Bad Company Ruins Good Morals

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[0:00] 1 Corinthians chapter 15, and we'll be reading verses 24 to 34.!

Then the end will come when he hands over the kingdom to 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 is 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 to put everything under him, so that God may be all in all.
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?
[1:31] 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 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.
Do not be misled. 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. Well, we come tonight to verses 29 to 34. And in this passage, God presents to us two very practical considerations.
Our attention here is drawn to these two practices. These two things that people are doing, whether Paul or himself. And he's saying, doing these things would be crazy if there is no resurrection.
[2:43] Why live this way if there is no life beyond the grave for body and soul? Now, the first practice is certainly more difficult to understand.

The second, as we'll see, is pretty straightforward. But not the first. In fact, there are as many as 40 different interpretations that have been put forward for verse 29.
And this practice that Paul calls baptism for the dead. Or as the ESV says, on behalf of the dead.
Now, that many different interpretations of one verse reminds us that there are indeed some passages of Scripture that are harder to understand than others.
And doesn't it seem like 1 Corinthians has its fair share? More than its fair share. But it's good for us to work through those passages and to seek to better grasp them by God's grace.
The Lord has said it. The Lord has given these words to us for our edification. Thus saith the Lord. So far be it from us to ignore what he says.
[3:55] So let's consider his word then. Even what may seem to be a strange verse on the surface. A verse certainly with a meaning that is obscure in many ways.

Which let me then emphasize and begin by emphasizing this is one verse. Paul says very little here in verse 29. And he continues to move on.
In fact, he doesn't even make a statement here. It's two rhetorical questions in this one verse. A very important rule of thumb in studying and interpreting the Bible is to be careful in developing any kind of theological idea or any kind of doctrine off of just one verse.
There have been many errors down through church history that had to be addressed because one phrase or one verse was misunderstood and twisted. And it was that only verse that was being used to support a false doctrine.
So if we find something in just one place in our Bibles and perhaps it seems strange to us, like verse 29 I expect does seem strange, well we should pause.
[5:04] We should be asking, what's going on here? What is it that God is telling us? Am I understanding this verse correctly? Because what it teaches maybe I haven't found anywhere else

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in my Bible.

Or what's more, perhaps it seems to me that what it seems to teach on the surface could actually contradict what else is in the Bible. If we find ourselves realizing that, well then we need to be asking ourselves, am I understanding this correctly?
What am I missing? Where am I wrong in my understanding? Because the Bible does not contradict itself. The Bible teaches us the truth. So if we find a verse that seems problematic, well who's the problem with?
Is it us or is it God? It's us. This is God's Word. This is our God. The God whose way is perfect, whose every word proves true.
So let's look at the first practical consideration given to us tonight. Here's something that people were doing, and they were doing it because the resurrection is true.
[6:10] They were living their lives in this way in light of the resurrection. Now that's what I mean by practical consideration. Here's a practice that people were doing.

So let me read the verse, and then I'll spell out the very first point. Verse 29. Otherwise, what do people mean by being baptized on behalf of the dead?
If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on their behalf? So practical consideration number one. God uses the truth of the resurrection to pique the interests of unbelievers.
Now, that point might not totally make sense yet, but Lord willing, it will as we discover what Paul means here. But first, let's begin with what Paul doesn't mean.
So we have a challenging verse before us this evening. One that has raised many questions in many believers' minds. One that has been misinterpreted and used to support false doctrine and strange practices in cults down through the ages.
[7:19] And not long after Paul's day, the Gnostics, this heretical group, they were getting baptized for the dead, in place of the dead. Even in our own day, another heretical group, Mormons, they do this too.

