

Resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15 (10) - Abounding in the Work of the Lord

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 07 May 2023

Preacher: Rev James Maciver

[0 : 00] Let's begin our worship singing in Psalm 113. 113, that's on page 393. The tune is St. Columba.

We'll sing the whole of the psalm. Praise God, ye servants of the Lord. O praise the Lord's name, praise. Yea, blessed be the name of God from this time forth always. From rising sun to where it sets, God's name is to be praised. Above all nations, God is high. Above heavens, his glory raised. And so on through to the end of the psalm.

Praise God, ye servants of the Lord. Praise God, ye servants of the Lord.

O praise the Lord's name, praise. Yea, blessed be the name of God.

[1 : 10] From this time forth always. From rising sun to where it sets, God's name is to be praised.

Above all nations, God is high. Above all nations, God is high. Above all nations, God is high.

God is high. As many login, if you see you in the wall. Go home, if you are The biblical peace andapi, For by your surrendering peace and money have a chance.

For by your return, Jesus, bless the cross, God is high. Though may you see you in the wall. for divorce.

For life, you will allow more than you see you. of things to see in men under the dark he from the dust that pays the pure that ready hope doth lie and from the earth ill is the man oppressed with poverty that he may hide free him advance and when the princes sent with those that all his people are the chief he princes reign low of rest he is theanner

[3 : 58] Handsome, mother, full of joy. Praise to the Lord, give me.

Let's now call upon the Lord in prayer. Let's join together in prayer. Lord, we give thanks for these great words where we are reminded of your own condescension and love and mercy toward us.

For you are described as the one who humbles himself to see everything that is in heaven and earth. And we acknowledge, Lord, with thankfulness tonight that you humbled yourself even to come to the point of death on the cross so that your people might come to enjoy life with you.

We thank you, Lord, tonight for this privilege we have once again of gathering together to praise you for all that you are, for all that you have done, for all that you continue to do, and for all the promises we have of what you will do yet.

We give thanks, O Lord, that you are incomparable, that there is none like you, that you are worthy to be worshipped, and you alone are worthy to be worshipped.

[5 : 17] We thank you tonight, Lord, for the privilege we have of engaging in worship together. We thank you for the privilege we have of coming individually before you, even in the privacy of our own hearts and our own homes.

But we thank you, O Lord, that you commend to us the gathering of your people together, and that you take delight in coming to meet with your people as they are gathered together, even as we are now.

We pray, O Lord, that we may know your presence, that your own touch may be upon us, that our minds may be opened once again to receive the gospel, to receive the teaching of your word.

Help us, we pray, to come willingly to submit our mind to your word. We know that your word has your own authority, that it carries that great imprint of your own authority upon it.

We pray that as we give respect to all that you have revealed of yourself in your word, of all that you tell us of the creation we belong to, and of ourselves as human beings.

[6 : 21] O Lord, we thank you especially for the emphasis we have in your word, on your love and on your mercy, on your provision of grace and compassion in the Lord Jesus Christ, of salvation in

abundance in him.

And we thank you tonight that we have access to you through him in such a way that would come, Lord, directly into your presence to speak with you in prayer, as well as to give our voices to your praise.

Help us, Lord, we pray tonight to be concerned, to gather once more into our hearts the teaching of your word, and to do so with a resolve that we will apply it to our lives in the way we live from day to day.

And we give thanks, O Lord, that your word is especially relevant for us in the age that we belong to, as it has been in every age before now and every age that will follow us.

And we thank you that your word itself has taken account of all our conditions, all our circumstances and states in which we find ourselves in this life. And we give thanks, Lord, for the comprehensiveness of your word, that it includes all such human situations, so that you address us, Lord, in your truth in a way that will benefit from it.

[7 : 40] We pray your blessing to be with us here as a congregation of your people from week to week. We give thanks, Lord, for all that we are able to engage in from one Sabbath to the next, and for the things that take place here in the name of the congregation from week to week, during weeknights and weekdays as well.

And we give thanks, Lord, for the testimony that we are able to give to the gospel and to the love of Christ, whether it be practically or in other ways expressed. We pray that all of these efforts will meet with your blessing.

We ask, Lord, for the work that is done from the youngest group in the congregation through to the over 55s and fellowship. And we ask that all of these activities, Lord, may be blessed by you.

We pray for those who enjoy coming together to meet together informally and for the way that this will continue on Fridays and the weeks and months to come. We ask, Lord, that all of the ways in which we seek to present the love of Christ and in which we seek to engage with others in practical provision for them, that you would be pleased to bless it.

