

Comforting Words

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Death, in a sense, is something we've all been touched by. One time or another in our lives, we will be touched by death. It's nearly always tragic and always involve some periods of grief. There is some degree of anguish associated with it and that all depends on how closely it impacts us personally. We've all lost loved ones and we all obviously will sooner or later. My wife and I at our age, have obviously lost our parents. We've lost a couple of our children. Most of us try to keep tabs on our old friends. I used to run with guys in high school and most of them are gone now for one reason or another. Sometimes we remember who we went to college with and try to keep track of that. Church members—we've had a lot of church members and when we find out, if it's not too late, we try to attend the memorials for church members we've known. That's about the only time the groups seem to get together. It's just me with my sense of humor, but I always look at those get togethers for funerals as an elephant ball. Where we are all dancing around the elephants in the room. Coworkers—I worked for a corporation where we had 1800 employees and obviously, I didn't know them all, but I knew a lot of those folks. I usually at least checked the local obituaries and if there are people I know and used to work with, I try to attend their memorials.

Sometimes we run this scenario in our mind where we know someone who is grieving heavily. They are really stressing and troubled by the things that are going on with them and sometimes, in this scenario, we feel like we could reach out to them and impart some comforting words to them and help them through it. I think we all feel that way. I've yet to officiate at a memorial service. Not looking forward to that. You're always going to have people there that don't understand about death and dying. They have these common ideas. They think their loved ones are off in heaven somewhere or a bad uncle is roasting in hell somewhere—all those kinds of ideas. People have these ideas about death that they use to go along with some idea of an afterlife. We, as God's people by God's grace and through His Holy Spirit, have been given an understanding about death and dying. That understanding comes by and through the death of one person. Turn over to Hebrews 2. I'll be using the New Living Translation unless I say otherwise.

Hebrews 2:5 *And furthermore, it is not angels who will control the future world we are talking about. (NLT)*

Historically, we know the book of Hebrews is obviously written to the Jews. It has to do with some of the things in the Old Testament in reference to angels, but the Jews had this fixation on the role of angels. Paul is correcting them. He is going to go on in the context, he's pointing out God's plan and purpose and it's not going to be run by angels.

6) For in one place the Scriptures say, "What are mere mortals that you should think about them,

7) *Yet for a little while you made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor.*

8) *You gave them authority over all things.” (NLT)*

He’s actually quoting and referencing Psalm 8.

8 continued) ... Now when it says “all things,” it means nothing is left out. But we have not yet seen all things put under their authority.

9) What we do see is Jesus, who for a little while was given a position “a little lower than the angels”; and because he suffered death for us, he is now “crowned with glory and honor.” Yes, by God’s grace, Jesus tasted death for everyone.

10) God, for whom and through whom everything was made, chose to bring many children into glory. And it was only right that he should make Jesus, through his suffering, a perfect leader, fit to bring them into their salvation. (NLT)

Why? Because He has experienced death. Verse 14.

14) Because God’s children are human beings—made of flesh and blood—the Son also became flesh and blood. For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the devil, who had the power of death. (NLT)

The devil mentioned there, what he means is when he talks about Satan having the power of death, refers to mankind’s beginning in the Garden of Eden when Satan deceived mankind. Satan will do everything to thwart God’s plan—anything and everything. He has all kinds of strategies to do that. I’m convinced more and more as we go along, just the way things work out, one of the most important tools that Satan has in his toolbox is confusion. He likes to create chaos and confusion. We have that confusion in relation to this topic. He has confused people regarding death and what it means. We know Satan has deceived the whole world. Revelation 12:9, deceived people into thinking we either go to heaven or hell when we die and that instills a certain fear in people. Even Eve, in the Garden of Eden, he deceived her and told her she won’t die. That wasn’t true. We know as God’s people there is hope beyond this life. We do have comforting words in scripture and take comfort in what we know. What God through His Holy Spirit has given us to understand about that. We have a special knowledge. So my title is:

Comforting Words

We’re going to discuss those comforting words today in three points that have to do with death and dying.

