Resurrection Incentives

1 Corinthians 15:29-34 - John MacArthur

We are continuing in our study of the *15th Chapter of 1 Corinthians*, coming this morning to *verses 29 through 34. 1 Corinthians 15:29 to 34*. Now there are some of you persistent Bible students in this congregation who have asked me to interpret *1 Corinthians 15:29* for the nine years that I've been here, and I have stalled you off until this very hour. And how I can no longer stall you because here we are, at a very, very difficult passage in the Scripture that we'll endeavor to gain an understanding of as we look at this morning.

Now, I've entitled this passage the incentives of resurrection. And just a basic principle to start with that'll help you to understand the approach we want to take, all doctrine, whether it's the doctrine of resurrection or any other doctrine in the Bible, all Bible doctrine, all theology, all truth in Scripture is given in order that it might bring about a practical response.

Scripture is never intended to be theory. It is always intended to have practical incentive built into it. Right doctrine leads to right behavior. Right principles lead to right conduct, that's the way the Bible goes. God lays out certain truth and then expects certain kinds of behavior in response to that.

The theology of Scripture is not something just to be discussed and just to be talked about among theologians, just to be adhered to in creeds. It is something to be lived out and inherited all theology, all truth about God is the fact that a practical response is commanded by the very truth itself.

A good illustration of this would be to draw you back in your Bible to the *12th Chapter of Romans* just to point out what I mean in this principle. In the *12th Chapter of Romans*, the first part of the verse, verse 1, says this, *"I beseech therefore brethren by the mercies of God that you present your bodies a living sacrifice."* Now we stop right there. This is the first exhortation given to the believer in the *book of Romans*, for all intents and purposes. This is it.

It doesn't come until the 12th Chapter, which means there are 11 chapters of theology. The greatest theological treatise in the New Testament is the first 11 chapters of *Romans*. And after all of that theology, all of that truth about God, all of that pure doctrine, finally he says, "therefore," and therefore is the key word in Chapter 12. "Therefore, on the basis of all of these doctrines," which he calls by the way the mercies of God, all of these things that are connected with the nature of a merciful God, all of these theological truths because they are presented therefore you are to present your body as a living sacrifice.

So after 11 chapters of theology, then you have the exhortation to behavior. It is always characteristic of the apostle Paul that Christian ethics or Christian behavior or Christian morality rises off of the foundation of redemptive accomplishments. You feel in *Romans 1 to 11* that Paul's mind is sweeping and searching across the infinities of the nature of God. And he's grabbing every salient point out of God's nature and the whole of theology. And after he's been all up in the infinities dealing with that, all of a sudden he comes down to earth and he says, *"now brothers, therefore, this is required of you."*

Now every great theological truth has practical implication. In fact, in *Psalms 116*, we come to what really could be said to be a response to the whole *book of Psalms*. The whole book of *Psalms* discusses who God is and what He's done. Who God is and what He's done. And then you get to *116:12*, and you hear the Psalmist say this, "*What shall I render the Lord for all His benefits for me."*

In other words, all that He is and all that He has done lays up on me, the necessity to render to God something of myself in response. Now you have it again illustrated, I think, well in the *7th chapter of Luke*, and I want you to look at, because I want to establish this principle in your mind from this passage. In *Luke 7, verse 40*, Jesus answering and He said unto Simon, now watch this, *"Simon, I have somewhat to*

say to thee." And he said, "Master, say on." "There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. The one owed five hundred danerei and the other fifty. And a danereius would be a day's work, so that's a lot. One owed five hundred days work, one fifty in money.

"And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him more or most?" Simon answered and said, "I suppose that he to whom he forgave most."

And He said unto him, *"Thou hast rightly judged."* Now, this is what that's saying, our response is in measure to the degree that God has benefited us. In other words, we must look and see what God has done and respond in kind to the magnanimous comprehensive work of God on our behalf.

That's the essence of this principle. First of all, you see the sweep of what God has done, and then there is to be a response in our lives that fits the comprehensiveness, the totality of the grace of God on our behalf. Very simple principle, and yet very, very important. Now, as we come to *1 Corinthians 15:29*, this is precisely what Paul is dealing with here. He is saying look, the whole concept of resurrection truth lays out some very strong imperatives. Because the resurrection is a reality and he has established that in the first 28 verses beyond doubt, because the resurrection is a reality, because the resurrection is a fact, it carries with it some great incentives or some great motivations. If we remove bodily resurrection, we lose those incentives. We lose those motivations.

Paul wants to say here, we can't get people to present their bodies to Christ. We can't get people to come to Christ. We can't get people to serve Christ. We can't people to live a holy life if we don't have a resurrection. And so again, we see that Paul's approach in this chapter is to say to the critics in verse 12 there, who said there's no resurrection. If you say that, here's what you've done. And in this little section, he says in effect what you've done is to remove some major incentives out of Christian living.

