

9,18,25 1 Cor. 15:29-35, Resurrection Glory

We ended our last study in 1 Cor. 15 at vs. 28, so let's begin by reading vs's 29-30;

(1 Cor. 15:29-30) 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? And why do we stand in jeopardy every hour?

First, just to use this as an illustration; I'm not LDS. Here are some excerpts related to various writings on Mormon theology in the area of baptism.

In Latter-Day Saint's doctrine, baptism is understood as the ordinance through which sins are forgiven and washed away. Put simply, the belief is that if, for whatever reason, a person dies before getting baptized, a living person can be baptized in place of the dead person resulting in salvation for that dead person.

However, the Biblical teaching is that salvation is by faith alone, apart from any works on our part. But every other religion in the world, and unfortunately, many different denominations and cults like Mormonism, want to add one or more works to what's required for salvation. John 3:16 is both clear and absolute, but the religious spirit in our flesh mandates that we be given credit in some way for our salvation.

So, what is Paul talking about in 1 Cor. 15:29-30? As the Pulpit Commentary explains it, this is one possible foundation for this belief;

Doubtless some of the deaths alluded to in 1 Corinthians 11:30 had happened to persons who had been cut off before they were actually baptized; and their friends had gone through the rite in their stead, in the hope of extending to them some of its benefits.

Actually, there are dozens of different interpretations of what this is really all about. The reason for that is that this is a subject that isn't discussed anywhere else in the Bible, but Paul seemed to expect that his readers would know what it meant.

I looked for something that would seem both reasonable and would also take into consideration Paul's whole purpose in writing this chapter on resurrection, because that's the context, and as we know, context is crucial for interpreting anything. Here's one that seemed to fit;

In 1 Corinthians chapter 15 the apostle Paul is teaching the Corinthian church about the resurrection of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, and the resurrection of the body. From verse 1 and throughout the whole chapter Paul addresses “brethren” in the Lord and speaks in terms of you, we, and us, with one exception. Only in verse 29 is the word “they” mentioned: “Else what shall *they* do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are *they* then baptized for the dead?” From this it would be reasonable to conclude that Paul talks in verse 29 about a group *outside* the Christian community. Baptism for the dead is not mentioned anywhere else in the Bible. If it were an ordinance of the church one would expect to see the teaching repeated and elaborated on somewhere in the scriptures.

Paul isn’t commending this practice; he’s using it to show that even some *outside* the church believe in resurrection.

In vs. 30 we see Paul talking about constantly being in jeopardy. That phrase is literally, “. . . in peril, or in danger.” And as Jerusha mentioned in her study of the letter to Smyrna in Revelation 2, there have been more Christians martyred in the last 100 years than double the number who have been killed in the last 2000 years.

You obviously won’t hear about this in the media, because as a whole, the world could not care less. But God sees it all, and from a prophetic viewpoint, this is just another one of hundreds of signs that we are at the end of this age. The deception and persecution of the Church is increasing in number and intensity all the time (just like ‘birth-pangs’).

Just a quick point that William McDonald made which I thought was good – he said;

Secret plots were hatched against Paul in an effort to take his life. He could have avoided all this by abandoning his profession of Christ. In fact, it would have been wise for him to abandon it if there was no such thing as resurrection from the dead.

As we see this pressure against the church intensifying in our generation, having the hope of resurrection (and ideally, the rapture, which is referred to as a

‘resurrection’ or “rising up” in 1 Thess. 4), should become something that occupies more of our thoughts as this Age winds down.

(1 Thess. 4:13-18) I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. 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. 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. 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. Therefore comfort one another with these words.

And as we’ll look at in more detail later;

(1 Cor. 15:50-53) Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed— in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

I guarantee you that our brothers and sisters in places like North Korea and parts of Africa are aggressively standing on the “hope” of resurrection. It is definitely a “comfort” for those who believe that whether by rapture or death we will be instantly with the Lord, (“And thus, we shall always be with the Lord”. )

In vs’s 31-34 Paul continues to try and bring what we might call “common sense” logic to the Corinthians;

I affirm, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. 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!” Do not be deceived: “Evil company corrupts good habits.” Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame.

