

Resurrection of the Dead

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Date: 06 May 2018

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- [0 : 00] There's a widespread axiom, a saying in our culture that goes, live the life you love, love the life you live.
- You guys have probably heard of this, right? Another similar slogan says, live, love, laugh, or one that we probably know best from Lion King, Hakuna Matata, right?
- Don't worry, enjoy life, simply live, right? That's the kind of mantra that permeates our culture. And these sayings have a certain appeal because, after all, who doesn't want to live a carefree life and to enjoy life and to be present, right?
- But God's Word teaches us something that's a little more nuanced than that. It teaches us that living for today without any view to eternity is short-sighted.
- Christ calls us to radical sacrifice and full obedience, and such a life cannot be sustained by a flimsy hope for the pleasures of this life.
- [1 : 09] What we are called to, as Christians, to live in full obedience and radical sacrifice can only be sustained by a firm hope in the resurrection life to come, and that's really Paul's main point in this passage.
- Knowing that we will be raised with Christ in the future, we can die to ourselves every day. So before I go further, let me just submit this to the Lord so that he can help us.
- God, we pray that as we come to your Word, wanting to hear from you and address by you, that you would speak to us powerfully, that your Word would not go in one ear and out the other, but that it would land on our hearts, that we would believe it, and that because we believe it, Lord, that through the renewal of our mind, Lord, we would be transformed.
- We pray for that, Lord. Speak to us. Help us to hope in the resurrection life to come as you call us to in this passage. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. And so the main point is knowing that we will be raised with Christ in the future.
- We can die to ourselves every day, and I'm going to cover that in three parts. First, the past resurrection of Christ, the future resurrection of believers, and then third, the present death of believers.
- [2 : 31] Now, in chapter 15, verses 1 to 11, which you may have noticed we skipped, it's because we went ahead and covered that on Resurrection Sunday on Easter.
- And so if you need to refresh yourself of what that was about, you can listen to the sermon online. But Paul, in that passage, taught that we must hold fast to the gospel of the resurrected Christ because it is of first importance.
- And in our passage for today, we find out why Paul thought it necessary to include that in his letter to the Corinthians. So he says in verse 12, read along with me. Now, if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?

The dead refers to those who have died, and Christ was once among the dead, but he was raised from the dead on the third day. So the Corinthians believed the resurrection of Christ, but they nevertheless argued, some of them, that there is no resurrection of the dead.

But for Paul, belief in the resurrection of Christ disallows the denial of the resurrection of the dead. So he continues in verse 13. But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised.

[3 : 45] If the resurrection of the dead is not a thing, then Christ also would not have been raised. And it's Christ's resurrection that guarantees the resurrection of believers. For this reason, proclaiming the resurrection of Christ necessitates the resurrection of the dead.

And denial of the resurrection of the dead negates the resurrection of Christ itself. And so, arguing that there is no resurrection of the dead was tantamount to denying the resurrection of Christ.

So Paul then takes that line of thought and reasons it to its logical conclusion, which brings us to verse 14. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain, and your faith is in vain.

If we don't believe in the resurrection of Christ as believers, then Christian preaching and Christian faith are all empty. They're in vain. To deny the resurrection is to deprive the very substance of the Christian faith.

And it not only reduces our preaching and faith to vanity, it also makes us guilty of fraud. As Paul says in verse 15 here, we are even found to be misrepresenting God because we testified about God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if it is true that the dead are not raised.

[4 : 58] If God did not raise Christ from the dead, then we are lying about Him by saying that Christ was raised from the dead. And the apostles, and this is quite the accusation if that's the case, because the apostles were commissioned by Jesus Christ Himself to be the guarantors of the faithful transmission of the gospel, that Christ died and rose again for our forgiveness of sins.

And so these apostles who are supposed to be faithful stewards of that, to transmit that to the next generations, they are made out to be just charlatans, right? They're all frauds.

For as Paul says in verse 16, if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. It's a pretty straightforward argument, right? If the dead are not raised, then Christ could not have been raised because if the resurrection of the dead is impossible, then it's not possible for Christ to have been raised.

