

Your labour in the Lord is not in vain!

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[0 : 0 0] let's read from God's word but someone will ask you how are the dead raised with what kind of body will they come how foolish what you sow does not come to life unless it dies when you sow you do not plant the body that will be but just a seed perhaps of wheat or of something else but God gives it a body as he has determined and to each kind of seed he gives its own body not all flesh is the same people have one kind of flesh animals have another birds have another and fish another there are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is of one kind and the splendor of the earthly bodies is another the sun has one kind of splendor the moon another and the stars another and star differs from star in splendor so will it be with the resurrection of the dead the body that is sown perishable it is raised imperishable it is sown in dishonor it is raised in glory it is sown in weakness it is raised in power it is sown a natural body it is raised a spiritual body if there is a natural body there is also a spiritual body so it is written the first man Adam became a living being the last Adam a life-giving spirit the spiritual did not come first but the natural and after that the spiritual the first man of the dust of the earth the second man is of heaven as was the earthly man so are those who are of the earth and as is the heavenly man so also are those who are of heaven and just as we have borne the image of the earthly man so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man

I declare to you brothers and sisters that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable listen I tell you a mystery we will not all sleep but we will all be changed in a flash in a twinkling of an eye at the last trumpet for the trumpet will sound the dead will be raised imperishable and we will be changed for the perishable must close itself with the imperishable and the mortal with immortality when the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable and the mortal with immortality then the saying that is written will come true death has been swallowed up in victory where oh death is your victory where oh death is your sting the sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law but thanks be to God he gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ therefore my dear brothers and sisters stand firm let nothing move you always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain thanks Derek for reading good morning St Silas if we've not met before my name is Martin Ayres

I'm the lead pastor here it's great to see a few new people here as a church what we do is we work through the Bible chapter by chapter week by week so that we're letting God set the agenda and we believe that in the Bible God speaks to us by his spirit today as a present word about his son and so what we're looking for now is that we would hear God speak to us and be able to discern what that means for us today as we look to know God and live for God as a church so if you could keep your Bibles open if they've fallen closed just to head back to 1 Corinthians chapter 15 that would be a great help in the church Bibles it's page 1157 and we're just gonna I'm just gonna lead us in a prayer where we ask for God's help as we turn to his words let's pray heavenly Father may the words of my mouth and the thoughts and reflections of all of our hearts be pleasing in your sight O Lord our rock and our redeemer

Amen well last week we heard about some different views of reality today as we were in an earlier part of the chapter and one of them was just verse 32 if you just look down there at the bottom of the page where Paul the apostle says if the dead are not raised let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die in other words it makes sense doesn't it if there's no afterlife to enjoy this one as best you can and that's the message that we hear all around us this life is all there is make the most of it it's all we've got we could think about YOLO you only live once people's bucket lists people ticking off the things they want to do and see before they die they want to see the northern lights from Iceland they want to go and see the Great Wall of China the Sydney Opera House they want to do the Inca

Trail we think of FOMO the idea of the fear of missing out on what other people are doing or on opportunities the anxiety of Swifties

Taylor Swift fans if they've missed out on getting tickets for her ERA's tour when it comes to Scotland next year and there's nothing wrong with wanting to go but the sense of despair for people who've missed out on the tickets people around us are striving striving in this life because they think these things are all there is you know the home the career the holidays the cars the travel this is what it's all about let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die but not everyone around us actually lives like that because sometimes we find ourselves arriving at the horrible realisation that whatever you choose to live for death is going to spoil it so we see another view of life in our culture the hope that somehow we might in some way be able to cheat death or at least put it off for much longer we see it in the love that we have for the National Health Service the adulation that we give to surgeons we glimpse it in the gym memberships exercise regimes beauty regimes in cosmetic surgery as a massive growing industry in diets and supplements