So there definitely have been people, small in number, but there have been people who have practiced something akin to getting baptized in the place of people who have died, particularly unbelievers who died without Christ.
Now, there's no record, and we need to get this, there's no record whatsoever of any kind of practice like that being done before Paul wrote 1 Corinthians.
All instances of any kind of baptism on behalf of the dead or substituting for a dead person and being baptized in their place, all instances of it have happened since Paul wrote this letter.
Meaning this particular practice seems to have developed from this verse, from misunderstanding this verse, from misunderstanding what Paul says.
[8:26] So let's consider three problems that very quickly arise if Paul is talking about some kind of vicarious baptism, some kind of baptism in the place of unbelievers who have died.

The first problem is this. We're making baptism into something that saves. But baptism does not save you.
Salvation is by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. So what good would getting baptized for an unbeliever do for that unbeliever? What good would getting baptized yourself have done for you before you were in Christ?
There's nothing salvific in baptism. There's no saving benefit to that ordinance. A baptism follows salvation. It does not bring about salvation for you or for anyone else that you might get baptized on behalf of.
And that brings us to the second problem. You and I can't do anything to save someone else. You can't believe for someone else and then get baptized for them.
[9:39] And this sounds somewhat like the Roman Catholic practice of indulgences that Martin Luther rightly opposed in the 1500s. Indulgences could be purchased on behalf of loved ones.

And this was the lie that was being sold. If you purchase an indulgence, you will shorten the time that loved ones spent in purgatory. So you did something in this life for the sake of a loved one in the next.
Baptism on behalf of the dead sounds somewhat like that. You get baptized in this life for the sake of a loved one in the next. You're doing something to make possible the salvation of others.
Even though what you're doing does not save. And the third and the final problem. We're now talking about post-humus salvation.

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This is salvation after death. This is getting a second chance. But not even the way that some people think of getting a second chance. It's not you after death standing before God and saying, well now I repent and believe.
[10:47] Which of course we cannot do. But it's not even that. It's someone in this life doing something so that you are saved in the next life. You're standing before God.

And a messenger shuffles into the throne room. Wait, wait! So and so just got baptized on behalf of you. And so now God welcomes you into his eternal kingdom. Do you see how terribly problematic that position would be when you tease it out?
This is heretical on multiple levels. This is a works-based salvation. That you're somehow achieving for someone else after they've died.
If that is what Paul is talking about, why in the world is he not condemning it with the strongest of language? Because it's not just some silly, strange practice that's foreign to us.
It's not that innocent. It's not just something that Paul says, well they're doing this, but I'm not doing that. No, if they're practicing vicarious baptism, they're doing something that runs counter to the very heart of the gospel.
[11:56] Consider just how much time Paul is devoting to addressing this false doctrine that says there's no resurrection of the dead. We're 29 verses into that critique.

Should he not devote just as much time to addressing this false doctrine of vicarious baptism? If that's what he means by being baptized on behalf of the dead?
Because to teach vicarious baptism, that is just as bad as teaching that there is no resurrection.
Now one thing to remember, Paul's whole point in these verses that we're looking at tonight, his whole point is to show how true doctrine regarding the resurrection, true doctrine inspires good practices.
And he's introducing both of these examples. The example of people getting baptized, and as we'll see, the example of himself being in danger. He introduces them in very parallel ways.
He asks these rhetorical questions. If the dead are not raised, number one, why are people being baptized on their behalf? And number two, why am I in danger every hour?
[13:13] You see the parallel fashion here in which Paul asks these questions. It gives every indication that these are good practices. We're doing these things because we believe there is a resurrection.

We're doing these good things because we believe in this true doctrine. There is a general principle of Scripture. What we believe impacts how we live.
If we believe rightly, well, that ought to lead to right living. And if we believe wrongly, well, that will then lead to wrong living. If you believe there is no resurrection of the dead, that will impact how you live your life.
We'll see that soon enough. Paul will very clearly say you'll live sinfully because you believe this false doctrine. And the reverse is true. If we believe there is a resurrection of the dead, that should impact how you live as well.
You should live godly, holy, honorable lives. Just as Paul says in Titus 1 verse 1, the knowledge of the truth accords with godliness.
[14:24] That knowledge of the truth, it goes hand in hand with godliness. Good doctrine should lead to godly living. So it would make no sense for Paul here to go against that principle.