1. We don’t need to be afraid.

There's a reason God actually built in us for our self-preservation, this instinct of self-preservation. Merriam-Webster Dictionary says that:

Self-preservation is a natural or instinctive tendency to act to preserve one's own existence.

Pain and fear are integral parts of this—that fight or flight mechanism. It's just a fact, we all have that. We know, through God's Spirit and the understanding He has given us that there is something beyond the physical—there is an answer. We're still in Hebrews 2—I read that previously—but let's read verses 14 and 15.

Hebrews 2:14 *Because God's children are human beings—made of flesh and blood—the Son also became flesh and blood. For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the devil, who had the power of death. (NLT)*

We don't usually look at the book of Hebrews as a book about human nature but in many respects it is. We are looking at an example of Jesus and He resisted that powerful instinct, didn't He? That human desire for self-preservation—He had that, He was a human being, but He resisted that. It's amazing what we can glean from that one verse. Remember that incident where they were coming to take Jesus and Peter came to find out, and he whacked off the ear of the servant of the High Priest. Jesus told him, to put that away and said:

"We don't need to do that. If I wanted to, I could ask the Father and He would send 12 legions of angels to help me."

I don't know if you have ever looked it up or not, but a Roman legion was 6000 soldiers. Multiply that by 12. That's 72,000 soldiers—quite a calvary that He could have tapped into to come to His rescue. Could any of us have done that? Could we have resisted that? I don't think so. It happens sometimes that a human being will sacrifice himself for others, but it's pretty rare. When it happens, we call it heroic. Jesus' sacrifice was way beyond that. It was super heroism we could say. There's a gigantic lesson there. In that very example where He resisted that instinct that we all have and it was wired into Him as well—same as us. He gives us a powerful lesson to overcome that part of our human nature. He left an example. He resisted that powerful instinct.

Continuing in verse 15) ...

15) *Only in this way could he set free all who have lived their lives as slaves to the fear of dying. (NLT)*

Slaves to the fear of dying—that phrase—all of humanity is under this fear. We all have that and some sense or another. I looked that up in the Word Study Dictionary by Zodhiates and for *slavery* it has an interesting comment. In the New Testament that word *slavery* or *slave* is used only *figuratively* as a *slavish spirit* in contrast to the *spirit*

of sonship. In other words, a slave is a slave and he knows it and will not have anything else. But we aren't called to that, we are called into something entirely different. We aren't called into slavery. We know there is something else, so that's what that word means. It gives a reference of Romans 8, so let's go there. What we are called into. It's not slavery. I'll be reading this from the New King James.

Romans 8:15 *For you did not receive the spirit of bondage ... (NKJV)*

That term is used interchangeably. I remember sermons in the past about it being a *bond slave*.

15 continued) ... again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."

16) The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17) and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. (NKJV)

In other words, there is a future far beyond slavery. We all know in our minds, there is a future beyond this physical life, yet we are subject to this innate fear of death. We just are. All of us have loved ones and we will face that ourselves at some point. Solomon points out a fact of life. Let's go to Ecclesiastes 3. Everything that Solomon experienced, everything that he knew, he tells us that humanly we are caught in this time cycle. He uses this poetic section of scripture which we all know and love.

Ecclesiastes 3:1 *For everything there is a season, a time for every activity under heaven.*

2) *A time to be born and a time to die. A time to plant and a time to harvest.*

3) *A time to kill and a time to heal. A time to tear down and a time to build up.*

4) *A time to cry and a time to laugh. A time to grieve. (NKJV)*

Like we do. This whole subject of death.

4 continued) ... *and a time to dance. (NKJV)*

There's a reference, you don't need to turn there, in Hebrews 9:27 where the context is speaking of Christ's sacrifice—His death—where it says,

Just as each person is destined to die once and after that comes the judgment.

Even knowing that, we get anxious because of that interval between the time we die and judgment. We still get a little anxious about that. What if we had Jesus standing right there telling us not to worry about that? You know that actually happens in a way. Turn to Revelation 1. In a way, this happens. We know the context here; it's a picture of the glorified Christ and John is astonished at the things he's seeing in a vision. He is "blown away" as we would say today.

