

The Resurrection of the Body – Part 2

(1 Corinthians 15:20-34)

Expository Lessons from Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians

I. Introduction and Review

- a. This is part 2 of the teaching in **1 Corinthians 15** regarding the resurrection of the body.
- b. This will build on the foundation we laid in the first part. To recap parts of that lesson:
 - i. Many Christians today believe that after we die, we are judged immediately, with our souls going immediately to heaven (for the righteous) or hell.
 1. As a result of this belief, many see that only our souls will be saved, not our bodies.
 2. While they believe that the body of Jesus was physically raised from the dead, they do not believe that the same thing will happen to us.
 - ii. The New Testament teaches that all will be judged at the same time, on the Last Day, at the return of Jesus. The bodies of the dead will be physically resurrected and reunited with the souls of the dead (who had been waiting in Hades for the Last Day).
 1. This understanding was held by the early Christian writers.
 2. The resurrection of the dead is one of the six “elementary principles of the faith” in **Hebrews 6:1-3**.
 3. Belief in the resurrection of the body is included in the Apostles Creed, an ancient summary of the basic doctrines one was expected to confess upon becoming a Christian.
 4. Jesus taught this in several places in the gospels, notably in **John 5:28-29**.
 - iii. The most detailed discussion on this is in **1 Corinthians 15**, where essentially the entire chapter is devoted to explaining this basic Christian doctrine. Apparently, there were some Christians in Corinth who were denying that the dead would be bodily resurrected, and Paul devotes most of the chapter to refuting this heresy.

- iv. Paul reasoned that *if the dead are not raised*, then Christ was not raised either.
 - 1. And *if Christ was not raised*, the entire Christian faith falls apart. (We are still in our sins, apostles were false witnesses about Christ, and our faith is in vain.)
 - 2. The entire Christian faith hangs on the truth of the bodily resurrection of Jesus from the dead.
- c. In this lesson will begin by considering some deep philosophical issues related to the nature of man. However, at the end we will be getting extremely practical regarding how understanding the resurrection of our bodies should influence our day-to-day lives.

II. The Body and the Nature of Mankind

- a. All Christians understand that as humans, we each have (or consist of) a body and a soul.
- b. **Questions:** Or is it a body and a *spirit*? Do the terms 'soul' and 'spirit' refer to the same thing?
 - i. In the minds of most Christians (including me until fairly recently), man consists of *two parts*: the body and the soul.
 - ii. Also, most Christians believe that the terms 'soul' and 'spirit' (referring to the *spirit of a person*, rather than to the Holy Spirit) are more or less interchangeable, referring to the same thing.
- c. However, according to the apostle Paul, each person consists of *three parts* rather than two.
 - i. "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole *spirit, soul, and body* be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (**1 Thessalonians 5:23**, NKJV)
 - ii. Paul says that we are comprised of three parts, consisting of our:
 - 1. *spirit*,
 - 2. *soul*, and
 - 3. *body* (sometimes referred to in Scripture as '*flesh*').
 - iii. Paul also desires that all three of these *be preserved* blameless at the Second Coming of Christ.
 - iv. Man consists of three parts, and God's plan is for all three parts to be preserved and saved on the Day of Judgment.

- d. **Question:** Are you still unconvinced that ‘soul’ and ‘spirit’ do not refer to the same thing? If so, please consider the following well-known passage from **Hebrews**:
- i. “For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing *even to the division of soul and spirit*, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” (**Hebrews 4:12**, NKJV)
 - ii. **Question:** Are *joints* and *marrow* the same thing?
 1. **Answer:** Obviously, no. While they are very close to one another and intimately related, we all know that our joints and our marrow refer to two different things.
 - iii. **Question:** Are *soul* and *spirit* the same thing?
 1. **Answer:** Again, no. While they may be very closely related to one another, again, they refer to *two different things!*
 2. The point the **Hebrews** writer is making is that the ‘Word/word of God’ (whether this refers to the Scriptures or Jesus) has the ability to cut and penetrate like a surgeon’s scalpel, with the level of precision to separate even two things that are extremely close to one another.
- e. **Question:** What is the difference between the soul and the spirit, how do they relate to one another, and how do both relate with the third part (the body or the flesh)?
- i. The Scriptures do touch on this, but I have found it easier to see this if we start first with early Christian understanding of the three parts and then consider their perspective in light of the Scriptures.
 - ii. Irenaeus, bishop of the church in Lyons, in Gaul (modern-day France), had been taught by Polycarp in his youth, who in turn was a direct disciple of at least one of the apostles. Therefore, Irenaeus was just one human link removed from the apostles. From Irenaeus, writing c. 180 AD:
 1. “For that flesh which has been molded is not a perfect man in itself, but the body of a man, and part of a man. Neither is the soul itself, considered apart by itself, the man; but it is the soul of a man, and part of a man. Neither is the spirit a man, for it is called the spirit, and not a man; but the commingling and union of all these constitutes the perfect [*i.e. complete*] man.

