

1 Corinthians 15:29-34

“Awake To Righteousness”

As Christians, *everything* we believe hinges upon the resurrection of J.C. – You start tugging on the string that *doubts* or *denies* the resurrection, *everything* unravels. If there’s no resurrection then all of the apostles are liars, Jesus Himself is a false prophet (a deceiver), the Word of God is untrue, untrustworthy, full of failed promises & false hopes. Because they have all prophesied, promised or bore witness to the resurrection when in reality there is no resurrection (if Jesus didn’t rise from the dead).

The resurrection is the proof positive that Jesus’ sacrifice for sin was received by the Father... If Jesus didn’t rise, then we have to presume that His payment was rejected. If His payment was rejected then the apostles are false witnesses, our faith is empty & we are still in our sins. Everyone we know who has placed their faith in Christ & has since died has perished...

& Though it’s true (as we discussed last week) that becoming a Christian can solve many of life’s problems, it can also expose us to a whole host of *new* problems. The person who paints you the picture of, “Just come to Jesus & you’ll have a problem free, primrose, privileged existence” has done you a great disservice. – Jesus never painted that picture for *anyone*! He said things like, “*Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.*”¹ He said, “*Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you.*”²

Jesus calls us to cease placing the priority on the things of this life, of this world. Our hope isn’t in this world, we’re called to maintain the eternal perspective. So, if in this life we only have hope in Christ, & Christ isn’t risen, then as believers our existence is a pitiable joke...

But now Christ *is* risen from the dead & has become the 1st fruits of those who’ve fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. & As our time came to a close last week, Paul was systematically demonstrating how that the resurrection of J.C. necessarily set in motion a chain of events that would culminate in the final destruction of death & an eternal sinless state to the glory of God...

¹ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Mt 7:13–14). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

² *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Jn 15:20). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Vs 29-32

Paul continues to pound into his readers the absolute necessity & dogmatic, unyielding inflexibility of the reality of the resurrection.

“Why would some partake of ‘this’ particular practice? Why would we subject ourselves to relentless persecution if the truth is, there’s no resurrection? If this life is all we’ve got, then why not party till you puke, rinse & repeat?” That’s essentially what he’s saying... We touched on this last week.

But let’s look at this because lots of people have questions about it & it’s only appropriate that you would because the truth is, no one really has an answer for it. ☺ However, there are some biblical insights we *do* have that we can use to address it... We wish that Paul would’ve spent a little bit of time establishing understanding for us w/regard to this practice he simply acknowledges & then moves on from. **But the truth of the matter, is that the *practice* (in his mind) is peripheral (especially considering the fact that they obviously already knew exactly what he was referring to), the *principle* that the practice pointed to is what he’s establishing.**

He says it Vs 29, “Otherwise, what will they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all?” What in the world is he talking about w/regard to being “baptized for the dead”? I’m just going to be completely honest with you, I have no idea. & I will also tell you this. **Don’t let anyone else tell you that they know what he’s talking about, because he *doesn’t* tell you what he’s talking about. There are literally dozens (if not 100’s) of attempts that people have made (over the years) to bring some kind of understanding to this text & the truth is they all lack... Here’s why. They’re all speculative. No one knows for sure.**

Now: Paul’s *point* we know for sure. But regarding this *practice*, no one truly knows... The plain reading would seem to indicate that there were people being baptized on behalf of others who had died. The question that comes up is, “Why would anyone do that?” – **& You should know that this is the one Vs that the Mormon church developed an entire doctrine around & this is why genealogy is so important to them. They will search their family tree & be baptized by proxy (or on behalf) of relatives who weren’t Mormon (or hadn’t been baptized) that perchance they may be saved even though they’ve already died. They believe in baptismal regeneration (which is essentially salvation through the act of baptism) & that God has provided a way in His mercy (through baptism by proxy) for everyone to be saved & receive “the blessing of baptism” even after they’ve died.**

So, if you're a Mormon, it's incredibly important to you to find out who's in your family tree, so that you can be baptized on behalf of your entire lineage as far back as you can find!

