

Series: 1 Cor
Title: Why be Baptized for the Dead?
Text: 1 Cor 15: 29-32
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1 Cor 15: 29: 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?

The verse has been given a wrong meaning by many. It does not mean we are to baptize living people in the place of dead people—nor any variation of that non-sense. Nor is Paul using a vain practice to emphasis his point. If the apostle Paul was making his point by using a practice that he knew was wrong then he would have made clear that the practice was wrong. Dr. Gill—and a few others—give two interpretations that best agrees with this verse and the context.

First, if it goes with what came before—in the context, it speaks simply of believer’s baptism. Paul gave a list of consequences if there be no resurrection:

- V13: Christ is not risen
- V14. Our preaching is vain and your faith is vain
- V15: We are false witnesses...and so on.
- Here he resumes with another consequence—those who are baptized have been baptized in vain-- “Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why then are they baptized for the dead.”

Baptism symbolizes death, burial but it also symbolizes resurrection. We are baptized “for” or “unto” the death of Christ and raised up out of the watery grave like as Christ was raised from the dead.

Romans 6: 3: Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into [unto or for] his death? 4: Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into [unto] death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. 5: For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness* of *his* resurrection:

But if you take away resurrection Christ is not risen. Then our baptism only symbolizes death and burial—“What shall they do who are baptized for [unto] the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why then are they baptized for the dead?”

Yet, I agree with Dr. Gill, that another interpretation, which goes with the context of the verse after this text is that “baptism is used here in a figurative and metaphorical sense, for afflictions, sufferings, and martyrdom.”

The Lord used “baptism” to describe his suffering and death on the cross.

Matthew 20:22: But Jesus answered...Are ye able..to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able. 23: And he saith unto them, Ye shall...indeed...be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with:...

If Paul has been speaking of believer’s baptism it seems he would have said “we” because baptism is common to all believers. But he used the pronoun “they” because only some suffer unto death. Plus, the interpretation of suffering fits the context of what Paul says next.

1 Corinthians 15: 29: 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? 30: And why stand we in jeopardy every hour? 31: I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. 32: If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die.

Proposition: The hope of the resurrection in Christ is how God strengthens his saints to endure suffering for the sake of Christ.

MARTYRS FOR CHRIST

Believers suffer because to be a witness of Christ is to be a martyr for Christ. The Greek word from which the word “witness” is translate is the word “martyr.”

Christ suffered for his people—“For it became him, for whom *are* all things, and by whom *are* all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.” (Heb 2: 10) Christ our Sanctifier was made one with his people who were flesh and blood to suffer and deliver us from bondage by making reconciliation to God for the sins of his people. (Heb 2: 10-18) Also, that Christ might be tempted in all points like his people so that he might know be able to comfort us in all our suffering. So, believer, by his suffering, Christ satisfied God for us and is able to comfort us. That is the two-fold job of the High Priest, our great High Priest (Heb 2: 17-18)

As Christ suffered as a Man—as the servant of God, dependent upon God—his strength to endure suffering—was the hope of the resurrection from the dead as God promised. He prayed to God because God was able to resurrect him from the dead once he had finished the work of redemption.

Hebrews 5: 7: Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; 8: Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; 9: And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;

Since Christ our Lord suffered for us, his people shall suffer for his sake as we obey him. Our Master said,

John 15: 18: If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before *it hated you*. 19: If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. 20: Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. 21: But all these things will they do unto you for my name’s sake, because they know not him that sent me.

Many saints have suffered unto death for Christ’s sake.

Hebrews 11: 36: [some had] trial of *cruel* mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: 37: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; 38: (Of whom the world was not worthy:)

Paul says in our text, “we stand in jeopardy every hour”; “I die daily.” So all God’s saints shall suffer. Have you suffered for Christ’s sake? If we are like this world, we will not suffer. If we bear witness of Christ then the unregenerate world will reject us.

WHY BELIEVERS SUFFER

Why do believers suffer? We suffer because we identify with Christ. He is our message. He is the one we walk after. Christ was despised and rejected and Christ said, “all these things will they do unto you for my name’s sake, because they know not him that sent me.”