2. “And for this cause does the apostle, explaining himself, make it clear that the saved man is a complete man as well as a spiritual man; saying thus in the first Epistle to the Thessalonians, ‘Now the God of peace sanctify you perfect (perfectos); and may your spirit, and soul, and body be preserved whole without complaint to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.’ (1 **Thessalonians 5:23**)
3. “Now what was his object in praying that these three—that is, soul, body, and spirit—might be preserved to the coming of the Lord, unless he was aware of the [future] reintegration and union of the three, and [that they should be heirs of] one and the same salvation? For this cause also he declares that those are ‘the perfect’ who present unto the Lord the three [component parts] without offence.”
 - a. (Source: Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, book 5, chapter 6; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 1, p. 532)

iii. Further on, in the same work by Irenaeus:

1. “...there are three things out of which, as I have shown, the complete man is composed—flesh, soul, and spirit. One of these does indeed preserve and fashion [the man]—this is the spirit; while as to another it is united and formed—that is the flesh; then [comes] that which is between these two—that is the soul, which sometimes indeed, when it follows the spirit, is raised up by it, but sometimes it sympathizes with the flesh, and falls into carnal lusts.”
 - a. (Source: Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, book 5, chapter 9; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 1, p. 534)
 - b. The picture presented by Irenaeus:
 - i. Our God-given human spirit tends to pull us toward God.
 1. Even people who are not Christians have something inside of them that tends to pull them toward God. We each have been given a conscience by God, the inner voice that tends to pull us in the right direction (unless we kill it or sear it). It strives to pull us spiritually *upward* toward God.

2. Consider people like Job and Cornelius, as well as the pagan Gentiles who followed their consciences that Paul refers to in **Romans 2:14-16**. After the fall of Adam and Eve, although we inherited a fallen nature in our flesh, mankind *did not become totally depraved!* Men and women still possessed a God-given spirit.

- ii. The second part, our fallen flesh (our body), tends to pull us downward in the direction of fulfilling its carnal lusts.
- iii. Our soul, the third component of every person, finds itself between the other two. It is pulled in both directions *and must choose which of the two to heed.*
- iv. If you often feel internally 'divided' in this life, even after becoming a Christian, this may well be the reason why!

spirit	soul	flesh
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The spirit of man (not the Holy Spirit) • Pulls us toward God • Closely related to our consciences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is pulled in both directions (toward the spirit as well as toward the flesh) • Must choose between the two 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tends toward carnal lusts

iv. From Origen, writing c. 225 AD:

- 1. "Let the reader take this also into consideration, that it is observed with regard to the soul of the Savior, that of those things which are written in the gospel, some are ascribed to it under the name of *soul*, and others under that of *spirit*. [*In other words, where it speaks of the soul or the spirit of Jesus. -CP*]
- 2. "For when it wishes to indicate any suffering or perturbation affecting Him, it indicates it under the name of soul; as when it says, 'Now is My soul troubled;' (**John 12:27**) and, 'My soul is sorrowful, even unto death;' (**Matthew 26:38**) and, 'No man

takes My soul from Me, but I lay it down of Myself.' (**John 10:18**)