As we've seen in Acts, Paul's life was a constant influx of near-death experiences. There are even some passages that linguists believe may have been saying that on those occasions Paul did die and was brought back because his course had not yet been completed. But regardless, Paul did something that all of us have to do at sometime if we genuinely intend to go on with the Lord and finish our own course victoriously – Paul died daily.

He decided every morning when he woke up that, if he could help it, there would be nothing in this day that would be his will over God's will. Like his Master, Paul's continual thought was "not my will, but Thy will be done. . ." That's what death to the self-life means. We've been bought with a price; we are not our own, so we are to daily renew our original commitment as disciples of Christ when we 'presented our bodies as a living sacrifice' to Him to do with as He pleases – for His glory.

This is how Christ lived with the Father, as we saw consistently throughout the gospel of John, as Jesus Himself said in John 20:21; "As the Father sent me, in the same manner, I send you."

The Lord did a great many things during His life here, but He never allowed any of what He did prevent Him from reaching His goal – the Cross, Resurrection and the salvation of humanity would be the outcomes.

By application to us, we saw this in Phil. 3:13-14,

"This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

No matter what we do along the way, there is "one thing" that should cause us to set our faces like flint to reach that goal, and not allow anything to sidetrack us. The "upward call of God in Christ Jesus" is sharing His throne in His kingdom.

Now, what does Paul mean in vs. 32 by, "If, in the manner of men, I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantage is it to me?"

First, even though at that time in the Roman empire, Christians were being thrown to the lions, Paul would have escaped that, because the Romans didn't use that form of punishment for citizens of Rome, which Paul was.

And Paul used that “wild beast” metaphor in 2 Tim. 4:17 also;

The Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was rescued out of the lion’s mouth.

Paul had both demonic and human enemies constantly trying to destroy him; and as he told us in Eph. 6:12, even though much of our persecution can come from Man, behind all of it is the reality that “. . . we wrestle *not* against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers; against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”

To know what the battle entails we have to know what the ultimate goal of the enemy is. Since he’s not allowed to kill all of us, his purpose for the rest is to put a spiritual or psychological barrier between us and God. His plan is to weaken or remove our faith so that we no longer trust the Lord. And the way he does that is through deception. He’s already deceived the nations to keep them from having any relationship with God at all; and for us that relationship has to be either damaged in some way. The enemy wants to convince us that God is not trustworthy.

In Luke 4 we are shown, in principle, exactly how the enemy attempts to deceive us.

(Lk. 4:1-13) Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being tempted for forty days by the devil. And in those days He ate nothing, and afterward, when they had ended, He was hungry. And the devil said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.” But Jesus answered him, saying, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.’ ” Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, “All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours.” And Jesus answered and said to him, “Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.’ ” Then he brought Him to Jerusalem, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw

Yourselves down from here. For it is written: 'He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you,' and, 'In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.' " And Jesus answered and said to him, "It has been said, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God.' " Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him . . .

The Christian life is a warfare, but there is a huge difference between knowing this academically and realizing what it feels like; and what to do when it heats up.

With each attack of the enemy, the Lord responded with "It is written", followed by a verse from God's Word. No matter what specific test or temptation you face, there is always a verse someplace that will counter it. The 'sword of the spirit' is our only offensive weapon.

The first thing you want to do when you feel overwhelmed by something, is to stop and identify it, expose it to yourself as a *thing* you are experiencing rather than immediately taking it in on as being something that's you. Once you've identified it, then you stand against it using the Truth as your weapon. And all of this has to be done in spite of your emotions or all so-called 'evidence' the enemy is presenting to you.

That's what makes it difficult – emotions and evidence are both very real things, but where you want to end up is in a position where you've taken some time to think this through, separated the thing you're overwhelmed by from who you are in Christ, and decided that you're going to believe what the scriptures say and you're going to trust the One Who wrote them.