Romans 8:36: As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

We suffer so that we might live by the power of our resurrected Redeemer. It is the only way we persevere and do not faint. We suffer as we spread the gospel so that others might live through our gospel by Christ resurrecting them to life from his throne in glory. The only reason we endure suffering, the only way our inner man is renewed daily, the only way we persevere in faith is by the life of Christ our resurrected Redeemer! The only reason any dead sinner has life and faith in Christ is by the life of Christ our resurrected Redeemer! As Paul went about preaching the gospel he said Christ’s preachers were...

2 Corinthians 4:10: Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. 11: For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. 12: So then death worketh in us, but life in you. 13: We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak; 14: Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present *us* with you. 15: For all things *are* for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God. 16: For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward *man* is renewed day by day. 17: For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory; 18: While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen *are* temporal; but the things which are not seen *are* eternal. 5: 1: For we know that if our earthly house of *this* tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

We suffer because we preach Christ’s works rather than man’s works.

Galatians 5:11: And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased.

When religious men argue that they reject our gospel because of their high regard for the law that is not it at all. It is because of their high regard for their self-righteous, self-sanctifying, self-saving works. Paul said, “If I preached circumcision”—if I preached the law—if I told sinners they are saved by grace but it is necessary they keep the law—then I would not suffer persecution. But because Paul preached Christ—as all Righteousness and all Holiness—they hated him. Paul’s message was...

Galatians 2: 19: I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.

What does that mean? It means Christ is my Righteousness—"I am crucified with Christ." (Gal 2: 20) And it means Christ is my Sanctification, my Holiness—"nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Gal 2: 20)

Those who persecuted Paul said, "But once you believe by grace then you must go to the law to perfect holiness!" But Paul boldly said,

Galatians 3: 1: O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? 2: This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?...Having begun in the Spirit or you now made perfect by the flesh?...5: He [our resurrected Redeemer from heaven] therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? 6: Even as Abraham believed God...

Abraham believed God, was made righteous and holy, and made to walk in obedience before God through the hearing of the faithfulness of Christ. Abraham did so though he never had the ten commandments or any law from Mt. Sinai. God taught Moses in Spirit through Christ through the hearing of God's faith and Christ's works. You and I are saved and made to walk honorably before God the exact same way—not by the hearing of the works of the law. We preach Christ's works through which Christ works in our hearts because we have experienced our resurrected Lord's power. We know he really is risen and really does work in his people through the preaching of faith.

Believer, ignore the vain reasons men give for which they reject our gospel. The one reason is plainly given by God in the scripture. They persecute us for the same reason they persecuted Christ. It is because we declare Christ is All our salvation, apart from any work of the sinner.

THE CAUSE OF SUFFERING

God's saints suffer to cause us not to look to ourselves but to God who raises the dead who strengthens his suffering child with the hope of the resurrection.

The apostle Paul suffered greatly at Ephesus because they worshipped the idol Diana. The idol makers feared being put out of business so they incited a riot seeking to kill Paul. (Acts 19) He said in our text, "If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die." But here is why Paul said God made them to suffer at Ephesus.

2 Corinthians 1:9: But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: 10: Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us;

Our trust at all times—especially in suffering—is in God which raiseth the dead. Our trust is in God who raised Christ from the dead. Our trust is in God who raised us from the dead in Christ. The hope of the resurrection is the strength of those who have been baptized for the dead as the Hebrew writer points out, saying, "others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection." (Heb 11: 35)

But if there be no resurrection why suffer unto death? What would be the point. That is the point of our text. **1 Corinthians 15: 29: 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? 30: And why stand we in jeopardy every hour? 31: I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. 32: If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die.

But thank God Christ is now risen. So be ready to suffer for Christ. Be ready to preach to any man who will listen. Be ready to endure persecution from unregenerate beasts. Do so knowing that from his throne in glory, Christ shall strengthen his suffering people with a good hope—he shall renew us now if it be his will. If it is his will we die then he will raise us to be with him immediately in spirit. And one day our bodies shall be resurrected from the dead to live with Christ forevermore!

Amen!