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A1311 – March 17, 2013 – 1 Corinthians 15:29-34
The Axiological Evidences For Resurrection

If you'd return once more to 1 Corinthians 15 you will find the single most extensive chapter on resurrection in the entire Bible. Resurrection is an OT doctrine and a NT reality beginning with Christ, the first fruits from among the dead. And yet there were some believers at Corinth who held that there was no resurrection from the dead, a universal negative to which Paul logically refutes by saying then not even Christ has been raised from the dead. So the statement there is no resurrection from the dead is easily refutable and Paul has actually refuted it from three lines of evidence so far. First, from the Scriptural evidence; second, from the historical evidence; third, from the logical evidence and today we come to the fourth evidence, the axiological evidence. What is axiology? *Axiology is the science of assigning value to how we live so it deals with what is a valuable way to spend our time in light of what we believe.* For example, if you are an atheist it is not a valuable use of your time to go around preaching the gospel but it is valuable to study material explanations of the universe. So axiology is the science of the logical relationships existing between beliefs and behaviors and they inform you on what kind of behavior is valuable. Now since the subject of 1 Cor 15 is the resurrection then Paul's point is that your view of resurrection affects how valuable you think it is to live a certain way and engage in certain behaviors. So if you glance at vv 29-34 you will see that every behavior mentioned is a behavior that a group of people or Paul engaged in because of their belief in the resurrection from the dead. And so if there is no resurrection from the dead then these behaviors would not be valuable, they would be a waste of time and therefore these people ought to go do something else. So axiology is the essence of Paul's argument in vv 29-34. If there is no resurrection from the dead then why behave as if there is resurrection from the dead?

Observe in verse 29 the first behavior, a very strange behavior from our perspective. You may have heard of this in Mormon circles but Protestants don't practice anything like this. **Otherwise, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why then are they baptized for them?** Now the behavior described here seems straightforward from the English translation but what this means is not clear from the original Greek. Consequently no single verse in the entire NT has more interpretations than this one. A. T. Robertson said 100 years ago there were 30 + interpretations of this verse. David Lowery said today there are "up to 200" interpretations. Now most of these are ridiculous for one reason, they are trying to fit this verse with the orthodox teaching on water baptism when that is not Paul's point. Paul, if you observe carefully, does not include himself as someone who was being baptized for the dead. He says **what will those do who are baptized for the dead and why are they baptized for them.** He does not say what will we do and why are we baptized for them. And therefore he is clearly distinguishing himself and his own teaching and practice from them and their practice. But he nevertheless uses them as an example of what a waste of time it would be to be **baptized for the dead** when in fact **the dead are not raised at all.** And that is enough to prove all that Paul wants to prove, namely that it would be a waste of time for these people to be baptized for the dead if the dead are not raised.

Now as to what this verse means, whatever it means it is not a biblical practice. That's not Paul's point. But what does it mean nevertheless? Godet points out that for the Corinthians it was virtually a technical term referring to a practice well-known to them but unknown to us. Lowery points out that just across the channel of the Saronic Gulf rites of initiation into the Eleusinian mystery cult involved washings of purification in the sea without which no one could expect to experience the bliss of life in the hereafter and these practices had crept into Corinth. Archaeology has uncovered a practice of Pharisees and Essenes who were so obsessed with ritual washings that upon the death of a loved one they would ritually wash the dead person's body in a ritual bath (i.e. *mikveh*) to remove any impurities in preparation for the resurrection. Ryrie says the practice might have been that of new converts being baptized to replace old converts who had died. Godet thinks the baptism refers to martyrdom because Jesus said he had a baptism to undergo that referred to His death on the cross and therefore Paul's point is that people would not undergo martyrdom if there was no resurrection from

the dead (cf v 32). But whatever the proper explanation three things are clear; first, the Corinthians knew exactly what Paul was talking about, second, Paul didn't practice it and third, Paul's argument for resurrection from it stands. It simply doesn't make any sense for people to be baptized for the dead if the dead are not raised. It is therefore an axiologically ridiculous behavior!

