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1 Corinthians

For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet.

1 Corinthians 15:25

The previous verse spoke of things to come concerning the rule of Christ; a rule which will continue until the kingdom is delivered "to God the Father." This will be when all rule, authority, and power have been ended and there is only the kingdom of God which remains. In fact, "He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet."

There are at least two logical reasons why this must be so. The first is because it is morally proper for it to be this way. God created Adam and gave him free reign in the Garden of Eden, with but one prohibition. Adam disobeyed and plunged the world into sin. The devil's rule began and with it there have been many lesser kingdoms which have sprung up in this fallen world. In order to return things to the way they were intended to be, all of these lesser kingdoms must be ended and the rule go back to one Man.

This is already accomplished in God's mind, and it is revealed as accomplished in the pages of Scripture. Two pertinent verses of note from Revelation are -

"Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdoms of this world have become *the kingdoms* of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!'" Revelation 11:15

&

"The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet *are*. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever." Revelation 20:10

The kingdoms of the world will come to an end, and the devil who deceived man will be destroyed forever. It was morally proper for this to occur, and the Bible shows us that it will, in fact, come about.

The second reason that Christ "must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet" is because Scripture (based on the moral necessity of the matter) foretold that it would occur. It has done it throughout the Old Testament and it is confirmed in the New. Two parallel passages which highlight this are -

"The LORD said to my Lord,
'Sit at My right hand,
Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.'" Psalm 110:1

&

"But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³ from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool." Hebrews 10:12, 13

What is right and proper has been prophesied. As the Bible is the word of God, it cannot fail to come about. And therefore, Christ must rule until it does. We should have more surety in our hearts that Christ will accomplish these things than we do anything else.

Life application: In God's mind, the battle is already won. He has revealed this truth to us for our comfort and reassurance during times of trouble and difficulty. Let us hold fast to the truth of Christ as an anchor for our souls.

The last enemy *that will be destroyed is death.* 1 Corinthians 15:26

Considering the Greek here will shed light on what Paul is thinking. The verb for "will be destroyed" is in the present indicative middle or passive voice. And so rather than "will be" the action has already begun and is on-going until a fixed point.

A good way to understand this would be to consider a major league baseball team which has no chance of winning the pennant. They have lost the right to play in the World Series, and yet they continue to play because other teams still have a chance. Until the series is ended they continue in order to meet a set plan which was initiated at the beginning of the season. Though they are defeated, their defeat will continue until the plan is finished.

As the Pulpit Commentary notes, it is "already begun and continuing by an inevitable law." Therefore, Paul is thinking "is being destroyed until it is finished." Further, there is a definite article in front of "death." Therefore, "death" is being personified and capitalizing it is more appropriate. As Tyndale's version renders this -

"Lastly, Death the enemy shall be destroyed."

In support of the on-going (and yet inevitably completed) nature of the action, we can review several pertinent verses from the New Testament which concern the work of Christ. These are only a few among many which show us that Death is defeated, but that it will continue in this defeated condition for a set amount of time. First, from Paul's second letter to Timothy -

"...but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, *who* has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel..." 2 Timothy 1:10

Paul shows that in Christ's first appearance death was abolished. However, death still exists as is quite evident from the world around us. To understand this, again

think of the baseball team that has no chance of winning the pennant and yet, it still plays during the regular season. And so even though this action is done, it is awaiting a future fulfillment.

Next, From Hebrews 2, we see that it was through Christ's death that this came about. In this, "death" is tied in with the devil, showing that it is the devil who had "the power of death" -

"Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Hebrews 2:14, 15

Next, in John's first epistle, he shows that death is tied to sin. This takes us back to the very beginning when the devil deceived the man. In so doing, man sinned and death entered the world. As the wages of sin is death, it shows that the work of the devil is what brought death about -

"He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." 1 John 3:8

Jesus Christ came to undo this. He accomplished it at the cross, destroying the power of the devil in all who believe. But why didn't He just toss the devil into hell right then? The answer is that He is building a church out of the redeemed of the world. If He simply destroyed the devil at that time, there would be no church and thus no "living temple." Instead, the victory was won, but the devil has been allowed to continue in the world until a time determined by God. In this, we can think of the team which will eventually win the pennant. It is comprised of people who are winners, but they are not winners until the end of the season.