We pray your blessing for our children. We pray for them, Lord, in creche and in tweenies and in Sunday school and in the YF and Bible class. We thank you for them.

[9 : 04] We thank you for the encouragement it gives us that they belong to our congregation here. And we give thanks, Lord, that we are encouraged that parents bring their children to be participants in worship and engaged, O Lord, in the teaching of your truth.

We pray that that will be blessed to themselves as parents as well as to their children. And we ask that you would help us constantly, Lord, to bear our children and young people and parents before you in prayer.

For we know that we live in difficult times, O Lord, that in your wisdom and providence you have brought to us situations that we would not have anticipated or wanted to be part of ourselves.

And yet this in your wisdom is what you have done and you have come, Lord, to make challenges and difficulties for us in these days in which we live.

And yet we give thanks that these are but further opportunities to present our testimony and witness to the Lord and to the sufficiency of His grace. And we pray that you would bless us in that regard.

[10 : 08] We ask your blessing too, Lord, tonight for all those who are preparing to go to camps, those who are preparing as leaders of camps. And we pray, as we've been reminded in our notices today, Lord, we pray for the church in Moldova, for those who are preparing there for a camp, and we pray for those who are engaged in help and fundraising here.

Bless them and encourage them. Lord, we know how close they are to conflict now in their own part of the world and the difficulties that have been made for them by an influx of so many people from Ukraine during the conflict there.

We pray, Lord, that you would bless your church there too. And we ask that you would bring about peace in these areas. We long, Lord, to see the cessation of war.

We pray for tyranny to be overcome. We pray, Lord, that your people may be encouraged in all of these lands. And we pray that we may hear with interest of developments from day to day so that we can come and bring our informed prayers to you in their regard.

We ask, O God, too, that you would continue to bless those who prepare for other ways of outreach in our own locality here. And we ask that you would lead us as a congregation.

[11 : 29] And as we are burdened for those around us, we pray that you would increase that for us, that you would help us to see the plight of those who live without Christ, those who face a lost eternity, and those around us, Lord, who are so unfamiliar with the gospel, even though it is with us in abundance.

Oh, bless them. We pray and bless the gospel throughout our communities. Bless our schools. Bless our teachers. Bless each and all, O Lord, who witness to you in this regard. We pray for them and the challenges that they face in our day as well. And we ask that they and our parents together may come to know your leading and guidance during this difficult time. We ask you a blessing, too, for those tonight who mourn the passing of loved ones, who continue to mourn over their passing, who still feel the pain of parting in their hearts. Lord, we pray that you would bless them with your comfort. Be pleased to strengthen them, Lord, we pray, and encourage them at this time. We ask for those who are ill and pray for those in hospital.

[12 : 37] We give thanks for those who have recovered. We pray that you would bless them as they return home. We pray, O Lord, that all of those that we know are laid aside at this time will know your blessing for themselves and for their families.

And we pray for little Everly, Lord, as she has been safely delivered. And we pray that your blessing will be with her in her young life. Bless her, we pray, and be with Kiana and Alistair, her parents, with her grandparents.

We thank you for hearing our prayers for them and for our safe delivery. And we pray that you would continue to bless them as a family in these days to come. Now, Lord, we ask that you would hear us in our prayers here and that you would bless us and bless all, O Lord, others whom we remember as well before you.

and we pray that you would continue to provide for us even more than we are able to ask or even think. For we pray all seeking cleansing from all our sin.

For Jesus' sake. Amen. We're going to sing once again to God's praise. We're singing this time in Psalm number 30. Psalm 30, that's in the Sing Psalms on page 35.

[13 : 52] The tune this time is St. Minver. We're singing verses 9 to 12. What gain will my destruction bring if I descend to death?

Will dust proclaim your faithfulness or praise you with its breath? Hear as I cry, O Lord my God, and listen to my plea. Come to my aid in my distress.

Have mercy, Lord, on me. You turned my wailing into dance. No longer was I sad. My sackcloth gone, you gave me clothes of joy, and I was glad.

Therefore, my heart will sing to you and never cease to praise. To your great name, O Lord my God, I will give thanks always. These verses then to God's praise.

What gain will my destruction bring if I descend to death?

[15 : 00] will dust proclaim your faithfulness, or praise you with its breath?

O Lord my God, and listen to my plea.

Come to my aid in my distress.

Have mercy, Lord, on me. You turned my wailing end to dance.

No longer was I sad. My sackcloth gone, you gave me clothes of joy, and I was glad.