Now a second behavior is mentioned in verse 30 as ridiculous if there is no resurrection from the dead. Paul says, **Why are we also in danger every hour?** That is, why do we carry on with the practice of daily putting our lives in danger if in fact there is no resurrection from the dead? Why would we put our lives on the line for the gospel if it's not true and we might die? We would be more logical to just keep our mouths shut and therefore not be in danger. And you see that Paul does involve himself in this action. Paul daily put his life in danger. How did he put himself in danger? By preaching the gospel. By preaching Jesus Christ crucified and risen. And I think everyone in this room can be challenged by Paul's daily practice. Do we put ourselves in danger every hour for the preaching of the gospel? I think emphatically not. I don't think there's anyone here or ever has been anyone here in this church or anyone in this town that has this kind of missionary zeal. Now maybe someone like Solo Philip in India or maybe someone like Michael Turay in West Africa, but probably only a handful of people in the world have ever had the missionary zeal to put themselves **in danger every hour** for the gospel! And yet it seems quite logical that if there is a resurrection from the dead that we should be willing to put our lives **in danger every hour**. If we really believe the resurrection of the dead why don't we live like it and risk our lives for the gospel? Perhaps it's because we have responsibilities to take care of, like caring for a spouse or for our children. And Paul admits as much in 1 Cor 7 that indeed when you are single you can take more risks for the gospel. So there are valid reasons for not being as risky with the preaching of the gospel if we have these other responsibilities. But the challenge still remains as to whether we put our lives at some degree of risk for the gospel or whether we just remain silent when we know we should be more proactive and speak out. In any case, Paul and the other apostles put their lives **in danger every hour** and that is a very foolish thing to do if there is no resurrection from the dead. For if there is no resurrection from the dead and they are killed then that is all there is, they will simply return to dust with no hope of an afterlife.

Now verse 31 and here he is backing up what he just said about being in danger every hour with a solemn oath, this is a court affirmation, something like "I swear to tell the truth and nothing but the truth so help me God." **I affirm, brethren, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.** Now this court oath or affirmation is translated strangely but what he is swearing is that he **dies daily** just as he boasts daily in the Corinthians. Paul daily boasted in the Corinthians, not because the Corinthians were such great Christians they lived so well by the Spirit, for they were still fleshly, but he boasted in the fact that nevertheless they were Christians. Their behavior didn't make them look much like Christians but they were anyway and Paul boasted in that. And just as he boasted in that so he also says **I die daily**. Now this is how Paul lived each day. Moment by moment, day by day Paul died to himself and lived to God. And this is the way every Christian is to live. Every day you get up you are to die to self. You are supposed to say, it's not about me, it's not about what I want, it's not about what I have planned, it's about Jesus Christ and what He wants. And that's how Paul lived. In fact that's the only way to live as I'll show you. Paul said this in many ways and in many places so I'd like to share some of them with you. In Gal 2:20 he said essentially the same thing when he said, "I no longer live but Christ lives in me, the life I live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me." When he says I no longer live he essentially says I die daily and he's talking about the fact that when we die daily we enjoy the exchanged life of Christ living in us, the life of faith, trusting the promises of God. And the reason we are to live this way is because Christ first loved us and gave His life for us. We are purchased possessions of God. Now the concept that we have been purchased is redemption and again this plays into the fact that each day we are to die if we really want to live. In 1 Cor 6:19 Paul said it this way, "you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body." In other words, even your physical body belongs to God and was purchased by God and therefore we ought to daily put to death the lusts of the body and glorify God, use the body in a way that reflects His essence. Now Paul didn't only say this here or in Gal 2:20 but he also said it in Gal 6:14 when he said, "may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." There was a dual crucifixion for Paul; the world crucified to Paul and Paul crucified to the world. And to be crucified to something was to be dead to it. So Paul is saying that the world is dead to me and I am dead to the world. Paul understood

that as a Christian there was nothing the world had to offer; our world is the world to come, that is the world that belongs to us, this world we are merely passing through and that is why we should not focus on storing up riches in this world where moth and rust decay but in heaven where neither moth nor rust decay. And Paul is not the only one who reminded us of this truth.

