



## A Study of Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians

### Lesson 24: Baptized on Behalf of the Dead... 1 Corinthians 15:29-58

There is a wonderful line in the movie the *Princess Bride* where the character Vizzini keeps saying "inconceivable" over and over again and Inigo Montoya finally turns to him in a state of total befuddlement and says, "You keep using that word. I do not think it means what you think it means." I wanted to remind you of that image because our passage this morning starts off with one of the most difficult verses in the whole of the New Testament and regardless of the intelligent and winsome nature of the potential interpretive option I am going to provide for your...someone here is going to wind up saying, "I do not think it means what you think it means."

I want you to know I am good with that.

I say that because in the history of the church there have been about two hundred different interpretations posed as possibilities.<sup>1</sup> In fact, I think you could say that there has been a general tendency on the part of commentators to simply say, "We cannot know what it meant and therefore should expend too much energy trying to figure it out, especially in light of the fact that the broader context is clear

enough”, which is another way of saying, “Let us not miss the forest for a single tree.”<sup>2</sup> I think that is good advice. In fact, when I affirmed the perspicuity of Scripture in my ordination vows, which means that I affirmed the fact that I believed the Scripture could be understood, I thought to myself I hope no one asks me to explain 1 Peter 3:19, Hebrews 6:4 or the passage in front of us this morning 1 Corinthians 15:29. That is not to say that I didn’t believe that those three passages had something to say and could be understood, I did believe that. It is just that I didn’t know what it was they had to say.

Now I bring that up this morning not because I am trying to be overly humble (which reminds me of the first time I ever saw J. Vernon McGee speak publically. The pastor who introduced him said, “Dr. McGee is a humble man. Some say...most say...he has a lot to be humble about.”) but rather because I am trying to tell you up front that my view regarding this one verse could very well be wrong. That doesn’t mean that my understanding of the whole passage is wrong. It is not wrong. Nevertheless, regarding this particular verse I could very well be wrong. So listen with discernment. Accept the good; reject the bad and pray for enlightenment to know the difference.

How’s that for being careful?

I almost sound like the President-elect.<sup>3</sup> It is impossible to know what I just said but at least I said what I am said in a really intelligent manner. But, I digress.

So let’s come at last to the passage itself...one of the three or four most difficult passages in the Bible...1 Corinthians 15:29.

**ESV 1 Corinthians 15:29**...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?

Now the first thing I want you to notice is that the passage itself is set in a paragraph that is fairly emotive. What I mean by that is that the paragraph in which the verse is set makes a pretty strong emotional appeal to the reader. In the New Testament world, arguments usually appealed to a person on one of three possible grounds. That is, an argument usually appealed to a person on the basis of logic or on the basis of the moral reliability of the speaker or on the basis of the listener's empathy or emotion. The words used to describe these three appeals were *logos* (logic), *ethos* (the moral reliability of the speaker), and *pathos* (emotion or empathy). This particular passage really seems to be appealing to *pathos*...the emotion or empathy of the reader. Look at verses 29-34 with me, and try to keep the underlying appeal to the heartstrings of the Corinthians in mind as I read them.

**ESV 1 Corinthians 15:29**...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? <sup>30</sup> Why are we in danger every hour? <sup>31</sup> I protest, brothers, by my pride in you, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die every day! <sup>32</sup> 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." <sup>33</sup> Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good morals."<sup>4</sup> <sup>34</sup> 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.

Now, you can see, I think, what I mean when I say that the passage appeals to the heartstrings of the reader. It does that by means of diction or word choice and by the literary figures it employs. Notice how the various words in the passage stir you emotions and grab your attention.

Vs. 30...Why are we in danger every hour”  
Vs. 31a...I protest brothers, by my pride in you...  
Vs. 31b...I die every day!  
Vs. 32b...What do I gain if I fought with beasts at Ephesus?  
Vs. 32c...Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.  
Vs. 33a...Do not be deceived;  
Vs. 34a...Wake up from your drunken stupor.  
Vs. 34b...I say this to your shame.