[16 : 24] Therefore, my heart will sing to you, and never cease to praise.

To your great name, O Lord my God, I will give thanks always.

Now let's read from God's Word. We're reading tonight in 1 Thessalonians. Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians.

And it's chapter 2 at verse 17 through to the end of chapter 3. So it's 1 Thessalonians chapter 2 and from verse 17.

But since we were torn away from you, brothers, for a short time, in person, not in heart, we endeavored the more eagerly with great desire to see you face to face.

[17 : 41] Because we wanted to come to you, I, Paul, again and again, but Satan hindered us. For what is our hope, or joy, or crown, or boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming?

Is it not you? For you are our glory and joy. Therefore, when we could bear it no longer, we were willing to be left behind at Athens alone. And we sent Timothy, our brother, and God's co-worker in the gospel of Christ, to establish and exhort you in your faith.

Let no one be moved by these afflictions. For you yourselves know that we are destined for this. For when we were with you, we kept telling you beforehand that we were to suffer affliction just as it has come to pass, and just as you know.

For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about your faith for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labor would be in vain.

But now that Timothy has come to us from you and has brought us the good news of your faith and love and reported that you always remember us kindly and long to see us as we long to see you.

[18 : 54] For this reason, brothers, in all our distress and affliction, we have been comforted about you through your faith. For now we live if you are standing fast in the Lord.

For what thanksgiving can we return to God for you? For all the joy that we feel for your sake before our God, as we pray most earnestly night and day, that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith.

Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you, and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

We pray that God, once again, will follow with his blessing this portion of his word. We're singing next in Psalm 68. Psalm number 68, this again is in the Scottish Psalter on page 305, and tune this time in St. Lawrence.

Singing verses 32 to 35. O all ye kingdoms of the earth, sing praises to this King, for he is Lord that ruleth all, and to him praises sing.

[20 : 26] To him that rides on heaven of heavens which he of old had found, lo, he sends out his voice, a voice in might that doth abound. Strength unto God do ye ascribe, for his excellency is over Israel.

His strength is in the clouds most high. Thou art from thy temple, dreadful Lord, Israel's own God is he, who gives his people strength and power.

O let God blessed be. So these verses to the tune, St. Lawrence, O all ye kingdoms of the earth.

Sing praises to this King, For he is Lord that ruleth all, and to him praises sing.

To him that rides on hands of heavens which he of old had found, lo, he sends out his voice, a voice, and light that doth abound.

Strength unto God do ye ascribe, For his excellency is over his heart, Well his strength has stayed, the gods' most high.

[22 : 33] Thou art from thy temple, Thou art from thy temple, Thou art from thy temple, or art, Israel's own God is he, Who gives His people strength and power, O Lamb of blessed be.

Now please turn with me to 1 Corinthians chapter 15. And we're just bringing our studies through this chapter to an end this evening, looking at verse 58.

1 Corinthians chapter 15, and the final verse of the chapter. 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.

Now there's a very important word at the beginning of that verse, the word therefore. Maybe it doesn't seem that important, but it's one of those important joining words that you find all the way through, especially through Paul's epistles, where what he's doing by using the word therefore is taking everything that he has said in the previous verses of this great chapter, and he's actually now channeling them all into this final conclusion.

If you think of the great doctrine of the resurrection that we've gone through, both Christ's own resurrection, the resurrection of the Lord's people, and the defeat of death, as we saw there last time.

[24 : 20] If you take that as a great reservoir of truth, if you like, and here is Paul, if you like, just opening the sluice gate, and out comes this rushing torrent of truth of doctrine, and it actually hits this particular point, this practical point, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

And that's consistent with the way the Bible brings us doctrine so often, isn't it? Some of the biggest points of teaching, some of the deepest truths that you find, even truths that we cannot really plumb the whole depths of, but they're so often used in such a way that will affect us practically.

For example, you think of the Lord himself and his compassion and the humbling of himself. And not only is that given us so that we'll appreciate what he's done, but so that we'll carry that with us and apply it into the kind of life and lifestyle that the Lord requires of his people.

You'll find the same here, having looked at the defeat of death and all of this great mighty doctrine of Christ's resurrection and our resurrection.

Here it is now flowing into this final verse, this conclusion by which he wraps up this point and by which he applies all the weight of that doctrine into this practical application as to what a Christian congregation should be, what a Christian life consists of, what Christian service is about.

