

# EQUIPPING THE SAINTS

“...FOR THE EQUIPPING OF THE SAINTS FOR THE WORK OF SERVICE...” ~ EPHESIANS 4:12

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## **DON'T BE DECEIVED: “BAD COMPANY CORRUPTS GOOD MORALS”**

By Andrew Dow

Christians can be deceived. The Bible warns, **“See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception”** (Col 2:8). As disciples of Christ, we need to realize that deception threatens our spiritual well-being. Too many Christians have put their guard down, given into deception, and fallen away from truth. To warn us of a potential deception, Paul writes, **“Do not be deceived: ‘Bad company corrupts good morals.’ Become sober-minded as you ought, and stop sinning; for some have no knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame”** (1 Cor 15:33–34).

### **The Context of 1 Corinthians 15:33–34**

First Corinthians 15 contains Paul’s longest discourse on the resurrection. Paul is combating some false ideas that had made their way into the church—**“How do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?”** (v. 12). So, Paul takes time to defend resurrection.

Paul begins by showing that Christ was raised. First, He was seen post-resurrection by many people (vv. 5–10). Anyone who denied Christ’s resurrection could talk to the eyewitnesses! Second, Christ’s resurrection is fundamental to the faith of all Christians (vv. 12–19). **“If Christ has not been raised then our preaching is vain, your faith also**

**is vain**” (v. 14). Finally, Paul uses Christ's resurrection to argue for the coming resurrection of all men (vv. 20–24). Paul suggests that Christ is **“the first fruits, after that those who are Christ’s [will be raised] at His coming”** (vv. 22–23).

After Paul makes the case for our future resurrection, he proceeds to ask rhetorical questions that show the silliness of living without the hope of resurrection. First, he asks, **“If the dead are not raised at all, why then are they baptized for them?”** (v. 29). Paul is not suggesting we should be baptized on behalf of the dead. Rather, if there is no resurrection, then baptism for forgiveness is pointless. In such a terrible situation all men, whether inside or outside of Christ, will remain in the grave. Second, Paul asks, **“Why are we also in danger every hour?”** (vv. 30–32). If there is no resurrection to anticipate—if death is the end—then why suffer for Christ? It would be better to indulge yourself in this life (v. 32).

Paul concludes with a warning, **“Do not be deceived: Bad company corrupts good morals”** (v. 33). Those who would suggest **“that there is no resurrection of the dead”** (v. 12) are **“bad company.”** The Corinthians wrongly felt they could associate with anyone without repercussions. They were wrong; their companions caused them to reject their hope in Christ. Paul exhorts them to **“become sober-minded”** (v. 34). Think clearly and avoid Satan’s deception.

### **An Example: The Israelites**

What is Paul’s main point in 1 Corinthians 15:33–34? A summary might be, *“be separate.”* Don’t be deceived into thinking that you can surround yourself with false teachers or ungodly people and come out unscathed. Paul wrote them elsewhere, **“Do not be bound together with**

**unbelievers ... ‘Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate’” (2 Cor 6:14, 17). Peter wrote similarly, “Do not be conformed to the former lusts ... but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior” (1 Pet 1:14-16).**

The command to be holy was first given to Israel: **“Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy”** (Lev 11:44; cf. 19:2; 20:3, 7, 26; 21:8; 22:32). Israel was chosen to be God’s special people. As such, she was expected to be holy, unique, different, and separate from all the ungodly nations around her. Unfortunately, Israel was deceived into believing that she did not need to be holy.

Israel did not separate herself and was influenced to act against God! Hosea observed that **“Ephraim has become like a silly dove, without sense; They call to Egypt, they go to Assyria.... Woe to them for they have strayed from Me!”** (Hos 7:11-13). Israel is depicted as a foolish bird who flies into a trap without a second thought. If they had only remained separate they would have lived in peace with the Lord!

### **Application for Today**

All of this should serve as a warning to us. Israel was the chosen nation of God. Despite all of God’s care and blessings they were deceived into thinking that they could associate with the ungodly nations around them without repercussions. If it happened to Israel, it can happen to us?

The church at Corinth was established by the Apostle Paul. They had seen the signs and wonders that he performed and imparted (cf. 1 Cor 12–14). Despite all of this they were deceived into thinking that they could associate with ungodly teachers who denied the coming resurrection

and remain unharmed. If it happened to these Christians, it can happen to us?

Brethren, we need to associate with God’s people. We are not expected become hermits or recluses (cf. 1 Cor 5:9–10). We must, however, be careful with whom we choose to spend our time! We must “**become sober-minded**” in order to discern between good and bad companions. Don’t be deceived. Keeping company with the wrong people will turn you away from faith in God!

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**AM LESSON:**  
Be Zealous for Good  
(1 Peter 3:13–4:6)

**PM LESSON:**

**“GO THEREFORE AND MAKE DISCIPLES...”  
(MATTHEW 28:19-20)**