You can see what I mean. Paul doesn't just seem to be appealing to the Corinthians on the basis of cold, hard facts but rather on the basis of something very real and very personal to him. It seems to me that the broader context of the paragraph in which the verse is set has to do with those people that have actually, really and truly, put their bacon on the line for the sake of the gospel. To those chosen few, that is those who are dying every day, to those who are fighting against wild animals, to those who are giving up the various temporal pleasures they might otherwise enjoy, the hope and comfort of the resurrection is a very real thing and concrete thing. And I think Paul's argument goes on from there to appeal to the Corinthians on the basis of the fact that up until now the Corinthians have put quite a measure of confidence in what those kind of men...those dying every day kind of men...have had to say.

But I am getting ahead of myself.

Historically, there have three major interpretations or categories of interpretation of verse 29.

The first view...the view that has become so prevalent that it has come to be called the “normal view”. It is the view that some in Corinth were being baptized on

behalf of those who had already died.<sup>5</sup> Gordon Fee says that this particular reading of the text is so clear from the text and from the natural reading of the words themselves that nobody would have ever even questioned the view that that is what Paul meant if it were not for all the theological problems that the view itself causes.<sup>6</sup>

Still, the view does have problems. Fee points out the two major problems that arise from understanding the passage that way. First of all...

(1) There is no historical or biblical precedent for such baptism. The NT is otherwise completely silent about it; there is no known practice in any of the other churches nor in any orthodox Christian community in the centuries that immediately follow; nor are there parallels or precedents in pagan religion. This is a genuinely idiosyncratic historical phenomenon. For that reason, if in fact some were actually practicing such a baptism, we are left quite in the dark on all the essential questions: (a) *Who* was being baptized? (b) *For whom*? (c) *Why* were they doing it? (d) *What effects* did they think it had for those for whom it was being done? It is impossible to give a definitive answer to any of these.

(2) The second problem is theological and has to do with how Paul can appeal, without apparent disapproval, to a practice that stands in such contradiction to his own understanding both of justification by grace *through faith*, which always implies response on the part of the believer, and of baptism as personal response to grace received. It smacks of a “magical” view of sacramentalism of the worst kind, where a religious rite, performed for someone else can have saving efficacy.<sup>7</sup>

Now I pretty much agree with Fee here. I just do not see how the phrase “baptism for the dead” could have ever meant that someone was being baptized in another’s place. And while I am never apt to try to put words in Paul’s mouth this is one of those places I cannot help but think Paul would have said something if that was what had been going on in Corinth and I am in pretty good company feeling that way. Calvin did the same. He writes this:

For my part, however, I cannot by any means be persuaded to believe...that those who denied that there was a resurrection...made use of a custom of this sort. Paul then would have had immediately this reply made to him: "Why do you trouble us with that old wives' superstition, which you do not yourself approve of?"<sup>8</sup>

Still, that is the position of a number of commentators today and even a number of religious sects including the Mormons. In fact, the principle reason the Mormons are so concerned about genealogy centers on the potential aspect baptism for the dead might have in the future life. In other words, they believe that being baptized on behalf of or for someone who has died actually has a real benefit to the person. What that means practically is that they believe being baptized on behalf of someone who has died more or less makes them a Mormon. In other words, they believe that the baptism of a live person can count on behalf of a dead person.

You can see, I think, where that might lead to all sorts of religious controversy.

In an article on the Newsweek/Washington Post religious blog entitled *On Faith*, journalist David Waters writes this:

To their credit, LDS leaders realize that the practice (the practice of being baptized for the dead) can be offensive to non-Mormons. In 1995, they reached an agreement with the American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors. Among other things, LDS agreed to "discontinue any future baptisms of deceased Jews, including all lists of Jewish Holocaust victims who are known Jews, except if they were direct ancestors of living members of the Church or the Church had the written approval of all living members of the deceased's immediate family."