Principles of behavior. And what it boils down to is this, people are not going to give their life to something they don't really have hope in. And if you tell people there's no bodily resurrection, what makes you think for a minute they're going to bother with Christianity? Or what makes you think they're going to live a sacrificial life? Or what makes you think they're going to set their life apart to holiness if there's no resurrection, if there there's no consequences, if there's no rewards, if there's no punishments, if there's never any accountability? That's the essence of this chapter.

On the other hand, if there is resurrection, if we will face Christ, if we will have to be at the judgment seat of Christ, if there will be a day of reunion in heaven, if there will be a time when we dwell with the Lord Jesus and the saints and the ages forever, if there are those things in eternity for which we hope and in which we can believe, then there is incentive for this life.

That's his point. I'm sure you would agree with me that nothing short of the confidence of resurrection hope would ever have allowed Stephen to lay beneath the stones while his life was being crushed out and asked for forgiveness for those who did it. Nothing less than resurrection hope could have allowed as tradition tells us, Andrew to be crucified by being tied to a cross and left there for days until he was dead. Nothing less than resurrection hope would have left Peter to live his life out for Christ, finally to be crucified upside down again as tradition reminds us. If it wasn't that he believed that someday he'd see his master face to face and hear well done Peter. And that someday he'd be in heaven and see some of the fruit of his labor. And I'm sure nothing but resurrection hope would have allowed the apostle Paul to give his life continually and finally to put his head on a block and have it severed from his body, nothing less in resurrection hope would have made him do that. He did it with absolute faith that he would see Christ and that he would see the people he loved and won to Christ in this life and he'd part of the redeemed community forever with God.

It was that kind of hope that was incentive to those kinds of people. Now if you remove the possibility of resurrection you have removed this great, great incentive. That's what he's saying. Now, he picks out three areas, three incentives. He says if you remove the resurrection, you have removed an incentive to salvation, you have removed an incentive to service, and you have removed an incentive to sanctification.

He zeroes in on three key powerful incentives that would be lost without the belief in the bodily resurrection. Now you see bodily resurrection is the faith that someday, after we die, we will live again in a glorified body in a resurrection body. A body like, but unlike, the one we have. But the point is that we will rise again to be who we are minus our sin, and to dwell with God forever as who we are.

There is real resurrection for us as individuals. Now, this is what Paul has been through in the first 28 verses. This great hope is at the heart of the Christian faith and the gospel. If you remove that, first of all, you remove a great incentive to salvation. That's his first point. Let's look at it in verse 29.

"Else what shall they do who are baptized for the dead if the dead rise not all? Why are they then baptized for the dead?" Now that verse beloved has between 40 and 400 interpretations. Any one of which might be right with some exceptions. What it's saying, I really don't know. I'll be very honest with you. I do not know. I will...I will take a calculated risk. I will throw myself at your mercy this morning and you can determine whether or not there's much ground for my conclusion.

But believe me, you don't hardly have time during one week to study 40 views intelligently, let alone to come to a conclusion, but I have one anyway and I'll offer it to you. I will not be dogmatic on this, simply because this is one passage that is so obscure and so difficult that we couldn't be dogmatic, but we can draw some conclusions that I think the context sort of lends itself to.

Now, let me give you a basic point that I'm working with as a result of working over the text. By the way, I started with a completely different view on Monday than I wound up with on Friday. In fact, I was very surprised at my conclusion. I think three people talked to me during the week and I told them three different views that I was holding on that day.

But anyway, this is Sunday morning and here we are. Ask me tomorrow, you don't know where I'll be. But anyway, I think that the context lends itself to the fact that Paul is trying to point out things that would be lost if we give up bodily resurrection. And so in my mind, there must be legitimate things. And there's much reason for that. I just make that statement to you.

But I think what Paul is saying here is simply this, people get saved because they anticipate resurrection. In other words, one of the strongest incentives for people to become Christians is the hope of resurrection. You know, it...to become Christian means you don't have to look at the bleakness of the grave. You can have resurrection hope.

To become a Christian means that you can be rejoined with everybody else as a Christian and spend eternity with them. To become a Christian means you can enter into heaven and dwell with God and live in His celestial kingdom and all the marvels of that kind of afterlife. You see, that in itself is a great incentive for salvation. And I think essentially that's what Paul is saying here.

Now I know you're saying well, I don't see it. Well, I'm going to try to help you. Let's look first of all at the simple statements in the verse. "*What shall they do who are baptized for the dead if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for the dead?"*

Now the Mormon church takes this verse and they take what appears on the surface to be the most obvious view, that somebody is baptized for a dead person. And the Mormons call it vicarious baptism. And they teach...and incidentally you might note that that is not common only to Mormonism. That was a heresy taught by two ancient fathers in the church known as Cerenth and Marcien. They both believed this. In fact, it was branded as heresy even then.