3. "Into the hands of His Father He commends not His soul, but His *spirit*; (**Luke 23:46**) and when He says that the flesh is weak, He does not say that the soul is willing, but the *spirit* (**Matthew 26:41, Mark 14:38**): whence it appears that *the soul is something intermediate between the weak flesh and the willing spirit.*"
 - a. (Source: Origen, *De Principiis*, book 2, chapter 8; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 4, p. 289)
 - b. Similar to Irenaeus, here Origen sees that the soul operates between the spirit and the (weak) flesh.
 - c. Consider the passage quoted by Origen when Jesus is addressing Peter in the Garden of Gethsemane. Read **Mark 14:37-38**.
 - i. "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." (**Mark 14:38**, NKJV)
 - ii. Note that the imperative commands to "watch" and "pray" are in the second person plural. Those directives from Jesus therefore apply to more than just one man, Peter. (Credit for that insight goes to Theophylact, from his *Explanation of the Holy Gospel According to Mark*.)
- v. For more on the early Christian understanding of the soul and spirit, and the three-component view of mankind, see *Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs*, ed. David Bercot, entry on 'Soul / III. Tripartite Distinction of Body, Soul and Spirit'. See also Bercot's lesson, *What the Early Christians Believed about the Spirit and Soul*, available in audio or e-book format through Scroll Publishing.
- vi. **Question:** Do the Scriptures give us any further indication of the distinction in the roles of the (God-given, human) spirit versus the soul?
 1. **Answer:** Perhaps yes. However, one of the things that contributes to the confusion is that the term '*spirit*' is used in the Scriptures to refer to a few different things.

- a. The word 'spirit' is used to refer to the God-given human spirit that every person has within himself or herself. Examples include:
 - i. From David, in the **Psalms**
 - 1. "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me..." (**Psalm 50/51:12**)
 - 2. "A sacrifice of God is a broken spirit..." (**Psalm 50/51:19**)
 - ii. Note that Paul refers to "my spirit" several times in his writings. Places where he speaks about the human spirit include:
 - 1. "For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God." (**1 Corinthians 2:11**, NKJV)
 - 2. "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, *along with my spirit*, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ," (**1 Corinthians 5:4**, NKJV)
 - 3. "For if I pray in a tongue, *my spirit prays*, but my understanding is unfruitful." (**1 Corinthians 14:14**, NKJV)
 - 4. "I had *no rest in my spirit*, because I did not find Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I departed for Macedonia." (**2 Corinthians 2:13**, NKJV)
- b. Second, the term '*spirit*' also can be used to refer to various non-human spirits, such as the *unclean spirits* that can enter into, inhabit or depart from a person.
 - i. These are mentioned throughout the gospels and in **Acts**.
- c. Third, the word 'spirit' can refer to the Holy Spirit. In our Bibles that is typically shown by using a capital 'S'.

- vii. A few comments regarding “capital ‘S’ *Spirit*” versus “lower case ‘s’ *spirit*”.
1. The earliest Greek manuscripts were written in all-caps (uncials). Translators have had to try to discern which references to ‘spirit’ refer to the Holy Spirit (versus which refer to some other spirit, such as the spirit of a man or an unclean spirit).
 - a. We see similar distinctions made in modern Bible translations using capital versus lowercase designations for some other important words.
 - i. For the term ‘Angel/angel’, the capital-A “Angel” as in the expression “the Angel of the Lord”, refers to the Son of God. In contrast, the lowercase ‘a’, as in the expression “an angel”, would refer to one of the angels.
 - ii. Likewise, for the term ‘God/god’, the one with a capital ‘G’ refers to the one true God. In contrast, with a lowercase ‘g’, as in “one of the gods of the Egyptians”, this same word could have a much broader meaning (including various false ‘gods’). In each case, the translator must decide whether to use a lowercase or capital letter.
 2. Most do not realize that in earlier English translations (for example, the original 1611 King James Version, or 1582/1610 Douay-Rheims) many more of the New Testament references to ‘Spirit/spirit’ were rendered with a lower-case ‘s’, suggesting a person’s spirit (rather than the Holy Spirit), in contrast to how more modern translators have treated the same passages. In that regard, the earlier English translations seem to be more consistent with how the early Christians understood passages where they encountered the term ‘SPIRIT’ in the New Testament.
 - a. For example, in **Galatians 5:16-26** the works of the flesh are contrasted with the fruits of the spirit. The early church understood this as the contrast between a person’s flesh and that person’s God-given human spirit, rather than between a person’s flesh and the Holy Spirit.
 - b. Also, in **Romans 8** both our spirit and the Holy Spirit are being discussed. (But don’t assume that modern

translators got all the capitalization right; consider the context in each case.)