Revelation 1:17 *When I saw him, I fell at his feet as if I were dead. But he laid his right hand on me and said, "Don't be afraid! I am the First and the Last. 18) I am the living one. I died, but look—I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and the grave. (NLT)*

Our Savior, Jesus, has fully experienced death. That should be reason enough for us not to be afraid. But even the gruesome death that He faced, He experienced death in a way that none of us will ever see, no matter how bad it gets for us. He was beaten, tortured by people who hated Him and all of that for hours before He was crucified. Then He was in the grave for 3 days and 3 nights, dead like all human beings. So He actually experienced that interval that we so greatly fear from the time we die and are resurrected and face judgment. It's always hard for me, especially in the Passover season, to get our mind around everything that He endured. We can't really ponder that to any great extent. But we know that Jesus knows what it's like to be dead. He knows what it's like to be without consciousness. Everything is gone for Him just like everyone else that has ever died. But scripture also tells us that He came fully alive again. He was in the grave 3 days and, 3 nights and He rose again. That's one of the things He's pointing out when He says, don't be afraid. I am the first and the last—meaning He was the first one born physical and the first one raised from the dead. He was the first one to eternal life. Jesus has those keys to eternal life. He determines where and when people are resurrected. Let's turn over to—can't even talk about this subject without going to 1 Corinthians 15. We'll pick up a few verses and a little bit more later.

1 Corinthians 15:55 *O death, where is your victory? (NLT)*

In the end, death loses. That's a fact. An alternative title for this would have been Death Does Not Win.

55 continued) ... O death, where is your sting? (NLT)

Years ago, we had a good friend in the church, he said it's not death he was afraid of, it was the dying part. He said I don't mind dying, I just don't want to be there when it happens.

*56) For sin is the sting that results in death, and the law gives sin its power.
57) But thank God! He gives us victory over sin and death through our Lord Jesus Christ. (NLT)*

By His example, by His death, by His resurrection. Just thinking back to Revelation, He is the first and the last, the alpha and the omega. He experienced death yet He was awakened. Death doesn't win, it's a temporary thing, just like we are temporary. I try to point out when I talk about contentment, we're temporary. If we remember that, the trick is letting temporary be enough. We just want to keep on going. Jesus being in the tomb 3 days and 3 nights, He understands death. He knows what that is. He understands what it is to die a painful death. He understands what it is to be without consciousness

for 3 days and 3 nights. Then after all of that, He knows what it's like to claim victory over death in the grave because He was resurrected.

We all realize that we aren't given a choice concerning death—we'll all face that and scripture tells us that. Yet what did Jesus say? Don't be afraid. One question that people always have—we have it too, to some degree or another—they want to know what happens to people when they die. We have that in the back of our minds, as part of that innate instinct that we have. We have this assurance from Christ.

This brings us to the second point.

2. The dead will live again.

Let's go to Job 14. Job wrote about this. He made an observation here.

Job 14:1 *"How frail is humanity! How short is life, how full of trouble!" (NLT)*

That's a pretty apt description of life. I heard a story once that is an analogy along these lines. The story of a king who sent out one of his servants; he wanted to know the history of the world, the history of mankind, mankind's part in the history of the world. He sends out his servant and says to go out and figure this all out and come back in 5 years and tell me what you discover. So, he comes back to the king and the king asks,

*"What did you find out? What's the history of the world?
What's the history of mankind?"*

The guy says,

*"I don't have volumes of books for you. I just don't. All I have is this message.
Mankind lived, they suffered, and they died."*

That's been mankind's history—that's all we have without God. Life is not really that simple. Of course there are some good times, there are prosperous times, there is some abundance in life. God gives us that. A lot of people have an awful lot of turmoil in their lives.

2) We blossom like a flower and then wither. Like a passing shadow, we quickly disappear. (NLT)

Let's read that from the New King James.