[25 : 54] Therefore, my beloved brothers, in relation to everything I said, is what he means. Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

And it's also important how he speaks there about them as his beloved brothers. And of course, that means the women as well as the men. All the people, the saints in this church in Corinth, as they're believers in Christ, he's embracing them in this terminology where he says, my beloved brothers.

And that's quite remarkable when you think about it. Because here's a church that really gave the apostle so many headaches, so many sleepless nights. He's written this epistle to them that's full of counsel, of advice, of rebuke, of teaching, because in many ways they were all over the place doctrinally.

They were riven with divisions, all sorts of things as you go through the chapter, as you read the things that Paul is saying to them. And yet here he is coming to the end of this epistle near enough. And he's saying, therefore, my beloved brothers.

You see, he's not saying to them, I know what you've done, and I can't really speak to you in love. Yet that's what he's doing. I'm speaking to you as my beloved brothers, my beloved fellow Christians.

[27 : 17] And you know, that reminds us tonight of something very important. Remarkable as this is indeed in Paul's writing. It's something that is so applicable to our Christian life in its entirety, where the lesson is that love is foundational to everything we do.

Love is foundational to the life of the church, to the interaction of Christians with each other, to the way in which we seek to live together in the gospel, in which we worship God, in which we reach out with the gospel, in which we face difficulties and challenges and trials.

But love has to undergird everything. My brothers in love, he's saying. This is what he's saying, therefore. Saying, this is who you are. And saying, this is what I've said to you.

Be steadfast. Be immovable. Always abounding in the work of the Lord. Now, there are three things that we can do in dividing up the verse.

First of all, here is Paul giving a job description of what the Christian life or a Christian congregation is about. He calls it the work of the Lord.

[28 : 26] That's the job description. And then secondly, he gives an indication of the type of workers that are required by God to fit that job description to carry it out.

And the kind of workers he's looking for are workers that have these three terms applicable to them. Those who are steadfast. Those who are immovable. Those who abound in the work of the Lord.

So that's the kind of type of workers, the qualities, the characteristics of the workers in the work of the Lord. People who are steadfast, immovable, and always abounding.

And then he gives us, thirdly, an incentive for this work. The incentive being knowing that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. That's the incentive he gives us.

That's just confining to the context. You can find many other aspects of that incentive to work for Christ elsewhere. But that's what he's saying here. Knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

[29 : 30] The job description, the types of workers required, and the incentive for the work. Well, let's look at that and apply it to ourselves.

And, you know, this is one of those verses where, as often in the Bible, you find remarkably combined within a short space, such as in this verse, you actually find challenge and promise tied together.

Challenge and promise tied together. Because obviously there's challenge there to be steadfast, to be immovable, to always abound in the work of the Lord. And there's a significant challenge for us. But then he comes with this great promise, knowing that in the Lord your neighbor is not in vain. So the job description is, first of all, it's comprehensive.

It's the work of the Lord. And he doesn't confine that to what you do on a Sunday or what you do on a midweek prayer meeting. The work of the Lord is the work that you carry with you as a Christian into every aspect of your daily life.

[30 : 37] Because that's what really the Christian life is about. It's not just something that you do at special times or at significant points in your life or in your week.

When he says here, the work of the Lord, it's not to be detached from your everyday life. You know, sometimes we fall into the trap of dividing our spiritual life from our secular life.

Or dividing what is spiritual or religious from what is secular. But for the Christian, that distinction is actually not really valid. Because what you are in your spiritual life is intimately connected with what you are practically in your everyday life.

The work of the Lord is something that you do not just in terms of the church or in the work the church might give us to do or we be volunteers in. The work of the Lord is the work you do at home as a parent.

The work you do in school as a teacher. The work you do in hospital as a nurse or a doctor. The work you do, whatever it is you find in the practical issues of your life. That's the work of the Lord.

[31 : 47] That's strictly speaking where the Lord has put you. So that all the things that you learn from the gospel that you want to carry forth into your life, that's where they come to be applied.

The work of the Lord does not make that divide or distinction between the religious and the secular. It's all spiritual as far as this teaching is concerned.

The work of the Lord is something that you find in every area of life. Think, for example, how the apostle wrote to the Colossians. And in chapter 3 of Colossians, in verse 23, this is how he addressed them.

Where he was talking there about the practicalities of their Christian life. Put on, he says, as God's chosen one, holy and beloved. Put on compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, bearing with one another, forgiving one another.

And above all these things, put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. See how like that is to this verse we're looking at tonight.