One of the major tactics of the enemy is to strip away from Christians the awareness of warfare itself. And there are far more spiritual casualties by not fighting than there are by fighting. A lot of us get bruised and wounded, and knocked down, but we get up and fight again. But overall, Christianity is filled with believers who are spiritual casualties because they didn't fight.

If we look at Christ's temptations, we can see the nature or characteristics of this warfare.

First, as mentioned earlier, Satan's assault was against Jesus' relationship with His Father, "If You are the Son..." The whole question of 'sonship' is raised. Is God really our Father and are we really His children? If so, why is He allowing these

things in our lives – are these the kinds of things a Father would allow to happen to those He loves? The enemy is always trying to drive a wedge of doubt and mistrust between us and the Father.

And then the enemy addresses our relationship to the World. We are offered a place in this world; it could be a place of honor or wealth, or simply a place of acceptance; some place where we can feel safe and at home; loved by those around us and where we fit in to what is popular.

Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, 'All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish.'

We're given reasons why it would be to our advantage to, in some way, choose the world over the Lord.

The next temptation is related to our relationship with the Church. "He took Him to the pinnacle of the temple". It's a religious issue; not a temptation to compromise with the world. Here's how one commentator on Luke put it;

This is something else, and here you have, represented by the temple, the popular religion; the contemporary and established religion, the traditional religion, the formal religion- yes, and the dead religion (but the devil would never say so). And now the suggestion is made that Jesus can capture, or at least fit into the religious world if only He will do this thing, He can capture the religious world and a place in the religious world, He can capture a reputation; He can have influence in that world; Jesus can make a name for Himself in that world; He can get applause in that world, acceptance and a following in Christianity. But Jesus always drew a distinct line between popular, cold, dead, contemporary religion, and the living church. Don't forget dear friends, the enemy is always trying to get us to accept something that is less than God's full thought concerning the church: to drop down on to that level, and to be robbed, deprived of the tremendous significance of the Body of Christ and its destiny in the counsels of God.

You've probably noticed that during all of these temptations we also see the division of body, soul and spirit. The first temptation offered His body relief from

hunger (“command this stone to become bread”). Jesus had just fasted for forty days – Satan began with that.

The next appeal was to the Lord’s soul; it was an appeal to Man’s ambition and desire to be someone, to at least be accepted if not praised. Satan was trying to draw out the Lord’s “soul-life” and bring that to the forefront so that it would be His soul, not His spirit, that directed His steps from then on.

Finally, His spirit, and the question of “worship”. When we went through John we saw that those who worship God must do so in spirit; not just body or soul, but primarily spirit. “God seeks such to worship Him”. And Paul wrote, “God, Whom I serve in my spirit”.

The question of worship governs this temptation. Worship, in spirit... the spirit is that part of us where God gets true worship.

(John 4:23-24) The hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

Not the body, not just the soul, but the spirit. The enemy will do anything to get us out of that essential relationship with God in our spirit; anything to draw us away from that.

We have to learn what it means to walk in the Spirit, and to have our life with God in our spirit – not just by our feelings, our emotions, our own desires, and not by the influences of this world at all; but in the innermost part of our being with God.

From Spark’s book on spiritual battle, he wrote;

It very often becomes a very clearly divided question when you become a Christian. In very many practical ways the enemy presses against us; he presses and it becomes a true battle right on to the end. It is never, to the end of our lives, a pleasant thing to our natures, to be shunned by the world, discounted by the world, and to have the world holding back its favor and its prizes, because we are Christians. But it has got to be settled; we are at war.

So, after Paul tells the Corinthians about his “wrestling with beasts”, in vs’s 33-34 he adds;



Do not be deceived: “Evil company corrupts good habits.” Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame.

In other words, wherever you’ve received teaching that has led you to doubt the resurrection of Christ and of His Church, avoid that source like the plague. They are stealing your hope and binding you to earth.