The very principle that he's bringing out in this passage. And why use a bad practice here in 1 Corinthians 15 as evidence of good doctrine?
Wouldn't it be rather strange of Paul? Wouldn't it have been rather illogical of Paul to cite this invalid practice as he's making the argument for the validity of the resurrection?
Because it's clear that whatever the Corinthians are doing involving baptism and the dead, it's clear that Paul is saying this practice goes hand in hand with belief in the resurrection.
You wouldn't be doing this if you didn't believe that the dead will be raised. And so you see, it's only reasonable to conclude whatever this is. Even Paul says this is good.
[15:29] A good practice. Now I think it's important to point out because a common interpretation of this verse is to say that, well, Paul's drawing attention to this practice that some are doing, but he doesn't condone it.

He distances himself from it, some would say. As though he's saying, well, these people, they're doing this weird thing, perhaps even this heretical thing, but I'm not saying that you should.

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I'm just saying they do it. But again, that muddies the entire argument of this passage. Why point out this bad practice that is resulting from good theology?
Paul's wanting the Corinthians to see that these practices should not be abandoned. Baptism on behalf of the dead, putting oneself in danger every day, those are good practices, but they are only good practices if this doctrine of the resurrection is true.
Otherwise, we should stop doing those things altogether. So, if these practices shouldn't be stopped, what does Paul mean by baptism for the dead?
[16:44] If it's not being baptized on behalf of the dead, in place of the dead, what is it? Well, something far less strange and heretical and actually to our surprise, something far more relatable than we might expect.

Maybe we aren't thinking 1 Corinthians 15, 29. That's a verse that really hits home for me in my life. Maybe it does more than you realize. In fact, some of us, many of us perhaps, have actually done this very thing.
So, to grasp what Paul is saying, let's start with that little phrase, on behalf of. That's how the ESV translates this little Greek preposition that simply means for.
In fact, the NIV, if you have the NIV 84, it gives us that most straightforward, simple translation, baptized for the dead. That is one way.
And the most common way, I will say, to translate that Greek preposition into English is to translate for as on behalf of. But there is another equally valid way.
[18:01] In fact, Paul has already said that little Greek word for, and it's been translated a different way in this letter. It's another way to translate it, and that is to say, on account of.

So, instead of understanding the preposition for to mean that you do something in the interest of someone, that preposition could just as well mean that something is done because of someone. Some in Corinth were baptized on account of the dead. Not on behalf of, but on account of. So, instead of the phrase communicating substitution, the phrase communicates causation.
He's baptized not in the place of another, but baptized because of another. Because of the dead.
Now let's talk about the dead. Throughout this chapter, Paul has made it abundantly clear that the dead he's concerned with here is a particular group.
It is the dead in Christ. It's believers, not the dead in general. So, again, this isn't some kind of vicarious baptism where believers are getting baptized for their unbelieving family members and friends.
[19:19] No, actually, this is a beautiful picture of the influence and the impact of believing family members and friends upon unbelievers who then come to Christ and are baptized.

They are baptized because of the godly example, because of the witness, the testimony of believers who have since died and gone to be with the Lord.
God uses our testimonies in this life and even after we've died to draw others to himself for all of eternity. How often do believers make appeals to unsaved family and friends from their very deathbeds, perhaps.
They make these appeals to their loved ones. Come to Christ! They make these appeals that they might join them as they enjoy God for all of eternity. And God uses their words.
He makes their words to hit hard and to sink deeply and to soften the hearts of the lost. Here, this unsaved person has witnessed this Christian run the race to the end.
[20:30] They've witnessed this Christian who meets death without fear. That's a powerful thing to see. To see a Christian with a sure confidence that he will one day rise again.