But they say Paul is saying this that a Christian who is alive and has been baptized can get re-baptized for a dead person so that the dead person can get saved by proxy. Okay? So like if your great dear friend at work dies without the Lord, you can come here and get baptized for that dead person and by proxy he'll get saved. The Mormons, of course, teach that the spirits of those who have died can't enter heaven unless a Mormon is baptized for them by proxy.

Now it's obvious, I think, to all of us that we don't believe that. Proxy baptism, vicarious baptism could only be extrapolated out of this text, and there's a simple principle, a biblical interpretation. You never generate a doctrine out of an obscure text when no other text in the Bible teaches it.

I mean, you...that's mercilessly attacking the Bible with your own bias and making it say what you want it to say and you can't do that. The person who gets baptized himself doesn't get saved by being baptized let alone a dead person. We believe you're saved by faith in Jesus Christ, right? And baptism is simply an act of obedient faith that proclaims that...that testimony of salvation. But no one is saved by baptism. Not living people to say nothing of dead ones.

It is appointed unto men once to die the Bible says *and* after this the baptism? *After this, the judgment*. Christian baptism is in view in this verse. Let's look at that. You see the term baptize. Let's take it piece by piece. The term baptize is referring to Christian baptism I believe. It's the normal term. Some would assign it to some pagan custom, but it seems rather undefined, the most common understanding of this to anybody reading it would be Christian baptism. And I don't see any reason to make it any other thing.

Some people are being baptized in a Christian manner. Some people are coming to Christ is what it's literally saying. Now mark this in your thinking. Whenever you see in the New Testament the idea of being baptized, it always has a relationship to salvation unless it's talking about something like the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which is a spiritual thing. But when you're talking about water baptism in the New Testament it is something that is synonymous with salvation. And that goes all the way back to the words of Jesus in the great commission. Because Jesus said, *"Go into all the world and make disciples, baptizing and teaching."*

And He didn't teach baptismal regeneration. He didn't mean save them by dunking them. What He was saying was, *"Go into all the world and make disciples, first by winning them to Christ and then by teaching them."* In other words, from the very utterance of Jesus, baptism was a term used synonymously with salvation.

And you see those terms used that way in many cases. When Paul talks, for example to the people in *Acts 19* who were disciples of John and asked them if they've been baptized. He's not talking about some ritual. He's really wanting to know if they've been saved by faith in Christ.

So those are synonymous. So in that sense of synonym, when you look here and see this, you could read it this way. "What shall they do who are saved?" In other words, it's synonymous with them being saved. Some people, and note that they would probably be somebody who is not a Christian, the we in the next verse referring to the believers and particularly the apostolic group, and so he's pointing off into the distance and says "*What about those people, unbelievers who are being saved and baptism being the outward symbol of it."* Now we go to the next word, for and then the dead. Now could somebody get saved for the dead? Well, let's look again at the next word for. And this becomes arbitrary all the way along the line, but I want you to see how this one view seems to hang together. The word for here is huparein the Greek. Now that word can be translated by no less than probably 12 different words.

It could be translated over the dead, above the dead, across the dead, beyond the dead, on behalf of the dead, instead of the dead, in the name of the dead, because of the dead, in reference to the dead, or with regard to the dead. And we see a little of the problem. And all of those translations would be if the context permits and the case permits accurate.

So what you really find out is you have to pick one. And as I look at it, I think perhaps the best one would be a causal use and that we could translate it "because of." Hupare can be translated because of and it would read this way, some people, unbelieving people are being saved because of the dead. Now it is most likely that the dead have reference to Christians. The dead.

Now, why would they do that if the dead don't rise? Now let me give it to you simply. There are some people who come to Christ and are saved because of some dead person or persons. What do I mean by that? Just this. There are two things I think in this particular area that draw people to Christ. One is this,

an unbeliever sees a Christian and he watches that Christian face death. And that Christian has hope and confidence. He is encouraged. He anticipates being with Jesus. For example, Mike McKillip was told that he would just have a little while to live. Now they really don't know how long, but originally he had a little while to live. His response was oh, then I get to be with Jesus all the sooner.

Mike's a young man in our church. Then I get to be with Jesus all the sooner. As a result of that, hearing that, and knowing that somebody came to Christ. In other words, the hope of the Christian in the face of death becomes an incentive for other people who look at death so fearfully so blackly and so bleakly.