[7 : 31] Brian Johnson is an e-commerce entrepreneur and he is very very rich he lives his life now according to an algorithm that he developed called Blueprint and he hopes that this way of living will keep him at the physical biological age of 17 even though he's now 46 years old he spends 2 million dollars a year on this project and he's got he's employed a team of 30 doctors and experts he takes 100 pills every day he eats all his meals before 11am and he goes to bed alone every night at 8.30 he recently was speaking about how he wonders why he's still single he bathes his body in LED light and the picture there is not of him and his younger son that's him and his son and he injects himself with blood from his son as part of the project but even though by some measures he is extremely healthy you might think he doesn't actually look very healthy but by some measures he is extremely healthy for a 46 year old much older than me but critics say that the reality is he's not actually getting any younger age will creep up on him and it is creeping up on him he describes himself as the world's most measured human but one day he's going to die and you could argue that by limiting his whole life in the way that he is death has already won over him it's enslaved him so whether you go down in hedonistic glory or you are devoted and disciplined enough to stay healthy and to try and live much longer than others the reality is death has dominion over us our clocks are ticking and it shapes how we live it shapes the choices we make every day so what does

God say well this is our third week in this chapter 1 Corinthians 15 written by the apostle Paul to a church that he planted a few years before and here in this chapter he sets out the certain Christian hope that every Christian will live forever the reason for this chapter seems to be in verse 12 if you just look back there where he says if it's preached that Christ has been raised from the dead how can some of you say that there is no resurrection from the dead so evidently some of the Christians in this church in Corinth they had misunderstood what it meant to hope as a Christian they didn't think that there would be a future resurrection to look forward to and that's not a bolt from the blue in this letter to hear that for it makes sense of so many problems that we've been learning about in this letter that this church had they tolerated and even celebrated sexual immorality as though it doesn't matter what you do with your body as though true spirituality is somehow disconnected from your body they indulged their freedoms as Christians enjoying them and living them out even if they could see that it was discouraging other people or undermining their witness to the outside world and we heard in chapters 12 to 14 this was a very gifted church they had spiritual gifts we heard about these gifts of tongues and prophecy and words of knowledge but they were using those gifts to exalt themselves and kind of divide themselves from others who didn't have those gifts well folks here are the marks of a church who think that true spirituality is about living your best life now with God's help they are triumphalistic they've lost the Christian pattern the pattern we get from Jesus of living a cross shaped life now for the joy that will one day follow so Paul started the chapter with what he calls matters of first importance that Jesus Christ was definitely dead the Romans definitely killed him he was buried and he definitely rose and he was definitely seen alive again at one time by over 500 people at the same time and in verse 22 he clarifies that that resurrection of Jesus that historical event every Christian will be part of that same harvest verse 22 he says for since death came through a man sorry verse 22 for as in Adam all die so in Christ all will be made alive but each in turn

Christ the first fruits then when he comes those who belong to him and this morning we've got three truths about our future and then at the end two implications two responses for today so first three truths about our future and the first is your future body will be different there was probably a scoffing