- i. “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,” (**Romans 8:16**, NKJV)
3. I realize that for those of us who have been reading modern English language translations for many years, it can be especially hard to reconsider what Paul might have meant where we see the capital-S word ‘Spirit’.
 - a. It might refer to the Holy Spirit, or it might refer to our spirit (small ‘s’). In each case we should reconsider in the light of the context, and perhaps informed by the earliest Christian writers, regarding what Jesus or Paul meant!
 4. For more on this issue of lower-case ‘s’ versus upper-case ‘S’ of the word ‘SPIRIT’ in English Bible translations, see David Bercot’s lesson on *What the Early Christians Believed About the Difference Between the Spirit and Soul*, available through Scroll Publishing in audio or e-book format.

III. We Will Follow the Pattern Established by Christ, if We Follow Him

- a. Read **1 Corinthians 15:20-23**.
 - i. Adam was the first man, and he brought death to all who followed.
 1. Paul explains further in **Romans 5** that this is not automatic, but the result of sin on our part as well. We who followed Adam’s example will end up as he did.
 2. “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, *because all sinned—*” (**Romans 5:12**, NKJV)
 - ii. Likewise, Jesus, the firstborn from the dead, brought the resurrection from the dead for all who follow Him.

IV. Jesus as the Firstborn from Among the Dead

- a. Jesus set the pattern that those who follow Him will follow in. If we remain faithful, the same will happen to us.
 - i. As Paul said: “Therefore, having obtained help from God, to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come—that the

Christ would suffer, that He would be *the first to rise from the dead*, and would proclaim light to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles.” (Acts 26:22–23, NKJV)

- ii. Also from Paul: “And He is the head of the body, the church, who is *the beginning, the firstborn from the dead*, that in all things He may have the preeminence.” (Colossians 1:18, NKJV)
 - iii. From John, in the opening of the **Book of Revelation**: “[grace and peace from the Father, and the seven Spirits]... and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, *the firstborn from the dead*, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood,” (Revelation 1:5, NKJV)
- b. Jesus was “the firstborn from among the dead”. If we look to His example, we can grasp what will happen to all those who will follow after.

V. Review of the Bodily Resurrection of Jesus

- c. Consider the accounts of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus in all four gospels. After he died and was buried, *His soul went to Hades* (as Peter explained in Acts 2:25-31, where he quotes and explains the prophecy of Psalm 15/16:8-11). However, his soul did not remain there. It was delivered from Hades and reunited with His body.
- d. When Jesus was resurrected from the dead, it was not simply as a ghost or a disembodied spirit. The apostles did not see a ‘*doppelganger*’, another person who happened to look just like Jesus. When Jesus rose from the dead, He had a physical body, the same body He had before His death, yet in some way *transformed*.
 - i. The tomb was empty. There was no dead body in it. (Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20)
 - ii. His Jewish opponents were unable to produce the body, and therefore made up a fake story that His disciples had stolen it (Matthew 28:11-15).
 - 1. The same false account was still being circulated among the Jews in the days of Justin Martyr, c. 160 AD, as recorded in Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho, a Jew*, chapter 108; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 1, p. 253.
 - iii. “And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, ‘Rejoice!’ So they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him.” (Matthew 28:9, NKJV)

- iv. “Now as they said these things, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, ‘Peace to you.’ But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit. And He said to them, ‘Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? *Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.*’ When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. But while they still did not believe for joy, and marveled, He said to them, ‘Have you any food here?’ *So they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb. And He took it and ate in their presence.*” (**Luke 24:36–43**, NKJV)
- v. Read **John 20:24-29**.
1. “[*Thomas said*] ‘Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.’” (**John 20:25**, NKJV)
 2. “Then He said to Thomas, ‘Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing.’” (**John 20:27**, NKJV)
 - a. Recall that the imprint of the nails in His hands and feet was in fulfillment of prophecy. He had marks made in His body to make it clear that this was the very same body that was crucified; not another person, not a ghost or a disembodied spirit.
 - i. Even after rising from the dead, Jesus would bear the recognizable marks of a criminal’s death.
 - ii. Also, this was in fulfillment of prophecy.
 - b. “And again another Scripture says, ‘They shall look on Him whom they pierced.’” (**John 19:37**, NKJV)
 - c. “And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.” (**Zechariah 12:10**, NKJV)
 - d. **Psalm 22** (designated **Psalm 21** in the LXX), written about 1,000 years before Jesus was crucified, foretells the details of His crucifixion. It includes the statement: “For many dogs surrounded me; an assembly of

evildoers enclosed me; They pierced my hands and my feet.” (**Psalm 21:17**, LXX, OSB)