So that sometimes when a Christian dies the very death of that Christian with confidence and faith and hope can actually be the thing that draws somebody else to Christ. I'll give you an illustration of it. I found an article about seven soldiers of the Red Army during a period in the Finish-Russian War. It was written by an immigrant engineer in Finland by the name of Nordenburg who was actually in on the experience. This is what he said, "I offered my services to the government and was appointed an officer in General Manerhiem's army. It was a terrible time. We besieged a town that had been taken by the Red Army and we overtook it.

A number of Red prisoners were under my guard and seven of them were to be shot at dawn on Monday. I will never forget the preceding day. The seven men were kept in the basement of the town hall and in the passage, my men stood at attention with their rifles. The atmosphere was filled with hatred. My soldiers were drunk with success and taunted their prisoners, some swore and beat on the walls with their bleeding fists, others called for their wives and children who were far away because they knew at dawn they were all to die. We had the victory.

That was true enough, but the value of it seemed to diminish as the night advanced. Then something strange happened. One of the men doomed to death began to sing. He is mad was everyone's first thought, but I had noticed that this man whose name was Koscanen, had not raved and cursed. Quietly he sat on his bench. Nobody said anything to him. Each was carrying his burden in his own way. Koscanen sang rather waveringly at first and then his voice grew stronger and became natural and free. And all the prisoners turned and looked at him as he sang these words. "Safe in the arms of Jesus. Safe on His gentle breast, thereby His love are shaded sweetly my soul shall rest. Hark it's the voice of angels born in the song to me over the fields of jasper, over the crystal sea."

Over and over again he sang that verse, and when he had finished everyone was quiet for a few minutes and then a wild looking man broke out and said "where did you get that you fool, are you trying to make us religious?" Koscanen looked at his comrades with tear-filled eyes as quietly he said, "comrades, will you listen to me for a minute? You asked me where I got this song, it was from the Salvation Army.

I heard it three weeks ago. My mother sang about Jesus and prayed to Him often." He stopped a little while as if to gather strength and then he rose to his feet being the soldier that he was and looked straight in front of him and said, "it's cowardly to hide your beliefs, the God my mother believed in is now my God. I can't tell how it happened, but last night as I lay awake I suddenly saw mother's face before me. It reminded me of the song I had heard. I felt I had to find the Savior and hide in Him. I prayed that Christ would forgive me and cleanse my sinful soul and make me ready to stand before Him. It was a strange night, there were times when everything seemed to shine around me. Verses from the Bible and the song book came to mind. It was God's answer to my prayer. I couldn't keep it to myself. Within a few hours I shall be with the Lord, but saved by His grace."

Koscanen's face shown as if by an inward light, his comrades sat quietly. He himself stood transfixed. My soldiers were listening to what this Red revolutionary had to say. "You're right," Koscanen, said one of his comrades at last. "If only I knew there was mercy for me too, but these hands of mine have shed blood and now I've reviled God and trampled on all that is holy and I realize there is a Hell and that's the proper place for me." And he sank to the ground in despair. "Pray for me Koscanen," he groaned. "Tomorrow I shall die and my soul will be in the hands of the devil."

These two Red soldiers went down to their knees and prayed for each other. It was no long prayer, but it reached heaven and we who listen to it forgot our hatred. It melted in the light of heaven, for here were two men who were soon to die seeking reconciliation with their God.

The change in the atmosphere was indescribable. Some of the men sat on the floor, some on the benches, some wept quietly and another talked of spiritual things. None of us had a Bible, but the Spirit of God was speaking to all of us. The night was almost gone and the day was dawning. No one slept a moment. "Sing the song once more for us Koscanen," said one of them and you should have heard them sing not only that song, but verses and choruses long forgotten. The soldiers on guard united with them for the power of God had touched everyone. Everything changed in the venerable town hall basement resounded in the early morning hour with the songs of the blood of the lamb. The clock struck 6:00 and how I wished I could beg mercy for these men, but I knew it was impossible.

Between two rows of soldiers, they marched out to the place of execution. One of them asked to be allowed to sing Koscanen's song once again and permission was granted. And then they asked to be allowed to die with uncovered faces and so with hands lifted to heaven they sang with might and mane "Safe in the arms of Jesus." And when the last line had died out the Lieutenant gave the word fire, and we clinched our heads in silent prayer.

What happened in the hearts of the others I don't know, but as far as I was concerned I saw a new man. I was a new man from that hour. I had met Christ and one of His loveliest and youngest disciples and I had seen enough to realize that I too could be His."

That's a beautiful story isn't it? And you know, there have been people come to Christ simply because they've seen the hope in the heart of a believer. And what Paul was saying here possibly is just that. If there is no resurrection, then why are some unbelievers being baptized because of the great hope they see in those that have died? See, if there's no resurrection, why?

