

1 Corinthians 15D

- The reality of Resurrection is so important to the church, that Paul reserved his longest and most detailed defense in the letter to this topic
 - Up to v.28 Paul has argued three points:
 - The hope of resurrection lies at the heart of the Gospel, which the church believed by Paul's testimony
 - Christ Himself was raised, proving the reality of resurrection
 - Finally, Christ's very purpose in leaving Heaven to be born as a man was to conquer death by making a way for men to receive new, eternal bodies through resurrection
 - Certainly, these arguments are powerful evidence of the reality of resurrection, but Paul isn't done arguing his case
 - Next, Paul points out two examples where the actions of the Corinthian church were in contradiction with their beliefs against resurrection
 - The first example is found in v.29

1Cor. 15:29 Otherwise, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why then are they baptized for them?

- Paul begins with the word otherwise, meaning "If resurrection isn't true, then..."
- If it isn't true, why are you baptizing for the dead?
- This phrase is potentially confusing
 - In fact, the Mormon religion has misunderstood this phrase to the point of creating a bizarre, false doctrine
 - Joseph Smith and his followers invented the practice of researching family genealogies to discover the names of family members who died without believing in the Mormon religion
 - Then in secret rituals, the Mormons perform a "baptism" on behalf of these dead relatives, thinking they have given them eligibility to enter the Mormon version of heaven

- They came to this ridiculous practice from this one verse, thinking that Paul was advocating for baptisms for the dead
- We don't have to be Bible scholars to recognize the errors in the Mormon heresy
 - First, we know the Bible teaches that following death comes judgment without the possibility of second chances
 - Hebrews says:

Heb. 9:27 And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment,

- God has appointed that men die and He has appointed that our physical death is followed by eternal judgment
- Therefore, there are no backup plans or escape clauses
- Secondly, we know every man or woman will be judged according to their own faith and decisions

Ezek. 18:20 "The person who sins will die. The son will not bear the punishment for the father's iniquity, nor will the father bear the punishment for the son's iniquity; the righteousness of the righteous will be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked will be upon himself.

Ezek. 18:21 "But if the wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed and observes all My statutes and practices justice and righteousness, he shall surely live; he shall not die.

Ezek. 18:22 " All his transgressions which he has committed will not be remembered against him; because of his righteousness which he has practiced, he will live.

- We each stand or fall on the basis of our own righteousness
 - A righteousness we receive by faith in Christ
- No one can be saved by the decisions of another person
- I can save you and you can't save me, whether before or after I die
 - A parent can't save an infant by baptizing them
 - Nor can a child save a dead parent by some silly Mormon ritual

- So if v.29 isn't talking about baptizing dead people, what *is* Paul talking about and how does it reinforce the truth of resurrection?
 - Let's take a second look at the text again
 - Paul asks what will those do who are baptized for the dead?
 - Paul is speaking of water baptism that every believer under goes following their profession of faith
 - Water baptism was given to the Church by Christ to communicate a picture concerning death and resurrection
 - When we enter the water and someone submerges our body, we are testifying to our belief that our sinful nature was put to death with Christ through our faith
 - And when that person lifts us out of the water, we are testifying to our hope that one day Christ will raise our dead bodies to eternal life
 - Baptism always requires a second person to conduct the ritual to illustrate that we cannot save ourselves
 - We depended on the Lord to lay in our grave in our place
 - And we rely on the Spirit to raise us into a new body
 - So Paul asks why is this church practicing baptist for the dead if they don't believe in resurrection?
 - Paul's question makes more sense when we add a missing phrase that's implied but unstated in Paul's wording

1Cor. 15:29 Otherwise, what will those do who are baptized for the resurrection of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why then are they baptized for them?

- Paul is asking why this church continues to practice water baptism if they don't believe in the resurrection from the dead?
- If they don't believe in resurrection, then why do they perform a water baptism that illustrates a belief in resurrection?
- Paul's second example of their behavior contradicting their beliefs is vs.30-32

[1Cor. 15:30](#) Why are we also in danger every hour?

[1Cor. 15:31](#) I affirm, brethren, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.

[1Cor. 15:32](#) If from human motives I fought with wild beasts at Ephesus, what does it profit me? If the dead are not raised, LET US EAT AND DRINK, FOR TOMORROW WE DIE.

- Paul asks why are he and the other apostles - indeed all Christians - placing themselves in harms way for the sake of the Gospel if resurrection isn't true?
 - The apostles remained in danger every hour of the lives
 - They were hunted down, imprisoned, beaten, starved
 - They were never at ease and always at risk
 - In fact, Paul says in v.31 that because of his work in founding the church in Corinth, he received even more persecution
 - So then Paul asks why would he choose to live this way if his body in this life were all any man was to receive?
 - It must mean that he was working for human motives, for certainly there would be no spiritual reason to persevere so much
 - Paul says in v.32 that if working for the Gospel only produced rewards in this lifetime, then why would he have risked his neck?
 - The phrase "wild beasts" doesn't mean animals
 - It's a euphemistic reference to the enemies of the Gospel in Ephesus, where Paul was as he wrote this letter
 - So why take these risks if resurrection is a lie?
 - Instead, it would have been far more sensible to adopt Solomon's perspective that we wring every last ounce of physical enjoyment out of earthly lives for as long as we can
 - For when we die it all comes to an end
- But that's not what Paul and the other apostles did
 - Instead, they fought hard against the Gospel's enemies in Ephesus and elsewhere to ensure they pleased the Lord and served Him well