[32 : 52] And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body, and be thankful. And he finishes there in verse 17 by saying, And whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus. Whatever you do in word or deed, do it unto the Lord. He's spoken about that earlier in the chapter, that you are doing it to the Lord and for the Lord.

It's one of the crucial things in our Christian testimony. One of the crucial things in our daily life. That we do everything for the Lord and to the Lord.

It doesn't matter where we are. We always have to think about it as being for the Lord and do it for the Lord and to his praise. Because you'll find throughout the Bible, and not least in Paul's epistles, an emphasis against falling into the trap of men-pleasing or people-pleasing.

People-pleasing is, in many ways, the bane of our daily life when we aren't living it for Christ. Because if we're not living it to the praise of Christ and seeking to do things for him, then we're going to be pleasing ourselves or just living so as to please others instead of him.

[34 : 15] Whatever you do, do it unto the Lord and not to people, is what he's saying. And come, he's saying, and whatever you do in word or in action, do it for the Lord.

Those who look after tweenies, those who look after creche, those who engage in the Sunday school, those who work in the practicalities throughout the week, parent and toddler groups. Whatever it is you think of in the congregation's life, wherever the love of Christ practically is to be shown, that is a spiritual activity. That is something that should be done unto the Lord and not to people.

And it doesn't matter what area of life the Lord has called us to be engaged in in our everyday lives. For the Christian, he or she brings the life of Christ, the values of Christ, the principles of Christ, the love of Christ into these situations.

And of course, as I said at the beginning, that is one of the great challenges of the Christian life, that we live in such a way as lives unto the Lord.

[35 : 28] But it's not just comprehensive, including all of that. It's also very intensive, this work of the Lord, because at the end of the verse there, he uses the word labor. And it's a very interesting word that he uses there, because the word that really has packed into it a whole lot of energy.

You go back to Luke chapter 5 and verse 5. You remember that incident where the disciples had been fishing and unsuccessfully had fished all night and caught nothing.

And Jesus came to them and said, go out into the deep and let down your nets again for a catch. And Peter said to him, Lord, we have toiled all night and caught nothing. Nevertheless, at your word, I will let down the net.

That's the word toiled. We have toiled all night. Have you seen any of these fishing programs from time to time that you get on television? You don't need to see them to realize this. But if you've seen them, it really brings home to you the toil of a life of fishing.

The toil of being engaged in the fishing industry. Because it is really testing, tiring, trying work.

[36 : 38] And that's the word that Paul is using here of the work of the Lord. It is a labor in which we are engaged. It's not something that's a hobby.

It's not something that we're just doing as a pastime. The work of the Lord requires our commitment, requires our labor, requires our energy being given to it.

And I think that's why, for example, you find the apostle writing to Timothy. And it seems by all accounts most commentators out of the view that Timothy was a fairly timid person.

Although there are many ways in which he had strengths, of course. But in writing to Timothy in his first letter to Timothy, the Lord, in 1 Timothy chapter 1 and verse 8, spoke like this to Timothy, where he spoke about the sufferings he himself was engaged in.

And where he said that in that way, he said, we are to actually take to ourselves, sorry, 2 Timothy chapter 1 and verse 8, therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me, his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God.

[37 : 55] Share in the sufferings of the gospel, he's saying to Timothy. In other words, he's saying, you know, when people hear that I'm his prisoner, that I'm Christ's prisoner, when you have to tell people that this is really what the apostle Paul now his situation is, he's imprisoned, don't be ashamed of that.

And don't you be ashamed of taking full responsibility for the gospel, for presenting the gospel as it should be presented. Don't actually hold back on it.

He doesn't mean by that, don't be tactless, just force people, trying to force people into a way of thinking. That's not what he's saying. But he's saying, don't be intimidated by the opposition you're going to face.

Don't regard the difficulties and the trials, and he puts here, the labor of the gospel in any way as putting you off, giving your full attention in such a way as you take your own share, he says to Timothy, of the afflictions of the gospel.

We live, friends, in days when this whole idea of offending people is very much in the current language of the age.

[39 : 12] People will turn around to others and say, I'm offended by that. You can't say that about me. I'm offended. And because I'm offended, I just reject what you're saying altogether.

And this whole business about holding back from offending people. Now, don't get me wrong. I don't mean we should be brusque or brash or bad language or anything like that in our dealings with people.

But when you go to somebody and say to them, this is God's word in the Bible as far as I'm concerned. Have you considered what the Bible says about your need to be born again?

Or however tactfully you put it, and the person comes to be offended by that and say, well, I'm taking offense at that. What do you say to yourself? You say to yourself, well, that's what the gospel is designed to do.

