

The Glory Of The Resurrection

1 Corinthians 15:35-58
Key verse 15:49

Easter Conference 4-3-10
Shp Kevin Jesmer

“And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven.”

I thank and praise Jesus for helping us to take these last few days to think exclusively about the Gospel of Jesus’ death and resurrection. We needed this time together, to take our eyes off the perishing things of this world and focus them exclusively on what is truly important, our eternal hope in Christ. Let us review a little. From Tim Sagel’s message we have learned about the gospel of our salvation – Jesus’ death and resurrection and how Jesus’ death and resurrection solves all of our sin and death problems, which is really at the heart of all of our problems. Through Jeremy Hajek’s message, we learn about the power of the resurrection that totally discards our old nature and makes us alive in Christ. And now, we will see how Paul concludes this beautiful chapter with yet another aspect of the gospel of the resurrection called, *“The glory of the resurrection.”* The resurrection is glorious beyond our imagination. It is the glory that we must behold and it is the glory that we seek after with all of our hearts. Let’s see...

Part I: Death...A Necessary Prerequisite To The Resurrection (35-38)

There were some questions among the Corinthians, as to the nature of the resurrected bodies. Paul continues to tell us more about the resurrection of the dead. Let’s read verse 35 all together. *“But someone may ask, ‘How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?’”* Apparently, some of the people had a question about how the dead were raised. They wondered about what kind of body they would they be raised in (35). It is hard to imagine what a resurrected body will look like. We see many pictures about the resurrected Jesus but not many about the resurrected believers. As we see every day on the news, some people's bodies are victims of natural disasters. Most people who pass away are very old and their bodies as weak and frail. After death more people are being cremated. If I am ever cremated then please sprinkle half may ashes over NIU campus and the other half over the Hamburger University campus. It is so beautiful here. These Corinthians couldn’t imagine what a resurrected body would look like. Would it look like a scene from the movie *Zombie Land*? Would it be like a huge nursing home convention? So in their confusion, some people asked, *“How are the dead raised?”* They did not understand the very nature of the resurrection. So, Paul sets out to explain the facts.

Paul did not accept their misunderstanding. Look at verse 36a. *“How foolish!”* Paul considers such unbelieving speculation as foolish. Why? It is because God has revealed the resurrection so clearly to us. Let’s think about it is and then you will say, *“Dah! How foolish!”* Since it is spring, we can see the resurrection revealed clearly in nature. Look at the ground outside. What do you see? Yes! Beautiful lilies are blossoming through cold dark earth. A beautiful plant is produced from a lowly, ordinary bulb. God has provided this evidence about the nature of the resurrection. Romans 1:19-20 reads, *“since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.”*²⁰ *For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made,*

so that men are without excuse.” To Paul, and to those who have eyes to see the glory of God in this created world, it is foolish to question the resurrection. So through this message let us cast off all foolishness and believe!

Let’s think more about Paul’s metaphor of a seed and a plant. Let’s read verses 36b- 38, “...*What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. 37When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. 38But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body.*” It is natural law that a seed must die if a beautiful plant is ever to come to life, producing a colorful blossom full of life and beauty. We can say that the death of the seed is a necessary prerequisite for the beautiful plant. More than that, we do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed. Then God gives it a body. To each kind of seed he gives its own body. If we sow an apple seed, an apple tree will grow. If we sow an orange seed, an orange tree is produced. Our physical bodies are like seeds. And, like seeds, our bodies necessarily should die order to receive a glorious, new resurrection body with all of its accompanying eternal beauty and glory.

It is interesting to note that that Paul states, “*What you sow does not come to life unless it dies.*” (36b) People tend to think that their lives in this world and in this “*seed like*” body are everything. They equate living with only breathing, eating, resting and being entertained. Now that’s living! Not really. They don’t seem to care if their hearts are lifeless or if the vitality of their bodies is being smothered by the dead and perishing hopes in this world. They claim that they are alive but in reality they are like the living death. Paul sets us straight here. According to Paul, compared to our resurrection bodies, the seed of our present bodies has not even come to life yet! The seed of our present body is lifeless compared the explosion of life that is going to be revealed at the time of the resurrection. We will be infused with so much life, that we won’t even be able to handle it, unless we are changed.