Those who come to Christ are "in Christ" and can never die again. But those who are not will both physically die and they will be eternally separated from God in the process, because Death continues to reign over them. Thus, we see why there is an on-going nature to the work of Christ. But some wondrous day, even Death will be eliminated forever. This is noted in Revelation 21 and it fits perfectly with Paul's words of verse 26 which we are evaluating -

"Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. ¹⁵
And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire."
Revelation 20:14, 15

Life application: In Christ, Death is defeated. If you are in Christ, don't be fearful of the Death which surrounds us; he has no mastery over you.

For "He has put all things under His feet." But when He says "all things are put under Him," it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted.
1 Corinthians 15:27

This verse goes back to verse 25, thus it makes verse 26 a parenthetical thought. The "For" at the beginning of the verse shows us this. The work of Messiah is on-going in time and it will continue until all things are placed under His feet (meaning that all things are subjected to Him.) This is found in Psalm 8 -

"You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands;
You have put all *things* under his feet." Psalm 8:6

This verse from the psalm is speaking of man, but in the greater sense it is speaking of Christ who took on the nature of man. Adam (man) fell and lost his right to the world. Christ came to reclaim that. It is this work of Christ that is on-going in the lives of people around the world. Someday this work will be complete and Death and Hades will be cast into the Lake of Fire. When this occurs, all things

will have truly have been placed under His feet because, "The last enemy *that* will be destroyed *is* death."

However, Paul wants to clarify the nature of the Godhead and so he continues with "But..." His term "all things" is speaking of the created order. Elsewhere, Christ's authority and supremacy over all things is noted, such as in Colossians 1:15-20, Hebrews 2:5-9, etc. But it is not possible that He would have supremacy over the Godhead. Rather, He is a member of the Godhead. Therefore Paul notes that "*it is* evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted."

God is God. As the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all revealed to be "God" in the Bible, then it cannot be that one is greater than the others. They are co-equal because each is God. Therefore, He (meaning God) who put all things under Him (meaning Christ) is excepted. Paul will continue his explanation of this in the next verse.

Life application: We as Christians do not worship and serve a "lesser god." Rather, we worship and serve Jesus - fully God. The doctrine of the Trinity is complicated, but it is neither contradictory nor irrational. It is logical and it reveals the true nature of God.

Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.

1 Corinthians 15:28

This verse brings us to the final realization of the work of Christ and its meaning in the eternal state which will proceed from it. Paul's words are obvious on the surface, and yet there are those who would attempt to undermine them. We have been shown that Christ will deliver "the kingdom to God the Father." As noted, this is referring to "God as Father" rather than "the Father" within the Godhead.

After showing us this, Paul then noted that "the last enemy *that* will be destroyed *is* death." This is described in Revelation 21 where Death and Hades were cast into the Lake of Fire. After that time is when Christ will deliver the kingdom over. In order to understand what this means, we arrive at verse 28.

"Now when all things are made subject to Him (meaning Christ), then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him." Christ's mission being complete, there will be no more need for the mediatorial role He once performed. There will be no need for "going through Christ" to speak to God. Instead, we shall fellowship directly with God, who is Jesus. As Revelation 1:8 notes -

"I am the Alpha and the Omega, *the* Beginning and *the* End," says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

Christ, who is now our focal point for all matters related to God will be made subject to Him "that God may be all in all." Ellicott explains these words thus -

"In these words are expressed the complete redemption both of the race and of the individual. It is the great and sublime conclusion to which the moral enthusiasm and the earnest logic of the previous argument has necessarily brought us."

There will be no consideration of any special office within the Godhead as there now is. Now we have the anticipation of God the Father as we always look forward to His presence, but He is ever out of reach. We have God the Son who is our focal point in all matters related to our relationship with God. He is the Light and Path to that sublime time when we shall again be in full fellowship with God. And we have the Holy Spirit who is our Helper in this walk. He is our Comforter in our anticipation of full redemption by reminding us of the work of Christ.

However, in the eternal state to come, there won't be these distinctions within the Godhead. Instead, there will be God ever before us, radiating out His wondrous light for all eternity. This is actually shown to be the case in Revelation 22 -

"And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. ⁴They shall see His face, and His name *shall be* on their foreheads." Revelation 22:3, 4

The distinctions within the Godhead that we now perceive will no longer be perceived in the same way. Instead, an entirely new order of understanding God will be realized. May that day be soon!