- And they took their risks with the earthly lives because they understood that the abundant life Christ promises is the life that follows resurrection, not the one that precedes it
- It's the only explanation for why Paul would place himself in harm's way time and time again for the Gospel
- The eleventh chapter of Hebrews is a beautiful testimony of saint after saint who sacrificed their earthly life in faith to God's promises of resurrection
 - As the writer summarizes

[Heb. 11:35](#) Women received back their dead by resurrection; and others were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection; [Heb. 11:36](#) and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment.

[Heb. 11:37](#) They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated

[Heb. 11:38](#) (men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.

[Heb. 11:39](#) And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised,

[Heb. 11:40](#) because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect.

- The writer says these OT saints accepted even greater persecution for the sake of a "better" resurrection
 - How can a resurrection be made better?
 - The writer is referring to a better reward in the resurrected life
 - We may receive greater rewards in the Kingdom because of greater obedience, sacrifice and faithfulness now
- But if the Corinthian church truly believed that resurrection was a lie, then they should have been living according to that belief
 - They shouldn't sacrifice for the Gospel
 - They should have been using their one life to live it up, since there was no future life, no future body, no future reward to earn

- But they weren't doing that
- They were preaching no resurrection, but they were attempting to live in obedience in the hope of a reward
- Once again, their behavior and beliefs were in opposition
- Paul asks these questions to highlight the contradictions in Corinth, but in the process Paul has exposed an even bigger problem in the church
 - He's exposed the spiritual immaturity of the church
 - The church didn't understand the meaning of the rituals they performed or the rewards they sought
 - And by their ignorance, they contradicted their own beliefs
 - They proved the adage that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing
 - While it's easy for us to chuckle at the ignorance of the Corinthian church, we need to be careful about pointing fingers too quickly
 - The Lord ensured Paul's letter found its way into the canon of scripture for good reason
 - Because today's church is not that much different from the one Paul founded in Corinth
 - We can still find plenty of examples of belief and behavior contradicting in Christian practice today
 - Some churches practice baptism by sprinkling, proving they don't understand how baptism pictures of death and resurrection of the body
 - Some churches feature altars in the sanctuary, even though altars imply sacrifices which Christians maintain are no longer needed
 - Some churches tell believers to seek for a filling of the Holy Spirit after coming to faith, yet the Bible teaches that faith itself comes as a result the indwelling of the Spirit
 - The list goes on, but the root cause is always the same in every case

- Any time our church practices are disconnected from the authority and instruction of scripture, we're going in the wrong direction
 - Sooner or later, our behaviors will come into conflict with the beliefs we claim to hold
 - Before we know it, we're wise in our own estimation
 - Instead following the Lord by His word, we're in danger of becoming followers of denominations, signs and wonders, styles of worship or worse - cults, heresies and the like
- Paul calls the church to seek for better influences and better theology

[1Cor. 15:33](#) Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals."

[1Cor. 15:34](#) Become sober-minded as you ought, and stop sinning; for some have no knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame.

- Paul warns don't be led astray by this kind of false teaching
 - And Paul quotes a popular phrase of his day
 - Bad company corrupts good morals
 - The quote comes from a stage comedy by the Greek playwright Euripides, and it was so popular in Paul's day that it had become a proverb
 - It's still well known today because of Paul's quotation
- When we associate with the wrong people, we'll find ourselves adopting their bad thinking and practices
 - If we associate with bad teachers, we're going to fill our heads with false teaching
 - If we associate with immature and misled congregations, we're going to become spiritually immature and misled ourselves
 - If we associate with corrupt and fleshly Christians, we're likely to be pulled into sinful choices
 - No one remains immune from these influences once we place ourself under their influence

- Paul admonishes the church in the severest terms yet in v.34 telling them to start thinking in spiritually mature ways and stop sinning
 - What was their sin in this case?
 - Well, among other things, clinging to unbiblical theology in the light of better teaching is a sin
 - When the Lord brings us the truth by His word and we stubborn choose to hold onto to contrary views we're sinning
 - We're demonstrating self-importance, pride and disobedience to the word of God
 - We can get away with protecting our pride for only so long
 - For one day, the Lord will expose us at the judgment
 - But we don't have to choose spiritual ruin
 - Instead, we can humble ourselves, concede to the truth and become sober-minded
 - Paul says there were those in the church who had no knowledge of God and it was to their shame
 - He's not saying they didn't know the Lord, as in were unbelieving
 - He's saying they were utterly ignorant of the Lord's teaching...of scripture
 - They were professing to teach the truth, but their were fools
 - They were proving James' teaching true, that not many should desire to be teachers
 - Educating others concerning the Lord and His word is an unforgiving, demanding task in the church, and nothing is more important
 - This poor church was being led by fools without a clue, and they were bringing many others down with them