

I Corinthians

Chapter 15:29-58

²⁹*Otherwise, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why then are they baptized for them?*

Many suggestions have been offered for the puzzling expression baptized for the dead. There are *up to 200 different explanations* for the passage; a summary is given by K. C. Thompson

Utley > We have no parallel passages in Scripture. We have no other reference for this practice in the early church, although there is some historical evidence about something similar being practiced among the heretics of the second and third century.

Got Questions > "Baptism for the dead is a practice that was common in the pagan religions of Greece and is still practiced today by some cults; but it doesn't change a person's eternal destiny, for that is determined while he lives (Luke 16:26 +)"

³⁰*Why are we also in danger every hour? ³¹I **affirm**, brethren, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. ³²If from human motives **I fought with wild beasts at Ephesus**, what does it profit me? If the dead are not raised, **Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.***

Affirm > (Strong's) by (a particle of affirmation employed in oaths)

Precept Austin > I think the **NET** reading is much more accurate (vs 31) > "*Every day I am in danger of death! This is as sure as my boasting in you, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord.*"

Vincent > Rev., better, that glorying in you which I have. Paul would say: "You Corinthian Christians are the fruit of my apostolic labor which has been at a daily risk to life; and as truly as I can point to you as such fruit, so truly can I say, 'I die daily.'"

I fought with wild beasts at Ephesus > (Utley) Paul does not mention this experience in his litany of sufferings in 2 Cor. 11:23-27, and because Paul was a Roman citizen, he should not have been forced to fight wild beasts. This must be a metaphor of the difficult spiritual situation that Paul encountered at Ephesus.

Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die. > (Utley) This was the motto of the Epicureans. It is also a quote from Isa. 22:13, which reflects a need for repentance, not feasting (cf. Isa. 56:12).

Isa. 22:12-13 > ¹² Therefore on that day the Lord GOD of armies called you to weeping, to wailing, to shaving the head, and to wearing sackcloth. ¹³ Instead, there is joy and jubilation, killing of cattle and slaughtering of sheep, eating of meat and drinking of wine: "Let's eat and drink, for tomorrow we may die."

³³Do not be **deceived**: "**Bad company corrupts good morals.**"

Deceived > *planao* > (Helps Word-Studies) properly, go astray, get off-course; to deviate from the correct path (circuit, course), *roaming* into error, *wandering*; (passive) be misled.

Precept Austin > *planao* from *plane* which describes "a wandering" and gives us our English word "planet")

Bad > (Precept Austin) *kakos* related word = *kakia*) is a word which basically denotes a lack of something so that it is "bad" or "not as it ought to be. *Kakos* means not meeting accepted standards of behavior, and thus worthless, bad or inferior.

Corrupts > (Strong's) to destroy, corrupt, spoil

Morals > (Helps Word-Studies) familiar morals," referring to daily *life-style* (moral *habits*, behavioral *patterns*)

Bad company corrupts good morals > (Precept Austin) He reminded them of what was probably a well-known proverb from the Greek poet Menander. (*Menander*, born c. 342—died c. 292 BCE, Athenian dramatist whom ancient critics considered the supreme poet of Greek New Comedy—i.e., the last flowering of Athenian stage comedy.)

Utley > Paul was raised in Tarsus, which was well known for its schools of Greek philosophy (cf Acts 17:28 and Titus 1:12). He was uniquely learned in rabbinical Judaism and secular Greek thought.

³⁴Become **sober-minded** as you ought, and **stop sinning**; for some have no knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame.

Sober-minded > Is exactly what it appears to be > *come out of your drunkenness*. (Precept Austin) *eknepho* from *ek* = *out* + *nepho* = *be sober*) means to sober up from a drunken state (as in LXX - Ge 9:24, 1 Sa 25:37, Joel 1:5). In this solitary New Testament use *eknepho* means to rouse oneself out of a state of stupor (sinful stupor in this context).

Stop sinning > (Precept Austin) (The Greek grammar) means to stop and act or action which was in progress.

MacArthur > The Greek historian Thucydides reported that when a deadly plague came to Athens, “People committed every shameful crime and eagerly snatched at every lustful pleasure.” They believed life was short and there was no resurrection, so they would have to pay no price for their vice.

³⁵*But someone will say, “How are the dead raised? And with what kind of body do they come?”*

With what kind of body > (Vincent) Rev., correctly, with what manner of

And with what kind of body do they come? > (Wiersbe) relays a very important concept that is echoed by so many of the authors > “Then he made the important point that *resurrection is not reconstruction*. Nowhere does the Bible teach that, at the resurrection, God will ‘put together the pieces’ and return to us our former bodies. There is *continuity* (it is our body), but there is *not identity* (it is not the same body).”

Utley > One source of the conflict concerning a resurrected body comes from the negative view of the physical body in some schools of Greek philosophy. The Greeks often viewed the material as evil (i.e., Gnosticism) and even worse, the physical body as the prison-house of the eternal divine spark or soul within all humans. This cultural / philosophical background came into direct conflict with Paul's Hebraic (i.e., Pharisaic) background of the affirmation of a physical, bodily after-life. **15:35-41** Paul uses a series of illustrations that show the *continuity*, and yet *distinctivity*, between the physical body and the spiritual body.