I don't come to realize myself as a sinner before God without being myself naturally offended at that. And it's only as I come to realize that God is offending my own natural judgment, my own natural inclination, my own natural view of myself, my particular regard for myself, tendency to elevate myself, to think well of myself.

[40 : 23] It's when God pulls that to pieces and offends you in that sense of the word that you then begin to realize what the truth is. It's labor.

It has its difficulties. But what rewards it actually brings as well. And of course, the days in which we're living, it's not entirely new. But all of the ways in which the gospel is being opposed politically and in other ways, the danger is that we come to the whole idea of free speech being closed down.

Some people might think, well, that might be a good thing. But you wouldn't find such horrible things said in social media or wherever. Well, maybe that's the case in some people's thinking.

But let's, friends, forget. Let's not forget that free speech is one of the great marks of a democratic, free society. And whoever offended we might be at what they say of the Lord Jesus Christ, of ourselves as a Christian church, of the gospel as what we seek to commend to people, they have the freedom to say that even if you and I think they're entirely wrong in saying it.

And that means you have the freedom to speak about Jesus, to present Jesus, to support the claims of Jesus, to present the claims of Christ to the world in which we live.

[41 : 53] Because if you close down free speech, you close down the gospel. And if you close down the gospel, how are people going to hear of their need of salvation, of their need of Jesus?

Don't be intimidated against speaking up for Christ. Don't be intimidated about your witness. That's what he's really saying. And all of that, you can see, has risen out of the word labor.

Here is the job description. It's comprehensive and it's intensive. But it's got great rewards because God himself, Christ himself, is behind it.

As he said there in the passage in Colossians, we read, You serve whatsoever you do, do in word or deed unto the Lord Christ. For you serve the Lord Christ.

That's what you keep in mind. Who's my boss? Who am I answerable to? Who is it my privilege to work for? It's the Lord Jesus Christ.

[42 : 52] And when you're privileged to work for the Lord Jesus Christ, in whatever area of life he situates you, it's your greatest privilege to serve him. Because he came into this world as the servant of the Father.

To give the kind of service that culminated in the death he died on the cross. And surely none of us today or tonight will say, Well, I know that.

But surely he doesn't expect me to actually give of myself to the extent that I'm laboring, that I'm finding it a challenge, and that I'm seeking in the work of the Lord just to do my utmost.

Well, he is. He did his utmost for us. The least we can do is labor for him, is serve him in whatever way we can.

So there's the job description. Briefly, the type of work is required. Well, the three terms are be steadfast, be immovable, be always abounding in the work of the Lord.

[43 : 58] Be steadfast is a word which means pretty much similar to immovable, but I think it focuses especially on the establishment of our lives in the truth of God.

So you come to be rooted in the truth of God immovably. And you know how important that is to the apostle, where you find him elsewhere talking about false teaching, and the need to face up to false teaching, and overcome false teaching.

And none of us can say we're immune to the effects of false teaching, or sometimes even to the attraction of false teaching to our everyday lives.

That's where you find so much given these days to lifestyles that are labeled Christian, but are denounced by the Bible. Why is that? Because people have lost their grounding in the truth.

People have lost their grounding in what the Bible is. You always have to ask yourself, what is the Bible? Before you ask yourself, what does it say? It's only as you realize that the Bible is the Word of God, it is God speaking to us.

[45 : 07] That's what it is. And then you ask, well, as God's Word, what does it say to me? What does it require of me? What does it promise me? What are the great encouragements in it?

What are the great challenges in it? Be steadfast. Be anchored in the truth. Because you see, it's what you believe in many ways that leads to what you do.

And it's what you believe that feeds into the work of the Lord. It's what you actually have as your belief, as you're grounded in the truth of God.

And that's why, as we said at the beginning, all of this wonderful body of teaching in this chapter itself, as we compared it to a great reservoir of truth, and now he's opening the sluice gate, he's saying, well, this is really what you must be in the world, but I want you to take everything I've said about the resurrection, about the defeat of death, about the glorious, glorious victory of Jesus, and the glorious victory of His people in Him, let that affect how you live.

Let that affect how you are and your standing in the truth, how you relate to other people. Be steadfast. Be rooted immovably in the truth. And then be immovable.

[46 : 23] Don't be deflected, really, in other words, by the likes of persecutions. Now, persecution takes different forms, as you well know.

If you lived in a place like Russia, North Korea, places like that in the world, and there are many of them, where you try to live your life consistently as a Christian, where you try publicly to witness as a Christian, you would find that far, far more difficult than in Stornoway.