– Few things you need to know about that & that we do well to discuss while we're here. 1st of all you should know that there isn't so much as 1 single reference to this practice *anywhere* in your bible outside of this one verse.

There is a "rule" that we have when it comes to establishing sound doctrine, or an appropriate teaching for the church. & The 1st rule is that you need to see Jesus teaching it. Nowhere, in any gospel is there even one reference that Jesus made to being baptized on behalf of the dead that they might be saved. Now... (think this through) If you're the Son of God, & you were sent to bring salvation... Remember what Jesus said? He said, "*For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.*"³ He said, "*...the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.*"⁴ This was His "mission statement". To bring salvation to all mankind... That being the case, don't you think that if it were possible to see ancestors saved who'd perhaps otherwise (at least as far as you know) perished (meaning you didn't know them, & at the very least you weren't certain of their faith)... If you could stand in the gap on their behalf, be baptized for them that they might transition from a place of alienation *from* God to reconciliation *with* God that Jesus would've at least mentioned it... once? Yet Jesus *never* so much as even alluded to this, much less taught it as a valid practice.

#2 We need to see it practiced in the book of Acts. We have no record anywhere in the book of Acts that the early church practiced baptism for (or on behalf of) the dead.

#3 We need to see it reinforced in the epistles. Paul mentions it here, but he certainly doesn't approve of it (much less reinforce it), he just acknowledges it in order to serve *his point* which we'll make mention of in a moment.

The truth is (outside of the fact that the Bible doesn't anywhere teach Baptismal regeneration, what it teaches is that we're saved by faith in J.C. & what He's *done* not anything we *do*) is that Scripture teaches that once we die our eternal destiny is sealed. There's no "do over". No opportunity to change your mind... The Bible says, "*...it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,*"⁵ If you're in Christ, He bore God's judgment on your behalf. If you're not... you're on your own.

³ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Jn 3:17). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁴ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Lk 19:10). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁵ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Heb 9:27). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

This is why (as though God were pleading through us) we implore you, be reconciled to God! Because what is your life? It's even a vapor that appears but for a moment & then vanishes away... You're not guaranteed another minute, much less time to grow old & make a decision later... & As Paul said in 2nd Cor, "*Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men;*"⁶ It's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God! That's why the Bible says that *Today* if you will hear His voice, don't harden your heart... open your heart. Today is the day of salvation, don't flirt or skate on the edge of trusting you'll have another chance, another day... you may... you might not.

It's also very possible that what Paul is referring to had nothing to do w/a custom of the Christians in Corinth. It may very well have been a pagan practice that he's pointing out. Notice, his reference to it isn't comparative, it's contrasting. He says, "What will '*they*' do? Why then are '*they*' baptized for the dead?" He never even alludes to it as being something that *he* does or that "*we*" as believers do. He doesn't say, "Why then do we take the time to be baptized for the dead?" He makes the distinction... It's something *they* do, not something *we* do...

But *why* do they do it? Whoever "they" were... It's because they (even they) knew that this life wasn't the end... The Bible teaches in Ecc 3:11 that God has put *eternity* into the hearts of all mankind. Man innately, intrinsically knows that this life isn't all there is. Oh, they may try & convince themselves of that lie, but deep down we know... this can't be it. There's got to be more...

Paul could simply be saying, "Even pagans believe there's more than this life... what does that say about you?" So... he's not endorsing this, simply pointing out the rationale that some have in observing it. They realize there's more, it points to resurrection.

What is baptism? It's identification w/death/resurrection. We identify w/the death of Jesus when we go down *into* the water, & we identify w/His resurrection (the newness of life in Christ) as we emerge *from* the water. What's the point of baptism at all, if everything is over at the end of this life? How does it hold any significance whatsoever?

Vs 30-31

When Paul says, "I die daily" let me tell you what he's *not* saying. He's not saying, "Every day I wake up & I die to self. I make a conscientious decision to crucify my flesh, to deny myself, take up my cross & follow Jesus."

