

## HOW CHRIST TRANSFORMS YOUR BUCKET LIST

1 Cor. 15:29-32

Turn back to 1 Cor. 15...

Who knows what a bucket list is? – It's that list of things you want to do in life before you 'kick the bucket', before you die.

Before 2007, nobody had heard of this. – But what brought us this new term was a hit movie that year, entitled, *The Bucket List*, featuring Morgan Freeman & Jack Nicholson. – While in the hospital, they meet and both find out they have cancer and have less than a year to live.

Freeman is a mechanic, and Nicholson is a billionaire. – They decide to leave their families behind and launch out on a final adventure of completing their bucket list. – They go skydiving, get tattoos, drive a fancy car, do a safari, see the pyramids, and the Great Wall of China (all the while discussing what really matters in life).

Behind this new trend of 'bucket lists' are the old ideas of Epicureanism & Hedonism: 'You only live once, so live it up. If there is no eternity & no resurrection & no life to come, then grab all you can now. Seize the day, because there's nothing after this.' –

It's the essence of secularism: live for the *seculum* (Lat.) "this age", the here-and-now. – I.e., 'Eternity doesn't exist, or can't be known. Right now is all that there is, so live it up. If you don't satisfy yourself & pursue your pleasures *now*, you never will.'

That's the world's bucket list, for those who walk by sight, not by faith, who live for what you can see in the present, not what is unseen in the future (2 Cor. 4:16-18; 5:7).

Christian, what's on your bucket list? – More importantly: *How has Christ changed your bucket list?* –

HOW does your hope in a risen Lord and in His promise to raise you one day, how does that hope transform your bucket list and your life priorities?

Stand & Read & Pray:

Give title...

**\*TWO WAYS that Christ & the hope of resurrection transforms your bucket list:** (I.e., Two things you should never do *unless* God will raise your body one day!)

### 1. v. 29, GET BAPTISED

v. 29 – What in the world is this "baptism for the dead"? – First, let's expose & debunk the most deadly & wrong answer today:

The Mormon view (also known as Latter Day Saints, LDS). – One of their pamphlet is on the 17 marks of the "True Church", and mark #16 is: "The True Church Must Practice Baptism for the Dead". –

So we've gone from one obscure comment of Paul in 1 Cor. 15, mentioned nowhere else in all the Bible, or in early church history until the 2<sup>nd</sup> c., and then only by heretics, to one of the 17 top marks of a true church?! – I think that's a big red flag. (NB, 2 Pet. 3, Peter tells that already in the 1<sup>st</sup> c., a favt practice of false teachers was to take hard statements of Paul and "twist them...to their own destruction".)

Here's the Mormon view on v.29, "the baptism for the dead": That if you have deceased loved ones who did not convert to Mormonism, you can be baptised on their behalf so they are rescued out of "spirit prison" and enter Paradise. – See, Mormons hold to a doctrine of the 2<sup>nd</sup>-chance, that you still get a chance to be saved after death. –

So Mormons say that redeeming the dead is the "greatest responsibility we have in this world" (sounding a lot like pre-Reformation Catholic church selling indulgences). – So their view of "baptism for the dead" is an essential way that the deceased are offered salvation in the afterlife. –

Which is why their Family History Centres are so important, for researching your family genealogy so that you can evangelise all your deceased loved ones and get them out of "spirit prison".

+ Mormons active in South Africa; any cause for concern? – Large temple here in Parktown, with its 6 spires (can see clearly from the M1 headed south into Joburg; plus many other churches around.) – 147 congregations, 55,000 members countrywide. (Book of Mormon translated into Zulu & Xhosa; continent-wide in Africa: 1,172 churches, 390,000+ members)

+ Tell James White story about girl who came up to him after a debate:

She testified of being baptised 50x for 50 ancestors, but then she claims to see a 51<sup>st</sup> spirit on back wall of temple, still looking at her & pleading for release; so she pleads with her priest to baptise her one more time...