Job 14:2 *He comes forth like a flower and fades away; He flees like a shadow and does not continue. (NKJV)*

I think, like a vapor—sometimes you'll see a vapor or a mist—and then it just disappears. Kind of describes our existence. It's pretty important to us while we are here.

Continuing in verse 3)

3) And do You open Your eyes on such a one, And bring me to judgment with Yourself? (NKJV)

In Job you have to track the conversation here because if you go back a few chapters in the context, he's talking to Zofar and then God gets involved in the conversation and it's hard to track sometimes who is who.

4) Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? No one!

5) Since his days are determined, The number of his months is with You; You have appointed his limits, so that he cannot pass. (NKJV)

That is speaking of us—of our lives.

6) Look away from him that he may rest, Till like a hired man he finishes his day. (NKJV)

We start, we have our life to live and then we are done. Man is born, lives a life, there's trouble and then he dies. Then in verse 7, Job launches into his own analogy.

7) "For there is hope for a tree, If it is cut down, that it will sprout again, And that its tender shoots will not cease

8) Though its root may grow old in the earth, And its stump may die in the ground,

9) Yet at the scent of water it will bud And bring forth branches like a plant. (NKJV)

Reminds me years ago, my wife would plant perennials—she had several different kinds, tulips and some other things. I can't keep up with all that she has planted for all those years. I've gotten in pretty serious trouble on the home front being a dunce agriculturally. I didn't know perennials would come back up in the spring so I would pull them up or spray them with weed killer. She had to educate me. Those sprouts are not weeds. Continuing with the analogy. Job pointed out, we think something like a plant dies and we'll never see it again but it grows back. We had an aspen tree like that too. It decided to drop seeds one year. It's a pretty tree, especially in the fall. When it decided to proliferate it dropped seeds everywhere. My poor wife was out there on her hands and knees with some kind of brush or tree killer with an eye dropper trying to kill all these sprouts and I could have mowed the sprouts.

That's what Job is saying, even trees that are cut down will eventually come back to life again. He's making a comparison.

10) *But man dies and is laid away; Indeed he breathes his last And where is he?*
11) *As water disappears from the sea, And a river becomes parched and dries up,*
12) *So man lies down and does not rise. Till the heavens are no more, They will not awake Nor be roused from their sleep. (NKJV)*

That's what it seems like when we go to cemeteries. We have been to a lot of cemeteries visiting or whatever it may be. The people are still there, they aren't sprouting back up like those trees. Verse 13, Job is getting to his point.

13) *"Oh, that You would hide me in the grave, That You would conceal me until Your wrath is past, That You would appoint me a set time, and remember me! (NKJV)*

Job is finally getting at the end of his analogies, to the question of the ages.

14) *If a man dies, shall he live again? All the days of my hard service I will wait, Till my change comes. (NKJV)*

He asks a question and he answers it. That's a hard question, but we do have positive answers. *If a man dies, will he live again?* Job had this expectation that he would change from death—like sleep—he would wake up. Just like a tree in a way, that's cut down, that it would grow again. That it would come alive again. He's making a comparison there.

15) *You shall call, and I will answer You; You shall desire the work of Your hands. (NKJV)*

We know God is going to open the graves and resurrect His people—all of mankind eventually. Let's go back to 1 Corinthians 15. This tells us that the dead are going to live again.

1 Corinthians 15:51 *Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—*
52) *in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. (NKJV)*

That's at some point determined by God. The dead are going to be changed to live again.

53) *For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.*

54) *So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: [He's quoting Isaiah 25:8] "Death is swallowed up in victory." (NKJV)*

The good news is, although we will die, death does not win and we should not be afraid of death itself. I'm not hoping to die a painful death of course. We hope people will just be watching TV, like we've known, and just not wake up. Or just go to bed and not wake up. The point is, we shouldn't be afraid and recognize that the dead will rise again. They are going to live again. Turn to John 5. If that's not enough evidence, we just need to realize what Jesus said in one scripture. Just hearing this one scripture—reading it—gives such clarity. It's something we should meditate on and savor this scripture.