There's a second element to this. You know another great thing in death that is a cause for people to be saved is the hope of reunion. Do you know that? I've never had a funeral in which I didn't give that word. You say to someone who's a Christian that's died and you'll say, "you know, this person knew and loved the Lord Jesus Christ and they went to be with Him and if you will come to Christ, you can be rejoined with this one you love," right?

You've heard that at funerals. I would dare some of you came to Christ because you wanted to be reunited with somebody you loved who went to be with the Lord.

That happens all the time, all the time. I've seen a husband who wouldn't come to Christ for any other reason, finally come to Christ when his wife died, because he wanted to be reunited. I've seen it happen in the case of a mother dying and a child who had been wayward and rebellious come to Jesus Christ in the hope that he would be reunited with his mother, reunion.

Paul is saying look, if there's no reunions, if there's no fulfillment to hope, why are people getting saved? Because of this anticipation that they see in the hearts and lives of Christians. James Boyer, who takes this view in his commentary on Corinthians says, "the hope of the resurrection that is held by saved people was after they died a powerful incentive to their loved ones still living to be saved and baptized."

Well, reunion is a great, great incentive. The anticipation of the hope of resurrection is a great, great incentive. If there's no resurrection, we don't have that incentive. We have to say to somebody look, you loved one is dead, but don't worry, it's nothing. You know, it all ends there. Redemptive history winds up as Ladd says in a cul-de-sac in a Palestinian grave. It's all over there. You'll never see them again anyway, so you can understand what that would do to one's incentive for salvation.

By the way, the hope of believers throughout all of the Scripture has always been of reunion after death, did you know that? Believers have always hoped that. Clear back in *Genesis 37* where you have a very undefined view of life after death early in *Genesis*. You find this in the heart of Jacob. And Jacob is talking

about the fact that he doesn't think he'll ever see Joseph again because Joseph's brothers have made Jacob think he's dead. They brought in a blood spattered coat and so Jacob tore his clothes and put sack cloth on his loins and mourned for his son many days. *Genesis 37:35, "And all his sons and all his daughters rose to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted."* And this is what he said, *"I will go down to the grave to my son mourning."* He was sad, but he had the hope in his heart that when he died, he would be rejoined with his son. That's always been in the heart of believing people.

When David's little son died, that little son born of that illegitimate union with Bathsheba, when that little baby died and David's heart was broken, he said, *"look he cannot come to me, but,"* what, *"I shall go to him."* He had that confidence.

In *Matthew Chapter 22 in verses 30* and following Jesus, dealing with the subject of resurrection said, *"You missed the point because you don't understand God and what you don't understand about God is that He is the God of the living, not the dead. He's the God of the living Abraham, the living Isaac, and a living Jacob."*

And the Thessalonian Christians, you know, they were all uptight. The Thessalonians believed that Jesus was going to come at any minute. They believed He was going to come at any moment. And in that tremendous confidence and in that tremendous belief, they were having problems because they were saying boy, we're going to glorified, Jesus is going to come, the Christians who've died, have they missed it all? Have they missed it all?

They're just in the grave, they were victimized perhaps by the philosophy that was dominant in their time. And so the apostle Paul writes to them in *1 Thessalonians 4:13* and says, *"Brethren I don't want you to be ignorant concerning those who sleep."* Don't sorrow like the people with no hope. Don't sorrow like the Greeks who don't believe in life after death or resurrection. "*If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also who's sleep in Jesus will God,"* what, *"bring with Him."*

You don't have to fear. We're going to be reunited. They'll all be there, reunion again. Reunion has always been in the heart of the believers. And many have come to Christ because of the hope of reunion. Many have come to Christ because they've seen the confidence of a dying Christian. I can't help but think in *Acts 7*, when Stephen was being stoned and it says they laid their cloaks, the people stoning him, laid their cloaks at the foot of a man named Saul, who turned out to be Paul. I can't help but think the Holy Spirit dropped that little note in there just to kind of let us think that the apostle Paul must have never forgotten the shining of the face of Stephen, the forgiveness in his heart, the hope that he had in the face of death, and just maybe the remembrance of that great hope of dead Stephen was part of the cause for which Paul responded so instantly on the Damascus road. Maybe the hope of Stephen was a part of what made Paul turn so quickly to Christ. But if the dead don't rise, there's no union with Christ, the grave is the end, there's no way we can look forward to hope that incentive for salvation is lost.

Now Paul says there's a second thing here, back to the 15th Chapter. A second thing, if there's no resurrection, we have secondly lost the incentive to service. We have lost the incentive to service. There's really no problem with interpreting this. This is obvious. He says, verse 30, *"Why stand we in jeopardy every hour?"* He says, look if there's no resurrection why am I doing this? What am I some kind of a masochist?