And then in verses 18 to 19, Paul explains further how denying the resurrection of Christ renders our faith futile and our hope pitiable, right?

He says in verse 18, And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile, and you are still in your sins. If Christ has not been raised, then his atoning sacrifice, his death on our behalf, was ineffective.

[6 : 18] That means we are still in our sins. So sometimes we can think that, as Christians, Christ's death alone was sufficient for our salvation. But that's not the case. Paul writes in Romans 4.25, Christ was delivered up for our trespasses, he died for our trespasses, and raised for our justification.

His resurrection is part of our redemption, and salvation. And he similarly adds in Romans 5.10, For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his son, much more now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life?

Again, the death and resurrection cannot be separated. It's the resurrection of Christ is part of what saves us. Because if Christ has not been raised, that means it would mean that he was swallowed up by death.

If Christ had not been raised, then it would mean that he was overwhelmed by the curse of sin. If Christ had not been raised, then it would mean that he was overcome by Satan, the enemy of God.

And that means all of us, all Christians, would still remain in their sins and stand condemned under God's judgment. For that reason, apart from the resurrection of Christ, our faith is futile.

[7 : 35] And we are still in our sins. And not only is the faith of the living futile, Christians who died already with faith have altogether perished.

Paul says in verse 18, then those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. The expression falling asleep was a common euphemism for death among the Greeks.

But among Christians, it also came to express their hope in the resurrection. And that's because if you remember from Mark 5:39, when Jesus goes to heal Jairus' daughter, it turns out that Jairus' daughter has already died.

But when people are mourning around him, Jesus says this, the child is not dead, but sleeping. And then he raises her from the dead.

By this miracle, Jesus taught his followers that those who put their faith in him, for them death is not final, but temporary, like sleep itself.

[8 : 42] So when Christians begin to use the expression falling asleep, they express their hope in the resurrection to come. But if we deny the resurrection of the dead, as the Corinthians are doing, then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.

They're no longer just asleep. They've perished altogether, gone forever. All their deeds of faith and acts of obedience would have been for nothing.

Of course, the Corinthian believers themselves would have disagreed with Paul's assessment. They didn't believe in the resurrection of the dead. Well, some of them probably did, but some of them didn't. But they did believe in the afterlife, like the rest of the Greeks.

And so what they think is, and that's why I think in verse 29, we see some of them were getting baptized on behalf of the dead. So they clearly believed that something happened after death.

They just didn't believe in the physical resurrection of the dead. So they had this disembodied view of spirituality, right? And we've seen that over and over again throughout this letter. They thought that they were already like the angels in heaven while they're living here on earth.

[9 : 52] So they wrongly believed that whatever they did to their body didn't affect them because the body, after all, is something that's just going to be discarded upon death anyway. And we're going to be these souls, you know, going into heaven.

So that's what they believed. That's why they indulged in incest, as we saw earlier. That's why they were sexually immoral with prostitutes. That's why they believed that marriage was something they could neglect, right?

Because they didn't believe that the body had any significance. But this doctrine of the Greeks, the immortality of the soul, is an incomplete and faulty doctrine. The true Christian doctrine is the resurrection of the body.

And that's why Paul teaches here that our bodies will be raised and it will be perfected at the second coming of Christ, which we'll talk about next week. And our soul and body together will be made whole and we'll be able to enjoy our fellowship with God forever.

And for that reason, to deny the resurrection of the dead is to nullify the Christian faith altogether. Because if there's no resurrection, then those believers who have already died have perished altogether.

[10 : 52] And if Christian faith is futile, then Christian hope is pitiable. Paul says in verse 19, If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

This does not mean that the Christian life offers no benefits in the present life. It does. It offers us joy, peace, love, forgiveness. It gives us community. But it does help us to become better moral people.

But if all the benefits of Christ are for this life only, then we are of all people most to be pitied because our hope for the future is the basis of our joy in this life in the midst of suffering.

Because our hope in the future, for the future, is the basis for our peace in this life, even amidst the turbulent world. Because that's the basis for having love in a hate-filled world.