John 5:28 *Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice*
29) *and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation. (NKJV)*

That seems like evidence enough that the dead will rise again—will live again. It says ***all who are in the grave will hear His voice.***

That brings us to point 3.

3. Comfort one another.

I think we should all remember that. When we know people that are in bad health or sorrow, maybe things look grim, we should remember to comfort one another. I think we all realize that nobody stands alone for long. We might try it, we might go alone and some of us are just naturally loner types. Unfortunately, I think I fall on the end of that category, but as I get older I realize that's not a good way to go. Some are very strong and can stand alone for a time, but it's always better if they have someone who can console them and give them comfort. Solomon knew that back in Ecclesiastes 4. After all that he did, he accomplished everything and probably thought he was all by himself. He was rich and had anything he wanted.

Ecclesiastes 4:9 *Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed*
10) *If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble. (NLT)*

That's the point of that principle. It's better not to be alone if you can help it. We know people who have passed alone—they had no one. It's better if you can show some support. In doing that, we share experiences, we have respect for one another. Speaking of respect, one thing I'm not saying here, in knowing what we know about death and dying, we shouldn't preach that to other people. People don't need that. Unfortunately, in the past that at funerals and memorials, we've taken that as an opportunity to preach and people don't need that, they need comfort. We should

appreciate each other and express comforting words. One way we do that, as a small group, and these days everyone is isolated or scattered all over the place, we use cards. You might not see that as meaning too much, but it's a means of support, of letting them know we are thinking about them and that they are not alone. People process grief in different ways. Some people grieve right away, some take years. I did that with my mother. It was several years after my mother passed, in the middle of the night, I'm crying. People process in different ways. Just knowing that people are thinking about them and that can comfort them in a way—help them through that and give them some encouragement. We have received our share of cards over the years for the things we've had—death in our family, illness, trials of different kinds, a number of things. Just that little card gives a little boost to our morale and encouragement and that's really all we need. Turn to 1 Thessalonians 4. It's interesting when you do go to a funeral or memorial what you learn about people that you never knew before. I don't know if you have experience that or not. Some people have a very interesting history in their lives or could have even been famous and all the time we knew them we didn't know that.

I retired from a nuclear power plant corporation and one of the guys that I worked for—worked for him for several years—and then I went to his memorial, a large memorial—I came to find out in Vietnam, he was special ops. He was a black beret. I never even heard of that kind of a thing. These guys would HALO in (high altitude low open)—black chutes—in north Vietnam, blow up bridges, ammo dumps and cause havoc wherever they could. The whole time I knew him, then I find out at the funeral that he had stepped on a mine and almost lost his leg. He was medevacked out; they did save his legs. I knew him and his wife. I worked for him and his wife was in the secretary pool and she worked for me for a while and I knew them both really well. I learned so much just by going to a memorial. We just learn to appreciate people that way.

1 Thessalonians 4:13 *But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.*
(NKJV)

Paul equates death as sleep. The world doesn't look at it like that. When you're dead, you're dead. When you're asleep, you can be woken up. Paul doesn't want them to grieve as people that don't have any kind of a hope.

14) *For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.*

15) *For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.*

16) *For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.*

17) *Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.*

18) *Therefore comfort one another with these words.* (NKJV)

I think we've all been to funerals and memorials and if not, we will be at some point. When we think about what these scriptures tell us, isn't it comforting to have that understanding and to know these things? We've all lost loved ones. We've lost two children but we know beyond those periods of grief, there is hope. There is reality of what God tells us, what we know and understand. We can't fix anything now, but the reality is there and it is going to happen.

Another thing is, isn't it comforting to know that we will see that person again, at some point, somehow. Even with everything we know—people do this, we kind of do it too in the back of our mind—we ask “*Why?*” We know the answer to that “*why?*”. We know that. We know that the dead will live again. We know that when somebody dies, it's just a body. The important part of that person has gone back to God and is in safe keeping until they are resurrected. That person lives again. We have that hope of eternal life and we should comfort one another with those words. Just with the knowledge of that, we can comfort to someone. Not to preach to someone, but to give them comfort, understanding what they are going through.