Why do I stand in jeopardy every hour? Frankly, beloved I really believe that if you remove the hope of resurrection you will tear the motivation right out of all service to Jesus Christ. Why? Because the only thing that makes people willing to suffer, willing to endure, willing to go through all kinds of hardship to do the work of Christ at any cost is the fact that someday that work is going to have eternal results. That someday there's going to be fruit in heaven that they're going to see. That Jesus said would remain. That someday they're going to stand before Jesus and say here I am and I gave the best I had and they're going to hear well done. And that's going to make it worth it.

Listen, if there is nothing more, if we just have our spirits float and get absorbed into some kind of eternal fog, and we aren't going to be who we are now, and the grave is the end, and there's no resurrection like some were saying in the Corinthian church, then there's no reason to give my life as a sacrifice now man. This is all there is. I got to live it up, you know. I'm...I'm going to join the beer commercial. I'm going to grab all the gusto I can get because I only go around once. I'm going to string it out and live it up as long as I can. I'm sure not going to make myself a burning sacrifice, throw my life away and die and go into blackness forever.

Service is predicated on the hope of resurrection. We suffer because we see that ahead. I was watching the other night when Ali was fighting Ernie Shavers, and I kept saying to myself, that's crazy. Those two grown men beating on each other and enduring all of that agony. And then a little voice says to me, yeah, I remember MacArthur, you used to play football. Is it any different? Not a lot. Why do people do that? Why do people punish themselves like that? There's only one reason and that's because of the potential of victory and success and glory, that's all. You take all that away and they won't do that. Same thing's true in the Christian life. You remove all the glory. You remove all the reward. You remove all the eternal consequences. You remove the victory and nobody's going to bother with it.

Paul says, every hour he was in danger. Now somebody's going to say well, Paul...now...now Paul you're speaking a little evangelistically. Paul, you...I realize that's part of the profession to speak in hyperbole like that, but after all every hour Paul? I mean, you do now and then have a little break from jeopardy. So he just gets very vehement in verse 31 and he says literally, *"I swear I do."* And at the end of the verse really says, I can read it this way, "I swear that I die daily." And he's not talking about some great spiritual crucifixion of self. This is not dying daily in the terms of devotion to Christ.

He's saying I swear that every day I'm one step away from dying physically, every day, this is no exaggeration. And he swears...it's interesting that he would be so vehement as to make an oath out of it. The term I swear, which your Bible may say I protest, the Greek particle here that is used to introduce an oath. He's...he wants to really solemnize his point.

And he swears, and it's interesting the way he does it, it's not translated perhaps the best way in the authorized. It should read this way, "I swear by the pride I have in you in Christ." In other words, "I swear it by the pride I have in you in Christ." Now what does this mean? Well, to swear by something means that you're willing to forfeit that something if the word isn't true. So you're really making an equalization.

Let me say it another way. I know it's hard to understand. It's almost Hebraism that we can't translate in a sense. But what...what he is saying is as true as this is so true this is. As true as I am proud of what Christ has done in you, that's how true it is that I die every day. That's really what he's saying.

I swear it. As proud as I am of what Christ has done in you and he was proud of the saving work of Christ in them even though they were a mess. He was proud of what Christ had done. He wasn't too proud of what they'd done. As proud as I am of what Christ has done, that's how truly I say to you I die every day. My life is on the line every day, every hour I'm in jeopardy.

Now don't you come along and say to me, well Paul by the way there's no resurrection. Then he's going to say in verse 32, *"If then only in a human way, only from a human viewpoint, only humanly, only after the manner of men I fought with beasts at Ephesus, what does that profit me? I should fight beasts for this if there's no resurrection. What a waste."* Paul put his life on the line every day, every day.

It came to the end of his life, he said, *"I fought the good fight."* Every day, every day, read *2 Corinthians Chapter 4* and see all the things he says there. "*We're troubled yet not distressed, perplexed not in despair, persecuted but not forsaken, cast down but not destroyed. Always, always, bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus."* Always.

The guy went from problem to problem to problem. Well somebody would say well, you know, I know now and then you get little problems. I remember over there in Damascus you had to come over the wall in a basket. I remember when we had to ship out you one time because the Greeks were trying to kill you.

Paul you do have trouble. Paul says, I have it every day and the reason is because Paul only knew one kind of ministry and that was confrontation and he's slammed up against the system every day of his life and generated antagonism, every day.

And then he says don't come to me and tell me I've been doing all this just for this life alone. This is no way to live. I'm just trying to throw this life away and make an investment in the next one. He even said, *"I count the things of this life as manure."* Didn't he say that? It's a throw away. Throw this life away. Jesus put it another way. *"Don't layup treasure in this world."* Throw it away. Give it away. Invest it in the lives of people. Invest it in the kingdom." Don't pile it here. Don't stack it here. Throw this life away, because it's the next one that matters. Now when some Joe comes down the pike and says hey there is not a next one, Paul says, whoa. I'm too far gone to buy that.