The phrase, “Evil company corrupts good habits” (or as some translations put it, “bad company corrupts good morals”), was a proverb from the Greek poet Menander, and it would have been known throughout that part of the world – so Paul uses it and applies it to the “there’s no resurrection” deception the Corinthians were buying into.

The phrase “good habits” or “morals” comes from the Greek word “chrestos” which refers to;

. . . that which is fit for use, able to be used and hence is good, kind, benevolent, worthy, useful, and virtuous (in contrast to what is bad or unprofitable).

Paul is basically asking the Corinthians to consider the usefulness or value of discounting the resurrection; they had no idea how serious of a mistake that would be.

Now in vs. 35, another question is raised and it moved Paul into what he talked about for the rest of this chapter.

Someone will say, “How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?”

Following the rapture, when we are finally housed in our eternal, glorified bodies, they will have certain characteristics that are shown in these verses;

Vs. 37 Our new body will be completely different from our old body

Vs. 43 It will be glorified and powerful

Vs. 44 It will be spiritual rather than natural

Vs. 50 And it will be incorruptible (as in indestructible, immortal and eternal)

And as we'll see in 1 Cor. 15:41, each Christian's body will be different – in the same way that the sun, moon and stars are different. In other words, each body will shine with lesser or greater intensity or brightness depending on how far each of us grew spiritually in this life.

There have been all kinds of speculation about what we will be in terms of appearance as a new species of humanity in this new creation, without any of the limitations of the old humanity. In most of what I've read on this; radiant light comes into play. The brightest light, the highest glory, of course, is Christ;

Here are two lexical definitions of this using the original Greek of the word "glory"; The first is from Kittel's Theological Lexicon;

Regarding the word, glory (GK. doxa), "While individual nuances may embrace divine honor, splendor, power or radiance, what is always expressed is the divine mode of being . . . with varying stress on the element of visible manifestation (Lk. 2:9; 9:31-32; Acts 22:11; Rev. 15:8; 21:23).

The second is from Walter A. Elwell;

The most significant use of the ideas of glory and majesty is their application to God. In this regard, it is . . . stated that God's glory is the external manifestation of his being. God's glory is something that appears (Ex. 16:10 ), is revealed (Isa 40:5), and can be seen (Num 14:22 ).

Now, as related to my statement earlier that Christ in His glory is the brightest light, listen to this passage in Acts 9:3-8;

As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes, he could see nothing. So, they led him by the hand into Damascus.

So, Paul was blinded by the light of the glory of Christ.

(Rev. 1:16-17) In his right hand he held seven stars, and coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance. When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead.

And we know from this passage in Phil. 3:21, that in varying measures and degrees, this is our destiny also;

By the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, (He) will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

The Judgment Seat will determine the degree of glory, privilege and honor each believer will receive. Dwight Pentecost uses the term “capacity” to explain this; “Our reward in eternity will be a capacity to manifest and radiate forth the glory of God.”

In Rom. 2:10 Paul wrote, “Glory, honor and peace to everyone who works that which is (intrinsically) good . . . ” In 1 Peter 1:7, Peter said it this way; “That the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

Now, I want to wrap up this part of our study on our glorified body with some very helpful information I found on this in L.S. Chafer’s Systematic Theology; here’s Chafer’s response to Paul’s question in 1 Cor. 15:35, “How are the dead raised up?”

The answer is that there is a great variety of forms and bodies in God's creation. God will give the believer a transformed body in resurrection. Concerning this transformation there are 4 contrasts drawn.;

1. Our body was sown in corruption and will be raised in incorruption
2. Sown in dishonor, or humiliation, is raised in glory
3. Sown in weakness, raised a powerful body
4. Sown with a body that is adapted to the human spirit. This aspect of truth is concluded with the assuring words: “As we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.”

Christ's resurrection was vastly more than a mere reversal of death; and such will be the character of the believer's glorified body. The scriptures record restorations from death; but a different form of resurrection awaits the body of the child of God who has died.

It is quite diverse from any restoration ever accomplished in human history. The transformed, resurrected body will be limitless in power, infinite in glory, eternal, and adapted to the spirit. Such is the particular glory each individual will contribute to the whole new creation.