Now; certainly Paul did those things (even as we should do those things). We should (Rom 6:11) reckon ourselves indeed dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. But that's not what Paul is saying... When he says, "& Why do we stand in jeopardy every hour?" He's telling you what he means... He's like, "You've got them over there being baptized on behalf of the dead, because they believe there's more than this life. & We're over here, literally laying our lives on the line on the daily... why would we do this? Why risk the *end* of our lives in this world, if this life is all there is?"

When Paul says, "I die daily", he's saying that he's in constant peril for his life. In 1 Sam Ch 20, David is talking to Jonathon & letting him know that Saul (Jonathon's father) was wanting to kill him (David). & He says, *"...truly, as the Lord lives and as your soul lives, there is but a step between me and death."*⁷ That's the gist of what Paul is saying here.

Ladies & gentlemen we've drawn attention to it many times throughout the years. Paul was the kind of guy who was so radical for J.C. so on fire for the message of the gospel, when he came to your town 1 of 2 things was probably going to happen. It would either end in revival or a riot. Many times, it was a riot. People were always trying to kill him.

In Acts 23 more than 40 men took a vow that they wouldn't eat or drink anything until they had killed him. Back in Ch 4 of this very letter he said that even as he was writing he was hungry/thirsty, poorly clothed, beaten & homeless... (Good ol' pastor Paul, let's go to his church ☺). In 2nd Cor 4 he speaks of being beaten multiple times w/rods, receiving 39 stripes from the Jews... (5xs!). Shipwrecked multiple times, robbed, left cold, naked, sleeplessness & weariness & toil... You & me; we like our creature comforts. Paul wasn't about that life. He lived a life so committed to Christ & propelling the message of the gospel that people could look at him & say, "There's no way he would live like this if this life were all there was."

In Vs 32 he says, "I have fought w/the beasts at Ephesus." – The book of Acts holds no record of a literal occasion whereby Paul was thrown into an arena. It's either unrecorded or more likely (as a Roman citizen he wouldn't have been subjected to that) he's speaking of the radical/violent persecution he faced while at Ephesus for which eventually he would be forced to flee.

But his point is plain enough, "People are trying to end my life on the regular. Why would I even flirt w/that if there were no resurrection, nothing beyond this life?" & Really you could apply this to *all* the apostles.

⁷ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). [1 Sa 20:3] Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Think of the manner not only in which they lived but in which they were willing to die! Would they do that if it were all a ruse, a giant scam?

Say they all sat down after the death of Jesus, He never rose again so they figured out a way to sneakily dispose of the body despite the Roman soldiers guarding the tomb, they carefully crafted the story to cover the lie that Jesus put forth that He would rise from the dead. *There they were grilling one another, shooting holes in one rendition of the account after the other until they thought of every angle by which it could be questioned or challenged. They all sang the same tune & decided to run with it... They all know they're spreading a lie (put yourself in their position).* It all seems like fun & games at 1st, you're getting famous, you're building a movement, people are selling what they own & putting it in communal pot in the name of this lie you're perpetuating, you've got it made...

But after a few years it starts getting out of hand, causing a commotion. People won't say, "Caesar is Lord" so it starts setting off alerts at the highest levels of government.

Penalties start arising if you're part of this movement, but you hang on. You're at the top so it's still benefiting you. But one day they find you. & The penalty they propose isn't a fine, it's progressed past a beating, they're going to kill you. Your life is going on end today. & Not in a "humane" relatively painless fashion. You're going to be crucified upside down & left there to suffer until you die. You're going to be tied to a stake & burned alive. You're going to be boiled in oil... run through w/a spear, dragged behind a horse through the city streets till your dead... Honestly now, all you have to do is say, "Ok, ok, we made it up. We made a little money, got positions of power/influence & we were milking it for all it's worth, but it's a lie, Jesus never rose from the dead." You say that, & you're a free man, no harm, no foul.