Constable > This objection to the resurrection has to do with the reconstruction of the body out of the same elements that it formerly possessed. Obviously it would be impossible to reassemble the same cells to reconstruct a person after he or she had been dead for some time. This is the primary problem that Paul solved in the rest of this pericope. For example,

- If someone died at sea and sailors buried him, a fish might eat his body. The atoms and molecules of his body would become part of the fish.
- If a fisherman caught and ate the fish, its body would become part of the fisherman's body.
- If the fisherman died and an undertaker buried him in the ground and someone eventually sowed wheat over his grave, the fisherman's atoms and molecules would go into the wheat.
- A third person would eat the wheat and so on.

How could the first person's body ever come together again?

Barnes > It may be understood as meaning, "What will be the form, the shape, the size, the organization of the new body? Are we to suppose that all the matter which at any time entered into its composition here is to be recollected, and to constitute a colossal frame? Are we to suppose that it will be the same as it is here, with the same organization, the same necessities, the same needs? Are we to suppose that the aged will be raised as aged, and the young as young, and that infancy will be raised in the same state, and remain such for ever? Are we to suppose that the bodies will be gross, material, and needing support and nourishment, or, that there will be a new organization?"

³⁶***You fool!** That which you sow does not come to life **unless it dies**; ³⁷and **that which you sow, you do not sow the body which is to be, but a bare grain, perhaps of wheat or of something else.** ³⁸**But God gives it a body just as He wished,** and to each of the seeds a body of its own.*

You fool > (Robertson and Plummer) literally the Greek says *Fool!*

Stedman > It is foolish, he says, because everywhere around you are examples of what is happening in resurrection. He is referring to the normal process of plants growing from seeds or bulbs that are placed in the ground. They die, they lose their consistency, and out of them emerges another kind of body which is yet identical to the seed that was placed in the ground

Unless it dies > (Erdman) "True, the seed does not so literally die as does the body, but it ceases to exist in the form of a seed to appear in the higher form of the fruitful stalk."

That which you sow > (MacArthur) Resurrection is not impossible, because it occurs on a small scale continuously in the plant world.

Ray Pritchard > I am to my resurrection body as the acorn is to the oak tree.

Robertson > Dissolution and continuity are not incompatible; how they are combined is a mystery beyond our ken, but the fact that they can be combined is evident, and death setting free a mysterious power of new life is part of the how.

But God gives it a body just as He wished > *1 John 3:2* > ² *Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.*

³⁹***All flesh is not the same flesh,** but there is one flesh of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fish.*

All flesh is not the same flesh > (Constable) A body can be genuinely fleshly and still subsist in different forms for different environments. (Very important ... we humans are designed for a very specific environment. We have to take that environment with us (space suit, scuba, submarine, airplane, etc.) or we die.

⁴⁰*There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the **glory** of the heavenly is one, and the glory of the earthly is another.* ⁴¹*There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory.*

Glory > (Vine's) the basic idea in the word *doxa, glory*, is that of manifestation. The glory of God is the manifestation of His Being. His character and His acts. As to the inanimate things here mentioned, the glory of the sun, moon and stars is the manifestation of their nature in their differing degrees of splendor and beauty. As to the stars, their differences in luster and brilliance are endless, and in this they testify to the infinite wisdom and inexhaustible power of God their Creator.

⁴²*So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a **perishable** body, it is raised an **imperishable** body;* ⁴³*it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power;* ⁴⁴***it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.** If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.*

Perishable > (Strong's) *phtheiro* > destruction, corruption

Precept Austin > The basic idea of *phthora* is not a sudden destruction owing to external violence, but a dissolution brought about by internal decay. It describes decomposition

Imperishable > (Strong's) incorruptibility

Natural > (Precept Austin) literally "soulish"

Natural Body ... spiritual body > (Vincent) The (Greek word for) *natural* occurs only twice outside this epistle; James 3:15; Jude 1:19. The expression *natural body* signifies an organism animated by a soul (see on Romans 11:4); that phase of the immaterial principle in man which is more nearly allied to the flesh, and which characterizes the man as a mortal creature; while *spirit* is that phase which looks Godward, and characterizes him as related to God.

It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body > (Wuest Translation) > *It is sown a body which is a fit instrument by which the individual can live a life in which the interests and activities of the soul-life predominate. It is raised a body which is a fit instrument by which the individual can live a life in which the interests and activities of the human spirit predominate.*

D L Moody > We read part of this chapter in what we call the “burial service.” I think it is an unfortunate expression. Paul never talked of “burial.” He said the body was sown in corruption, sown in weakness, sown in dishonor, sown a natural body. If I bury a bushel of wheat, I never expect to see it again, but if I sow it, I expect results. Thank God, our friends are not buried; they are only sown!