tone about the question that's asked in verse 35 if you just have a look but someone will ask how are the dead raised with what kind of body will they come so Paul doesn't say what people often say today when you ask a question that's a really good question you notice that he says how foolish verse 36 and he gives us pictures of God and the future body that look different from our current bodies they'll still recognizably be us the bodies that we get there's continuity but it's transformed will be transformed and he says our illustration of God's ability to do that and his plan to do that is right in front of us if you look at verse 37 when you sow you do not plant the body that will be but just a seed perhaps of wheat or of something else but God gives it a body as he has determined and to each kind of seed he gives its own body in verse 39 he takes us around the zoo or the safari park he says look at the fish in the aquarium go to the insect room go in the aviary and look at the birds go to the wild cat's enclosure and you'll see among animal the animal world there are tremendous varieties of flesh that God has made in verse 41 he moves to the cosmos the sun has one kind of splendor it's this exploding gas giant the moon another though it looks splendid to us it's actually a cold rock as we know it's just reflecting the splendor of the sun different stars are very different from one another in how they display their different types of splendor and then he says so will it be at the resurrection of the dead in other words why would it be difficult for us to grasp and to believe that God has the ability to give us transformed resurrection bodies so that we don't need to speculate on well what age will my resurrection body be in the new creation how old am I going to look or am I still going to have the same nose you know either because you know I really like my nose or I really don't like my nose or what about my tattoos am I still going to have my tattoos we don't need to speculate like that because we see all around us how God can create with awesome variety and our resurrection bodies they're going to be of a different nature to our bodies here on Great Western Road at the moment you can collect conkers with kids I'm assuming you did that if you do it you do it with kids you could do it without kids but the horse chestnut trees tower above you and you get these little shells don't you when you can break them open you get the little conker inside and for children it fills them with wonder to think that by this going into the ground something so awesome and sturdy and stable and vast could grow but the conker the seed does have to fall to the ground the seed has to break up for that life to come that new life and in the same way God will raise everyone who falls to the ground trusting in Christ and that picture of the glorious tree or the stars in their splendor leads us to our second point your future body will be different we've heard also your future body will be glorious that's in verses 42 to 49 Paul continues with this series of contrasts between the body we saw the body that falls to the ground and the body that is reaped the body that is raised look with me at verse 42 the body that is sown is perishable it is raised imperishable and some bodies bear the marks of persecution if you'd seen Paul himself and he'd taken off his shirt you'd have seen on his back the scars from the five times that he was flogged for his testimony about Jesus 39 lashings five times but he says next to the body it is sown in dishonor it is raised in glory then thinking about human frailty just the frailty the brokenness of our bodies it is sown in weakness it is raised in power and then thinking about our fallen nature our sinful nature verse 44 it is sown a natural body it is raised a spiritual body and then we hear more about this new spiritual body in the next few verses not that we are unspiritual now if we trust Jesus we are spiritual people in Colossians chapter 3 it says we've been raised with Christ already spiritually we have spiritual life but in terms of our physical bodies though the spirit dwells in us we are still biologically like Adam the first man he was his body came from the dust [17:41] God created him from the dust and we are like chips off the old block but Jesus renewed physical body is a transformed body fit for the new creation so in verse 49 Paul writes just as we've been born we have born the image of the earthly man Adam so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man the Lord Jesus Christ and Jesus' resurrection body is a glorious one he appeared alive to his disciples they could recognize him he had the marks in his hands from where the nails had been but he appeared to them through locked doors it seems that he could move through the walls and it may be it may well be that Jesus' resurrection body today is transformed again since his ascension if you think about how Peter, James and John saw him as that he took them up a mountain and he was transfigured before him his clothes were blindingly bright and it may be that he has some of that glory now that wasn't even seen between his resurrection and ascension and so our resurrection bodies they're going to be transformed by the presence of the Holy Spirit to be both physical and spiritual fit for glory so we tend to think of this life as the big one and any notion of an afterlife as some kind of dreamy ghost-like after party a kind of nothingness with benefits that's what one of my friends once described how she imagined life after death she was dying actually

and not a Christian and she said

I think it will be like nothingness with benefits if we think like that we might get some comfort in the face of death but ultimately we're still going to have our bucket lists for this life the fear of missing out because we think this life is the main event I've got to get the most out of it that I can and God in this chapter calls us to see things the other way around we know a couple who are moving into their new home soon and they hope they'll live there for many years it will be a good home for them for many years to come but when they bought it it wasn't ready for them to move the way the sale worked so they've sold their old home and they've had to move into a temporary house while they wait for their new home their future home to be ready and so they've found one on Airbnb and it's unglamorous it's underwhelming but that's okay because they know that their future home is coming where they'll be for many years so they can sit in a drafty room looking at the 1980s wallpaper and think to themselves it's going to be so good to get into that new home when it's ready and so it is when we think about our Christian lives this life with our mortal bodies now these really are the wilderness years before we get to the promised land and of course this is wonderful news my friends Nick and Dorothy they live in the Republic of Ireland where they have two children William, their son has Duchenne muscular dystrophy it's a life limiting muscle wasting condition and there is no cure William is 10 and he will need a wheelchair soon when he gets older the day will come when he starts needing ventilation to breathe first during the night and then it will be during the day as well and already day by day there are struggles for William that Nick and Dorothy his parents have to live with him through he struggles to make friends at school because he can't keep up with the other children in the playground sometimes on Sunday morning at church he taps his mum to say he can't stand to sing because his muscles aren't working well and Nick his dad says this Jesus knows our suffering we know the day will come when Jesus will look at us like the day he looks at the woman he heals in Luke's gospel and say to us like he said to her be free from your suffering