James taught this truth in another way when he said in James 4:4,

“friendship with the world is hostility toward God!” So why, O why Christian do you want to be friends with the world, for to be so is to be an enemy of God? You ought to and I ought to rather become as Paul and **die daily** to the world, and to the things of the world, to be dead to self and self’s desires and self’s pleasures and instead to live by faith in God who gave His only Son for us. As Paul said earlier in 1 Cor 3:23. “all things belong to you, and you belong to Christ; and Christ belongs to God.” So what care do you have for the world? You might leave the world behind and in doing so you would lose nothing and gain everything, yours is the kingdom and the resurrection and the new heavens and the new earth with the new Jerusalem. So then die Christian, die for that is the only way to live! As Jesus said, “whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.” And if you really believe in resurrection then why aren’t you losing your life for Christ’s sake daily?

Now verse 32 records another human behavior that is very pointless if you don’t believe in resurrection from the dead. **If from human motives I fought with wild beasts at Ephesus, what does it profit me?** In other words, if there’s no life beyond the grave why would I go through all the difficulties that attend preaching the gospel? Paul was at **Ephesus** for more than 2 ½ years. At the end of his stay the opposition had erupted with tremendous force. He refers to this tremendous force as **wild beasts**. Now they were not literal **wild beasts**. Paul didn’t fight lions and tigers and bears. But he’s referring to rioting pagans at Ephesus who were stirred up against him because of the economic crisis paganism was facing because of Paul’s gospel. Paul’s dying daily to himself in Ephesus for over 2 ½ years caused such an influence of the gospel message that Luke says “all Asia heard the word of God.” That may be hyperbole but 350,000 people lived in Asia at the time and the gospel was making inroads. Many of them were becoming Christians. So many became Christians in and around Ephesus that the new Christians realized that buying the little silver trinkets of the fertility goddess Artemis, the local goddess of the Ephesians, was a waste of

money. The thriving business of Demetrius the silversmith was going bankrupt. The gospel was impacting people's wallets and when that happens you better watch out because there's going to be a response. The response in this case was that Demetrius started a riot against Paul. The result was that 25,000 people flocked to the great theater of Ephesus and yelled and screamed "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians" for more than two hours. That's the kind of inroads the gospel made when one man died daily for more than 2 ½ years at Ephesus. Now why would Paul go through all that rigmarole if there's no resurrection from the dead? If there's no resurrection Paul doesn't profit anything from going through that, it was all just religious motion. But Paul did go through it and that is an argument for the resurrection.

Now verse 32b and here we have another logical conclusion Paul is willing to follow if there is no resurrection from the dead. Paul says, **If the dead are not raised, LET US EAT AND DRINK, FOR TOMORROW WE DIE.** This is the end; this is the axiological end of no resurrection. Look, let's be real here, if this is just a human program of religion that we're involved in why live morally? We might as well eat ourselves into oblivion, drink ourselves into a stupor and have sex with anything that moves, because that's all there is and tomorrow we die. There are only two logical alternatives available to men for how to live; only two. And Paul says if Christ is not raised, if this is just a human program of religion I'm involved with I'm perfectly willing to follow the logical conclusion. The logical conclusion is just to have a good time. This is it. Get drunk, have a lot of sex, do drugs, blow your brains out, drown yourself in music, anything to cope with this sick, nasty, evil, deteriorating world. And don't kid yourselves; these are the coping strategies being used by 99% of Americans. They're trying to handle the mess in their hearts. There are serious issues deep down in people's hearts that are not being addressed with the gospel. And they're simply following out what they've been taught in the public school system. If I believed what is taught in the public school system, that all I am is a piece of cosmic debris that resulted from mere chance over time working on molecules and my ultimate environment is this dark, impersonal universe that surrounds me on every side and there's no meaning to life, no purpose, why not do drugs? Why not experiment with sex? Why not drink myself numb every night? If I'm hurting inside and that stuff makes me feel better, why not? Don't you come along and tell me don't drink and don't have sex and don't do drugs. Get out of my way, I'm hurting and there's