That she will one day rise again. And that unbeliever sees that Christian and he's moved in his own heart to repent and believe on Christ and be baptized.
That he too might die in such a manner with such a sure confidence in the resurrection. But if the dead are not raised, then there's no hope of reunion with that beloved family member or that friend.
If the dead are not raised, why subscribe to the same faith as the dead? It's an empty faith. It's a vain faith. A futile faith. So you see, these people weren't getting baptized for unbelieving family and friends who had died.
No, they were getting baptized because believing family members and friends had died and their testimonies had left a lasting impact on them.
[21:38] Not baptized in place of the dead, but baptized on account of the testimony of the dead. And with the hope of sharing that resurrection life with them one day, being reunited with those

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loved ones, and then when Christ returns, joining with those loved ones as their bodies are raised together in glory.

For all of us, can't we think of people who lived God-honoring lives that inspired us? And maybe for some of you, the Lord actually used such people and their testimonies as they approached death to work in your heart, to draw you to Himself.
You saw that Christian who ran the race to the end and they didn't meet death with despair, but with this contentment and peace and even joy because life everlasting with the Savior awaited them.
And that testimony was powerful. And God used it in your life. You were converted, you were baptized on account of this Christian's influence in your life.
God worked through them even as they went to be with Him. God worked through them that He might save your soul, that you might one day be with that loved one with resurrection bodies.
[22:58] And what's more, that together you might be with God Himself in the new creation. Now we might be wondering, but why does Paul say here baptized on account of the dead?

Why doesn't he say converted on account of the dead? Why doesn't he say saved on account of the dead? Well, perhaps because baptism is that wonderful picture of new life in Christ.
Being buried with your sins and being raised up to newness of life. Coming up out of the water just as one day we are going to come up out of the very grave.
So it would seem he chooses to highlight baptism here. Not to skip over conversion or to equate baptism with conversion, but to drive home the connection with resurrection.
Those who are converted and baptized due to the influence of those who have now died, they share in the same hope as the dead, that they will one day rise from the grave with them.
[24:06] So that's the first practical consideration that's given to us in this passage. God uses the truth of the resurrection to pique the interest of unbelievers.

Now the second. God uses the truth of the resurrection to inspire courage in believers. Beginning in verse 30. Why are we in danger every hour?
I protest, brothers, by my pride in you, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord. I die every day. What do I gain if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus?
If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die. Do not be deceived. Bad company ruins good morals. Wake up from your drunken stupor as is right and do not go on sinning.
For some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame. So now Paul gives himself as an example here to the Corinthians.
[25:12] He's done this many times already in his letter. He's drawing their attention, he's drawing our attention to his very own life. You know, it's one thing to say, look how others are living in light of the resurrection.

It's another thing to say, look how I'm living in light of the resurrection. Look at my life. Look at the lives of my companions in the ministry. Constantly putting our lives on the line.
For what? For the sake of the gospel. Paul gives a very detailed list in 2 Corinthians chapter 11.
And in that list, he's spelling out all of the suffering that he endured for his faithful witness to Christ.
He says, beginning in verse 24, five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes, less one. Three times I was beaten with rods.
Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. A night and a day I was adrift at sea on frequent journeys in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers.
[26:23] In toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.

Now, of course, we can take Paul at his word. Paul is trustworthy. But we can also look back at his life and the lives of those who ministered alongside him.
We have record of the danger that he's talking about. It was written down for us by Dr. Luke. In the book of Acts, we've got this wonderful biography of Paul.
And Paul did. He encountered a great many dangers just as he said. He was repeatedly harassed and threatened and arrested. What's more, he was physically assaulted.
He spoke of it in 2 Corinthians 11. Once I was stoned, we've got the record of that. But in Acts 14, when Paul was at Lystra and the crowds, they dragged him out of the city, they stoned him.

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[27:25] And verse 19 tells us that they assumed that he was dead. He was so brutally beaten that the crowds were sure we killed him. We finished him.