I've been asked to give a prayer at funerals and memorials before, and we ask for comfort for the family. It's a simple thing. Let's turn back to 1 Corinthians 15. We've been there before off and on. I can't think of a better place to wrap up this blessing that we have and this understanding that we have about death and dying. Better than Paul says it.

1 Corinthians 15:1 *Let me now remind you, dear brothers and sisters, of the Good News I preached to you before. You welcomed it then, and you still stand firm in it.*

2) *It is this Good News that saves you if you continue to believe the message I told you—unless, of course, you believed something that was never true in the first place. (NLT)*

There's a lot of that going around unfortunately. Paul addresses that as he goes along. In the whole conversation there are some things going on in this church. I've mentioned it before, we can be thankful that the Corinthians had the trouble they did because of the things we've learned from Paul correcting them.

3) *I passed on to you what was most important and what had also been passed on to me. Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said.*

4) *He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said. (NLT)*

We looked at some of those.

5) *He was seen by Peter^[c] and then by the Twelve. (NLT)*

Down in verse 10.

Comforting Words

10) But whatever I am now, it is all because God poured out his special favor on me—and not without results. For I have worked harder than any of the other apostles; yet it was not I but God who was working through me by his grace. (NLT)

That is something we should remember too. Most of the time it's God doing things through us. It's not us—we aren't special.

11) So it makes no difference whether I preach or they preach, for we all preach the same message you have already believed. (NLT)

Again, there are some problems going on with the Corinthians.

12) But tell me this—since we preach that Christ rose from the dead, why are some of you saying there will be no resurrection of the dead? (NLT)

This is probably the Sadducees influencing them, their thinking. Paul, (you can tell from the tone) is a little upset with these folks. They are getting off track.

13) For if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised either.

14) And if Christ has not been raised, then all our preaching is useless, and your faith is useless.

15) And we apostles would all be lying about God—for we have said that God raised Christ from the grave. But that can't be true if there is no resurrection of the dead. (NLT)

What he is saying is, if you believe that what you believe is true—no resurrection—then we're all wasting our time. What are we doing here? Let's go eat, drink, and be merry.

16) And if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised.

17) And if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless and you are still guilty of your sins.

18) In that case, all who have died believing in Christ are lost! (NLT)

In this way, he's throwing their "no resurrection" logic right back at them.

19) And if our hope in Christ is only for this life, we are more to be pitied than anyone in the world.

20) But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead. He is the first of a great harvest of all who have died. (NLT)

The first of the Firstfruits.

21) *So you see, just as death came into the world through a man, now the resurrection from the dead has begun through another man*

22) *Just as everyone dies because we all belong to Adam, everyone who belongs to Christ will be given new life.*

23) *But there is an order to this resurrection: Christ was raised as the first of the harvest; then all who belong to Christ will be raised when he comes back. (NLT)*

Those are the ones that will meet Him first in the air and then we'll be together and meet Christ. We read that in 1 Thessalonians 4.

24) *After that the end will come, when he will turn the Kingdom over to God the Father, having destroyed every ruler and authority and power. (NLT)*

It's a sideways reference to Revelation 21 which we'll look at later.

Verse 26.

26) *And the last enemy to be destroyed is death.*

27) *For the Scriptures say, "God has put all things under his authority." [He's quoting Psalm 8:6] (Of course, when it says "all things are under his authority," that does not include God himself, who gave Christ his authority.) (NLT)*

There's the Father and the Son, two distinct beings right there. Verse 29—again he is correcting their thinking because they are getting off track and losing sight of what they know.

29) *If the dead will not be raised, what point is there in people being baptized for those who are dead? Why do it unless the dead will someday rise again? (NLT)*

That's something we don't do of course, but some religions do that. Looks to me like that is Paul's sarcasm.