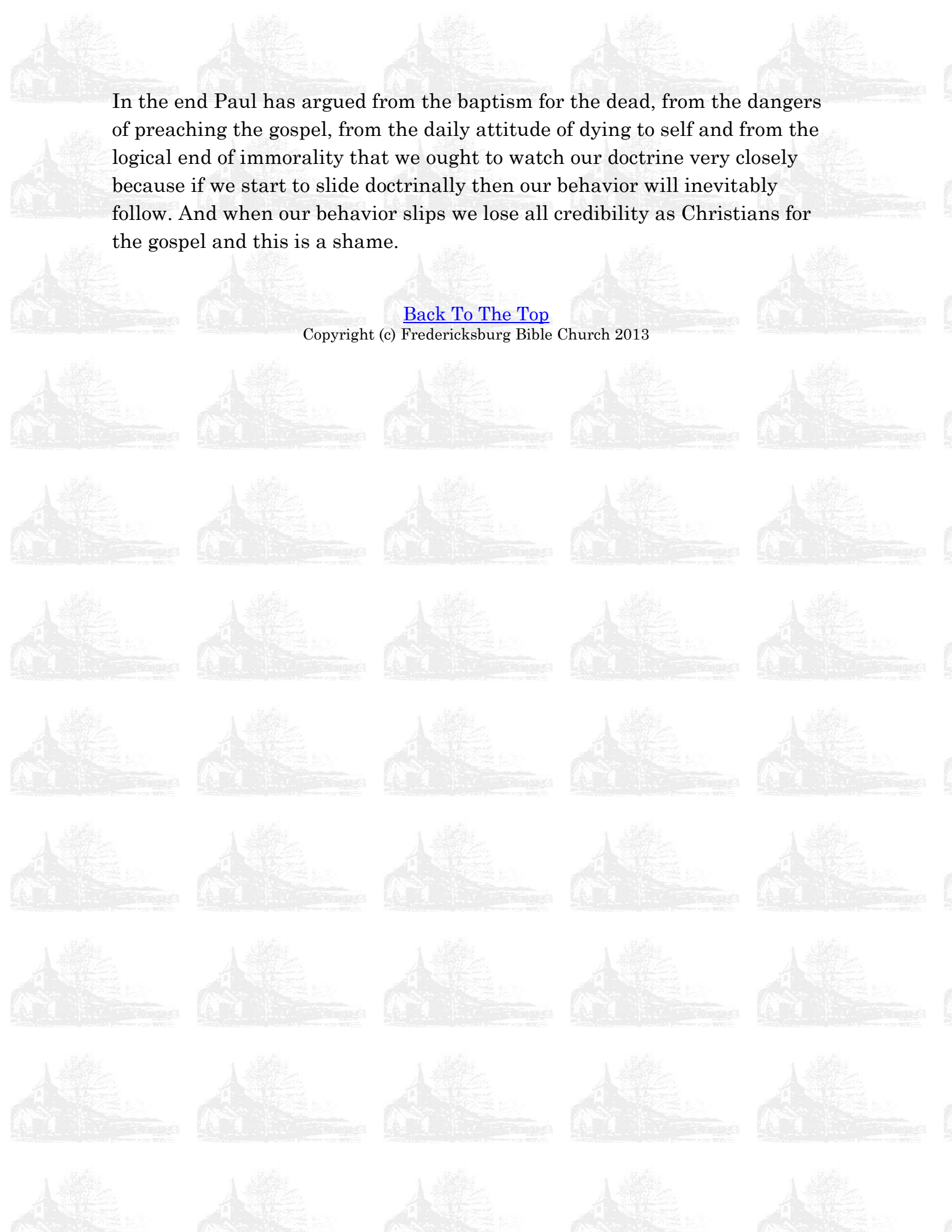
no purpose and there's no Person there who ultimately cares for me. I'm just a victim of my environment so I'm going to do it because that's the only thing that helps me kill the pain. And if I die, I die. You ought to be willing to live that way if there's no resurrection from the dead. Every Christian ought to say with Paul, if the dead are not raised, why not raise hell? Let's get out there and live it up because tomorrow we die! That's the axiological end of no resurrection. And I'm here to tell you Paul's right, these kids are right. And the reason these kids are living this way is because that's what they're taught in the public school system, and you can pour all the money in the world into it and it won't make a dime's bit of difference. And I've read over and over I don't know how many times that the public school systems are failing but I'm here to tell you they are doing exactly what they were designed to do; to create a meaningless, chaotic, licentious culture. Paul is dead on, verse 32, **If the dead are not raised, LET US EAT AND DRINK, FOR TOMORROW WE DIE.** Give up morality.