Because that's the basis for being forgiving and forgiving others in a vengeful world. Because that's the basis, that hope is the basis for having community in a world where people are selfish and alienating.

[12 : 04] If we discipline ourselves and persevere to the end with what Colossians 1.27 calls Christ in us, the hope of glory, but this hope turns out to be an illusion founded on nothing because Christ hadn't, in fact, been raised from the dead.

If we run this race with endurance only to discover that there is no finish line, no medal ceremony, in fact, there was no race at all to begin with.

We were running in vain. We are of all people most to be pitied. Recall that in 1 Corinthians 13.13, Paul said that faith, hope, and love are the three most important virtues that characterize the Christian life in the present.

But that of these, he said, love is the greatest because it, unlike faith and hope, abides eternally. And it's because to have faith is to believe what we do not see, right?

We do not see it yet. And to have hope is to long for and wait expectantly for what we do not yet have. That's why we have faith now.

[13 : 23] That's why we have hope now. But when Christ returns for his people and we are raised into resurrection life, that our faith will turn to sight and our hope will turn to fulfillment.

But if Christ has not been raised and therefore there is no resurrection of death, our faith will be disproved and our hope will be disappointed.

Which means our faith is futile and our hope is pitiable. For that reason, it is absolutely essential that we believe in the resurrection.

And the resurrection of the Lord, the resurrection of Christ is the linchpin of the Christian life. That's Paul's first point, the past resurrection of Christ. And then Paul paints this bleak picture of the Corinthians' worldview because he wants them to be grounded in faith and hope that are substantive, not elusive.

He asserts this in verse 20. But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. Because of this, our hope is not pitiable, but enviable.

[14 : 36] Because of this, our faith is not futile, but full and fruitful. And because of this, we are no longer in our sins. Because of this, we are rightly representing God, not misrepresenting him when we proclaim that Christ has been raised from the dead.

Paul uses that as a transition in verses 20 and 28 to argue for the future resurrection of believers. That's my second point. And he does this by calling Christ the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.

In the Old Testament, God's people were commanded to bring the first fruits of their labor, whether it's produce, if you're a farmer, or livestock, if you're a shepherd. And they were to bring the first fruits to the Lord as an offering of thanksgiving.

And this offering of the first fruits was an acknowledgement that God is the source of all life, and that ultimately all the fruit of their labors belong to God. And by bringing a portion of that, they were pledging, really, of all that they have.

And when they bring a portion and pledge, it was also a recognition that the first fruits that they have currently is a pledge of all that is to come, the full harvest that is still coming. And so when Paul describes Christ as the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep, he means that Christ's resurrection is the first of many to come, that Christ's resurrection sets a precedent, and that it's a pledge for the resurrection of all his followers, those who are united with him.

[16 : 01] Christ is the first fruits, meaning he is the first to rise from the dead, but he's not the last. The resurrection of Christ guarantees the resurrection of Christians.

And Paul explains why this is the case with two explanatory sentences in verses 21 to 22. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead.

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. Adam, as the first man, functioned as the head and source of all mankind.

And as such, he represented all of humanity. And therefore, when he sinned against God, sin and its just consequence, death came to characterize not just Adam, but all of humanity.

Conversely, when God sent his son, Jesus Christ, into the world as the son of man to represent humanity, to be the new and second Adam, the better Adam, and when he lived a life of perfect obedience and died for the sins of his people and he was raised again to vindicate his sacrifice, his righteousness, and its just reward, eternal resurrection life, also came to characterize all those who belong to Christ.

[17 : 22] Of course, by this Paul, by this Paul, is not saying that all people, regardless of whether they believe in Christ or not, will be made alive. Some people can misunderstand this verse that way.

That's a heresy called universalism. Instead, Paul uses the language of participation in verse 22. He says, For as in Adam all die, meaning all those who are in Adam, those who are part of Adam, represented by him, that's all of us.

So those who are part of Adam, the first man die. And then he says, So also in Christ shall all be made alive. That's the language of participation. This means all of those who belong to him, who are in Christ, those who have joined themselves to Christ through faith, in his death and resurrection, they are the ones who will all be made alive.