- e. This (appearing in a physical body that was pierced at his crucifixion) is alluded to in connection with how Jesus will appear at His Second Coming.
 - i. “Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.” (**Revelation 1:7**, NKJV)
 - ii. Based on this statement, I assume that when Jesus appears again, we will still be able to see the marks on his body, in his hands, feet and side. We will have visual proof that the Lord who returns is the very same Jesus who was crucified.
- vi. Luke’s opening comments in **Acts**.
 - 1. “The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, to whom *He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs*, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.” (**Acts 1:1-3**, NKJV)

VI. Coming Attraction: the Second Coming

- a. Read **1 Corinthians 15:24-28**.
- b. Christ is coming again.
 - i. He will deliver the kingdom to God the Father.
 - ii. He will put an end to all rule and authority.
 - 1. This reminds me of the prophecy in **Daniel 2:31-45** of the four-part statue that is crushed by the rock “cut out of the mountain but not by human hands”. It crushes all the kingdoms of the world, and turns into an eternal kingdom that fills that will stand forever.
 - 2. **Reminder:** We need not be too concerned about the political events of the world around us. In the end, all the kingdoms of

the world will be crushed. God's kingdom will fill the earth, in the end, and everything will be set right.

iii. He will reign until all his enemies are put under His feet.

1. Read **Psalm 8:4-7**.

- a. Paul quotes from this psalm here in **1 Corinthians 15**.
- b. This passage refers to the 'Son of Man', a title Jesus applies to Himself throughout all four gospels. All things will be put under His feet.
- c. Paul explains that death is one of those things that are referred to among the "all things" that will be put under His feet.

2. Read **Psalm 109/110:1-4**.

- a. While Paul does not quote directly from this psalm, it seems clear to me that he is *alluding to* this passage, applying it to Jesus. Paul further explains that death will be *the last of the enemies* that will be put under His feet.
- b. This is a famous prophecy about the Christ, opening with "*the Lord* (God, the Father) said to *my Lord* (David the author here referring to the Son of God, the Christ)". Also, that He would be an eternal priest, like Melchizedek, as explained in **Hebrews**.

VII. Baptizing People for the Dead?

- a. Read **1 Corinthians 15:29-33**.
- b. **Question:** What in the world does it mean to baptize someone for the dead? Are we supposed to be having baptism ceremonies where we are vicariously baptizing people on behalf of other people who have already died (and were not baptized during their lifetimes)?
 - i. In 1840, in Nauvoo, Illinois, here in the U.S., a man named Joseph Smith first publicly advocated "restoring" this practice, while he was preaching at a funeral. Sometime afterward his followers started doing, that in the Mississippi River.
 - ii. Smith's followers, members of the LDS church (a/k/a Mormons) still do this in their temples, baptizing by proxy those who have died. They started doing this for their ancestors, but later expanded the practice to do it for all sorts of deceased people.

1. **Questions:** Should we be doing the same thing? Is Paul holding this up as a good or even normal Christian practice?
- c. I have found two early explanations of this passage. Neither one suggests that Christians should be baptizing anyone vicariously!
- i. According to the first explanation, Paul has in view heretical groups who deny the resurrection and is referring to something that *they* (rather than mainstream Christians) are practicing. Paul is pointing out that the heretics are being illogical and inconsistent *even with their own false teachings*.
 1. Epiphanius of Salamis (c. 310-403 AD), bishop of Constantia (Salamis) in Cyprus, wrote a work against several heresies, called the '*Panarion*', or '*Medicine Chest*' c. 377 AD. In one section he wrote about the Cerinthians, a sect that followed the teachings of Cerinthus, a heretical contemporary of the apostles. Epiphanius made the case that much of what Paul was writing in **1 Corinthians 15** was addressing the errors that Cerinthus and his followers were spreading.
 2. From the *Panarion* of Epiphanius:
 - a. "In turn this Cerinthus, fool and teacher of fools that he is, ventures to maintain that Christ has suffered and been crucified but has not risen yet, but he will rise when the general resurrection of the dead comes.
 - b. "Now this position of theirs is untenable, both the words and the ideas. And so, in astonishment at those who did not believe in the coming resurrection of the dead, the apostle said, 'If the dead rise not, then is Christ not raised; 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die' and, 'Be not deceived; evil communications corrupt good manners.'
 - c. "Again, he likewise gives their refutation to those who say that Christ is not risen yet by saying, 'If Christ be not raised, our preaching is vain and our faith is vain. And we also are found false witnesses against God, because we testified against God that he raised up Christ, if so be that he raised him not up.' For in Corinth too certain persons arose to say there is no resurrection of the dead, as though it was apostolic preaching that Christ was not risen yet and the dead are not raised (at all).