Wickman said Monday that the church also has removed the names of more than 300,000 dead Jews. They also are changing the LDS genealogical database to make it more difficult to enter names of Holocaust victims. But Michel said his group's research shows that the names of Holocaust victims continue to be added to the LDS rolls, without permission, as recently as July. "Baptism of a Jewish Holocaust

victim and then merely removing that name from the database is just not acceptable," said Michel, who believe the practice of baptizing dead Jews should stop entirely.<sup>9</sup>

Now before I move on, I simply must read to you a short quote from Chrysostom who completely denigrates the view...he does so in spite of the fact that Calvin much later on accused him of actually holding the view he denigrates.<sup>10</sup> Chrysostom writes this and for a fourth century preacher this is pretty funny.

Or will ye that I should first mention how they who are infected with the Marcionite heresy pervert this expression? And I know indeed that I shall excite much laughter; nevertheless, even on this account most of all I will mention it that you may the more completely avoid this disease: viz., when any Catechumen departs among them, having concealed the living man under the couch of the dead, they approach the corpse and talk with him, and ask him if he wishes to receive baptism; then when he makes no answer, he that is concealed underneath saith in his stead that of course he should wish to be baptized; and so they baptize him instead of the departed, like men jesting upon the stage.<sup>11</sup>

Do you get what he is saying? He is saying when someone in their company dies, the Marcionites place the dead body on a couch and have someone else crawl under the couch. They then ask the dead person if he wants to be baptized...and when he doesn't answer the person under the couch answers for him, "Oh, yes...yes I would very much like to be baptized." And then they proceed to baptize him.

So the first view is that the words mean what they suggest...that is, that some of the Corinthians were actually being baptized in place of or on behalf of those that had already died. Of course what that means is that the baptism of a few was vicarious or beneficial to others.

Now the second view is that the phrase “the dead” in the phrase is to be understood as a metaphor for those who are believers or are about to become believers but are not yet baptized. This is probably the second most accepted view. It focuses either on the idea of the pre-baptized person’s spiritual state or on the person’s soon to be dead body. In the second and third centuries after the death of the apostles, it became fairly common for converts to put off their baptism till right before their deaths. The idea was that their baptism might be adversely affected by their sin and that a person could avoid the negative impact of their sin by waiting till the last possible moment to be baptized. Perhaps the most convert of all time to put off their baptism till the last moment was the famous Roman emperor Constantine.<sup>12</sup>

Calvin thought that that was what was going on in Corinth. He writes:

I say, that those are *baptized for dead*, who are looked upon as already dead, and who have altogether despaired of life; and in this way the particle  $\text{v}\pi\tilde{\epsilon}\rho$  will have the force of the Latin *pro*, as when we say, — *to reckon as abandoned*. This signification is not a forced one. Or if you would prefer another signification, to be *baptized for the dead* will mean — to be baptized so as to profit the dead — not the living. Now it is well known, that from the very commencement of the Church, those who had, while yet catechumens, fallen into disease, if their life was manifestly in danger, were accustomed to ask baptism, that they might not leave this world before they had made a profession of Christianity; and this, in order that they might carry with them the seal of their salvation.<sup>13</sup>

With a little different twist but still under the heading of that same view, a number of commentators think that the word “dead” in the phrase “baptism for the dead” simply refers to a sinner’s pre-baptism life. That is, they view any sinner to be dead in their sins until they are baptized. Naturally, this second view of baptism focuses on the fact that the person being baptized is spiritually dead prior to

baptism and that from baptism they are raised to walk in newness of life. Many of the commentators that hold this view are Baptists and they seem to be drawn to this view in particular because it seems to mesh with and illustrate with this particular affinity for immersion. Anyway, in their view Paul would have been baffled by the Corinthians' denial of the resurrection and yet their proceeding on with baptism. Paul would have had a hard time with their denying the resurrection especially since the transformative power and value of their baptism was contingent ultimately on the resurrection that it pictured.

So, the first two views are that "baptism for the dead" literally means just that...being baptized on behalf of someone who had already died or it means someone being baptized "while they were spiritually dead in their sin" or simply in a pre-conversion state.