So the leaders rush and dig into their genealogical databases and eventually find this 51<sup>st</sup> ancestor, and then baptise her one more time to release this last ancestor, and she has perfect peace at last, and it is her ultimate proof that the Mormon faith is true....

So tragically deceived.

REBUTTAL to Mormon view: Not at all what Paul had in mind here; such a view contradicts everything Paul & the whole NT says about salvation, on death, and on baptism. – I will show in a minute what I believe Paul is saying here. – But also for replying to a Mormon:

The NT never teaches that baptism saves anyone, so that would include the dead. – We are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone: read the Gospels, Acts, Romans, or the epistles!

[→Have YOU experienced this salvation? – Are YOU saved?!...]

Plus, note this phrase in v. 29, "if the dead are not raised": it is repeated exactly in v. 32, "if the dead are not raised". – From v. 12 onwards, "the dead" throughout chp. 15 refers only to one group/category of people (vv. 13,15,16,18,20,21,22, etc.):

Christians who have died, deceased believers. – Contextually, it cannot refer to all the deceased; it can only refer to Christians.

Scripture is clear: There is NO 2<sup>nd</sup>-chance after death: Heb. 9:27...

2 Cor. 6:2, “Now, today is the day of salvation”, *before* you die and it’s too late and there is NO more opportunity.

Luke 16:26 (Abraham speaking), “there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here [Heaven/Abraham’s bosom] to you [in Hades] will not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us.”

And get this: Not only is this Mormon doctrine of baptising for the dead unbiblical & heretical; it is also not taught *anywhere* in the Book of Mormon – not even mentioned once.

→ I pray that God would use us and true churches across this land to reach & rescue many who are trapped in this Satanic stronghold of Mormonism. (If you want to study more, see YouTube debates between James White & Mormon scholars, or visit [www.aomin.org](http://www.aomin.org))

WHAT THEN does v. 29 mean? (Only about 40 different interpretations have been suggested!) – Of all the views, there are a few that make decent sense of the context, and don’t violate any other major biblical doctrine. –

I think we have to say here that Paul is using this positively, to bolster his argument and the point he’s making and about to make further. – Whatever this practise of baptising for the dead was, it was something based on the hope of bodily resurrection, something only explainable in light of our belief in Christ’s resurrection. –

Otherwise, why mention it, if it would only weaken his whole point?

So then, here’s the view that makes the most sense to me (based on the context and on Paul’s normal use of his key words here: “baptised”, “for”, and “the dead”):

‘Because Christ has risen, it makes sense that you get baptised “for, on account of, because of” the faithful testimony and the heavenly hope of those Christians who’ve gone on before you’.

These may have been “dead” because of martyrdom? – Cf. vv. 30ff, Paul has the “danger” of serving Christ in view in those hostile days. May have just been “dead” loved ones in Christ. –

I.e., ‘After your dear Christian parent or sibling or neighbour, on his/her deathbed, said those last words to you, “Meet me in Heaven, meet me on the other side”, God used that to convict your heart of your sin and your need for the Saviour, and soon after you gave your life to Christ and got baptised.’

Or, ‘You saw God call home that faithful saint or martyr in your church, but that left a gaping hole in the church, an aching void. So you wanted to fill the ranks, to be the next soldier for Christ to stand in the gap left by that saint that died.’

'And like that dying saint, you too are clinging to the home of a new body one day! And that will make any amount of suffering or persecution worth it. You believe Paul's words in Rom. 6:3ff:

*...that all of us who have baptised into Christ Jesus have been baptised into His death. ...Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.*

*For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection....*

→Don't miss this: Paul is speaking TO wayward believers ABOUT faithful believers. He uses the baptism of the faithful as a rebuke to the unfaithful and the confused at Corinth, who doubted the resurrection of the body.