Nick also says I think about the resurrection every day Dorothy says we know William is trusting Jesus he will run and jump and what joy there will be in eternity and knowing that that's what's coming and we don't have it yet helps us with our expectations for this life so that's in our third truth about the future it's that your body will be indestructible in verses 50 to 57 in verse 51 Paul calls dying for the Christian just like falling asleep because we'll wake up have a look verse 51 listen I tell you a mystery we will not all sleep but we will all be changed in other words some people will be alive on the day of Christ the day he appears in glory and we're not to worry for those who have died before he returns verse 52 in a flash in the twinkling of an eye at the last trumpet for the trumpet will sound the dead will be raised imperishable and we will all be changed he talks about it as being clothed in verse 53 clothed with our new resurrection bodies and then in verse 54 he says about that future when the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable and the mortal with immortality then the saying that is written will come true death has been swallowed up in victory so there is a great victory that will be won by Jesus over death and it will come in the future earlier in the chapter the apostle Paul talked about how God will place all Jesus enemies under his feet but he said in verse 26 the last enemy to be destroyed is death now why does he say that that death is the last enemy because he hasn't been destroyed yet death is still an enemy for each of us today and we see that all around us don't we and these verses they vindicate the immense sadness we still feel even with Christian hope about death just where we live in the rectory across the road from our home there is the old pavilion of Anisland

Rugby Club and when an old member dies they lower the flag to half mast so you look out the window and the flag is at half mast and they lower the flag like that you fly a flag at half mast to make room because on that day the invisible flag of death is on top of the flagpole death has gained another victim he reigns that day and we feel that sense of being robbed by death whenever we miss someone that we love and remember they're not there perhaps most of all we feel it when someone dies young four years ago Millian Toby known to people in our church just married teachers committed Christians were on holiday in Greece and tragically the buggy they were renting crashed it fell down a ravine and they both died 25 years old two years ago a guy that Kathy and I had known in London Ed Nelson since we left London he'd gone to Paris he was a church planter in Paris married to Laura four children

[25 : 37] Nicholas Sam Alex and Lucy all still at home they went on a climbing holiday in the Alps and he fell to his death in a tragic accident and anyone going to those funerals knows that death is

gut-wrenchingly awful if you're a Christian death is a horrible thing if you're a non-Christian it's a horrible thing so this morning we hear God's promise of unspeakable comfort that one day the Lord Jesus Christ will announce that at last the time has come to take down the flag of death's victory and raise in its place his flag the flag that declares his victory as he grants his people new life with him forever and truly on that day we will be able to say death where is your victory?

death has lost its sting so Paul exclaims in verse 57 but thanks be to God he gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ and friends what relief for any of us whose bodies are not what they used to be for the woman with dementia for the man with motor neuron disease for the person who has a fall and the doctors say we'll do our best for you but because of your age you'll never really recover hear the promise that one day the trumpet of victory will sound and every eye will see Jesus return and he will raise all who have died trusting him by the power that raised him and he will clothe them with glorious indestructible new bodies three truths about our future our future bodies will be different they will be glorious they will never wear out and Paul gives us two responses for today we get them in verse 58 the last verse of this magnificent chapter in fact let's just read them together so have a look down at verse 58 and if you've got a Bible open let's read them together verse 58 therefore my dear brothers and sisters stand firm let nothing move you always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain so first then stand firm let nothing move you he doesn't mean this about everything I've got a Christian friend who not so long ago I said to him that I wondered if he had a bit of a stubborn streak and he said well Martin that's biblical it says in the Bible stand firm let nothing move you well no don't be stubborn about everything but be stubborn about the gospel don't let anyone move you from it Paul started chapter 15 by saying this is the message that he received from the Lord Jesus and he's passed it on to them they received it and they've taken their stand on it and he says you will be saved by this message if you hold to it firmly and so he ends the chapter saying therefore stand firm in it don't let anyone move you on from this message then the second response well I called it a second response but I've just wondered as well as I've thought more about this verse whether it's the same response that the next bit is about how we work for the Lord but actually that's how you stand firm in the gospel is you live it out by devoting yourself to the work of the Lord look at how Paul uses words here to emphasize complete devotion to the task that Jesus gives us verse 58 always give yourself fully to the work of the Lord in other words the work of the Lord is a priority that should take hold of you and govern you in your whole life and when Paul talks here about the work of the Lord he's got something specific in mind in the next chapter he talks about his work and his core worker

