

Mixed Feelings

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[0 : 00] Well, it's Resurrection Sunday, and when I woke up this morning, I was pretty tired, but I made a beeline straight for the accounts in the Gospels of how the tomb was found empty, and I very quickly found myself ready to rejoice, ready to celebrate.

And today is a day where we should give ourselves to celebration. But to be honest with you, this morning I have mixed feelings.

I'm delighted to see all of you here this morning, but I'm aware that there are so many other people who are lying in bed right now for whom this day is not a special day, for whom it's just an ordinary long weekend Sunday, the chance to gather with family, eat chocolate, do an Easter egg hunt, and then add to that the tragedy in Sri Lanka.

I have mixed feelings today, even though it's Resurrection Sunday. We're talking right now in our church, we're in a series talking about the resurrection, and I imagine that Paul also had mixed feelings as he wrote about something so glorious, so precious to him.

But as he looked at the situation in the church at Corinth, mixed feelings. If you have your Bible with you, I invite you to open it up to 1 Corinthians chapter 15.

[1 : 55] And we've been working our way through this chapter. And last we heard in this chapter from Paul, there are some in the church here at Corinth who have been saying that there's no resurrection of the dead.

And Paul has come right out and challenged this. He said there's a massive implication to that if there's no resurrection from the dead, then not even Christ has been raised from the dead.

And then we heard a couple weeks ago as he laid out all the implications of that, serious implications. Well, this morning, Paul goes on to give three more implications.

And we pick it up in verse 29, chapter 15. He says this, Now if there is no resurrection, what will those do who are baptized for the dead?

If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized for them? And as for us, why do we endanger ourselves every hour? I face death every day.

[3 : 10] Yes, just as surely as I boast about you in Christ Jesus our Lord. If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus with no more than human hopes, what have I gained?

If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die. These are Paul's three more implications.

He's arguing, making an argument with the Corinthians as to why their belief that there is no resurrection doesn't make sense.

It doesn't fit. And the first thing that he told us a couple weeks back is that we saw the risen Christ alive.

If he appeared to us, we were with him. In verse 20 he says, But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead. But then he comes back and just points to a few more things to appeal to them and help them see that this is the reality.

[4 : 23] Baptism for the dead. What on earth are you talking about, Paul? Some of us, when we hear that, we might think that we just walked into the middle of one of those inside jokes and we just...

Baptism for the dead? It's not spoken about anywhere else in the Bible. In historical records, we have nothing pointing to a practice of baptism for the dead at the time of this writing.

What is baptism for the dead? One translator notes that there are over 200 different theories as to what this baptism for the dead refers to.

So if you're thinking, what on earth is that? You're not alone. The best of scholars and historians have been wondering this too. Many of them have proposed all kinds of ideas, different variations

on what he means when he says baptism, different ideas about what it means to be baptized for or on account of or different ideas of who the dead refers to and a whole bunch of different combinations of these things.

If you just read this at its kind of straightforward sense, it would seem that there were some who were being baptized for other people or on behalf of other people.

[5 : 58] And one of kind of the leading thoughts is that this referred to people who were being baptized for other believers who had died but never had the opportunity to themselves be baptized before they were killed.

But of course with this, the question that immediately comes to mind is, well, what did the being baptized for them do for them? How did it benefit them?

Because if we suggest that this baptism for these deceased believers somehow added to their salvation or enabled them to attain to the resurrection, it goes against everything that Jesus and the apostles and even Paul himself taught.

So that's for sure not it. Others have proposed that instead of this, perhaps it was more of a symbolic act that in being baptized for departed believers, they were symbolically commending those people to God and to the resurrection.

Another idea out there is that this refers to just ordinary baptism and that the idea here is that people saw that some believers had been martyred, they'd been persecuted and killed and as a result of their death, they themselves had come to faith in Christ and been saved and were baptized and that their baptism had a bit of a nod to that person that they knew about or they loved and was a bit of a statement of faith that they would see that person again someday in the resurrection.

[7 : 46] One of the questions that we could ask here is does Paul approve or disapprove of this practice of baptism for the dead? Some suggest that he disapproves of it and what they point to is the language.

Paul kind of uses the third person. He says, what will they do who are baptized for the dead? This is something they do and the implication is that we don't do it.

And so, he's not approving of this practice. But then on the other hand, we kind of wonder, well, if he disapproves of it, then why is he using this in his argument for why there's a resurrection?

It kind of doesn't make sense. So the scholars, the commentators, they're as confused as you are as you read this passage. Some have just simply looked at this and said, well, maybe, he's not really commanding it, he's not really saying, don't do it, forbidding it.

Perhaps he's allowing it. Perhaps it was a meaningful practice that he allowed them to do as a church. Whatever the case, it's kind of lost in history.

[9 : 05] We don't know the answer. But what we do know is the point that Paul is making using this. He's saying, if there is no resurrection, what will those do who are baptized for the dead?

If there's no resurrection, then, if this is a valid, permissible practice, then this thing that you've been doing in faith that's been meaningful to you is meaningless.