Life application: To deny the Trinity is to deny what God has done and is doing for man. We cannot deny the Trinity while attempting to lead someone to salvation because in a denial of the Trinity, we deny that Jesus Christ is the God/Man. If He is not the God/Man, then He is not the Mediator for us to the Godhead. If He is not the Mediator, then we are still in our sins and we are not reconciled to God. Stand fast on the truth of God as is revealed in the pages of the Bible.

Otherwise, what will they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all? Why then are they baptized for the dead? 1 Corinthians 15:29

The subject verse is one which has resulted in many aberrant teachings and practices within the church and even among cults. For example, the Mormons practice baptism for the dead, meaning *in absentia*, or in place of a person who has died but was not baptized. Other odd interpretations of this verse have also arisen, the list being too long to go through. However, these words have nothing to do with baptism *in absentia* or any other such unusual rendering.

Rather, the context must be considered to draw out the intended meaning. Paul begins with "Otherwise" to show us that this is something in contradistinction to

something else. The proper context then is to go back to the end of the argument which precipitated his words from 15:20-15:28. Those verses spoke of the reality of Christ's resurrection and the significance of that great act. The thought now is given in response to the words of 15:12 - 15:19 which ended with the exclamation

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"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable." 1 Corinthians 15:19

In those verses, he was writing about the futility of our hope and faith if Christ is not risen from the dead. If Christ wasn't raised, then neither will anyone else be raised; all are dead and remain dead. And so, Paul asks (based on his "otherwise") "what will they do who are baptized for the dead." The word "dead" here is plural and is referring to all who have believed in the resurrection of the dead and who have now passed on or who will pass on. All are baptized in hope and in eager anticipation of a literal resurrection from the dead.

But if there is no resurrection, then the hope is in vain. "For the dead" then is a reference to the state of the believer if the resurrection isn't true. They are baptized as dead and they will remain dead; the baptism was a useless gesture. On the contrary though, we are not baptized for the dead, but for the hope of life. The very nature of baptism shows us that Christ died (being submersed in the water is a picture of this) and then rose to newness of life (being raised from the water is a picture of this).

But "if the dead do not rise at all," then "why then are they baptized for the dead?" These words go back to the thought of verse 18, which said, "Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished." If they have perished, then their hope is perished as well. Why would anyone follow these supposed faithful in baptism if they died without hope? Being baptized to replace dead people who will never rise to life would be as pointless as their baptism was. They died in the hopes of a Savior who is still in the grave, and thus no Savior at all.

The entire thought that Paul is relaying is that in Christ there is hope and those who have died in Christ have not died in vain, nor will any die in vain who follow in baptism in the hopes of eternal life through the risen Christ. This is why Paul uses both the terms "sleep" and "dead" at various points of his discussion. "Sleep" implies hope; "dead" implies none. In Christ, there is hope. Paul's next three verses will continue to explain this.

Life application: Despite the difficult nature of 1 Corinthians 15:29, it is a verse which speaks of hope, not only for those who have gone before us, but for we who are still alive today. We receive baptism in the hope that is based on the work of Christ, and which has been established in our forefathers who have gone before us. Christ is risen and our hope is not in vain!

And why do we stand in jeopardy every hour? 1 Corinthians 15:30

Paul now delivers an added note of surety concerning the truth of the resurrection by beginning with the words "And why..." This then is tied to the previous verse concerning being "baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all." Contrasting "the dead" of the previous verse, he now says "we." In this, he is speaking of the work of the apostles who risked life and limb in the spreading of the message of Christ.