And if that's not clear from verse 22, Paul makes that, they clear that up beyond doubt in verse 23, where he says specifically, at Christ's coming, those who belong to Christ will be made alive.

That's what Paul means when he says that all will be made alive. It's all those who belong to Christ, all those who are in Christ. Christ. That's why all that we hold dear as Christians, right, the love of God, our Father, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, we receive and experience all of this only insofar as we are in Christ.

[18 : 45] Are you in Christ today? Have you aligned yourself to Christ today? Do you belong to Christ today? Does he represent you today? Does he stand for you today? Sometimes when speaking of professional development or career advancement, people cynically say something like this, which I'm sure is sometimes true.

It's not what you know, it's whom you know, right? You guys have probably heard that, right? But this unfortunate adage in the context of the workplace is gloriously true when it comes to our salvation.

For those who want to be saved from their sins, for those who seek a full spiritual life in the present, for those who desire eternal resurrection life, it's not what you do.

It's not what you know, but whom you know. Because there's no way you can earn your way to heaven.

You and I are not qualified and we never will be. We cannot make our way. God's standard is perfect and holy and we have all fallen woefully short of it.

[19 : 53] We have sinned against an infinite God and we cannot bear the infinite punishment that is due that we have incurred. We have incurred an infinite debt that we owe to God and we have no means to repay it.

But Christ, as the second Adam, as our representative, as our champion, he had borne the punishment that we could not bear and he paid the debt that we could not repay.

That's the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ. And all we need to do is to align ourselves to him so that he stands for us, so that he represents us, so that we are in Christ.

This salvation is offered to us freely, not because it's cheap, but because it came at great cost to God, not to us. Why would you refuse this precious gift?

If you are not in Christ today, if you're not a follower of Jesus Christ today, I urge you, you're outside of God's grace. You are alienated from him and you are still in your sins, but you have hope.

[21 : 04] You can join yourself to Christ. We will celebrate baptism next week, which is the Christian rite of initiation. It signifies our union with Christ in his death, that we are in Christ.

That's what it signifies. And our baptism in water signifies our death to sin, and so that our sins have been washed away, so we are submerged in the water in the squalor of our sins, and symbolically we emerge having been clothed with the pure robe of Christ's righteousness.

And that becomes a surety for us, because we have died with Christ, that when Christ returns, we'll also be raised with him. You too can make this profession of faith if you're not yet a follower of Christ.

And having explained why Christ's resurrection guarantees the resurrection of his followers in verses 21 to 22, Paul now explains how these resurrections will happen in verses 23 to 24.

He writes, First is the resurrection of Christ, who is the firstfruits.

[22 : 25] Second is the resurrection of all those who belong to Christ, which will happen at Christ's coming. That's a reference to his second coming. Then after this will come the end, which is the third and final item in the sequence.

The end will be characterized by Christ delivering the kingdom of God, kingdom to God the Father, and after destroying every rule and every authority and power. So what does that mean?

These words of rule, authority, power, they occur in the exact same sequence in Ephesians 1, 20 to 21. It says, God the Father raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion.

And though these words can be used to refer to human rulers and authority figures, they are used consistently in both ancient Jewish texts and Gentile magical texts to refer to demonic and spiritual powers.

So Paul is saying here that Christ subjects all spiritual rulers, authorities, and powers under himself. But since these spiritual powers and authorities and rulers lie behind every social and political and economic structures and systems that set themselves up against God, Christ's subjection of these things refers to his reign over all things in life as well, not just the spiritual realm.

[23 : 53] He will make all things right again. If we don't long for this sweet victory and vindication, I'm afraid that it might be because we align ourselves too closely with the rulers and authorities and powers of this world.

Whether it's political persecution or systemic injustices or spiritual oppression, all of it will be destroyed by the Lord Jesus Christ.

and if you are mourning because of any of these things, you can live with hope in that day and rejoice for that day. But in Ephesians, if you're paying attention, Paul speaks of Christ as already having subjected all rule and authority and power.

But here in 1 Corinthians, why does then he speak as if Christ will only do that at the end when he returns? I've used this analogy before, but it's comparable to the relationship between D-Day and V-Day in World War II.

