living being. And I think what Paul is saying here is that God created a body that is for this age.

The natural from the dust body created in Adam. But now it is a body that has been spoiled and corrupted. But what Christ has done through his resurrection is to herald the dawning of a new age.

Notice the change. Up to verse 46, the contrast natural and spiritual. But then from verse 47, the contrast is heaven and earth. And for this new age, we need a different body.

We need a body not from the dust, not from the earth, but rather a body that is verse 47 like the last Adam from heaven. And that can only come through Christ.

What Paul quoted from Genesis 2 here by Adam is then echoed in the valley of dry bones in Ezekiel 37. And so just as God breathed life into Adam and he became a living being, likewise, as breath was breathed into the valley of dry bones, the dead were raised.

[28 : 54] Breath and resurrection. And so Paul says that whilst Adam became a living being, one from the dust who came to life, Jesus, through his own resurrection, actually becomes a life-giving spirit.

Just like to those dry bones, life is brought to that which was dead through Jesus. His resurrection sets our resurrection in motion.

His resurrection lines up for us a heavenly body, one which will see us enjoy full life forever. His resurrection engages us to our resurrection.

So verse 48, as was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust. Being Corinthian, cherishing this world, squeezing every drop of life out of this life before we die, that is to be of the dust, and to dust it will return.

And as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. Verse 46, it's the natural body first, this from the dust body, this now perishable one.

[30 : 13] Then second will come the spiritual body. Now it's important here to say that spiritual doesn't mean that the new body will not be physical.

Christ's resurrection was physical after all. He ate fish, he appeared, he was touched. But the natural and spiritual distinguishes between from the earth and from heaven.

Christ's resurrection has set in motion a whole new age for an eye. It is creation, but it will give way to new creation. Perishable will give way to imperishable.

And we will have bodies befitting the new age. Let us be clear. Any Christian, any church in this age is going to and ought to look feeble, feeling, and foolish.

it is ours in this age to look like the scum of the world, the refuse of all things. That's the language Paul uses of himself. And how familiar are we with that?

[31 : 22] When we pile up all the things that are against us in this world, the media, it's got no interest whatsoever in giving a positive light to faithful Christians. Other religions?

Well, we know brothers and sisters all around the world who are persecuted over belonging to Jesus. Governments? Well, they legislate all the time the kinds of things that blur and twist the truth.

All kinds of things that undermine God's pattern for humanity. What about the lecture halls? Well, they're against us too. Christian faith is just ridiculed in them, isn't it? And how often are we made to feel uncomfortable amongst our colleagues and friends, when discussions come up about how we see the world?

And then think about what we're armed with. Ours isn't to win the world through political means and power. Ours isn't to win the world by appealing to what people think they want.

Ours is to preach the cross and to pattern it. How on earth do we stand a chance in this world? What's the point?

[32 : 31] Have you ever felt like that? Well, Paul's message is clear. Death isn't the end. Death isn't going to prove us fools for wasting our lives. When throwing in our lot with the Lord, when our weeks and our lives are shaped around Jesus and his priorities and his church, then we know, we're assured that any cost, any loss is worth it.

The career that never was, the position that passed us by, the husband we always longed for, the honor that was never bestowed, the hobbies that never materialized, the busy retirement that's left you exhausted.

Far better to lose out in these and to long for that which will never be spoiled, that which will never fade. Better is coming. No sacrifice will be seen as a waste.

Verse 49, just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.

How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come? They're raised from ingloriousness, planted in what looks like failure, raised as truly spiritual, planted in weakness, raised unbreakable, planted in what looks like folly and raised fit for heaven, planted in what looks like loss and raised with riches, raised to be more real, more unflinching, raised in glory and to glory and for glory forever.

[34 : 16] Better is coming. That's why Paul finishes this chapter, verses 50 to 58. better is coming, victory is coming.

As unlikely as resurrection looks, the truth is that as we stick with Paul, we will see the defeat of death. Verse 50, Paul says, I tell you, this brother's flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

This life, as it is, cannot inherit the imperishable. We must first be given to dying, dying every day, and then to death.

Verse 51, Paul says, we shall not all be, we shall not all sleep, we shall not all be changed, that is, not every Christian is going to die, Jesus will return at some point, so not all will sleep, but look at this, we shall all be changed.