The third view and the last one I am going to mention is that "baptism for the dead" actually means baptism not in place of the dead but for the sake of the dead. The idea is not that the act is vicarious...that is, that it is not in place of someone else but rather that it is in honor or someone else...for them...in the sense that it is for their memory or perhaps even for their comfort. It is the idea set forth by Gleason Archer in his book on Bible difficulties. Concerning this verse he writes:

It is in this context that Paul moves into a discussion of the personal application of this joyous prospect to the individual believer. As older Christians fell terminally ill and it became apparent that their departure was near, they would summon their loved ones to their bedside and urge those of them who were as yet unconverted to get right with God. "Before long I will have to leave you, my dear ones," the dying saint would say, "but I want to see you all again in heaven. Be sure you meet me there! Remember that no one may come to the Father except through a true and living faith in the Son. Give your heart to Jesus!"

As they would leave that bedside, deeply moved by this earnest admonition, many of those who were still uncommitted to Christ would give serious attention to the gospel invitation and receive Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Mindful of the exhortation of their now-departed loved one, they would prepare themselves for public confession and baptism according to the practice of their local church.<sup>14</sup>

Now at first glance the idea sounds a little strange...but it is something that I have encountered personally in the ministry. I have seen individuals that made a decision to follow Christ or at least united with a church or took up a religious lifestyle, not because particularly wanted to but rather because of the affection that they had for someone who had recently died or who was about to die.

In fact, I performed a funeral not that long ago where the son of the person who died came up and asked me about uniting with a certain church, asking me whether I would be willing to baptize his child. When I asked them why he wanted to do that, he explained that he had made a promise to the person that had just died that he would follow Jesus for their sake. When I asked him whether it was something he really wanted to do, he hesitated for a moment and then said, "It's what I promised...so it's what I am going to do."

It reminded me almost immediately of Jimmy Stewart in the movie *Shenandoah* faithfully taking his kids to church, not because he really believed anything or wanted to, but rather in honor of his dear, departed wife Martha.

You can see how that view connects the dots to what Paul says in Corinthians. If that was what Paul was referring to then he would have been asking, "How can you promise to be baptized in honor of your loved one that has died, if you don't

believe in the resurrection? What would be the point? You aren't going to see them when you die? What would it matter?"

Now I wanted to end with that particular view because there is really good article by man named Joel White in the *Journal of Biblical Literature* in which he takes that view and tweaks it a bit and ties it carefully to the context of what is going on overall in this paragraph. You will remember that earlier I said Paul seems to be applying a measure of emotive pressure here...that is, he is appealing to pathos to drive home his point with the Corinthians. Well...White argues that when Paul refers to being baptized for the dead he is using that phrase "the dead" metaphorically to refer to those who have given their lives over to the proclamation of the gospel and by that he means himself and the other apostles. Now what you have to understand about White's argument is that he is saying that in verse 29 Paul is using the same word to mean two different things in the same sentence. In other words the first time he uses "the dead" in verse 29 he means those who have given their lives over to the gospel in such a way that they are for all practical purposes dead. The second time he uses the word "the dead" he means those that have actually died. Now look for a minute at verse 29 and you will be able to see how Whites understand it.

<sup>ESV</sup> **1 Corinthians 15:29**...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?

What White thinks Paul is saying is something like this, "Otherwise, what do people mean by being baptized for the sake of us apostles who have given up our lives? If the actual dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on their behalf?"

Now that might not seem to make much sense...but when you place that idea in the context of the rest of the passage it pretty much makes it come alive. Look at the passage again.

<sup>ESV</sup> **1 Corinthians 15:29**... Otherwise, what do people mean by being baptized for the sake of us apostles who have given up our lives? If the actual dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on their behalf? <sup>30</sup> Why are we in danger every hour? <sup>31</sup> I protest, brothers, by my pride in you, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die every day! <sup>32</sup> 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." <sup>33</sup> Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good morals."<sup>15</sup> <sup>34</sup> 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.