Or, if, another possibility is that he's simply pointing out an inconsistency. Some of these Corinthians have been saying that there's no resurrection of the dead.

Where did they get that from? Probably from other people outside the church who had been kind of speaking into their ear. and it could be that Paul is pointing at them and saying, why are you listening to them?

These people are telling you it's ridiculous to believe in a resurrection and in the next breath, the next day, they're going and being baptized for a dead loved one because they believe in the afterlife all of a sudden.

[10 : 16] They're living inconsistently, so why are you listening to them? either way, Paul's point is clear. The resurrection is a reality.

It was a reality with Christ. We saw him alive and it's a future reality for believers and we ought to live in light of that reality.

The second implication that Paul gives is in verse 30. He says, and as for us, why do we endanger ourselves every hour?

I face death every day. Yes, just as surely as I boast about you in Christ Jesus our Lord. If I fought with wild beasts in Ephesus with no more than human hopes, what have I gained?

Paul is challenging them. Think about this, guys. I've been traveling around from town to town, city to city, city, and people are after me.

[11 : 20] This is dangerous. I have risked my life. Why would I do that if this life is all I have to live and after that is nothing?

What is there for me to gain? Earlier in his letter, Paul reminded them of what it has been like for him.

He says this in chapter 4, verse 9, it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession, like those condemned to die in the arena.

We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to human beings. we are fools, we are weak, we are dishonored.

To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless, we work hard, we are cursed, we are persecuted, we are slandered, we have become the scum of the earth, the garbage of the world right up to this moment.

[12 : 30] Do you think that I and my fellow apostles would give up everything and go through that if this life is all we have and there is nothing after death?

No way. What Paul is showing them is that his faith, his belief in a future resurrection matches the way that he's been living.

I risk my life because I am confident that if they kill me it's not the end for me. And this is implied in this whole chapter.

I risk my life because I believe that there's something worse than death that people are facing in the afterlife.

And that's why I take my one precious life in my hands and lay it down at great risk so that some so that you might be saved.

[13 : 40] The third implication that Paul gives is at the very end of verse 32. He says this. He says if the dead are not raised let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die.

If there's no life after death if this is it then we should join the rest of the world in living it up eating drinking being married getting the most out of it as much as we can because it's nothing but hopelessness at the end of the line for us death why suffer needlessly why put ourselves through all of this if this is it we should just go out and party it up and live our lives to the full if there's no life after death no resurrection back to verse 20 but Christ has indeed been raised from the dead says Paul these implications would be tragic and would be devastating but you guys are wrong there is a resurrection and the proof of that is Jesus he was raised from the dead we were with him after he died we know it for a fact and therefore you guys who say there is no life after death there's no resurrection are mistaken there is not only that we heard two weeks ago he has been raised but he is the first fruits verse 20 of those who have fallen asleep he's the first portion of a greater resurrection harvest that is yet to come he's the first installment he's the down payment he's the proof he's the pledge he's the guarantee that there's more where that came from he gives this wonderful promise in verse 22 just as surely as everybody who is in

Adam dies so also everybody who is in Christ shall be brought to life after they die but Paul goes on verse 23 he says but each in turn Christ the first fruits then when he comes those who belong to him there's a certain order to this resurrection harvest there's a certain timeline to it it's a two part thing first part Christ is raised from the dead second part the rest those who are in Christ are raised from the dead when when he comes at his return everybody who whose body is lying in the cemetery who is a believer their souls have gone to be with

Jesus but their bodies if they've been buried in the cemetery are lying over there in the ground and when Jesus returns the promise is that they will come back to life and get up out of the grave amazing the resurrection that Paul is talking about here is not a spiritual resurrection it's not a resurrection that has already taken place like Philetus and Hymenaeus were teaching in Paul's letter to Timothy it's not something that happens to each of us after we die Paul says that moment when we come out of the graves happens when he comes when Jesus returns and at this point in Paul's letter he then zooms out and he gives us a bit of the bigger picture he goes on in verse 24 he says then the end will come when he hands over the kingdom to

[18 : 37] God the father after he has destroyed all dominion authority and power for he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet the last enemy to be destroyed is death for he has put everything under his feet now when it says that everything has been put under him it's clear that this does not include God himself who put everything under Christ when he has done this then the son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him so that God may be all in all we'll go into some of the details there just a few but before we do I think we just need to think of how

Paul is using this how this fits with his point Paul's arguing that there is a resurrection death if there's no resurrection then that means that death is allowed to persist as a power as a principle it's allowed to continue alongside

God Paul says there's no way God's going to allow that death will not be allowed to oppose God to oppose his son or to oppose his people at the final act death itself will be vanquished it will be beaten there is much in here that speaks of a coming kingdom a beautiful picture of how God is sending his son will send his son to abolish all power all authority all dominion that is opposed to him and death will not be an exception to that it too will be destroyed the picture that Paul gives us here is of Christ coming and bringing this world back into order the fullness of God's kingdom here on earth only one kingdom with one king forever it's a beautiful picture I'm not going to say a lot about this this morning but it's something that maybe you want to take some time to look at yourself to meditate over Paul spends a fair bit of this just talking about the relationship of the father and the son he talks about how the son is sent by the father to bring this kingdom to order and how the son he goes out he does this he subdues his enemies he destroys these rival powers and authorities and then what does he do he gives the kingdom he delivers the kingdom to his father his mission complete but there's also this what we see of