But they were wrong. He was very much still alive. Verse 20 tells us that when the disciples gathered about him, likely they were grieving. They were ready for a funeral.
Paul rose up and he entered the city. That is to say that he re-entered the city. He went back in. He returned even if it meant encountering the same people who had just tried to kill him and had just narrowly failed.
Paul actually gives us another example right here in 1 Corinthians 15. He says that he fought with beasts at Ephesus. Now it would seem this is probably not a reference to actual animals.
There's no record or any kind of tradition of Paul ever being subjected to that kind of danger. He doesn't include that in his list of dangers in 2 Corinthians 11.
[28:30] Being forced into the arena with wild animals. Paul doesn't say I had to be a gladiator. I think it would have come up if he had. Even more than that, we know Paul was a Roman citizen.

And most often that kind of death in the arena or that kind of fighting in the arena. It was for the low class, the non-citizens of Rome. We're talking about slaves and criminals and enemies of war.
So Paul here is probably speaking more metaphorically. And we do have historical record of Paul facing some pretty dangerous, out-of-control people in where of all places?
Ephesus. The city was enraged. The city was filled with confusion. Acts 19 tells us there was a great riot. And the people rushed into this theater and they began dragging out Christians.
Paul himself wanted to speak to the crowd, but the other disciples there, they wouldn't let him. It was that crazy. The people certainly were like wild beasts there in Ephesus.
[29:40] So the examples could go on and on. Yes, Paul faced great danger. He says in 1 Corinthians 15, 31, I die every day.

And he doesn't just say it. He says it with great conviction and with this earnest spirit about him. He says, by my pride in you, which I have in Christ Jesus, our Lord.
Or as the NIV says, I mean that, brothers, just as surely as I glory over you in Christ Jesus, our Lord. So Paul puts forth his great love, his great affection for the Corinthians as proof.
You know my love for you. You know that you are dear to me. I remember even in chapter 4 how he spoke of being like a father to them in the gospel.
How he called them his beloved children. He knows, or they know that he loves them. And so he's saying, just as certain as my love for you is, so too is the danger that I face every day.
[30:51] But Paul doesn't just say danger here. He says, I die every day. He says, I'm in danger every hour. And he says, I die every day.

Now we might be apt to say, die? Every day? Okay, Paul. Settle down a little bit. That's a bit much for us.
We all know what it's like. Sometimes children will exaggerate to try to persuade their parents. It's approaching dinner and maybe a child comes in and says, I'm starving.
Or maybe a child rushes into the room and they say, my brother's trying to break my arm. Maybe that's happening. Maybe there's some exaggeration.
Perhaps isn't exactly what's going on. We might want to think, well, that's kind of what Paul's doing here. I mean, we can make the case that Paul doesn't actually die every day.
[31:50] But, we'd be missing the point. Paul is prepared to die every day. He's willing to lay down his life. He's willing to sacrifice everything for the gospel.

And in one sense, yes, he does die every day. Let's be careful to not accuse Paul of exaggerating here. Because isn't Paul just describing for us the Christian life?
the life of a true follower of Christ? Did not Jesus himself say, if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.
For whoever would save his life will lose it. But whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. Taking up the cross. That cross is a symbol of death.
Jesus would literally take up his cross. And he would be put to death physically. So too must we. Take up our cross and die. Every day.
[32:54] Daily. Jesus said. So this isn't some kind of dramatic flair on the part of Paul. This is devoted obedience. This is Paul saying, I'm following Christ with all that I have.

Dying to self spiritually. Ready to die physically. Because this life is not all that there is. This life is not all that's to be gained.

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The resurrection inspired Paul to risk losing his life in this life for the sake of the life to come. Has the resurrection changed the way that you live your life?
Does it impact how you live each day? Dying to self daily. Ready to die when that day comes. there are Christians all over the world dying for their faith in Christ.
Just as Paul ultimately did himself. He was ready to die for Christ and he did die for Christ. What a foolish way to live if the dead are not raised.
[34:01] It's why we are the most to be pitied if we have hope in this life only. If there is no resurrection of the dead, why throw away your life?

