

## **“Baptism for the Dead”**

**By Paul R. Blake**

What does it mean in 1Corinthians 15:29 when the passage speaks of: “baptism for the dead”? “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?”

Not an easy question, but like all Bible questions, it merits a Bible answer. It seems that Paul is asking “Why are others immersed in persecutions just to bring salvation to the spiritually dead if there is no resurrection of the physically dead?” That certainly fits the context of the chapter (15:12-19), and would also parallel other similar statements of Paul to the Corinthians on suffering reproaches and trials in order to preach the gospel. In fact, consider what Paul said in the next two verses: “And why stand we in jeopardy every hour? I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily” (1Cor. 15:30-31). The context indicates that the resurrection of Christ gives hope for our own resurrection. This message of salvation needs to be preached to everyone. Often, the messengers will suffer hardship, persecution, and threat of death in order to preach the message of hope. Verse 29 asks the question: “Why risk death to preach to the spiritually dead if there is no resurrection?” He states the dilemma a bit different in verses 14 and 19: “And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain... If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.”

I am absolutely certain of one thing: this passage does not teach baptism or salvation by proxy for those already physically dead. That concept is disharmonious with scripture. The dead cannot be saved by a living person being baptized in his place post mortem. The only candidates for baptism are those who can believe the gospel (John 8:24; Acts 16:31), repent of sins (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38), confess the name of Jesus with the mouth (Rom. 10:9-10), and be personally immersed for the remission of sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16). That is why infants are not candidates for baptism, and that is why dead people cannot be saved by means of another person being baptized in their place.

It is sad, but it is also true, that it is too late to effect a change in one's eternal destiny after death. “Whatsoever thy hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, where you are going” (Ecc. 9:10).

### **Are You a Carrot, an Egg, or a Coffee Bean?**

A daughter complained to her father about her life and how things have been so hard for her. She did not know how she was going to make it and she wanted to give up. She was tired of fighting and struggling. It seemed that just as one problem was solved another arose. Her father, a chef, took her to the kitchen, filled three pots with water and placed the fire on high. Soon the three pots came to a boil. In one he placed carrots, in the other he placed eggs, and the last he placed ground coffee beans. He let them sit and boil, without saying a word. The daughter sucked her teeth and impatiently wondered what he was trying to do. She had problems, and he was making this strange concoction.

In half an hour he walked over to the range and turned down the fire. He pulled the carrots out and placed them in a bowl. He pulled the eggs out and placed them in a bowl. Then he ladled the coffee out and placed the liquid in a bowl. Turning to her, he asked, "Darling what do you see?"

She replied, "Carrots, eggs, and coffee."

He brought her closer and asked her to feel the carrots. She did and noted that they were soft. He then asked her to take an egg and break it. After pulling off the shell, she observed the hard-boiled egg. Finally, he asked her to sip the coffee. Her face frowned from the strength of the coffee. Humbly, she asked, "What does it mean Father?"

He explained. Each of them faced the same adversity, 212 degrees of boiling water. However, each reacted differently to it. The carrot went in strong, hard, and unrelenting. But after going through boiling water, it softened and became weak. The egg was fragile. A thin outer shell protected a liquid center. But after sitting through the boiling water, its inside became hardened. The coffee beans are unique, however. After they were in the boiling water, the water became stronger and richer.

"Which are you," he asked his daughter. "When adversity knocks on your door, how do you respond? Are you a carrot, an egg, or a coffee bean? Are you the carrot that seems hard, but with the smallest amount of pain, adversity or heat you wilt and become soft with no strength. Are you the egg, which starts off with a malleable heart? A fluid spirit, but after a death, a breakup, a divorce, or a layoff, you became hardened and stiff. Your shell looks the same, but you are so tough with a stiff spirit and heart, internally. Or are you like the coffee bean? The bean does not get its peak flavor and robustness until it reaches 212 degrees Fahrenheit. When water gets the hottest, it just tastes stronger. When things are their worst, you get better. When people talk the most, your praises increase. When the hour is the darkest and trials are their greatest, your worship elevates to another level."

How do you handle adversity? Are you a carrot, an egg, or a coffee bean? "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed" (2Cor. 4:8-9). (Author Unknown)

### **Easing Up at the End**

"...Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith..." (Heb. 12:1-2). On March 6, 1987, Eamon Coughlan, the Irish world record holder at 1500 meters, was running in a qualifying heat at the World Indoor Track Championships in Indianapolis. With two and one-half laps left, he was tripped. He fell, but he got up and, with great effort, managed to catch the leaders. With only 20 yards left in the race, he was in third place - good enough to qualify for the finals. He looked over his shoulder to the inside and, seeing no one, he let up. But another runner, charging hard on the outside, passed Coughlan a yard before the finish, thus eliminating him from the finals. Caughlan's great comeback effort was rendered worthless by taking his eyes off the finish line. (From Illustrations for Preaching & Teaching, p. 178). It is tempting for the Christian to slack off when the sights around him look favorable. However, let us continue to press toward our goal, always looking to Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.

### **Blaming**

When people blame their parents, siblings, people they work with or for, neighbors or the general social conditions that surround them, they are blaming their environment. Although we are undoubtedly influenced substantially by environmental conditioning, ultimately we cannot blame anything external to ourselves for what we think, say and do. That is, we are who we choose to be.

It is doubtful that any person will ever be completely satisfied with what he has done with his life. We may even despise what we have become. But we must not use our past failures or current habits as excuses not to improve. The most important part of moral courage and developing godliness is accepting responsibility for who we are today, so that we can choose a responsible course for the future. (Oscar C. Miles)