→Christian, do you remember the day you were baptised? – Do you still need to be baptised? (If so, fill out an appl form today!) – *There is no more profound public moment in the life of a Christian than the day of their baptism.* (repeat)

It is a funeral & a wedding for you, all-in-one! (And really a birthday also, since baptism was normally was the first response of a new convert, viewed as part of the conversion event itself.) –

It's the day you publicly declare that you are married & joined to Christ, in His dying & His rising. – Col. 2:12 sums it up: *...having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised [Christ] from the dead.*

Reread: 1 Cor. 15:29...

## **2. vv. 30-32, LIVE DANGEROUSLY for Christ**

~ "There is nothing gained by timidity and nothing lost by holy boldness." – That was Paul!

Now for more behaviour that affirms the truth of Christ's resurrection (and makes no sense without it)...

NB, Paul prefaces v. 31 with these words:

v. 31a – Paul uses a rare Grk word here, employed only in solemn oaths, when swearing or invoking divine sanction on what you are about to say. –

I.e., 'I solemnly affirm, O Corinthians, that you are my boast in the Lord. Your very existence, as saved & and as gathered in that church, are the fruit of my labours & suffering for the gospel.' ("I protest", ESV)

I.e., 'I was willing to sacrifice all for you, so that we all together might share in this hope of the resurrection!'

vv. 30-31 – "Every hour...die daily"? – 'C'mon Paul, aren't you exaggerating? Preachers are prone to that, right?' – Answer: Judge for yourself –

Look over at Rom. 8:35-36 (nb, v. 36, “all day long”)... “I die daily”

And 1 Cor. 4:9-13... “I die daily”

From the moment of Paul’s conversion in Damascus, they were trying to kill him. – His very commission, his job description from the start, was that Christ would show him “how much he must suffer” for Christ’s name (Acts 9:16).

As somebody once said, ‘When Paul entered a new town, he didn’t start by looking for a nice B&B to stay in; he started by checking out the prison accommodation’, b/c he knew he’d end up there, if not in the cemetery! –

Because of the gospel, Paul was a hunted man with a price on his head.

These Corinthians letters drip with the reality of Paul’s suffering for the gospel; every page is stained with Paul’s blood & tears...

2 Cor. 1:8-9... “I die daily”

And 2 Cor. 4:8-12... “I die daily”

And 2 Cor. 11:23-27... “I die daily”

Paul was not exaggerating when he said in Gal. 6:17, “For I bear on my body the brand-marks of Jesus”.

But WHY BOTHER? – If eternity doesn’t await us, then save yourself the trouble! – If Jesus’ body was still decomposing back in Jerusalem, and if Paul’s beaten & bruised body would not rise one day, then all his suffering was pointless....

→ Vance Havner said, “The hope of dying is the only thing that keeps me alive.” – Could you say that? – Do you live dangerously & take risks for Christ?!...

→ v. 31c, “dying daily” – Is there not also a spiritual principle for us here, for daily Christian living? –

Mark 8:34, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must.... For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever wishes to lose his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it....”

~ C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*:

*We are not merely imperfect creatures who must be improved: we are....rebels who must lay down our arms. ...To surrender a self-will enflamed and swollen with years of usurping [God’s throne. To surrender such a habitual selfishness] is a kind of death.*

*...Hence the necessity to die daily: however often we think we have broken the rebellious self, we shall still find it alive.*

→ Is your Christian life a constant demonstration of saying NO to self (cf. Titus 2:12), a regular exhibit of self-crucifixion? (cf. Php. 3:10ff)...

Are we willing to die a thousand deaths to see lost people come to Christ??... (and to die daily deaths to be holy, etc.?)...

v. 32a – It is unlikely that Paul, a Roman citizen, would've been forced to fight beasts in the arena (cf. Acts 22:25-29, where he stood on his legal rights; plus, never mentioned in any of his catalogues of what he suffered; plus, few ever survived such an ordeal).

Rather, he is probably speaking metaphorically here, of the bloodthirsty mob in Ephesus that wanted to kill him, cf. Acts 18-19. Paul's preaching elicited from some an anger, hostility, and ferociousness that could only be compared to "wild beasts" and hungry predators, licking their lips (1 Cor. 1-2, "word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing", a stone of stumbling & rock of offense).