You see what White argues and what seems to make perfect sense to me is that Paul is asking the Corinthians, "Why did you believe us...us who are for all practical purposes dead...why did you profess your faith by means of being baptized if you didn't actually believe in the resurrection. I am asking you that...and you know that I live a life fraught with danger....danger that is so intense that I am in danger every hour...so intense that I practically die every single day. What would be the benefit to me, in human terms, to fight with beasts at Ephesus (and there is no way to know whether he means a literal beast such as a lion or leopard or if the phrase is metaphorical and means godless men who oppose the gospel)? Look Corinthians, if God doesn't raise the dead let's eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we will be dead and gone. No, I protest...I invested much in you...I saw the Spirit's work. Do not be fooled, bad company ruins good morals (Paul apparently quotes a popular Greek play here written by Meander). Wake up from your drunken stupor and stop living like you are because it does matter. It is shameful that I even have to bring it up.

Now I have invested a lot of energy in working you through one verse and one verse only but I think it is a worthwhile investment because it shows you that the Bible has to be studied...has to be struggled with and ingested and that when it is, it is worth the time you put into it.

Now the rest of the chapter is pretty straight forward. What Paul argues is that the resurrected body of believers is different than the corrupt body that was sown in burial. He uses a wonderful metaphor...the sowing of seed into the ground that springs up as new a precious fruit.

<sup>ESV</sup> **1 Corinthians 15:35**...But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?" <sup>36</sup> You foolish person! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. <sup>37</sup> And what you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. <sup>38</sup> But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body. <sup>39</sup> For not all flesh is the same, but there is one kind for humans, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish. <sup>40</sup> There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is of one kind, and the glory of the earthly is of another. <sup>41</sup> 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. <sup>42</sup> So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. <sup>43</sup> It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. <sup>44</sup> It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. <sup>45</sup> Thus it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. <sup>46</sup> But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. <sup>47</sup> The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. <sup>48</sup> As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. <sup>49</sup> Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven. <sup>50</sup> I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

Now Paul's point is that the resurrection body of believers will have a new aspect. Our first body was earthly...related to the first Adam. Our resurrection body will be heavenly...related to the heavenly Adam, Jesus. We have already borne the image of dust...next we will bear the image of heaven. That means that our new body will be different than the one we have now...it will be us but it will be different.

You can tell that the change in the nature of the body is very important to Paul. The body is sown corruptible and raised incorruptible. It is sown a natural body and raised a spiritual body. Now that doesn't mean that it is not substantial...made of real substance...it is. It just means that it is different. You can tell that from verse 51.

<sup>ESV</sup> **1 Corinthians 15:51**...Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

You see what Paul says? He says that even those of us that remain alive until Christ's coming...until the Day of Judgment...will be changed. That's what he means when he says, "We will not all sleep but we will all be changed."

Now I want to hold off addressing this last paragraph until next week because it has some really important implications regarding eschatology...the doctrine of end things...and because of that has some bearing on our times' preoccupation with the Rapture of the church. I want to address that but I think I will simply close with reading the passage and we'll pick up right there next time.

But before I do, let me take just a moment and address a pastoral question that comes up from time to time when people die. Because I have had the privilege of ministering to a number of seasoned saints who have died, I have had the responsibility of answering some pretty down to earth questions and I want to share one with you that always touches my heart.

I have ministered to a number of seasoned saints facing death who did not have enough money to pay for their burial and because they did not, they were very concerned about whether it was right for them to be cremated. For those of you who don't know, it costs about \$7,000 to be buried and about a \$1000 to be cremated. Anyway, I can't tell you how many times I have been asked, "Tom, if I have to be cremated, will the Lord still be able to resurrect my body? Will he be able to find me?"

Now I can't tell you how that question always touches me and how important it is to answer that question correctly and to do so with a measure of tenderness that will comfort a worried heart. I always say something like this, "Yes, my dear saint...the Lord will be able to find you. In fact, He won't have ever lost you. He will know where your body is because your body will be a new creation and when He determines it is time, He will unite your spirit with your new body and you will ever be with Him in glory. So don't worry if you can't afford anything other than being cremated. The biblical symbolism of the resurrection is best served by being buried but the countless saints that have been lost at sea or have been murdered and discarded or burned at the stake...they are not lost...they were never lost...they are in God's hand and are not lost and neither will you be lost. So let your heart be at rest."

