

Prayers

To God

Pray by looking at a photograph of something you love dearly, a person, a scene or such. Let the Lord God speak to you through this.

For myself

Lord Jesus Christ, may Your wisdom be my guide as I think about what I do today; may Your Light be my guide as I seek to discern Your Word to me; and may Your love be my inspiration as I go about my daily work. I long to know Your presence ever closer each day, and live in obedience to Your Word and Your counsel to me in every detail of my daily living; all praise to You Lord Jesus Christ: AMEN

For others

Pray for Christian leaders who have to deal with the difficult issues of church life, such as safeguarding financial management, and property. Yet all are important and must be dealt with properly.

Meditation

Let us truly honour God, and respect each other, always.

Let us give Him thanks for the privileges of our salvation
Let us offer Him all of our lives, without argument or deviation
Let us love everyone He has placed us with, unquestionably
Let us give time, each day, to study and read His Word
Let us support the church, God's people, in good times and ill
Let us do all in our power to assist the poor as Christ would do
Let us donate our wealth and assets to His work and service
Let us spend time each day to talk with the Lord through prayer
Let us take every opportunity to speak to others about Jesus
Let us show love and care for others, in every way open to us

Let us truly honour God, and respect each other, always.

Bible Passage

1 Corinthians 15:12-34

¹² If it is preached that Christ is raised from the dead, how then can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³ For surely, if there is no resurrection of the dead, neither has Christ been raised, ¹⁴ and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is folly and your faith is folly. ¹⁵ Moreover, if it is true that the dead are not raised, then we are exposed as people who give false evidence about God, because we have testified about Him that He raised Christ, when He did not raise Him! ¹⁶ Now if the dead are not raised, then neither has Christ been raised, ¹⁷ and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless and you are still in your sins, ¹⁸ moreover, those who have

died in Christ are lost. ¹⁹ So then, if we have placed our hope in Christ for this life alone, we are the most pitiable of all people!

²⁰ But in fact Christ has now been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. ²¹ For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead came also through a man. ²² For as all die in Adam, so all will be given life in Christ; ²³ but each one in due order: Christ the first fruits, then at His coming, those who are Christ's.

²⁴ Then comes the End, when He hands over the kingdom to the One who is God and Father, when He has destroyed every rule and every authority and power. ²⁵ For He must reign until He has put all his enemies under His feet, ²⁶ and the last enemy to be destroyed is death, ²⁷ for

‘He has put all things in subjection under His feet.’

Now, when it says,

‘All things are put in subjection,’

it is clear that this excludes the One who put all things in subjection under Him. ²⁸ So when all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subjected to the One who put all things in subjection under Him, so that God may be all in all.

²⁹ If there is no resurrection, what will happen to those who are baptised on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised, why are people baptised for them?

³⁰ And why then do we risk danger all the time? ³¹ I swear by the pride I have of you in Christ Jesus our Lord; I face death every day! ³² Now, if I fought with wild animals at Ephesus for purely human reasons, what good is that to me? And if the dead are not raised, then ‘let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die!’

³³ Do not be deceived, for ‘bad company corrupts decent morals.’ ³⁴ Now do what is right, return to your senses, and stop sinning! For some have held on to ignorant talk about God; I say this to your shame!

Review

I take the view that in verse 29, where Paul speaks about those who are baptised 'for the dead' (elsewhere 'on behalf of the dead') this needs to be explained because it is so weird. There are two reasonable and acceptable interpretations that fit the language used:

1. The baptism is vicarious; i.e. a person in a family who professes faith has died before they can receive baptism, because in some parts of the early church, baptism was done only once a year at Easter. So at the Easter service, the relatives of these dead people symbolically received baptism on their behalf (one meaning of the Greek 'hyper' as used here). Whether they were 'dunked' or not is not known, but the general picture of this happening is close to the experience of the early church. This emphasises the GREAT importance of baptism to the early church. People wanted to meet their relatives in heaven, and make sure of it!

2. The baptism is done on believers who have been influenced by Christians who have died. Imagine this. Someone has become a martyr, and the extreme and terrible circumstances of this have rocked a church; but as a consequence, some who were wavering have accepted faith! At their baptism, they declare that by the grace of God they have found faith through the death of one who has already gone to heaven, and they accept

baptism 'for the sake of' or 'on account of' the dead martyr (again, a correct use of the Greek 'hyper'). Some feel that this is more far fetched, but be careful to dismiss this if you have not yourself been in a situation where you have known someone who has been martyred. God's power through such extreme events is extraordinary, and the early Church knew all about it.

I'm not sure whether we can ever sort exactly what Paul meant here until we ask him in heaven (and we want to know a lot more from Paul!). However, setting out such things can help people get into the shoes of other Christians of the first century, and perhaps begin to empathise with Christians of our own times who have very different experiences to our own.

Discipleship

Application

Ideas for what to do

Questions (for use in groups)

Final Prayer