And that's the message here. Throw your life away, it's manure in this life. We'll make the next life meaningful. If you give it to God as a living sacrifice. Now people say well what is this about fighting beasts at Ephesus? I don't know that either. You say when did Paul do that? I don't know, because that's the only time it's ever mentioned. You say are these real beasts? I don't know that either. But it says they're beasts. People say well, it can't be real beasts, because you see we don't have any other record of it. Well, you have this record. How many times does God have to say something to make it true. Well, you say they couldn't be real beasts simply because Paul was a Roman citizen, and a Roman citizen really couldn't suffer that kind of a situation. He couldn't be brought to...into the arena before the beasts.

And Paul, as a Roman citizen, wouldn't have done that. Well, listen, Paul's Roman citizenship did get him out of some things, but it may well have been that it didn't get him out of this and those people would have figured if the beasts all eat him, who's going to protest, right? Who's going to write Rome and tell them? Not us and not him either. I don't know. Some say, no, this is a wild beast, it's a metaphor. I know Linskiand in his commentary goes on paragraph after paragraph to prove it's a metaphor. And I'm not sure he does, but it might be.

He says it's a...it's really just wild beasts is a metaphor for the wild people at the riot in *Acts 19* that occurred in Ephesus, maybe so, I don't know. But whatever is, Paul says, look, verse 30, *"All of us apostles are in jeopardy. I particularly am in jeopardy. I die daily. Here's one incident. I had to fight beasts in Ephesus."*

By the way there is an old historic church legend that says he did fight beasts in Ephesus and that they had the same problem that they had in the den of Daniel. They became totally passive and left him alone. That's just a legend. But the point is this, Paul is saying what good is it if it's all a human effort. If it's all just here and now and good-bye and it ends at the grave. What a way to give your life.

And so at the end of the verse he says, look *"if the dead rise not, let's eat and drink for tomorrow we die."* Folks let's not get all bogged down in this kind of stuff. Let's just live for the sensual. Let's get all we want to eat and all we want to drink. Let's have a party. Let's do all we can. Grab all the gusto, live it out, dead, that's it.

Tomorrow we die, forget it. Like the rich fool, eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die. By the way, that's not anything new. That's a direct quote from *Isaiah 22:13* and that's the way people with no resurrection hope have always lived.

That's our society isn't it? That's what Solomon said. Read *Ecclesiastes*, he keeps saying it over and over again. "*I can see nothing better under the sun than to eat and drink and do what you want and have fun and rejoice and then die."* Certainly don't go out and give your life a sacrifice every hour of every day for a cause that isn't going to come to pass any way. For a Christ that never rose from the grave.

Classic literature is full of this kind of thought. Herodotus the Greek historian tells one of the customs of the Egyptians. He says, "in social meetings among the rich, when the banquet was ended a servant would often carry around to the guests a coffin. And in the coffin was a wooden image of a corpse carved and painted to resemble a dead person as nearly as possible. And the servant would show it to each of the guests and he would say, 'gaze here and drink and be merry for when you die, such you shall be.'"

That's a great way to end a party. I'll tell you what, that's a great way to get a party going. If you really believe that you are going to party. But the Christian life with its challenges and dangers and the investment of life and throwing it away is absolutely useless if there's no eternal fruit, right?

Those dear precious saints in the *11th Chapter of Hebrews* who invested their lives in the kingdom of God at the cost of their own life. It says, listen to this, *"Through faith they subdued kingdoms, they wrought righteousness, the obtained promises, they stopped the mouths of lions, they quenched the violence of the sword, they escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness they were made strong, they became valiant in fight, they turned to fight the armies of the aliens, women receive their dead raised to life, others were tortured not accepting deliverance, others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings and bonds and imprisonments, they were stoned, sawed in half, tested, slain with a sword, wandered in sheep skins and goats skins, destitute, afflicted and tormented, they wandered in deserts and mountains and dens and caves of the earth."* Why? Why? In verse 35, "*That they might obtain a better resurrection."*

You take away the resurrection there's no incentive for any of that. And even our dear Lord Jesus in Chapter 12 which follows it right up, it says this, *"And Jesus for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame and is now set down at the right hand of the Father."*

You see it was anticipation of resurrection glory that caused Christ to endure the cross. Great principle. If there's no resurrection, there's no motive to endure. There's no motive to serve, so says Paul.

You take away the incentive to salvation, you take away the incentive to service, and thirdly you take away the incentive of sanctification. This is very brief, so note it quickly. Verse 33, "*Stop being deceived, evil company corrupts good morals."* Make no mistake, he says.