- d. “For their school reached its height in this country, I mean Asia, and in Galatia as well. And in these countries I also heard of a tradition which said that when some of their people died too soon, without baptism, others would be baptized for them in their names, so that they would not be punished for rising unbaptized at the resurrection and become the subjects of the authority that made the world.
- e. “Some of these people have preached that Christ is not risen yet, but will rise together with everyone; others, that the dead will not rise at all.
- f. “Hence the apostle has come forward and given the refutation of both these groups and the rest of the sects at once on the subject of resurrection. And in the testimonies that he gave in full he produced the sure proof of the resurrection, salvation and hope of the dead by saying, 'This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality,' (**1 Corinthians 15:53**) and again, 'Christ is risen, the first fruits of them that slept.' (**1 Corinthians 15:20**) This was to refute both kinds of sects at once and truly impart the unsullied doctrine of his teaching to anyone who wanted to know God's truth and saving doctrine.
- g. “Hence it can be observed at every point that Cerinthus, with his supporters, is pathetically mistaken and has become responsible for the ruin of others, since the sacred scriptures explain it all to us, clearly and in detail.”
 - i. (Source: Epiphanius of Salamis, *The Panarion, Book 1, Part 28: Epiphanius Against the Cerinthians*, sections 6.1-7.1)
 - ii. http://www.masseiana.org/panarion_bk1.htm
- ii. Another understanding of Paul’s reference to “baptism for the dead” was advocated by Tertullian. He said that the term “dead” here refers to the physical body of the living person who was being baptized (since the body is the part of us that dies).
 1. From Tertullian, writing c. 207 AD:

- a. “‘What,’ asks he [*Paul*], ‘shall they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not?’ (**1 Corinthians 15:29**) ...
 - b. “...Do not then suppose that the apostle here indicates some new god as the author and advocate of this (baptism for the dead. His only aim in alluding to it was) that he might all the more firmly insist upon the resurrection of the body, in proportion as they who were vainly baptized for the dead resorted to the practice from their belief of such a resurrection.
 - c. “We have the apostle in another passage defining ‘but one baptism’ (**Ephesians 4:5**). To be ‘baptized for the dead’ therefore means, in fact, to be baptized for the body; for, as we have shown, it is the body which becomes dead. What, then, shall they do who are baptized for the body, if the body does not rise again?”
 - i. (Source: Tertullian, *Against Marcion*, book 5, chapter 10; found in *Ante-Nicene Fathers* vol. 3, pp. 449–450)
 - ii. See also a similar discussion by Tertullian in *On the Resurrection of the Flesh*, chapter 47; found in *Ante-Nicene Fathers* vol. 3, pp. 581-582.
2. John Chrysostom provided an explanation similar to that of Tertullian, in his exposition of **1 Corinthians 15:29**.
- a. “What then is Paul speaking of? But first I wish to remind you who are initiated of the response, which on that evening they who introduce you to the mysteries bid you make; and then I will also explain the saying of Paul: so this likewise will be clearer to you; we after all the other things adding this which Paul now saith. And I desire indeed expressly to utter it, but I dare not on account of the uninitiated; for these add a difficulty to our exposition, compelling us either not to speak clearly or to declare unto them the ineffable mysteries.
 - b. “Nevertheless, as I may be able, I will speak as through a veil. As thus: after the enunciation of those mystical and fearful words, and the awful rules of the doctrines which have come down from heaven, this also we add at

the end when we are about to baptize, bidding them say, 'I believe in the resurrection of the dead,' [*One of the last statements in the Apostles Creed and other similar ancient creeds that someone would confess before being baptized -CP*] and upon this faith we are baptized.