God the father he doesn't sit back and just watch this no he acts to bring the victory for his son the king to put his enemies under his son's feet it's a beautiful picture the story so big between a father and a son and a world and I can't help but just feel humbled just a small insignificant guy caught up in the middle of this great story sandwiched in the middle of all this is this beautiful statement verse 26 the last enemy to be destroyed is death death that stalking beast that takes us all what Paul is saying is the first blow against death was struck when I raised my son from the grave and the last blow that will vanquish it forever will be struck on that day when he comes death will be beaten we will be resurrected brought back to life but not only that we will be forever changed the principle and power of death that's at work in our bodies that causes our organs to fail and our bodies to age and succumb to sickness and disease that itself will come to its end before Christ when he comes it's an incredible and glorious picture of the hope that we have those of us who belong to

[24 : 15] Christ having been to the summit with what he shares and describes here I half expected Paul to end this passage this portion with a little worship hymn or something like that a song of praise to God who has done this for his people and so I was a little shocked when I came to verse 33 do not be misled says Paul bad company corrupts good character come back to your senses as you ought and stop sinning for there are some who are ignorant of God I say this to your shame mixed feelings mixed emotions

Paul's describing the glory of the resurrection but then all of a sudden he brought back down to think of the situation that this church is in and we didn't talk about it this morning but they've been in all kinds of immorality they've had all kinds of fighting and quarreling with each other and division mixed emotions Paul puts his finger on three things three things that they need to do that they need to address he says in verse 33 do not be misled bad company corrupts good character one of the problems that I see in you guys church of Corinth is that you've been letting others who are not living the way of Christ influence you you've been listening to them speaking into your life to the point now where you're almost denying the resurrection come to your senses stop listening to them bad company corrupts good character the second thing he points his finger on is in verse 34 he says come back to your senses as you ought and stop sinning

I really like this verse Paul just shoots straight as an arrow stop sinning last I checked our world's way of dealing with problems is not to tell people just to stop it that doesn't work don't tell them that especially if they're wrestling with addictions don't just tell them to stop that'll just reinforce their guilt and the weight that they feel and cause them to do it even more and yet it seems that Paul under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit just missed the memo on this he says come to your senses and stop sinning thank you Paul thank you for telling us what you see that we are in sin that we are responsible for our actions that we need to simply engage our minds come back to our senses and act to put a stop to this behavior the word come back to your senses is literally sober up sober up you guys have been living like you're in a drunken stupor here sober up come back to your senses the third thing that

Paul puts his finger on and it's connected to these other two is at the end of verse 34 there he says for there are some who are ignorant of God whoa he says I say this to your shame part of the

problem here with you guys in Corinth is that some of you don't know God you're living you're thinking you're feeling like you don't know God come back to your senses don't listen to those guys over there come back it's by this gospel this good news that you are saved if you hold firmly to the word I preach to you he says that little phrase I say this to your shame you almost get the sense of a slap on the wrist and sometimes we need that that too is a gift of

God's grace if we're willing to respond and hear him it's resurrection Sunday and I wanted to end this message with celebration totally unbridled nothing else in the way but while the resurrection of Jesus is a glorious reality it's also a reality that we live in this broken world amongst broken people I want to rise to celebrate the resurrection today but I feel like there's a ball and chain tied to my right leg why do we need the resurrection we need the resurrection because Jesus was executed why was he executed because

[30 : 29] I am desperately sinful and in need of God's forgiveness mixed feelings as we hear what Paul says about this glorious kingdom that is coming and how all the enemies of Christ will be put under his feet and destroyed are you aware are you aware that you and me would be numbered among the enemies were it not for the grace of God were it not for what we remembered on Friday and so I hope that we can spend the rest of this day celebrating to the best of our ability that Jesus is alive that we have a resurrection to look forward to in the future and that there is a great and glorious kingdom coming to this earth that we get to be a part of those of us who belong to

Christ but let's not celebrate like fans in the stands just cheering for our favorite hero waiting for him to strike the final blow let's celebrate as people who at one time were in the arena ourselves fighting on the wrong side and by God's grace we were given the chance to change sides before the final round when Christ comes as king and puts an end to all who oppose him what an amazing gift what an incredible gift and so let's celebrate the resurrection of Jesus today but let's also live like it's coming like he is coming let's submit ourselves to him as our king the king who is coming today and live our celebration in that way let's pray father in heaven thank you that you have just peeled back the covers a little bit so that we can see the great ending of the story we long for that day thank you that you have given so graciously to us lord we have loved ones in our lives who need to know this truth help us to share that with them and to do it well with our words but also with our actions fill our celebration fill our hearts with joy we ask and pray this in

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