I can't tell you how many times I have had to say those words and unless I miss my guess some of you, many of you will someday have to say the same thing yourself to someone you love.

Now let me read the rest of the chapter and we'll pray and see if you have any questions.

<sup>ESV</sup> **1 Corinthians 15:51**...Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, <sup>52</sup> 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 shall be changed. <sup>53</sup> For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. <sup>54</sup> When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." <sup>55</sup> "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" <sup>56</sup> The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. <sup>57</sup> But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>58</sup> Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

Let's pray.

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<sup>1</sup> John D. Reaume, "Another Look at 1 Corinthians 15:29, "Baptized for the Dead" in *Bibliotheca Sacra* 152 (October-December 1995), 457. Cf. Hans Conzlemann, *1 Corinthians* (Philadelphia; Fortress Press, 1975), 273.

<sup>2</sup> Joel R. White, "'Baptized on Account of the Dead': The Meaning of 1 Corinthians 15:29 in Its Context" in the *Journal of Biblical Literature* 116/3 (1997), 487.

<sup>3</sup> For those national security folks perusing the Internet all negative comments against the President please recognize that what I said was intended to be funny...and funny not at the expense of the President elect but rather at my own expense.

<sup>4</sup> Frank E. Gaebelien, *Expositor's Bible Commentary: Romans through Galatians Vol. 10* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1977), 15:33. Turning now to Greek literature, Paul supports his position by quoting a piece of practical worldly wisdom from Menander's comedy, *Thais*, relevant to the situation in the Corinthian church. The "bad company" points to those who were teaching that there is no resurrection and so were a threat to the testimony of the church.

<sup>5</sup> David E. Garland, *1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2003), 716.

<sup>6</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians NICNT*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1987), pp. 763-4. He writes, "The normal reading of the text is that some Corinthians are being baptized, apparently vicariously, in behalf of some people who have already died. It would be fair to add that this reading is such a plain understanding of the Greek text that no one would ever have imagined the various alternatives were it not for the difficulties involved."

<sup>7</sup> Fee, 764-5

<sup>8</sup> John Calvin, *Commentary on 1 Corinthians*, 15:29.

<sup>9</sup> <http://newsweek.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/undergod/2008/11/>

<sup>10</sup> Calvin, 15:29. Calvin writes, "Before expounding this passage, it is of importance to set aside the common exposition, which rests upon the authority of the ancients, and is received with almost universal consent. Chrysostom, therefore, and Ambrose, who are followed by others, are of opinion that the Corinthians were accustomed, when any one had been deprived of baptism by sudden death, to substitute some living person in the place of the deceased —"

I can't find any evidence of Chrysostom saying any such thing. It appears to me and I hate to say this...but it appears to me that Calvin was wrong about what Chrysostom actually believed. Probably, I just misunderstand him. I would sure hate to have to rename my grandson.

<sup>11</sup> John Chrysostom, "Homilies on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians: Homily 40, 1 Corinthians 15:29" in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers First Series, Volume 12* ed. by Philip Schaff (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 244.

<sup>12</sup> St. Ambose, "Selected Works and Letters" in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers First Series, Volume 10* ed. by Philip Schaff (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 8. "After the Council of Nicaea, A.D. 325, the faith of the Catholic Church was established, but a considerable time was to elapse, and the tide of heterodoxy was to ebb and flow many times before peace should finally ensue. The "conversion" of the Emperor Constantine, though not followed, till he was dying, by baptism, led not merely to the toleration but to the protection and, as it were, the "establishment" of the Christian religion."

<sup>13</sup> John Calvin, *Commentary on 1 Corinthians*, 15:29.

<sup>14</sup> Gleason Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1982), 401.

<sup>15</sup> Frank E. Gaebelien, *Expositor's Bible Commentary: Romans through Galatians Vol. 10* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1977), 15:33. Turning now to Greek literature, Paul supports his position by quoting a piece of practical worldly wisdom from Menander's comedy, *Thais*, relevant to the situation in the Corinthian church. The "bad company" points to those who were teaching that there is no resurrection and so were a threat to the testimony of the church.