- c. "For after we have confessed this together with the rest, then at last are we let down into the fountain of those sacred streams. This therefore Paul recalling to their minds said, 'if there is no resurrection, why are you then baptized for the dead?' i.e., the dead bodies. For in fact with a view to this art thou baptized, the resurrection of thy dead body, believing that it no longer remains dead.
- d. "And you indeed in the words make mention of a resurrection of the dead..."
 - i. (Source: John Chrysostom, *Homily No. 40 on 1 Corinthians*, sections 1-2)

VIII. Conclusions and Practical Take-Aways

- a. We don't need to be baptizing people vicariously, on behalf of others who have died!
- b. Rejecting the importance of our physical bodies and rejecting belief in the resurrection of the body are both rooted in an ancient and recurring heresy. Unfortunately, that foundational misunderstanding is alive well today and has become widespread.
 - i. First may we not fall into that old heresy ourselves.
 - ii. Furthermore, let us become better equipped to explain this to other believers who are confused or who have been mistaught.
 - iii. It is important that we don't forget or overlook the spiritual importance of our bodies, our flesh. In a possible example, Tertullian asserted that when Paul made the statement, "For *this corruptible* must put on incorruption..." that he likely was pointing to or touching the surface of his own body.
 - 1. "And we undergo the change. But in what condition, if not in that wherein we shall be found? 'For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.' (1 **Corinthians 15:53**)

2. “What mortal is this but the flesh? what corruptible but the blood. Moreover, that you may not suppose the apostle to have any other meaning, in his care to teach you, and that you may understand him seriously to apply his statement to the flesh, when he says, ‘this corruptible’ and ‘this mortal,’ he utters the words while touching the surface of his own body. He certainly could not have pronounced these phrases except in reference to an object which was palpable and apparent. The expression indicates a bodily exhibition.”
 - a. (Source: Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh*, chapter 51; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 3, pp. 584–585)
 - b. A footnote to the passage quoted above, in Ante-Nicene Father vol. 3, p, 585 adds: “Rufinus says that in the church of Aquileia they touched their bodies when they recited the clause of the creed which they rendered ‘the resurrection of this body.’” Perhaps some of us might think of doing the same, as a tactile reminder to our bodies, when we are reciting the Apostles Creed?
- c. Each of us consists of three parts. We consist of a body (the flesh) a soul, and a spirit. Therefore, if you feel inner conflict in this life, that should not come as a surprise!
 - i. Our *flesh* is pulling us one way (toward lust, gluttony, selfishness, laziness, comfort, pleasure-seeking indulgence etc.).
 - ii. On the other hand, the human (God-given) *spirit* that each person has been given is drawing us upward, toward God.
 1. We see examples of that in the case of Cornelius and many others in Scripture who listened to their consciences.
 2. After the Fall of Adam and Eve we inherited a fallen human nature in our flesh, However, unlike what the Protestant Reformers taught, mankind did *NOT* become “totally depraved”.
 - iii. Paul said, “I discipline my body and bring it into subjection”, setting a powerful and convicting example for us. This hard treatment of the body ultimately is good for our body (flesh) as well, since it will participate together with our soul and spirit in what comes after.
 1. This principle also applies to that exceptionally difficult-to-control part of our bodies, the tongue. If we do not bridle and control that part, our religion is *useless*. It will send us to hell.

2. Some early Christian writers described our struggle in this life as being similar to that of a charioteer in a chariot yoked to strong horses that pull it. If the charioteer does not restrain the impulses of the horses (representing the desires of our flesh), both the horses and the charioteer will suffer the consequences! Examples employing this type of imagery include:
 - a. “Let the soul restrain the provocations of the flesh; let it bridle the impulses of the body. For it has received this power, that the limbs should be subservient to its command; and as a lawful and accomplished charioteer, it should turn about the fleshly impulses when they lift themselves above the allowed limits of the body, by the reins of the heavenly precepts, lest that chariot of the body, carried away beyond its limits, should hurry into its own peril the charioteer himself as well as it.”
 - i. (Source: *Of the Discipline and Advantage of Chastity* [originally attributed to Cyprian, but considered of uncertain authorship]; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 5, p. 591)
 - b. “But irrational impulses must be curbed, lest, carrying us away through excessive relaxation, they impel us to voluptuousness. For luxury, that has dashed on to surfeit, is prone to kick up its heels and toss its mane, and shake off the charioteer, the Instructor; who, pulling back the reins from far, leads and drives to salvation the human horse—that is, the irrational part of the soul—which is wildly bent on pleasures, and vicious appetites, and precious stones, and gold, and variety of dress, and other luxuries.”
 - i. (Source: Clement of Alexandria, *The Instructor*, book 3, chapter 11; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 2, p. 284)
 - c. “And therefore, we ought rather to effect this [*desire that perseveres, producing self-restraint*], that we may rightly direct the affections, a corrupt use of which is vice. For these excitements of the mind resemble a harnessed chariot, in the right management of which the chief duty of the driver is to know the way; and if he shall keep to this, with whatever swiftness he may go, he will not strike against an obstacle. But if he shall

wander from the course, although he may go calmly and gently, he will either be shaken over rough places, or will glide over precipices, or at any rate will be carried where he does not need to go. So that chariot of life which is led by the affections as though by swift horses, if it keeps the right way, will discharge its duty.”