It's when the Allied forces made a breach by making a beach landing in Normandy and they successively took the surrounding area that established a firm foothold for the Allied forces in an area that was previously thought unconquerable, unconquerable.

[25 : 22] And then that first day of that operation is called D-Day. And that D-Day operation was so pivotal and significant that it all but guaranteed the Allied forces victory. It made their victory inevitable.

And so that D-Day set them up for V-Day, the Victory Day. So in a similar way, Christ's life, death, and resurrection decisively defeated sin, death, and the spiritual forces of evil.

And it's at Christ's second coming that we will experience the full consummation of that. Every rule and every authority and power have already been subjected in a decisive way, but they have not yet been fully destroyed, including death, which is still a reality.

Death has not yet been destroyed. But his victory will be consummated in its full effect will be realized at the end when Christ delivers the kingdom to God the Father. Paul elaborates on this in verses 25 to 26.

For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. Of all the enemies of the soul, the last enemy to be destroyed is death, which is why we still die.

[26 : 31] And when Christ returns and raises his people from the dead, he will destroy death once and for all. And Paul says later in verse 56 of the same chapter, the sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law.

So sin, which is the sting of death, has already been removed. Christ has dealt with sin and he has dealt with death in that sense. But that full effect of it, so that we no longer die, but we're raised from the dead, that will not happen until his second coming.

And until then, he must continue his reign, it says, until he has put all his enemies under his feet. This is an allusion to Psalm 110.1 where God says to his anointed king, the Messiah, which is the prophecy of Jesus, sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.

Paul sees Christ as this Messiah, the anointed king who subjects all of God's enemies under his feet. under his feet. And then Paul continues that train of thought in verse 27. For God has put all things in subjection under his feet.

Now this quotation is from Psalm 8. It says, Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him dominion over the works of your hands.

[27 : 45] You have put all things under his feet. In the original context of the Psalm, the Psalmist is praising God for how God has been so gracious to humankind. How did you make him only a little lower than the angels?

You have given him all this rule and authority and dominion. You have subjected everything under his feet. And later the author of Hebrews applies this to Christ. And he says, But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

What the connection that this biblical author is making in Hebrews is that Jesus is the ultimate man. He is the ultimate son of man, the ultimate human, the representative of all of humanity.

And he was made a little lower than the angels so that through him all the authorities and power and rule may be subjected under him. So that he can fulfill the true purpose of humankind which is to represent God and to rule in his stead over the earth and to extend God's benevolent rule over the earth.

And it's Christ who accomplishes this. Notice that while in verses 24 to 25 Christ is the one who puts all his enemies under his feet.

[29 : 04] Christ is the subject of the verb. But in verses 27 to 28 it's God the Father who puts all things in subject under Christ's feet. In subjection under Christ's feet.

So the Father and the Son of course are two of the three persons of the Trinity so this is not contradictory because even though they have distinct functions they have one essence and they always work in full concert.

But since the Son works according to the will of his Father all that he does is ultimately from the Father. And since the Son always works for the glory of the Father all that he does is also to the Father.

And that's what Paul's speaking of here. He says in verses 27 to 28 read with me. But when it says all things are put in subjection it is plain that he is accepted who put all things in subjection under him.

When all things are subjected to him then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him. That God may be all in all. There's a lot of pronouns there, right?

[30 : 01] It can get a little bit confusing. But what Paul is saying is this. He's not that by saying that all things will be subjected under Christ he's not saying of course that the Father himself will be subjected.

That's a violation of the Trinitarian order. But what he's saying is that Christ on the Father's behalf subjects all things to himself and later that rule will also be subsumed under the Father's reign.

One Bible commentator puts it this way healthfully. Since God and Christ as Lord are one this emphasis is not upon a discontinuation of Christ's Lordship as such but upon its culmination within the terms of its purpose for this world and Christ's kingdom here.

So this doesn't mean that Christ stops reigning that he stops ruling at some point in time but rather that he continues his reign under the lordship and sovereignty of God the Father.