Verse 33, **Do not be deceived.** Commandment of God, do not be led astray, the ancients thought the planets just wandered aimlessly and so they'd say don't be like the planets, don't wander aimlessly in this world, that's foolish. And then Paul quotes from a play written by Menander which had become proverbial among the Greeks. **"Bad company corrupts good morals."** That's not a Scriptural saying; even the pagans recognized this because they're made in God's image! So Paul quotes it, don't be fooled Paul says, if you spend time around Christians who reject the resurrection your character will eventually suffer. If you spend time with the world your character will eventually fall. The world is not your friend and if you become the friend of the world you'll become like the world. You cannot fix the world, only God can do that. Do not buy into the idea that you can go out into the world and not be corrupted by the world! You are a fool if you do that and fools are a dime a dozen. Be wise. We hear the argument of salt and light coming from Christian circles, that we have to be salt and light in the world, but nobody adds the last part, when the salt has lost its saltiness then it's no longer salt. And I'm telling you, if you think that you can set up your life to where it revolves around the world and not be infected by the world, you are a fool! Many Christians with good intentions do this and these Christians are corrupted, they are ruined, they are spoiled, they lose their saltiness and become the rotten filth of the earth. Do not be deceived, the world wants to stain your conscience, they want to get you to partake with them in their filth

so that they can feel better about themselves. They don't care about you, they only care that you reinforce their negative behavior toward God. And anyone that dares think they can become a friend of the world and walk around with their conscience exposing everyone else without serious pressure to capitulate to the world's practices is a fool. Your conscience will be pressured to violate its standards and eventually you will and then you will become like them. **Do not be deceived. "Bad company corrupts good morals."**

Now verse 34 and this is the flipside, the positive, **Become sober-minded as you ought, sober-minded** means having a proper evaluation of yourself and your abilities to resist the temptations of pagan culture. Don't think that you can stand up to the pressure, that's a foolish way to live, there are some people and some places Christians should not go because it will corrupt them, they have an arrogant evaluation of themselves, they think they can withstand the pressure and they can't. **Become sober-minded as you ought**, Paul says, **and stop sinning**. Stop it! Quit it! What is wrong with you? Unbelievers and fleshly believers are always going to put pressure on you to sin. It may start with something little but the pressure will always be on to push the envelope a little farther and before you know it you're caught in a habitual sin pattern and those are very hard to get out of. They can take years to get out of and when you think you're out of it you can slip and fall right back into it so become sober-minded today and start to understand that you don't have the ability to resist the temptations so just don't put yourself in the situations. **stop sinning** and start living for God and spreading the gospel!

Now the reason Paul puts forth to soberly evaluate themselves and to stop sinning is that **some have no knowledge of God**. That is, they were unbelievers in need of hearing the gospel and if Christians are caught up in sinning they're not going to have any credibility when they proclaim the gospel. We don't need to become friends with the world, even as James said, to be a friend of the world is to be an enemy of God and Paul said bad company corrupts good morals. Well, what do we need to do then? We need to spread the gospel message. The friend doesn't need another friend, they need a Savior. Paul concludes verse 34, **I speak this to your shame**. The Greek word **shame** is *entropē* from which we get entropy, the movement from order to disorder. What a terrible thing to live a life of wanton pleasure as a Christian and not live for Jesus Christ.



In the end Paul has argued from the baptism for the dead, from the dangers of preaching the gospel, from the daily attitude of dying to self and from the logical end of immorality that we ought to watch our doctrine very closely because if we start to slide doctrinally then our behavior will inevitably follow. And when our behavior slips we lose all credibility as Christians for the gospel and this is a shame.

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