A declaration is made in 2 Cor. 5:1-5; that should this earthly House of this Tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, and that the human spirit earnestly desires not to be unclothed or disembodied, but to be clothed upon. And to this end, a body from heaven, eternal with respect to its qualities, awaits the believer who dies.

In all that we have looked at so far, Paul has attempted to restore, in the Corinthian believers, their confidence of an incredible future that is glorious beyond imagination.

I know that for us, we probably don't struggle with whether Christ's resurrection happened, or even if ours *will* happen. But what the enemy had done in Corinth, at least in principle, is exactly the same thing he has always done, which, as we saw when we looked at the warfare we are in, involves attacking and weakening our faith – do we believe what God has said? For the Corinthians, it was an issue of faith in the reality of the resurrection, but for us, that's probably not our biggest struggle.

So, what I wanted to do in closing our study tonight was to provide some encouragement in this area of faith and belief that might be helpful to us no matter what our personal struggle might be. We all have one (or more, probably more), and it's obvious in scripture that throughout history, trusting God and believing that all that He has told us is true, is the biggest challenge every generation has faced in one form or another. Our own personalities and fears tend to create what form that will take for us.

I'm going to read from a couple of articles on faith that I thought were especially relevant to our time, to the experiences we seem to be going through because of the current spiritual conditions in the world and in the Church.

Here's the first article;

You may believe that your life is an inexplicable, bewildering confusion, a tangle from your standpoint or the standpoint of man; but God is faithful. That is what He Himself says He is. So, without questioning God we go on believing God. We have even to believe God to the point of putting over on to Him the responsibility for our failures, for mistakes. . . We have to move over to the Lord's account, those things which may have been mistakes or failures, and trust Him to deal with these and go on. With us, this may seem impossible, but with God, all things are possible.

Here is the second, and it's possibly the most difficult test of faith we face;

God does not tell us what He is doing when taking us through dark experiences. If He said, "I am going to lead you into a very difficult time, it is all going to be dark and strange and confusing and bewildering and helpless, but it is all right, I am working a tremendous thing, this is what I am going to bring out of it," if He said that, the faith element would fade out. If only He would tell us He is doing something, and what He is doing, instead of leaving us in the dark and seeming to be so far away and without any interest in us! If only! But He did not do that, and we know He does *not* do that, He does not explain. And that is the challenge.

This is what is meant by Hebrews 11 and the men of faith, that is what it means. And thank God we have the heritage, we have a great heritage, we have more than they had. These men did not have a Bible; it was not written when they were going through it. We have their story and so many more. We see the issue, we have the sequel, but is it really helping us? When you are having a bad, dark time and feel that all has gone wrong, read the story of Joseph again... starting on it you will not want to put it down. Take its great lessons. The God of Joseph is our God and He is doing the same thing, and we know that that is true to life. What I have been saying is so true to life. *That*, at any rate, is very much like my experience, and therefore I have

reason to believe that the same thing is involved. The God of resurrection is working this to glory.

Ultimately, it's not the circumstances that are our biggest trial (even though that's how it always seems to feel at the time); it's the doubts the enemy (and our own flesh) is putting in our minds about *the Person behind* the circumstances. Since we're in pain and we have no explanation other than passages like Rom. 8:28, "God works all things together for our good", our challenge is whether or not we are going to trust the Divine *Person* that is either causing or allowing what's happening to us. What do we believe God is like? What kind of God is He? Is He trustworthy or not?

In a lexicon I looked at several years ago, I remember the editor saying that the word "faith" in the context of placing our faith in God, meant "to slam ourselves on Him". The illustration the editor gave was to pick up a book and slam it down on a table as hard as you can.

In other words, we take who we are, and *what* we are in ourselves (no matter how weak, or how much of a failure we believe we are) and we "slam" ourselves onto the Lord, and then we move on, having cast the burden of "us" off of our shoulders and onto His. He welcomes that and He views it as an act of faith worthy of His faithfulness.