Timothy's work as the work of the Lord it's the work that he described for us in chapter 3 the work of making disciples by bringing God's word to bear about Jesus so that people become disciples and they continue and grow as disciples in other words the work of the Lord in this verse is gospel work it's being a servant of the word of God and gospel work is hard work because it's living like Jesus for every Christian and speaking about what we believe about him the apostle Paul in chapter 9 said that he becomes all things to all people so that by all means possible he might save some he talked about his freedoms and his rights and then he said that he doesn't he lays them all down his freedoms and his rights for the sake of others and their standing in Christ and he urges them the church there to use all the gifts

God's given them for the sake of others being strengthened and encouraged the work of the Lord is sacrificial work it can be hard to keep going with it and that's true of people who step away from their secular job to do kind of gospel ministry full time I've got a friend who's in ministry and I was talking to him recently and he was saying that he just finds that again and again in life he finds himself daydreaming about the cost that he's faced for going into full time Christian ministry he thinks about the job that he was doing and what life would be like if he'd stayed in it that he would have made a lot more money and he would have had a lot more kind of respect and glory from the job that he was in he would have had a much greater sense of control over his time and over where he lives and over his future but devoting yourself fully to the work of the Lord is sacrificial and that's somebody who's kind of made it their full time job but actually of course that is true of any of us in whatever job we have or however we spend our days if we're going to devote ourselves as well to the work of the Lord

[32 : 08] I think of a friend who had a choice on whether to do a PhD on top of his full time job that would have related to his work but he knew that if he took on the PhD he wouldn't be able to carry

on doing youth ministry at his church a friend who was asked to apply for a promotion at work by his boss but he decided not to do it because he knew that he wouldn't be able to lead his roots group if he took on the promotion and he knew how important that group was for the people in it and for himself we might think of the people who served here on Friday to make the quiz night happen giving time showing up trying to help us all of us to reach out people inviting friends to the life course cooking for the life course well Paul has given us this magnificent chapter of promise from God and he doesn't say at the end so go away and rejoice he says so go away and get to work devote yourself fully always to the work of the Lord why because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain it's worth making your life look like

Jesus' life because this isn't your only life if your life looks like Jesus' life did now then your future life will look like his now this isn't even your main life it's your spare it's your Airbnb life it's underwhelming but we're just passing through on the way to resurrection bodies and folks we need to hear this don't we I know I need to hear it that in a thousand years time it's going to be absolutely fine that I missed out on some stuff in this life it will be meaningless it will be laughable you'll be in your glorious resurrection body and it's indestructible and it's worth devoting yourself fully to the work of the Lord always because our work for the Lord can give that glorious resurrection body and life to others our work is never in vain because anyone who comes to faith and keeps going in faith is going to live forever so when we think about the cost of serving

Jesus to make him known today how will it feel different 200 years into the new creation when there's someone there who finds you and thanks you because your work for the Lord contributed to them hearing about Jesus and because they heard about him they are enjoying forever with you with a glorious body let's have a moment of quiet to reflect on what God says to us in this chapter and then I'll lead us in a prayer heavenly father we praise you for resurrection hope we thank you that Christ is risen and we thank you that our labor in the Lord is never in vain father you know our hearts and our minds our struggles to believe this functionally day by day we ask that in your mercy and for our good and for your glory you would make these truths sink deeply into us and grant us the faith to live today in a way that matches this glorious future hope that we would always give ourselves fully to this work for we ask in Jesus name amen oh peace