Why suffer and experience danger and pain as you throw away your life? What is there to be gained humanly speaking as Paul says?
Meaning what's to be gained in this life by giving up this life? So Paul presents to us the alternative. The alternative way of living.
He says in verse 32, If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die. That's the thinking of the unbeliever.
That's the thinking of the natural man who does not believe in the resurrection. Make the most of this life. Enjoy all that you can in this life because this life is all that you've got.
[35:04] Now you can certainly find that kind of thinking. That kind of lifestyle in Corinth in Paul's day. Like today, that mentality was very prevalent. There's actually a Greek historian named Herodotus and he told of this Egyptian custom where the rich would gather for these lavish banquets and at the very end of the banquet the servant would come around and he wouldn't be carrying like a tray with Andy's mint on it.

He would be carrying around a coffin and in that coffin was the most lifelike looking image that they could make of a dead person.
It was as real looking as possible and he would show this carved image in this open coffin to each guest gathered around the table and he would say, while you drink and enjoy, look on this because you will end up in this condition when you die.
Talk about a morbid ending to maybe a nice night together. Look at this dead guy we made, that's going to be you one day. But you see that custom reflected in Paul's words, eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.
But you will notice that those aren't just Paul's words, Paul's actually quoting here and it's not Herodotus, it's not anyone in Corinth, it's not a Greek or a Roman philosopher who denies the resurrection.
[36:33] No, ironically enough, Paul quotes not the inhabitants of Corinth, but the inhabitants of Jerusalem. This is a quote from Isaiah 22 where Isaiah spoke a prophecy against the people of Jerusalem.

He was looking forward in time to when foreign armies would surround the city and they would besiege it. Now you would expect that there would be weeping. You would expect there would be sadness.
You would expect there would be repentance. You would expect there would be mourning and sackcloth and ashes. But instead of weeping and mourning, which they should have done, strangely enough, Isaiah says, you hear the sound of happy voices within the city.
He says, beginning in verse 13, and behold, joy and gladness, killing oxen and slaughtering sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine.
Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die. So the people of Jerusalem were twisted in their thinking. Instead of repenting to God, they rejoiced in whatever little time they had left to live.
[37:48] Let's party, because when the city is overrun, well, we'll die. That is a hopeless, godless way of living. And that is the mentality of the lost.

Get everything that you can out of this life. Party it up now, because tomorrow we die, and that's it. Lights out. But Paul helps us to see that kind of thinking has no place in the Christian life.
Because the Christian faith rests on the truth of the resurrection. And the resurrection inspires courage, not hopeless despair, not living in hopeless despair by embracing lavish excess in this life.
No, the resurrection doesn't impart despair, it imparts courage. Paul had courage because of the resurrection. God's people down through the ages have as well.
Just as Hebrews 11 tells us about all of those who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the

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edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight, women received back their dead by resurrection, some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life.
[39:22] Paul too, like the believers in Hebrews 11, Paul too was looking to the reward, he was looking to the better life, so too are Christians around the world today.

Believing the right doctrine about the resurrection absolutely impacts how we live. It inspires courage in us, God gives courage to us, and what counterintuitive courage it is that he gives.
It's a courage that the world doesn't understand. It makes no sense to the unbeliever. The unbeliever scratches his head and he says, why do these people live the way they do?
Those Christians are a weird bunch, they've got these strange priorities. Indeed, they are strange to him, because the unbeliever only has hope in this life, but not us, because we have hope not just in this life, and because we have hope not just in this life only, we live in this life differently.
We should be willing and ready to risk it all, because death does not have the final word. And even if we don't find ourselves in the same kind of danger that Paul did, even if perhaps we aren't at risk of being stoned, or having a mob ready to pounce upon us like a lion, are we living courageously for Christ in whatever situation he has put us in?
[40:51] Are we taking opportunities to be bold when we just as well could walk away to move even toward the danger? You know, that's what Paul did when he was in Lystra.