Present tense - stop staying in the deceit you're in. Stop following this mistake and notion. You've got to get rid of this heresy about the resurrection. Stop being deceived. You know why? Because, now watch this, evil, and then you have a word here that's most interesting, evil blank corrupts good morals. Now the word hamilia basically means association. Evil association, however, according to some lexicons, it also carries the meaning of a sermon or a lecture.

Now if we combine those two meanings, this is kind of what we get, stop being deceived. Hanging around evil people giving evil messages will lead to evil morals. Or if you wanted to just squish it all together, bad theology corrupts good morals. The idea here is associating with somebody who's teaching bad theology. Hanging around and evil lecture. And evil association with an evil individual giving an evil lecture would be the...the combination of significances of the term in Greek.

And verse 34 note it says in the middle of the verse, *"some have not the knowledge of God*." See some in the church didn't know God truly, didn't know God's teaching truly and so they were espousing heresy and listen to this, now here's our point that we made at the beginning of the message, bad theology leads to bad behavior just like good theology leads to good behavior.

Just like because of all God has done because of this truth, you are to so live, so if you introduce error, you're going to have corrupt morals. So he says stop being deceived. Bad theology will corrupt your good morals. You've got to break the association with these people teaching this heresy.

You can't run around with heretics without it having a corrupting influence. In other words, what he's saying is look, holiness is predicated on association with good teaching. If you deny the truth of the resurrection you have removed an incentive to good living.

You know, one of the reasons that I live the way I live is because I have to stand before the Lord and give account, right? When after in the end of *Chapter 1 of Acts* the Lord had given all the instructions about the kingdom and given them everything they needed to know and said now go to it men, He ascended into heaven and the angels said, *"this same Jesus who was taken up from you shall so come in like manners you've seen Him go and don't you forget it."* He'll be back to check on how you did.

And so he's saying look to the resurrection, confidence in that resurrection will draw your heart to holiness. And he says in 34, *"awake to righteousness and stop sinning."* But if...but you won't be able to do that if you run around people who don't know God, who teach bad theology, you're going to come up with bad living. You tell a guy there's no resurrection, there's no life after death and watch the way he lives.

Thecidadies records how that when the deadly plague came to Athens, he says, people committed every shameful crime and eagerly snatched at every lustful pleasure because they believed life was short and there was no resurrection so they would have to pay no price for their vice.

Horace gives his philosophy. He says, "tell them to bring wine and perfume and the two short-lived blossoms of the lovely rose while circumstance and age and the black threads of the three sisters fate still allow us to do so."

Catullus writes a famous poem, one of the most famous poems ever, he says this, "Let's live my lesbia and let's love, value the tales of austere old man and a single half penny, suns can set and then return again, but for us when once our brief light sets there is but one perpetual night through which we must sleep. So Lesbia says let's live it up babe. Let's love. It'll all be over." Take away the thought of life to come. Take away the thought of accountability to God. And you take away the incentive to sanctification and holiness.

Life loses its value and morality its motive. Bad theology. A theology without resurrection is a theology that doesn't know God and that kind of theology leads to bad living. And he says you people better turn it around. Look at verse 34, "*and wake up to righteousness."*

And he says it at the end of the 34th verse, *"I'm ashamed that I have to remind you because you should have known."* You should have known. You see beloved the resurrection has tremendous implications. If Jesus rises from the dead, if He is alive, and we shall live also, then there is an incentive for people to be saved because there's hope after death and there's reunion.

There is an incentive for people to serve Jesus Christ because you can throw this life away and know that you're going to get it a million fold in the life to come. There is an incentive to sanctification because morality will be honored and rewarded in the days to come. And anything less than that is shameful heresy and will corrupt the truth. And so Paul says, hold to the resurrection.

Let's pray together. Father we thank you for the truths that we've shared this morning. And we know that these are true things. We trust they're the intention of the writer in this text. We know above all that they're true. We pray that we might so live in the face of death that others seeing us even die will be drawn to Christ that they too might have such hope. We trust that some in our midst this morning may even be drawn to Jesus Christ because the desire is so strong in their heart to be joined to someone they love.

It's enough to think of even having reunion with Jesus Christ, that's enough to draw us to be baptized in His name. Father, help us to know that because we shall live forever in the next life we should give ourselves to suffering service, we should give our lives totally, spend them, throw them away as it were like manure so that we may lay up treasure in heaven.

Help us too Father to realize that what we believe about the future is going to determine how we live in the present. Help us to live as those who must give account. Help us to live as those who can stand before your face unashamed and boldly say by the power of the Spirit of God, I endeavor to so live to honor the King. May we accept the incentives of resurrection that we might be to the praise of Your glory. In Jesus' name. Amen.