He speaks later in 2 Tim. 4 of being delivered "from the lion's mouth".

From human motives – Lit, "according to man", not according to God or eternity or any hope of the resurrection or a new body one day. –

I.e., Paul is saying 'You think I would endure all I've suffered for Christ if I only operated from an earthly mindset, with no hope of resurrection, no eternal horizon, only this temporary life in view? Forget it!'

v. 32b – Ah, there it is – the exact, logical, rational conclusion you must reach IF Christ never rose & our bodies never rise: Party like there's no tomorrow, live it up, go for the gusto! –

Why choose to suffer if you don't have to; that makes no sense!

+ If there is no life beyond the grave, then join the rich man in Jesus' parable in Luke 12, who says to himself: 'I've got plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink & be merry'.

~ "Resurrection means endless hope, but no resurrection means a hopeless end – and hopelessness breeds dissipation." (partying, wasteful living, debauchery) (Garland)

v. 32b...

+ Same year as God saved me, 1989, Steve Camp came out with a song, "[Living Dangerously In The Hands Of God](#)". – It struck a chord with my newfound zeal for Christ, and I wore out that cassette!:

*How easily Jesus is forgotten amid the comfort of my life  
How the flames become a flicker, and faith a brilliant disguise  
Our Sundays become a holiday, and prayer an empty exercise  
And the cost of real devotion seems so foreign to my life*

*Chorus:*

*Oh, to gladly risk it all, oh to be faithful to His call  
Abandoned to grace yet anchored in His love  
Living dangerously in the hands of God*

*Spoken:*

*There's safety in complacency, but God is calling us out of our comfort zone into a life of complete surrender to the cross. To live dangerously is not to live recklessly but righteously. And it is because of God's radical grace for us that we can risk living a life of*

*radical obedience for Him.*

*For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth, that He may strongly support those whose hearts are completely His. (2 Chronicles 16:9 NASB)*

→Beloved, what risks are you taking that are absurd to the world? – What choices are you making that make no sense if Christ did not rise & we shall not rise one day? – What things do we do that make the world scratch their head?! (Not just super-radical, but daily & weekly priorities)

Your praying, your witnessing, your worshipping?

Your giving, your discipling of others?

Your adopting, going into missions, going to hard places, reaching difficult people?...

Risking business? Family & friendships b/c of your witness for Christ?...

Reread: vv. 30-32b...

## **CONCL.**

Ps. 90:12, "Teach us to number our days". – But it depends on how you count. – Before conversion, we number our days selfishly, and with only earthly, temporal dreams. – But now, in Christ, we number our days very differently. –

We live in the hope of the resurrection, of seeing Christ, of new bodies, of heavenly reward, of eternal pleasures at God's right hand. – That hope changes everything, and completely rearranges our priorities.

+ Can I share with you my bucket list? – This was a helpful exercise. – By God's grace, and because Christ has risen & I shall rise one day, before I die I would love to:

- (1) Keep growing as a more Christlike husband to Michelle, with a happy & holy marriage until one of us buries the other.
- (2) Raise kids & grandkids (and great grandkids, if God allows) who love Christ & His Word & His Church above all else.
- (3) Stay faithful to regular Bible reading, memorising & meditating, regular prayer habits, and habits of personal holiness and regular witnessing and Christian reading.
- (4) For Antioch to stay faithful as a God-centred, Bible-teaching pillar of truth in Joburg, winning the lost, building up the saints, worshipping with passionate reverence, and loving one another.
- (5) See Antioch raising up young Christian leaders armed with a biblical worldview, and to see us strengthening other churches, and training preachers, church planters, and biblical counsellors to bless the nations.

- (6) To see the first Protestant Reformation in Africa in our time, where false gospels are exposed & renounced and the true gospel proclaimed, and the authority & sufficiency of Scripture unleashed on this continent.
- (7) To preach through every verse in the Bible before I die.

*What is YOUR bucket list? – How should Christ & the Christian hope transform YOUR bucket list?*