He went back into the city after being stoned. When he faced those wild beasts in Ephesus. He didn't run away. He stayed. You know, that's right where Paul was when he was penning the words of 1 Corinthians.
He was there in Ephesus. He had no plans of getting out of town quickly because of the opposition that he faced. Nope, he says in chapter 16, beginning in verse 8, but I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost for a wide door for effective work has opened to me.
And there are many adversaries. So the wild beasts, they didn't go away. Paul didn't figure out how to cage all of his adversaries. And yet, Paul stared down that danger.
Why? Because there was a wide door for effective ministry open to him. And he was walking through that door. door. Even if it meant being in danger every hour because of those adversaries.
[42:13] So where do we have a wide door open to us for effective work? And are we walking through that door? Even if we are in danger. Whatever the danger may be.

Maybe it's potential rejection by family members or friends. Maybe it's being met with scoffing and derision. Maybe it's being pressed with questions that we fear we can't answer.
Maybe there's the very real threat of material loss if we open our mouths and share Christ. But that's what the truth of the resurrection does. It moves us.
A loss in this life, it is far outweighed by what is gained in the next. And so we should say with Paul as he wrote Philippians chapter 3, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.
And then a few verses later, he elaborates on this knowing Christ as he says, that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible, I may attain the resurrection from the dead.
[43:32] Do you see how incredibly practical Paul is with us here in these verses? This false teaching in Corinth, it was not just some silly debate among intellectuals.

Doctrine matters. Right doctrine moves us to live God-honoring, self-sacrificing lives. And the opposite is just as true.
Wrong doctrine moves us to live God-denying, self-loving lives. That's why Paul gives us this second quote in our passage tonight in verse 33.
And this time it's a quote indeed from the Greco-Roman world. It's a quote from the Athenian playwright Menander. He says, bad company ruins good morals.
These false teachers who said there is no resurrection, they were bad company for the Corinthians because the bad doctrine that they were teaching was resulting in bad practices, sinful practices.
[44:37] Paul is teaching us what we believe impacts the way we live. Those who have no knowledge of God will not live lives that please God.

Too often, even in Christian circles today, there is a minimizing of truth. Knowledge is far less important to some than experience or how someone feels trumps what is true.

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And Paul is correcting that thinking. He is putting a premium on truth and he's saying, no, it is from truth that everything else follows, including how we live.
He doesn't just say here, stop thinking in error. Now, what does he say? He says, stop sinning. He says, do not go on sinning.
Now, Paul hasn't been talking about sinful actions, sinful behaviors in this section of the letter. Paul has been talking about false teaching, erroneous doctrine.
[45:39] But in his mind, there's a clear link and a link that we should make in our minds as well. A lack of knowledge of God leads to an abundance of sinful behavior.

The more that we know of God, the more that we know God, the more that we please him with our lives. So we must think rightly to live rightly.
And one of the most important things that we can think rightly about is the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. Because that does directly impact how we live.
Or at least it should. It ought to impact how we live. So like Paul, may we count everything as loss, that by any means possible we may attain the resurrection from the dead.
So if there is one question to leave with tonight rattling around in our heads, it's this. How will you live in light of the resurrection even this week?
[46:39] Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, we do give you thanks that you have given truth to us, that you have given us your word that we might know you, that we might know of you, that you might teach us by it, and that it might impact how we live.

We pray, Father, that you would be our help this week as we enter into a new week, as we seek to live rightly before you in this life. Help us to draw to mind, to bring to mind the truth of your word, and to live according to it.
Help us to remember the truth of the resurrection and to rejoice in that. And we pray that our lives would reflect our belief that indeed one day we will rise from the dead.
And we don't believe it because it's wishful thinking. We don't believe it because it sounds nice. No, we believe it and we thank you because you told us that is true. So help us, we pray, by your spirit, be at work in our hearts.
We pray all of this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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