All of us who know the struggle of being a Christian in this age, we shall be changed, none left behind. It will happen, but how and when?

[35 : 32] Verse 52, well, it will happen in an instant, a day is coming when in an instant we will be changed. Even if we're dead, even if we are but bones or dust, we shall be changed in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye.

But that instant won't happen until the last trumpet sounds. The trumpet, that's a sign often used of the return of Christ. It won't happen until then. Jesus is coming back and it is only at his return that we will know the lasting effects of resurrection, but definitely at his return will we know the glorious effects of resurrection.

resurrection. We'll be in no doubt. We won't be left wondering, has it been worth it? Did we trade what glory we could have for nothing? No. We traded Adam in whom all die for Christ in whom all are made alive.

We traded dust for heaven. We traded seeds for a bountiful harvest. For now we wait, but it is coming and when the trumpet sounds we will be raised imperishable.

verse 53 that is what has to happen. That is what has to happen so that we can take hold of all that is true and glorious. And then look at what will happen in verse 54.

[36 : 57] Death will be done. It will be swallowed up, finished. Its shadow that looms large will be gone. Then will begin life without the threat of death.

In that instant, Clarence will be out of business. No more anti-aging creams. Bupa, that will be gone. No more need for health or life insurance. There will be no more doctor's surgeries or pharmacists or crematoriums.

There will be no more mocking or loss or opposition. No more police. No more lawyers. No more weakness. No more shame.

No more struggle. Death and all of its gruesome and grim threats and effects will be swallowed up in victory. Paul quotes from Isaiah here in verse 54 and he fuses that together with verse 55 which is drawn from Hosea.

Listen to Isaiah. He will swallow up death forever and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces and the reproach of his people he shall take away from all the earth for the Lord has spoken.

[38 : 09] That day is coming. That day will belong to all who stick with Paul. Death done. Sadness ceased. Opposition obliterated. And so we can ask the questions that Hosea speaks.

On that day we can shout to death to death. Have at me. Give me your best shot. Oh death where is your victory? It's gone because I'm raised imperishable.

Oh death where is your sting? Verse 56 the sting of death is sin. The power of sin is the law. On that day sin won't be able to touch us.

It won't be able to damn us. We will have been saved finally from its penalty its power and its presence because the first fruit of our resurrection Jesus himself was vindicated and justified and so we will be too.

Now as a church we're well acquainted with some of the costs of following Jesus. Is a new prime minister going to change that? Will a new year change that? It's unlikely.

[39 : 21] Looking at the trajectory of the West is it going to be costlier and costlier to follow Jesus? Almost certainly in my lifetime. And no doubt each of us will ask at some point is it worth it?

How can we face this? All the people that I studied with, all the people I trained with, they've got it all. Success, money, comfort. Whereas I'm tired, I'm stretched, I'm clinging on, I don't have the picturesque Instagram life.

Does that sound like you? Well, here's all you need to know. A day is coming when in an instant all of that struggle will be transformed, when you will put on immortality and put off all that hinders and all that hurts.

a day when the best that this world has to offer will be dust. It will have perished, but you will be imperishable. And all the sacrifice you've made to see the gospel take root in others' lives will have borne its fruit.

That hard, slow, and sometimes fruitless looking ministry that you've given yourself to will have blossomed. On that day, all the money that you didn't spend will have gone, it will be dust.

[40 : 30] But every person you've helped bring to Christ won't be gone. Your title at work, doctor, head of this, director of that, will be gone, dust.

But every brother or sister encouraged to stay the course because of your struggle will be a lasting legacy. It won't turn to dust. The family that you missed out on because you wouldn't compromise on your church family, choosing those who would be the bride of Christ over being the bride here and now, well, your church family won't be dust.

They'll be raised with you. Verse 57, victory is coming. Thanks be to God, and he is no man's debtor. And so Paul returns to where he began this chapter.

The power of the resurrection in this age, the promise of the resurrection to come beckons us to be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, as unpromising as it will look.

We knew that in the Lord our labor is not in vain. The crown beckons us to take up the cross.

[41 : 52] Let's pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Father, we ask that you would give us eyes to see that which will last.

And by your grace, grant us to leave all the rest behind. Help us that we might squeeze every drop of service for you and your kingdom out of this life.

For we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.