It's like God the Father is the king over all who sends his son as a viceroy and to put down once and for all all these seditious and treasonous activities that are happening among his subjects and then to reestablish his reign and his stead.

[31 : 12] And then it's through Christ God rights all the wrongs of this world and brings it once again into order and under his reign so that God may ultimately be all in all. That's the goal of humanity.

That's the goal of human history. And this inevitable chain of events has been initiated by the past resurrection of Christ and that's why we can be assured as Christians of our future resurrection.

Note that consistently and repeatedly throughout this passage seven times in all Christ's resurrection is described in a passive form. It says that Christ was raised and that implies that the subject is God the Father who raised Christ up from the grave.

Of course it's not wrong for us to say that Christ has risen. That's what we say on Resurrection Sunday because biblical writers especially in the Gospels also use that language. But in an ultimate sense it's God the Father as the authority over and source of all things who raised Christ from the dead.

And that same God in verse 22 is the one by whom we shall all be made alive. So that shows that we don't make this happen ourselves.

[32 : 25] We don't raise ourselves. We don't need to wait for the queue so that we can resurrect when it's time for us. We don't need power ourselves to raise ourselves from the dead. It's God himself, the almighty God who raises us from the dead and because he has done it with Christ that becomes the decisive proof for us that that will happen for us.

It's a certainty. And it's this firm hope in our future resurrection that sustains our present obedience and perseverance.

Paul writes about this in verses 29 to 34. He says in verse 29, Otherwise, what do people mean by being baptized on behalf of the dead?

If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on their behalf? This is arguably the most difficult verse to interpret in all of 1 Corinthians.

Over 40 different interpretations have been suggested. And notably, this difference of interpretations is not just in our day.

[33 : 32] There's been differing interpretations throughout church history which tells us this is a difficult verse. And so we probably shouldn't be dogmatic about it. So with that caveat out of the way, here's my tentative interpretation.

The expression the dead is used eight times in this passage, not including the two occurrences in verse 29 which we're trying to figure out right now. And in all of those contexts, invariably, the word dead, the dead, refers to those who are already dead physically.

So I think it's most likely to refer to the actual dead not to believers who are dying which is what some of the interpretations suggest. And because throughout this passage as well, Paul's concern whenever he says resurrection of the dead, he's not speaking of resurrection of the dead in general, believers and unbelievers alike, but he's speaking of the resurrection of the believers who have died.

So I think that's most likely what Paul has in mind when he says the dead here. So it's those believers who died before they had the opportunity to get baptized. Basically like the thief on the cross that dies next to Jesus.

So some believers, it seems, among the Corinthians were getting baptized on their behalf because, oh no, they hadn't had a chance to get baptized. They had faith but they died without being able to get baptized so I'm going to get baptized for them.

[34 : 56] I mean, well-meaning but misguided. And the problem with this interpretation, the difficulty with it rather, is that there's no biblical precedent for such vicarious baptisms.

It seems to contradict Paul's teaching that people are saved by grace through faith and that personal faith is required and that a personal response involves baptism. It has to be that person's decision.

So just as you can't believe on behalf of someone, you also can't get baptized on behalf of someone so they must themselves respond to God. And I think it's that theological difficulty that has engendered all these alternate interpretations over and against the plain meaning of the text.

But even though I will add this, Paul mentions these vicarious baptisms, he's not necessarily endorsing them as legitimate because he's only saying that their existence proves people's implicit belief in the resurrection of the dead because without belief in the resurrection of the dead, such baptism would be pointless in Paul's argument.

So we can think of it this way. For example, if I can say to you, what do people mean by knocking on wood? Right? If they really don't believe in luck, then why do they knock on wood to avoid bad luck?

[36 : 09] Right? So that's an argument I can make. When I say that, I'm not endorsing the practice of knocking on wood. Right? I'm merely using that as an example to prove that people do in fact believe in superstitions.

Right? They believe in luck. So I think that's kind of what's going on here. So it's Paul is using this not to say that it's legitimate to get baptized on behalf of someone, a believer who has died, but to point out that the Corinthians' practice of doing so proves actually that there is resurrection of the dead because without the resurrection, there's no spiritual existence beyond the grave.