*Are you willing to die for a lie? Much less die in a horrific otherwise unbearable fashion? Now; people have died for a lie, but they believe the lie is true. I'm talking you're the father of the lie, you made it up, you know it's not real. I don't know anyone who would die for something they didn't even believe in, much less that they *know* to be untrue. Be honest w/yourself. Yet everyone of these guys (minus John) would be put to death in some horrific fashion because they preached the resurrection of J.C.*

Hey, if the dead do not rise... "Let us eat & drink, for tomorrow we die!" Live your best life now. Party/puke, make money, engage in sexual conquest... indulge yourself to the extreme everyday, rinse & repeat because when this life is over... there's no judgment, it's just over.

But Christ *is* risen, there *is* a resurrection & that should motivate us to endure the difficulties & struggles of this life, set our hearts on eternity, live for the glory of God & share the gospel of J.C. Because eternity is for real & everyone will abide in heaven forever or hell forever & that should motivate us to get the message out...

Vs 33

Now it could be that you're thinking, "I get the concept, but why did he say that here?" Think it through. Where were all these concepts & strange ideas about the resurrection (perhaps baptism for the dead & many of the other problems Paul has sought to correct throughout this letter)? They didn't come from Paul, they didn't come from other right on believers. They were obviously allowing people who were unhealthy for them spiritually into their "inner circle" they're "influential" numbers.

You have to be careful who you hang around. This quote isn't found in scripture, it's actually from an ancient Greek playwright, but he was correct. Truth is truth. The Bible says it like this, *"The righteous should choose his friends carefully, For the way of the wicked leads them astray."*⁸

Here's the problem, what we *believe* determines how we *behave*. This is why Rom 12:2 is so vital for us as believers. *"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."*⁹ We should strive to *obtain & maintain* a Biblical world view through our intake/application of God's Word. It's the Word of God that should shape the way we think, not the evil/secular influence of this world.

Vs 34 (Close)

When he says, "some do not have the knowledge of God" there are a # of applications we can receive from that. #1 If we knew the truth we'd recognize the lie. We wouldn't be drawn after strange thoughts or twisted ways of reasoning (effecting our behavior negatively) if we weren't willfully ignorant of the truth. It's both shameful & sinful to willfully be ignorant of the truth. Paul could be saying, "You should be ashamed to be so easily drawn away, having no grounding knowledge of the truth of God."

He could also be saying, "Why are you letting these people who have no knowledge God, be influential in your lives? You should be ashamed of that. They're infecting & polluting your life."

⁸ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Pr 12:26). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁹ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Ro 12:2). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Or, in saying, “Awake to righteousness & do not sin, for some do not have the knowledge of God.” He could simply be saying, “Hey! Stop sinning, snap out of it & get busy getting the gospel out to your community. Your friends & family. You’re over here slipping, sliding/stumbling in sin & people all around you are slipping off the planet w/out Jesus. W/out the knowledge of God... & you should be ashamed of yourselves for that.”

“Get out of the quagmire of your own sin & start telling people about Jesus! That’s why you’re here! To reach the lost!” He’s calling them back to their senses. & Perhaps today, God would call *you* back to *your* senses... There’s a reason you’re still here (on this planet). **It’s not to get lost in some kind of sin or strange thought that changes your direction. It’s not to be all about self. It’s to share the hope of J.C. (the knowledge of God) w/a hurt & dying world around you. – Awake to righteousness, regain & maintain that eternal perspective. Serve the Lord w/all of your heart... & God will be glorified in your life.**

Prayer Points:

God may we have ears to hear You today. Awaken us, snap us out of our slumber spiritually, bring us back to our senses that we might serve You effectively. That we might share the message of J.C. & Him crucified boldly. That we might reach this generation, this community, however You want to use us.

This is the message. We get one life. What we do with the knowledge of J.C. & Him crucified matters. He was crucified for our sin, raised for our justification & His righteousness is accredited to our account through simple faith. Believe God for what He’s done for you. Place your faith in Christ & you will be saved.