- i. (Source: Lactantius, *The Divine Institutes*; book 6, chapter 17; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 7, p. 182)

3. Our flesh wants to gratify its own selfish, carnal desires.
 - a. It is drawn to all forms of sexual immorality and indulgence (fornication, adultery, lust, pornography, homosexual relations and all kinds of depravity.
 - b. It is drawn to gluttony, drunkenness, sensuality, jealousy toward others, and living for physical pleasure.
 - c. It wants to indulge in laziness. First thing in the morning, it wants you to be a sluggard and linger in bed, rather than to get up, pray, and get into the Word of God.
 - d. It does not care about meeting the needs of others and lacks empathy regarding the plight of the poor and needy. It is consumed with satisfying its own selfish desires.
 - e. Its desires are described in the “works of the flesh” listed in **Galatians 5:19-21**.
4. Pleasure is not all bad. However, living to maximize pleasure will send us off the spiritual cliff. God puts limits on our sexual pleasure (restricted to within marriage only, to one person). He allows us to enjoy food and rest, but not to the point where it becomes sin (in gluttony or laziness).
5. Paul said, “...I *discipline my body and bring it into subjection*, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.” (**1 Corinthians 9:27**, NKJV)
 - a. This is the attitude each of us needs to have toward his or her own flesh, so that we don’t end up being disqualified from the eternal prize we seek.

- b. One of the hardest parts of the body to discipline is the tongue, that small flapping part that is located within the mouth. James reminded us of how hard, yet how important, it is to bring that part of our body under control, as well.
 - i. “If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not *bridle his tongue* but deceives his own heart, this one’s religion is useless.” (**James 1:26**, NKJV)
 - ii. “And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.” (**James 3:6–8**, NKJV)
 - iii. This part of our flesh, the tongue, wants to curse, gossip, slander and speak evil of others. For many of us, this is the hardest part of the entire body to keep under control!

6. Importance of denying our flesh, in spiritual fasting.

- a. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus did not say “*if* you fast”. He said, “*when* you fast”. (**Matthew 6:16-17**) He assumed that His followers would be fasting after His departure. (**Luke 5:35**)
 - i. It was a common practice in the early church for Christians to fast *twice a week*, on Wednesdays and Fridays. (See *Didache* in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 1, p. 379; Clement of Alexandria in ANF vol. 2, p. 544; Peter of Alexandria in ANF vol. 6, p. 278; *Apostolic Constitutions* in ANF vol. 7, pp. 445, 469 and 504)
 - ii. **Question:** Why don’t modern Christians fast as regularly and frequently as they did in the early church?

1. **Obvious Answer:** *Our flesh* does not want us to fast! Fasting is, among other things, a denial of the desires of the flesh.
- d. Our hope is in the return of Jesus Christ, and the resurrection of the dead. He will destroy all the kingdoms of the world. He will defeat His last enemy, death. Just as promised in the prophecies.
 - i. If that is not true, Paul and we are wasting our time here. “Let us eat and drink...” (1 Corinthians 15:32)
 - e. We need to be careful regarding the company we keep, and the influences we allow into our lives.
 - i. “Do not be deceived: ‘Evil company corrupts good habits.’ Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame.” (1 Corinthians 15:33–34, NKJV)
 - ii. Do not be deceived. You will be influenced by those close to you, whether they are appealing to your flesh or to your spirit.
 1. While this refers directly to the people who will influence us, the same principle applies to books and articles we read, the internet and other media we watch, and the music we listen to.
 2. *Do not be deceived.* Don’t fool yourself. You are not ‘above it’. They will influence you for better or for worse.
 3. **Challenge:** If these things (or people who are bad influences) are pulling you away from God, be open with a trusted brother or sister, get help and uproot these bad influences from your life.
 - f. **Closing Challenge:** Draw close to the people and things that will draw you toward God. *Don’t gratify the desires of the flesh!*