You know that. But persecution takes different forms. There's a lot more to persecution than state persecution, or persecution from those in authority, although the apostles, of course, knew all about that.

It's persecution when you find yourself maligned or misrepresented, deliberately misrepresented.

It's people speaking about you, things which are not true, and which you find difficult to answer or to deflect.

Persecution in deprivations of opportunities for work. It shouldn't be the case, but it is the case that people are not given the opportunity of employing because they're openly Christian.

[47 : 41] People are sacked because they've said things which they believe is true to the Bible, and therefore it doesn't fit the spirit of the age, so you can't say those sort of things, you can't believe those sort of things, so you're dismissed.

There are many people in our country who are like that, who have faced that problem, and sometimes have gone to court very successfully at times, thankfully, and had these verdicts overturned, these conclusions overturned, so that their stand for Jesus publicly is something that has been honored.

All different kinds of persecutions. And what the apostle is saying here, be immovable. Don't let the thought of the difficulties of the Christian life deflect you.

Don't let that put you off being true to Jesus, true to God. Which is why you find the likes of Peter himself. I'm actually saying in 1 Peter, again, if I can just briefly turn this up for you, in 1 Peter chapter 4.

Of course, 1 Peter, as you know, is a letter that's written primarily to those who are suffering for their faith, being persecuted for their faith in different ways, scattered throughout various regions, as he says.

[49 : 04] And in chapter 4 and verses 14 to 16, this is what Peter says. If you are insulted... Well, we can read from verse 12 there, where he's saying, Beloved, don't be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.

What he means by that is, don't think that suffering for the sake of Christ, for the name of Christ, is somehow out of place in your following of Him. Somehow out of character for God to do that.

No, he says, don't regard it as something strange, but rejoice, insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when His glory is revealed.

Take the long-term view, he's saying. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.

But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an evildoer, or as a meddler. Yet, if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.

[50 : 18] Again, hugely challenging words. But they keep us on the right track, don't they? They keep us in being true to Jesus, and keeping our view of the work of the Lord as a work that we're involved in steadfastly and immovably, and not being deflected by the spirit of the age or by whatever we meet in the world.

And he says, thirdly, abounding in the work of the Lord. Now, you like this word. It's a word that Paul uses very often. He loves the word himself, obviously. Abounding in the work of the Lord. After all, he wrote to the Philippians, for example, let your love abound more and more. What a remarkable man this was. Here he is, having reached a great level of love, when he can actually say in truth that he is addressing these difficult Christians in Corinth in the spirit of love, my beloved brethren.

And what he's saying to the Philippians is, I want my love, and I want your love, to abound more and more. Am I satisfied tonight with the level of my love?

Are you satisfied with the measure of love that is in place in your life? I ought not to be. You ought not to be. Because God will have us to increase in it, to abound in it more and more.

[51 : 41] And he uses that word of other things as well. For example, Romans. Just to take another verse, Romans 15 at verse 13. May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so

that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

Here is the apostle saying, do you have a living hope in Jesus? He's saying, well, that's great. But increase it. Look for it to be increased. Use the ways in which God has provided for you, that your hope may increase, that your love may increase, that your Christian life may continue to grow and increase, that it may abound, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

In other words, whatever we're doing for the Lord tonight, and he's not saying to us, you know, you really need to be forced into something more than you're doing.

We all have responsibilities in life. We all need to look after ourselves, our families, work, things like that. Whatever we're doing for the Lord and wherever it is, whether it's actually in the church itself, strictly or as Christians in our communities.

He's saying, always abounding in the work of the Lord. Seek to be growing in what you do for Christ. Don't be satisfied with being static, with reaching a plateau, if you like, and saying, well, that's it.

[53 : 13] Really, I've reached that now, and the rest of my life I can just live on that level. We can't say that as ministers of the gospel, and it's a danger that we would do that.

That I would come to the pulpit tonight and say, well, you know, I've been a preacher for over 30 years, so I can just rely on something I've done before, and the Lord will help me if I just pick up a text and just try and present that text from what I know already.

That's not the work of the Lord. That's not always abounding in the work of the Lord. And it's the same in every area in which a Christian is involved. Always abounding in the work of the Lord.

Always seeking to add to what you're doing for the Lord. That's the type of worker required.

Steadfast, immovable, always abounding.

And thirdly, along with a job description and the type of worker, he gives us the incentive, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

[54 : 13] Now, cast your mind back to earlier in the chapter in verse 14, and these words in vain actually occur there as well. If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain, and your faith is in vain.