So this verse doesn't teach us that we should get baptized on behalf of the dead. So that's some of the Corinthian believers seem to have had this kind of magical view of baptism and I think that's why kind of Paul corrects them throughout this letter.

So for example in chapter 1 verses 14 to 17 he said this, I thank God that I baptize none of you except Crispus and Gaius so that no one may say that you are baptizing my name.

for Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel. He's downgrading baptism here because the Corinthians were making such a big deal of baptism saying oh I got baptized by Paul I got baptized by Apollos I got baptized by so and so and Paul's saying no that's not what saves you baptism is your personal response to Christ Christ is the one who saves you.

[37 : 36] And similarly he said in chapter 10 verses 1 to 5 I do not want you to be unaware brothers that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea and all ate the same spiritual food and all drank the same spiritual drink nevertheless with most of them God was not pleased for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

Why does Paul make this connection between Israel and the present church and he uses the language of baptism and he uses the language of communion spiritual food and spiritual drink. The point he's trying to make is that the Corinthian believers were complacent and they were engaging in sexual immorality and incest and doing all kinds of things that are forbidden by God and yet they were saying to themselves well I was baptized well I partake in the Lord's supper so I'm safe and Paul tells them look at your forefathers they were in a sense baptized baptized under Moses they were in a sense partaking in spiritual food just like you yet they were destroyed because of their idolatry so Paul has already kind of addressed this issue of baptism throughout so I think he doesn't feel the need to correct them yet again in this instance but he's just using that as an example to prove his point that the resurrection of the dead is a reality and then in verses 30 to 31

Paul uses his personal example to prove the same point why are we in danger every hour I protest brothers by my pride in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord I die every day Paul says that he faces danger every hour and he says that he dies every day every hour every day the two expressions together basically amount to Paul claiming that he's facing risk and suffering 24 hours a day and 7 days a week 24-7 this is his life Jesus said in Luke 9 23 if anyone would come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me this is in fact what Paul has been doing he has been daily dying to himself for the glory of God and to emphasize the truth of his claim

Paul writes I protest brothers by my pride in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord I die every day what does Paul mean by that I think the NIV translates a little bit more literally and health fully it says I face death every day yes just as surely as I boast about you in Christ Jesus our Lord right Paul said earlier in chapter 9 that Corinthian church is the workmanship his workmanship in the Lord that they are the seal of his apostleship because he planted them in their church for that reason Paul had great pride in the Corinthian church in Christ of course and that's why he says as surely as I have pride in you that certainly that surely I am facing danger every hour and I'm facing death every day doesn't that really reveal Paul's heart I was so moved by that as I was preparing this passage even though the Corinthian church caused him more grief than any other churches that he ever served he says to him the surest thing that he can grab hold of to prove that he really is facing danger every day is my pride in you my boast in you that's his heart for the church that's his care for them and Paul is hardly exaggerating he says in 2nd

Corinthians 11 23 to 28 these are the things that he's suffering for the sake of the gospel and he's contrasting himself from the false apostles who are trying to lead the Corinthians astray are they servants of Christ I am a better one I am talking like a mad man but with far greater labors far more imprisonments with countless beatings and often near death five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one three times I was beaten with rods once I was stoned three times I was shipwrecked a night and a day I was adrift at sea on frequent journeys in danger from rivers danger from robbers danger from my own people danger from Gentiles danger in the city danger in the wilderness danger at sea danger from false brothers in toil and hardship through many a sleepless night in hunger and thirst often often without food in cold and exposure and apart from other things there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches but if there is no resurrection of the dead for what is Paul enduring all of this hardship he continues in verse 32 what do I gain if humanly speaking

[43 : 23] I fought with beasts at Ephesus if the dead are not raised let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die fighting with beasts is likely metaphorical and not literal for several reasons first if it were literal Paul would not have survived all the tale secondly if it were if it were literal it's not likely to be because Paul was a Roman citizen and the punishment execution by giving being given to wild beasts was a punishment that the Roman citizens were excluded from and third that expression fighting with beasts is a very common metaphorical expression that's used throughout Greek literature so I think it's likely Paul's using the same sense it refers to fighting or some kind of intense struggle like a mortal struggle with one's enemies and so Paul's saying he's intensely struggling in this way for the sake of the gospel but what gain is there if the dead are not raised let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die that's a quotation from