⁴⁵So also it is **written**, “The first man, Adam, became a living soul.” The **last Adam** became a life-giving spirit. ⁴⁶However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual.

Written > (Precept Austin) in the perfect tense indicating written down on record in the past and remaining on record, denoting the abiding authoritative character of that which was written (i.e., “it stands written”).

Genesis 2:7 > ⁷Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a **living being**.

Living Being > (Strong’s) a soul, living being, life, self, person, desire, passion, appetite, emotion

Living soul > (Barnes) in Hebrew (the word written indicate) became a living, animated being; a being endowed with life. The use of the word "soul" in our translation, for (that Hebrew words) does not quite convey the idea. We apply the word "soul," usually, to the intelligent and the immortal part of man; that which reasons, thinks, remembers, is conscious, is responsible, etc. The Greek and Hebrew words, however, more properly denote that which is alive, which is animated, which breathes, which has an animal nature.

Last Adam > (Precept Austin) a rabbinic expression used for the Messiah.

⁴⁷The first man is from the earth, **earthy**; the second man is from heaven. ⁴⁸**As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly.** ⁴⁹Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of the heavenly.

Earthy > (Strong’s) earthy, made of dust

As is the earthy ... > (Robertson and Plummer) Each race has the attributes of its Head. As a consequence of this law, we who once wore the likeness of the earthly Adam shall hereafter wear that of the glorified Christ. What Adam was, made of dust to be dissolved into dust again, such are all who share his life; and what Christ is, risen and eternally glorified, such will be all those who share His life. A body, conditioned by psuche (soul), derived from Adam, will be transformed into a body conditioned by pneuma (spirit), derived from Christ.

Barnes > he was a mass of animated clay

⁵⁰*Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.*

Vine > the two questions raised in verse 36 have been completely answered.

- As to the first, it has been shown that, instead of resurrection being impossible on account of the condition of the body after death, that very condition is essentially preliminary to resurrection, for it involves the principle of a new life.
- And as to the second, the resurrection body is to be in the likeness of that of the risen Lord.
- But a further question arises, namely, what is to take place in the case of believers who are alive when Christ comes. The statement in verse 50, while confirming what has preceded, prepares the way for the answer to this question.

⁵¹***Behold**, I tell you a **mystery**; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, ⁵²**in a moment**, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.*

Behold > (Precept Austin) *behold* is like a divine highlighter, a divine underlining of an especially striking or important text regarding which the current text supremely qualifies!

Mystery > (Precept Austin) in the New Testament is a truth never previously known, and a truth which human intellect could never discover, but one which has now been made known by divine revelation.

Moment > (Strong's) *atomos* > uncut, indivisible, (an indivisible) moment (of time) (Do you see our word *atom* there?)

Vincent > from *a* > *not* and *temno* > *to cut*

In a moment > (Wuest Translation) *In an instant of time so small that it cannot be divided into smaller units*

⁵³*For this perishable must **put on** the imperishable, and this mortal must **put on** immortality. ⁵⁴But **when** this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, **then** will come about the saying that is written, **Death is swallowed up in victory.***

Put on > (Strong's) to clothe or be clothed with (in the sense of sinking into a garment)

Barnes > The word used here properly means to go in, to envelope, to put on as a garment

When ...

- *this perishable will have put on the imperishable*
- *and this mortal will have put on immortality*

Then ...

- *will come about the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory.*

Death is swallowed up in victory > Isaiah 25:8 > ⁸*He will swallow up death for all time, and the Lord GOD will wipe tears away from all faces, and He will remove the reproach of His people from all the earth; for the LORD has spoken.*

⁵⁵***O Death, where is your victory? O Death, where is your sting?*** ⁵⁶*The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law;* ⁵⁷*but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

O Death, where is your victory? O Death, where is your sting? > Hosea 13:14 > ¹⁴*Shall I ransom them from the power of Sheol? Shall I redeem them from death? O Death, where are your thorns? O Sheol, where is your sting? Compassion will be hidden from My sight.*

Sting > (Barnes) The word which is here rendered sting denotes properly a prick, a point, hence, a goad or stimulus; that is, a rod or staff with an iron point, for goading oxen; (see the note on Acts 9:5); and then a sting properly, as of scorpions, bees, etc.

Constable > The fatal "sting of death" touches humans through "sin" (Rom. 6:23). What makes "sin" sinful is the law of God (Rom. 7:7- 11). Because Jesus Christ overcame sin, and fulfilled the law, death cannot hold its prey (Rom. 5:12-21). Death is still an enemy, in the sense that it robs us of mortal life. In spite of this, it is not a terror to the believer, because it is the doorway into an immortal life of glory.

Who gives us the victory > (Precept Austin) *Who* (present tense - continually) *gives us the victory* - Note the present tense participle (continually giving) so it is not "God gave us the victory" but "God Who keeps on giving us the victory!"

⁵⁸***Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.***

Wuest Translation > *So that, my brethren beloved, keep on becoming steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your fatiguing labor is not unproductive of results, as this labor is done in the Lord.*