Remember we said that if we don't believe in the resurrection, if we don't think and believe Christ was risen, then whatever we do is futile. That's what the word means. It's in vain. It has no purpose to it.

Now he's saying, in the Lord your labor is never in vain. It's never without purpose. It's never futile. Even if you think you're getting very little in result, your labor in the Lord is never futile. It's never in vain. But you also take this from that expression, that the Christian life is the life that's filled with purpose.

Every other life and lifestyle, you might say, comes short of this. However serious and however helpful other forms of life might be to us and by us to others, the Christian life, life in the Lord, labor in the Lord, is never in vain.

[55 : 36] In other words, your life as a Christian is filled with purpose. God has made it that way. It's the only life lived that brings purpose and satisfaction that really meets, if you like, the end for which we were created in the beginning, to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.

And that's what being in Christ does. And that's what being out of Christ can never achieve.

Knowing that in the Lord, your labor is never in vain.

Well, the whole chapter, you might say, is summed up adequately in these words. And it underlines for us the importance, indeed how crucial it is, to be found in Christ.

To be found in Him through faith and trust, through having come to receive Him for ourselves and place our trust in Him. To be found in Him, as Paul says in Philippians chapter 3, I count all things but loss.

Everything else compared to this pales into insignificance that I might be found in Him. Not having a righteousness of my own, but the righteousness which is of God by faith, the righteousness of faith through faith in Christ.

[57 : 03] Friend, are you still out with Christ? What is your relationship to eternity tonight?

What is your relationship to the death that's spoken of in this chapter? Is it the one that can say, O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?

Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ? Or is it something less than that? Is it for you, who knows the gospel so well, who we dearly love in the

gospel, as preachers of the gospel, as ministers of the gospel, is it still for you a life not in Christ? A life unsaved? A life without hope. A life in which, instead of filled with purpose, it is empty of it and filled with nothing more than this world.

Be steadfast. Be steadfast. Be immovable. Be always abounding in the work of the Lord. For as much as you know that in the Lord your labor is never in vain, wherefore, my beloved Christians, let this be so of you as well.

[58 : 40] Let's pray. Let's pray. Our gracious God, we thank you for the way in which your truth addresses us. Help us never to mishandle it, to treat it inappropriately.

Lord, help us always, as we are thankful for it, to place our own minds under it and under its teaching. And help us tonight, Lord, to take with us all that you have said in this great chapter that we've been looking at over these months.

And we pray that the resurrection of our Lord may be thrilling to our souls, that our own prospect of resurrection in Him may truly feed into our lives each day, and that we may, therefore, go on with steadfastness and being immovable and always abounding in the work of the Lord.

We thank you, Lord, for the way in which coming to know you as a Savior fills our lives with purpose, which were empty of it before. And so hear us now, we pray, and pardon our many sins and receive us for Jesus' sake.

Amen. Let's conclude now by singing to God's praise in Psalm 98. Psalm 98 from verse 9.

[59 : 58] That's on page 129. Psalm 98. We're singing from verse 4. The tune this time is St. Magnus. From verse 4 through to verse 9.

Acclaim the Lord, O all the earth. Shout loudly and rejoice. Make music and be jubilant. To Him lift up your voice. With heart make music to the Lord. With harp His praises sing.

With trumpet and with horn rejoice before the Lord the King. Let earth, the sea, and all in them rejoice triumphantly. Let streams clap hand and mountains sing together joyfully.

Now let them sing before the Lord who comes to judge the earth. He'll judge the world in righteousness, the peoples in His truth. These are great words of praise to God, words that ought not to make us gloomy, because we're really singing about the triumph of God Himself.

And we've been looking at the triumph of God over death, especially in the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15. So these verses then, in conclusion, acclaim the Lord, O all the earth.

[61 : 09] acclaim the Lord, O all the earth.

Shout loudly and rejoice. Make music to the Lord, to Him lift up your voice.

With heart make music to the Lord, with heart His praises sing.

With trumpet and with horn rejoice, before the Lord the King.

Let earth, the sea, and all in them rejoice triumphantly.

[62 : 19] Let streams clap hands and mountains sing, together joyfully.

Now let them sing before the Lord who comes to judge the earth.

He'll judge the world in righteousness, the peoples in His truth.

After the benediction, I'll go to the main door. Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and evermore.

Amen. Let them play together.

[63 : 32] Thank you so much. There we.

There are other ways that our God has come from?