Isaiah 22 13 that expresses a mindset of people who do not have any regard for God if there is nothing beyond death why suffer in this life why should we not indulge our every desire entertain our every whim and enjoy the pleasures of this life why not if there's nothing beyond death but to live in that way would be the height of foolishness because there is the resurrection of the dead Balthasar Grathian he was a 17th century Christian philosopher from Spain he wrote this never contend with a man who has nothing to lose because he has nothing to lose that person can give himself unreservedly and wholeheartedly to something Christians are men and women who have nothing to lose because what we have to lose in this world is nothing compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing

Christ as Paul says in Philippians 121 for to me to live is Christ but to die is gain if we die in Christ we will rise again with him and our sweet union with him will be perfected the one who loves us better and more than anyone we've ever known the one whom we're living for will be united with him in perfect undistracted undisturbed communion and fellowship that's what we have to gain when we die what do we have to lose it's only when we see that hope with clarity that we can count the costs of this life and then say still I will gladly pay the price that's what it means to be a

Christian God's not calling us to be little groupies that follow him around whenever things are going well he's calling us to give up our lives for him whoever will save his life will lose it but whoever loses my life for the sake of Christ and his gospel will save it so what in the world are we doing living like there is no resurrection of the dead that's what Paul is essentially saying in verses 33 34 do not be deceived bad company ruins good morals wake up from your drunken stupor as is right and do not go on sinning for some have no knowledge of God I say this to your shame the quote there the bad company ruins good morals is a quote from a Greek dramatist named Menander that Paul uses he seems to have been widely well read and by keeping company with people who denied the resurrection of the dead and therefore people who had lax attitudes toward life the

Corinthians were corrupting their good morals so Paul warns them and tells them to stop associating with them and he contrasts being awake on the one hand from eating and drinking on the other so that's in our idiom it might be something like being sober contrasted from partying and being wasted he exhorts them wake up from your drunken stupor those who are living without view to the resurrection are living in a drunken stupor it's like an inebriated person is incapacitated in every way their muscles are relaxed they don't really have full control they can't even walk straight they can't drive their speech is slurred they can't articulate themselves in fact their mind their mental faculty is also degenerating so they they're confused a lot of times in fact if you're so drunk you could even lose consciousness that's what

[48 : 48] Paul compares living without view to the resurrection too if we do not live with the resurrection with the long view in mind then we're living as if we're like a drunk intoxicated knowing that we will be raised with Christ in the future we can die to ourselves every day and in order to endure present death we must be assured of our future resurrection Christ has been raised from the dead the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep I mentioned the Old Testament practice of bringing the first fruit offerings earlier there was one more thing that they were commanded to bring not just produce and livestock they were required by God's law to bring the first born among their sons as well according to Numbers 18 15 to 17 the

Canaanites Israel's neighbors who worshipped the idol Molech they actually literally sacrificed their children by fire to their idols but God expressly and explicitly forbade this in numerous places in the Old Testament and instead he called for the redemption of the first born Israelites had to pay the redemption price for their first born sons as a recognition of the fact that they belong to the Lord that practice was instituted in the Old Testament why because it was intended to point to the sacrifice of the Son of God who is described in Colossians 1:15 as the first born of all creation Jesus Christ is the first born who was sacrificed in our place sacrificed for our sins so so that we can be redeemed and be adopted as his children in the family of

God and because he was the first born that died he is the first fruits of the resurrection Christ is our substitute in death and he is our forerunner in the resurrection and death is the truth upon which our faith is founded that's the gospel of Jesus Christ so let's be clear eyed and unflinching about this truth and live march forward giving our every breath and be ready to give even our very last breath for the sake of Christ for his glory for the love of Christ let's reflect on that in silence a few minutes and then we'll respond in prayer