30) *And why should we ourselves risk our lives hour by hour? (NLT)*

Paul said he faced death daily. What value are all the things that Paul has gone through—he fought beasts and gives a reference in verse 32. Verse 33.

33) *Don't be fooled by those who say such things ... (NLT)*

False beliefs—no resurrection, you'll go to heaven when you die or to hell when you die.

33) *... for "bad company corrupts good character."*

34) *Think carefully about what is right, and stop sinning. For to your shame I say that some of you don't know God at all. (NLT)*

Kind of an interesting phrase. *Some of you don't know God at all.* That's just the way the New Living puts it. Other translations say, *don't have any knowledge of God.* When you think about that, looking at Christendom in general, if people don't have the Father and just some idea of Jesus, they don't have religion at all—it's a false religion.

35) *But someone may ask, "How will the dead be raised? What kind of bodies will they have?"*

36) *What a foolish question!* (NLT)

He points to people that understand and are from a Gregorian society.

36 continued) *... When you put a seed into the ground, it doesn't grow into a plant unless it dies first.* (NLT)

It changes from a seed to a plant. You put it in the ground—it's a bare seed of whatever you planted and then God gives it a new body. He wants it to have a different plant growth from each kind and then he talks about the similarities of different things. Celestial bodies he talks about in verse 40. Then in verse 42 he's getting back to the point.

42) *It is the same way with the resurrection of the dead. Our earthly bodies are planted in the ground when we die, but they will be raised to live forever.*

43) *Our bodies are buried in brokenness, but they will be raised in glory. They are buried in weakness, but they will be raised in strength.*

44) *They are buried as natural human bodies, but they will be raised as spiritual bodies. For just as there are natural bodies, there are also spiritual bodies.* (NLT)

It can't get any clearer than that. Down in verse 46.

46) *What comes first is the natural body, then the spiritual body comes later.* (NLT)

Jump down to verse 50.

50) *What I am saying, dear brothers and sisters, is that our physical bodies cannot inherit the Kingdom of God.* (NLT)

I can't be there, it doesn't work. God's Kingdom is spiritual.

50 continued) *... These dying bodies cannot inherit what will last forever.* (NLT)

It doesn't work, it doesn't fit.

51) *But let me reveal to you a wonderful secret. We will not all die, but we will all be transformed!*

52) It will happen in a moment, in the blink of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For when the trumpet sounds, those who have died will be raised to live forever. And we who are living will also be transformed. (NLT)

No matter what our physical state is, living or dead, we will all be changed.

53) For our dying bodies must be transformed into bodies that will never die; our mortal bodies must be transformed into immortal bodies.

54) Then, when our dying bodies have been transformed into bodies that will never die, this Scripture will be fulfilled: "Death is swallowed up in victory." (NLT)

He's quoting Isaiah 25:8. Death does not win.

55) O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? (NLT)

He's quoting Hosea 13:14.

57) But thank God! He gives us victory over sin and death through our Lord Jesus Christ. (NLT)

What He went through and where He is now on the Father's right Hand. He rose again. No one could have summarized that topic better than Paul. I hope you meditate and remember these things and if we have issues with that, what we know will settle our minds about death and dying. It's not permanent. If we have the opportunity, we might comfort someone with this knowledge. Just help someone—let them know they are not alone. Somebody that just needs comforting because we can do that with this knowledge that we have. Not preaching, but with this knowledge.

The points were:

1. Don't be afraid.

Jesus Christ fully understands death—He died, He was in the grave and knows all about it.

2. The dead will live again.

Christ was the example. He was resurrected. He came back.

3. Comfort one another.

Above all we should remember this good news, that death does not win. It's not the end. One final place—there's a very beautiful place in Revelation 21. We know the context in chapter 21. This is from the Amplified. The picture here is the new heaven, a new earth, God's Kingdom will dwell on earth and He will dwell with His people.

Revelation 21:4 *God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more, neither shall there be anguish (sorrow and mourning) nor grief nor pain any more, for the old conditions and the former order of things have passed away. (NLT)*

There's the ultimate answer to everything regarding death and dying.