These men, and those who had heard and decided to follow their path, were known to "stand in jeopardy every hour." Their lives were constantly threatened as they carried on the work of sharing the gospel. He will conclude this line of reasoning with 1 Corinthians 15:32, but there is much more concerning the difficult lives of the apostles recorded in Acts and in extra-biblical documents as well. Further, in 2 Corinthians 11, Paul writes concerning many of the difficulties he personally faced -

".....in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. ²⁴From the Jews five times I received forty *stripes* minus one. ²⁵Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I

was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; ²⁶ *in* journeys often, *in* perils of waters, *in* perils of robbers, *in* perils of *my own* countrymen, *in* perils of the Gentiles, *in* perils in the city, *in* perils in the wilderness, *in* perils in the sea, *in* perils among false brethren; ²⁷ in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness— ²⁸ besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. ²⁹ Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn *with indignation*?" 2 Corinthians 11:23-29

His question is basically, "What would be the point of going through all of this if the resurrection wasn't true?" It would make no sense. Wouldn't it be better to follow any path than this one! But they did follow it, because the path ultimately leads to Christ Jesus and the truth that we too shall be resurrected, just as He was, if in fact we believe the gospel message. The real question then should be, "How could somebody not be willing to stand in jeopardy every hour?"

Life application: With Christ, there is hope; without Christ there is none. Be willing to put yourself at risk for the truth of Christ and the sanctity of His superior, most precious word.

I affirm, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.
1 Corinthians 15:31

The difficulty of verse 29 is partially explained in this verse. Paul noted those who are "baptized for the dead." He tells us now, as an affirmation ("I affirm") a note concerning the surety of hope that the believer possesses in Christ. This follows directly from his words of verse 30 which told us that he stood "in jeopardy every hour." As follow-on to that, he says, "...by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily."

The "boasting" he notes concerning the Corinthians is noted in 2 Corinthians 9:3 also. They are his converts and the people of the church he helped to establish. He had suffered greatly for them, placing his life in jeopardy for their sake as

much as for the sake of any other churches he was involved in. They were as children to a father to him.

This boast of Paul is then noted as "in Christ Jesus our Lord." Those who have called on Christ are "in" Christ. They have moved from death to life. And yet, he says "I die daily." He put himself on the line for their sake through many trials and sufferings. Of these trials and sufferings, any could result in his actual death, and so he metaphorically says, "I die daily." What would be the point of such a life if the hope of the resurrection wasn't true? And thus, what would be the point of baptism in that hope?

The very nature of baptism is a picture of death in Christ and then being raised to newness of life. Being submersed pictures His death and thus our participation in that. Being raised pictures His resurrection and thus our participation in that. Therefore, Paul's comment that he "dies daily" has no true and lasting consequences because ultimately he is "in Christ" and he already possesses eternal life.

When those who follow him in his example are baptized, they are so baptized in this same hope. He will continue to explain this in the coming verse.

Life application: If you have received Christ, and you truly believe that you have been granted eternal life, then why should the prospect of facing death in this life really matter? Yes, the thought of physical death can be unnerving, but if our hope in Christ is sure, it is not the end of the story. Should we face death, let us demonstrate the faith we possess in a manner worthy of the promise tied to that faith.

If, in the manner of men, I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantage *is it* to me? If *the* dead do not rise, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!"
1 Corinthians 15:32

This completes Paul's thoughts which are tied to verse 29 concerning the difficult words "baptized for the dead." In that verse, he noted "...if the dead do not rise at all? Why then are they baptized for the dead?" He again ties in the same thought concerning the dead rising now. In preparation for that, he explains what he meant in the preceding verse which said, "I die daily."

Putting it in the form of a question, he asks, "If, in the manner of men, I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantage *is it* to me?" First, "in the manner of men" is speaking of his mortal nature. It is a nature which can and will die. It could come about by any event, from a mild infection turning into a greater one, to a sudden heart attack, or even to an external disaster such as being run over by a stampede of bulls.

Life is tenuous and it can end in a myriad of ways. And so to stress the foolish nature of living a life for Christ if the dead do not rise, he uses a real-life example which could have led to his death and which was not accidental, but purposeful. That example is fighting "with beasts at Ephesus." It is unknown here whether Paul is speaking of literal beasts, or if he is speaking figuratively. The book of Acts, and his other writings, tells us nothing of him fighting with literal beasts, and so this is probably a figurative term for people who fought rabidly against him. This type of speaking is common in the world and even in the Bible. In just one psalm, there are three examples of it -

"Many bulls have surrounded Me;
Strong *bulls* of Bashan have encircled Me.
¹³ They gape at Me *with* their mouths,
Like a raging and roaring lion." Psalm 22:12, 13

"For dogs have surrounded Me;
The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me." Psalm 22:16

"Deliver Me from the sword,
My precious *life* from the power of the dog.

²¹ Save Me from the lion's mouth
And from the horns of the wild oxen!" Psalm 22:20, 21

Paul even comments that he was "delivered from the lion's mouth" in 2 Timothy 4:17, certainly speaking metaphorically. Additionally, as a Roman citizen, he would not have been subject to fighting beasts in an amphitheater. Therefore, the probability is that he is speaking figuratively. This then would be in contrast to "in the manner of men" that he opened this verse with.

Regardless of this, whether real beasts or enemies with the characteristics of beasts, if he willingly put his life in peril in such a manner, knowing that the dead do not rise, it would be an utterly foolish gesture. If life is tenuous on a good day, how much more so when one eagerly steps into harms way; and that for a cause which he would have known to be false!

Rather than such a foolish waste, it would be so much better to follow another path - "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!" If the dead are not raised, then this life is all we have. Wouldn't it be better to party the time away and do all the things that we wanted to regardless as to whether they were moral and proper? Wouldn't it be better to get all one could get, experience all one could experience, and live life to the fullest? If this one life is it, then why not make the best of it.

And to show even more forcefully that this is the case, he cites a portion of Isaiah 22. In that passage, Isaiah speaks of Jerusalem being hemmed in by enemies, ready to be destroyed. For the people inside, they made a choice. Rather than reaching out to God in repentance because of their sin which caused the destruction to come, and rather than asking for His powerful hand to have mercy and save them, they turned to tables full of food for one last delightful meal. Here is the account, which contains the verse cited by Paul -

"And in that day the Lord GOD of hosts
Called for weeping and for mourning,

For baldness and for girding with sackcloth.

¹³ But instead, joy and gladness,
Slaying oxen and killing sheep,
Eating meat and drinking wine:
'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!'

¹⁴ Then it was revealed in my hearing by the LORD of hosts,
"Surely for this iniquity there will be no atonement for you,
Even to your death," says the Lord GOD of hosts." Isaiah 22:12-14

The utterly disrespectful attitude of those in Jerusalem was so brazen that the Lord said their sin would never be atoned for. Even if they lived through the siege, they would never be forgiven. Paul uses their words as the ultimate example of futility in a life without hope of the resurrection. If there is no resurrection, then there is also no atonement. If there is no atonement, then the prospects of meeting God are to be considered utterly futile. Only condemnation awaits the departed soul.

This line of reasoning by Paul explains the difficult meaning of "baptized for the dead" in verse 29. "What will they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all?" The answer is, "They will perish like all flesh." Without the resurrection, there is no hope at all. But because Christ is risen, there is hope and therefore there is a reason to put oneself in harm's way. With Christ, every action we take has purpose if it is done in the hope of the resurrection.

Life application: Instead of "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die," our attitude should be "Let us rejoice, for our souls live... even if we die."

Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits." 1 Corinthians 15:33

This verse refers all the way back to verse 12, which Paul then went on to argue against for the next many verses. There in verse 12 he asked, "Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say

that there is no resurrection of the dead?" From there, he defended the truth of a literal, bodily resurrection. In order for them to stop listening to contrary arguments which can only pervert the simplicity of the gospel, he tells them first, "Do not be deceived."

Anything which is not in line with the gospel that was presented to them (see 1 Corinthians 15:1-8) is to be considered a deception. If one were to listen to such nonsense, it could only negatively affect them. In order to help them understand this, he says "Evil company corrupts good habits." This is an iambic line from *Thais* by Menander. It would have probably been a commonly quoted maxim by those in Corinth and so Paul uses it to help them remember the warning.

In this quote, the word for "company" includes the idea of communications as well as associations. We pick up bad habits from those we closely align ourselves with. Also in this quote, the word "habits" comes from the Greek word *homiliai*. It is only used this once in the New Testament and it refers to a place where one is accustomed to hang out or sit at. In the plural then, it leads to the thought of morals, manners, and character.

Life application: In 1 Corinthians 5:9-11, Paul indicates that we can associate with worldly people who act in a manner which is not Christ like. However, he now shows that becoming too closely attached to them, or anyone who would draw us away from the truth of Christ, is not healthy. There must be an appropriate balance in our associations in order to stay strong and properly attuned to the things of Christ.