



1 Cor. 15:29-33
WHY WE FIGHT

29 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?

30 And why do we stand in jeopardy every hour?

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

32 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!"

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

After the Second World War began, the American government realized that the American people needed to understand why they were fighting this war in the first place. That need actually became more acute the longer the war went on, and the sacrifices in men, material, and money began to mount higher and higher. They understood that eventually the initial zeal for the fight that was spurred by Pearl Harbor would begin to dim, and that Pearl Harbor didn't really explain for instance, why the United States was fighting in places like Europe and North Africa. There were fears that once the immediate threat was rolled back, people might press for some sort of settlement, or that their vigor to get the job done would flag if they didn't recognize that nothing less than the total defeat of the enemy was necessary. People forget for instance that in the North during the Civil War by 1864 when Union losses were stretching into the hundreds of thousands, there began to be a strong movement to come to a negotiated settlement with the Confederacy, but the men in Roosevelt's administration remembered that even Americans get tired of long, hard wars that don't seem to have an end in sight.

So master film maker Frank Capra, the man who brought us "*It's a Wonderful Life*" and "*Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*" was commissioned to make a series of films that explained why the war was worthwhile, why they should go on fighting, how the war had gotten started in the first place. It also painted a picture of why the world could not afford to allow philosophies like Nazism and Bushido to continue, that's why each film started with a quote from the Army Chief of Staff, George Marshall:

"No compromise is possible and the victory of the democracies can only be complete with the utter defeat of the war machines of Germany and Japan."

The films were brilliant and they answered the question posed in the title. Why are we fighting? For a better tomorrow, for Democracy, for peace, for truth, for justice, for the oppressed, that liberty might not perish from the earth.

Now I bring that up because in so many ways, in 1 Corinthians 15 Paul is asking and answering a similar question posed in verse 30 - ***why do we stand in jeopardy every hour?***

This is a question that every Christian should have asked themselves and answered at some point in their lives, because being Christian means going through tribulation. It means enduring hardship and scorn and ridicule and often hatred. Being a Christian means being committed to running a hard race through to the end, and standing firm against the World, the Flesh, and the Devil without compromising. Sometimes we here in the States forget that, because we don't endure the same kind of difficulties so many of our brothers and sisters have endured in the past, and endure now in so many different countries.

Paul has already answered told the Corinthians *why he is willing to stand in jeopardy every hour* of course, he has said to quote David Jackman that ***“he endures this sort of sacrificial life-style, with all its dangers and uncertainties because he is living in the present with his gaze firmly fixed on eternity. The thing that gives him the greatest satisfaction is that they are Christians who have arrived at eternal life through his sacrificial work.”*** – David Jackman

The certain hope of eternal life and the resurrection give the struggle meaning and purpose. With them fixed in mind, with the heavenly country before us, fighting the good fight makes sense, for even if we die, we remain more than conquerors, and all that death can do is bring us home to heaven.

And that is one of the many reasons that he is appalled by the belief of some of the Corinthians that there was no resurrection. If that is true, then the struggle and the sacrifices of the Christian faith make no sense. And indeed it would make more sense for the Corinthians to live like their pagan neighbors. So he wants to press home to them that just as the American struggle in the Second World War only made sense if we were committed to the idea that Freedom was good and Fascism was evil, then so to our own struggle as Christians will only make sense if we are committed to the idea of the resurrection and other essential doctrines.

He even points out that some of their own bad practices make no sense if there is no resurrection. And that is the context for the notoriously difficult verse 29. Now what Paul was probably referring to here was the unorthodox practice of someone else being baptized in the place of a catechumen or new believer who died prior to their own baptized.

Please note that this was just one of the many wrong practices of the Corinthian church, we are talking about a church where some of the members thought it was ok to take part in the wild pagan rites at the local Temple. So it shouldn't surprise us that they had a whole host of unbiblical practices. Please note that Paul is not *approving* of the practice.

As Hodge points out:

1. Paul, so far from intimating any approbation of the custom, distinctly separates himself from its abettors. He does not say, “What shall we do” —”What shall they do.” It was something with which he had no fellowship.

4. That the entire disappearance of this custom in the orthodox church, although other superstitious observances not less objectionable soon prevailed, is probably to be referred to the practice having been forbidden by the apostle as soon as he reached Corinth. This may have been one of the things which he left “to be set in order when he came,” 1 Cor. 11:34.

His point is that the bad practice makes no sense, if there is no hope for the dead to rise like Christ, why are they giving them a rite that points in part to their hope of resurrection?

Indeed far from being something they could dispense with, a secondary truth, his own hardships were a waste of time without the resurrection. Why do he and the Apostles and they bother to stand in Jeopardy? And endure hardship? Why did they even give up their jobs as fishermen and tax collectors?

Now verse 31 is hard to understand.

The meaning appears to be that he glories in their faith, boasts in it because he has hope in their resurrection, and for that he is willing to be in peril of death even on a daily basis. What he is saying is that as a Pastor, the faith of the flock and the certain hope for eternity that they have as result of his labors makes it all worth it.

I understand exactly how he feels, there is no amount of money that could make the difficult labors of the pastorate worthwhile and indeed there are many other occupations that would be more profitable in a worldly sense, but for me to know that I had been used of God in bringing anyone to salvation, makes the labor more than worth it.

Paul says, that is why I endure, for your sakes, for the certain hope of your resurrection, that is why I even endured hideous persecution at Ephesus. But if not, what is the advantage? And the answer has to be none at all.

If there is no resurrection, then you might as well party now, and he quotes the response of the godless

In Isaiah 22:12 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!"

Finally he cautions them and US not to be deceived

"Evil company corrupts good habits." Or evil communications corrupt good manners.

He is actually quoting a verse from the Greek poet Menander here

Their too intimate intercourse with their heathen neighbors

There is an application:

Whenever the church has abandoned orthodoxy, she has inevitably also slumped in terms of praxis

The liberal church

OH we'll stay MORAL

Abandoned her zeal

Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy - Baxter - "I observe that if at any time Satan did more weaken... zeal in religious duty abated"

Kids – watch your friends

Adults – beware the influence of the society

I tend to find once someone is given over to sin they begin to abandon orthodox beliefs

Pretty soon the faith begins to conform to their own sinful desires until it is a caricature.

Remember the answer to WHY WE FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT is that hope that we have of the resurrection of eternal life, the hope we have in Christ. It takes all the sting out of death and difficulty:

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

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

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

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

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

18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

If we are not in Christ, we are those who have no hope!