

1 Cor. 15:29-34 "If the Dead Are Not Raised"

For the Children: Imagine you knew that your bike was going to be destroyed or stolen tomorrow. That you would never see it again. Would you take much trouble with it? Why bother cleaning the mud of it, pumping up the tires, or oiling it, if it's going to disappear permanently tomorrow? If our bodies are all going to be destroyed and we will never see them again, why look after your body? Why bother trying to use it in a godly way? Why put up with suffering in bringing the Gospel to others, if there is no heaven and no hell? The Lord sees your body as important! He gives commands about how to use it. He promises gracious rewards that include the resurrected body. **Questions:** What could "baptizing for the dead" mean? Why does our connection to the Lord Jesus lead to bodily suffering? What is the danger in hanging around with people who don't believe in the resurrection of the body?

Introduction:

First Point: An Argument from Baptism

- 1) Baptizing for the Dead: What is this "baptizing for the dead"? Some think this refers to "vicarious baptisms (by proxy) e.g., for someone who died before he could be baptized. They argue that "those...they" in v.29 is meant to distance the apostle from those who do this. Others ask if Paul would use an argument based on a faulty practice. Others suggest that it refers to conducting baptisms over the graves of the martyrs; or to Jews who washed ("baptized") themselves after contact with the dead; some argue that baptism is always done in the hope of the cleansing and resurrection of the whole person, including the body.
- 2) The Inconsistency: The language most naturally refers to baptisms "on behalf of" the dead. But it is hard to be sure, because there is no clear evidence of any such practice at the time. Whatever the practice, it would be inconsistent to follow it if there were no resurrection of the body. If there is no resurrection, the body is unimportant. But the Scripture treats the body and what we do with it as important.

Second Point: An Argument from Sacrifice

- 1) Dangerous Situations: The apostle was often in danger for the sake of the Gospel (2 Cor. 4:8-11; 6:4-10; 11:23-29). The "wild beasts" in Ephesus may have been hostile mobs or individuals. Why make such sacrifices if there is no resurrection of the body – which implies no resurrection of Christ, and therefore no resurrection full stop!
- 2) Carrying the Dying of Jesus: Because the believer is united with Christ, he is always united to Christ's death. This results in persecution and the struggle against sin. Hence in 2 Cor. 4:10-12, the apostle speaks of always carrying about in his body the dying of Jesus. In 1 Cor. 15:31, he says he "dies daily." He affirms this by the "boast" he has that such sacrifice has resulted in the conversion of the readers through this same Gospel for which he suffers. But all this would collapse if there were no resurrection of the body, for that would mean we have no union with Christ in His death.

Third Point: An Argument from Christian Living

- 1) Eat, Drink and Be Merry: If there is no gracious reward of a bodily resurrection, this also implies there is no physical punishment of sinners. Then it doesn't matter whether we sin with the body or do good with it – the end result is the same. This undermines godly living. Hence this quote from Is. 22:13. See also Eccl. 2:24, 9:7.
- 2) Bad Company: Christian living may therefore also be undermined by associating closely with those who deny the resurrection. "Bad company corrupts good morals" – a quote from the 5th century BC playwright, Euripides. On the contrary, the believer should be applying himself to sober-minded resistance to sin (v. 34). That means choosing company that will help rather than hinder.

Conclusion:

