

Series: **“Being the Church in a World Gone Wild”**

CDOBC – beginning on 1/28/18

Today’s Title: **“Our Hope of Resurrection”**

December 30, 2018 - 1 Corinthians 15:29-34

Objective: To help people gain confidence in our future resurrection and holiness in this life.

Opening prayer

Turn to 1 Corinthians 15:29-34

In the preceding verses, Paul gave a detailed theological argument in support of the resurrection of the dead.

Remember, the Corinthians were raised in a culture which thought any talk / belief in the resurrection of the dead was ridiculous. This was a culturally held belief for at least 500 years, and now the resurrection of Christ – along with the resurrection of believers is not only dominant teaching in this new religion of Christianity – but the whole Gospel message rests on the foundation of bodily resurrection. (vs. 17-19)

You can’t have Christianity if there is no resurrection of the dead.

In our verses today, Paul is not going to argue from a theological position. He’s going to argue using *ad hominem* attacks. The gist of these verses is this:

‘If you are correct in your belief that there is no resurrection of the dead, the way you live is ridiculous! Your very life and practice are in opposition to your stated belief!’

Usually, *ad hominem* attacks are personal – and they focus on discrediting the person, not the details of their position.

But instead of a specific person, Paul will attack the common practices of those in the Corinthian church. He will expose the nonsensical nature of their life and practice, if their claim is true – that there is no resurrection of the dead.

Paul has argued the ‘*anti-resurrection*’ group through historical fact and eyewitness testimony (vs. 1-11) and through a detailed theological argument (vs. 12-28).

Ad hominem arguments are often thought to be desperate and according to the Urban Dictionary some believe *ad hominem* arguments “...are used by immature and/or unintelligent people because they are unable to counter their opponent using logic and intelligence.” (<https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Ad%20hominem>)

This is most often seen when one side launches into personal attacks against their opponents and they ignore the content of the opposing sides position. We see it in politics and reality TV all the time!

But Paul is not attacking people here – he’s attacking the practices of his opponents – which don’t make any sense if they are *correct* that bodily resurrection doesn’t happen.

In our verses today:

- He will attack the Corinthian’s practice of baptism for the dead... (vs. 29)
- He will then attack the logic of why he and the other Apostles risk their lives for the faith... (vs. 30-32)
- He will then give 3 commands

This passage is a bit confusing as the ESV translates it – so this morning, allow me to read from the NLT (*New Living Translation*) which is much more clear and easily understood.

“If the dead will not be raised, what point is there in people being baptized for those who are dead? Why do it unless the dead will someday rise again?”

30 And why should we ourselves risk our lives hour by hour?

31 For I swear, dear brothers and sisters, that I face death daily. This is as certain as my pride in what Christ Jesus our Lord has done in you.

32 And what value was there in fighting wild beasts - those people of Ephesus - if there will be no resurrection from the dead? And if there is no resurrection, ‘Let’s feast and drink, for tomorrow we die!’

33 Don’t be fooled (“Don’t be deceived” – ESV) by those who say such things, for ‘bad company corrupts good character.’

34 Think carefully about what is right, and stop sinning. For to your shame I say that some of you don’t know God at all.”

How the truth of future resurrection effects our present-day life.

The practice of our faith. vs. 29

People will often live in a way which is contrary to what they believe – or at least what they say they believe.

This is the idea Paul is targeting.

This verse (29) has caused all sorts of confusion through the years – and when you try and read through all the various attempts at explaining what is meant by “baptized for those who are dead”, you will probably get more

confused - as I was. Baptizing on behalf of those who are dead is not anything the N.T. teaches – nor is it something churches practiced in early church history. In addition, it's not found among pagan religious practices of the first century.

One commentator said this was “...*a practice no doubt as familiar to them as puzzling to us.*” (The Message of 1 Corinthians, by David Prior, p. 269)

Today, Mormons are known for this practice which is a secret ritual only performed in their dedicated temples.

But ***this is not a Biblical teaching***, so commentators and theologians have for centuries tried to make sense of what Paul was talking about here in vs. 29. They also wonder why he didn't take a 'time-out' and address the issue. They are baffled by his non-engagement on the topic. He just mentions it and doesn't expand at all!

I think the best way to understand this is the plainest way to understand this. It seems to have been a very localized issue to Corinth since it's not mentioned anywhere else in the N.T. letters. Apparently, some of those in the Corinthian church were being baptized on behalf of family members and friends who had died without being baptized. Paul's point is why would they do this – why is it necessary – if there is no resurrection – no life after death?

The whole practice makes absolutely no sense if there is no resurrection!

“If the dead will not be raised, what point is there in people being baptized for those who are dead? Why do it unless the dead will someday rise again?”

Our worship practices – the things we do when we’re gathered together – need to connect with biblical truth – need to connect with what we believe.

We sing songs about heaven...songs about our life in Christ...songs about our hope in Christ. (*Baptism, communion, meeting on Sundays*)

We had a funeral here on Thursday for Sergio Araya – and there were many tears and much weeping, but we celebrated Sergio’s life – his faith – and we were comforted with the knowledge that Sergio is right now in the presence of Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:8

“We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.”

Our belief in the resurrection impacts how we practice our faith – how we deal with death.

1 Thessalonians 4:13

“...we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope.”

Our confidence and belief in the future, bodily resurrection of believers affects the practice of our faith.

It affects how you worship.

It affects whether or not you're committed to worshipping with the local church!

It affects your passion and joy for worship.

It affects your view of life and death – your theology of death. Your belief about resurrection is not limited to something in the future – it relates to how you live and worship today!

The pain we're willing to endure for the faith. vs. 30-32a

How important and certain something is will determine how much pain you're willing to endure.

If being in shape is a high priority, then you'll endure a level of pain and discomfort to accomplish your goals.

If your marriage and family are priorities, then you will sacrifice your desires – which is a level of pain – for the joy of your spouse or your kids.

You aspire to a certain career, so you endure the pain of hard work, late nights studying and sacrifices in order to get the degree and the training the career requires.

You get the picture.

Paul's 2nd point of argument has to do with the pain he and the other Apostles were willing to endure for the sake of the Gospel. But if there was no resurrection...

30 And why should we ourselves risk our lives hour by hour?

31 For I swear, dear brothers and sisters, that I face death daily. This is as certain as my pride in what Christ Jesus our Lord has done in you.

Why would the Apostles die for a lie? This is one of the great truths which helps us gain confidence in the truth of the Gospel. We can know the resurrection of Christ is true...we can know the Apostolic message of the Gospel is true...because they were willing to die for it! They had nothing to gain – yet they were unwavering in their testimony about the risen Jesus!

The sense of the Greek in vs. 30-31 is that Paul faced death and physical harm all the time. It wasn't an occasional thing...or something which happened in a few isolated incidents. Remember, Paul was a man of privilege and growing influence in Judaism, and then on his way to Damascus he was converted – and his life was changed and transformed by Christ. Instead of arresting and persecuting Christians he became the greatest advocate for Christ!

His suffering is not made-up – it's not folk-lore – and he says it's “as certain as my pride in what Christ Jesus our Lord has done in you.”

Through the Corinthian's faith, Christ had changed many in the Corinthian church.

“And such were some of you” 6:11

He was proud that God used him to share the Gospel with them. He wasn't arrogant – this is not a sinful pride he's referring to – it's a pride in what Christ did through Him.

32 And what value was there in fighting wild beasts - those people of Ephesus - if there will be no resurrection from the dead?

Turn to **Acts 19:23ff** – *read passage*

The “wild beasts” were people – people who were attacking him – a mob – trying to kill him!

Paul wrote **1 Corinthians** while he was in Ephesus.

Read 1 Corinthians 16:8-9

Paul faced great difficulty and suffered as a result of the Gospel. If there was no resurrection, why would they do this?

The restraint of our sinful desires. vs. 32b

The reality of Christ...the reality of our life in Christ and our future resurrection and future judgment has an impact on how we live now. However, if there is no resurrection, then why restrain any desire?

And if there is no resurrection, 'Let's feast and drink, for tomorrow we die!' (Popular saying in 1st century Greek society)

If there's no resurrection, then do what you want!

However, since there is a future, bodily resurrection, and a future judgment based on our faithfulness (**1 Cor. 3:12-15**), we should live within that awareness. Knowing this reality, it restrains our sinful desires. Each believer

will give an account for their life – what they did – and didn't do.

One of the great applications of the book of Revelation and the study of the end times is knowing all things come to an end – the end God has decreed. Knowing this is a great help to our attempt at holiness.

Apply it...

In vs. 33-34 Paul gives 3 commands (*imperatives in the Greek*) which flow naturally and logically from his argument.

1. Don't believe the lie that what you believe doesn't affect how you live. vs. 33 ("Don't be deceived" - ESV)

"Don't be fooled by those who say such things, for 'bad company corrupts good character.'"

This is the first command, and it's a command to be wise – to be *on-guard* – to make sure you're not "fooled" or "deceived" by those who say there isn't a resurrection.

The saying, '*bad company corrupts good character*' was a popular saying in Corinth, due to the popularity of one of their Greek poets and playwrights – Menander.

It's a reminder that the choice of your friends...especially your closest friends is very important. Don't develop close friendships with those who hold to unbiblical teaching or principles. Yes, you might influence them, but more often the negative pulls down the positive. Good character is more easily

corrupted because it's not natural for us. To maintain good character, you must remain '*on-guard*' for deception or lies, and you must discipline yourself toward holiness. It doesn't really take any energy or effort for any of us to embrace "bad company" because it's already in our hearts!

2. Sober up!

"Think carefully about what is right..." – NLT

"Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right..." - ESV

Some commentators think this was a literal call to get sober – since back in **chapter 11** Paul criticizes how some were treating the Lord's Supper and getting drunk at the church pot-luck!

It's difficult to know if there were a bunch of unrestrained drunks in the Corinthian church, but we can be confident this 2nd command is connected to the 1st command. If you're going to take the steps to make sure you're not deceived or fooled, then you need to be thinking clearly – you need to be '*sober-minded*'.

The Christian faith is not a mind-numb faith. It's a faith that requires a fully-engaged mind if you're going to understand the truths it upholds.

Paul is telling them to be mentally and intellectually sharp so they can understand how and why resurrection is so important. They need to understand how the truth

of our future, bodily resurrection not only connects with the future, but today.

3. Live obedient lives for Christ.

“stop sinning.”

False teaching – incorrect teaching – leads to incorrect living. Just look back at the previous 14 chapters in this letter – and you can see all the problems with sin the Corinthians were dealing with!

Their incorrect understanding of the Gospel was not leading them to holy living, but instead was allowing them to embrace sinful choices which many of them thought were fine. Back in **chapter 5**, trying to wake them out of their spiritual slumber, Paul told them the sin they were embracing and giving approval to was “a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans...”.

When you understand the reality and certainty of the next life – the future resurrection of all humanity to either heaven or hell, it changes how you live in this life.