But must we wait until we all pass away in our old age until we taste it? No. Listen again to what Paul says, “*What you sow does not come to life unless it dies.*” This brings to mind a resurrection principle. This resurrection principle is spoken of by Jesus in John 12:24, Jesus says, “*I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.*” Jesus also tells us that our bodies are like seeds that must fall the ground and die, in order for fruit to be born and for us to gain life. In Jennifer Jesmer’s message we learn of Jesus’ bold declaration about himself. Do you remember? Jesus said, “*I am the resurrection and the life. He who lives and believes in me will live, even though he dies; and he who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?*” We can get a taste of the glory of the resurrection and the resurrected life, not decades from now, but even today. God will manifest the glory of the resurrection in us, as we allow this earthly body to fall to the ground and die. This can be done by deciding to believe in Jesus and living for Jesus and his precious gospel. Then we will begin to taste the life of God flowing though your soul.

Paul saw this fact in the faces of the first believers. In the Book of Acts, Stephen, a faithful man of God, was just about to give a long discourse concerning the coming Messiah to the enemies of God. He would be stoned for this. But before the discourse the Bible says, “*All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.*” (Acts 6:15) Stephen had been allowing “seed”, his body to fall to the ground

and die for the glory of God. And the glory of the resurrection was being revealed in him. There is evidence of this even among us. Look at Monica Barry. She is in her retirement years, but she has applied the resurrection principle in her life. She is laying down her life for Jesus. Recently she came back from Uganda serving a medical mission there. She is not planning a quiet retirement but planning how she can continually allow her seed to fall to the ground for the glory of God. She is youthful and glorious. In front of my computer is Mother Sarah Barry. She is in her late seventies in the photo and just had hip replacement surgery. And yet she is in the Middle East riding a camel smiling from ear to ear! She is full of life and vitality because she practically lets her body fall to the ground and die serving Jesus. She is glorious too. I can see many among you who are manifesting some of the glory of the resurrection as you lay down your lives for Jesus. To all those who think that living life with a dead feeling in your hearts and powerlessness in your limbs is normal, it is not normal. Come to Jesus. Hear his word. Allow your seeds to fall to the ground and die. You will cross over from death to life (John 5:24) and a glimpse of the glory of the resurrection will be manifest in you too!

Part II: The Glory Of The Resurrection (39-49)

Paul changes his metaphors from flora to fauna and then to the celestial in order to explained more about the glory of the resurrection. Listen to what he says in verses 39b-41, “...*All flesh is not the same: Men have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another. 40There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendor of the earthly bodies is another. 41The sun has one kind of splendor, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor.*” Here Paul is trying to establish the fact that just every body in our universe has its own purpose and splendor. There are many kinds of bodies: animals, people, birds and fish. Each has been given a physical body in order to live in this world. Each has its own unique splendor. Have you ever seen a lion in the wild take down a wildebeest? (Go to an African Summer Bible Conference and you might see it.) Have you seen a huge marlin fish fly through the air after breaking through the surface of the ocean? Have you taken time to see the moon and the stars on a cloudless night? Come to DeKalb on a cloudless night and you will be amazed! Just as there are earthly bodies, there are also heavenly bodies. We can not go to heaven and dwell their in our present bodies. Do you really want to? I don’t think so. Our heavenly bodies will be uniquely equipped to spend eternal life in heaven with Jesus forever. Let’s learn more about our resurrection bodies!

The nature of the resurrection body is necessarily different from our physical bodies. Look at verses 42-44b. “*So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.*” We all want to live a glorious life, forever in this world. But the reality is we are perishing. Even the bodies star Olympians will be disintegrate in the earth. The Bible refers to our bodies as being like jars of clay. (Rom 4:7) Jars of clay crumble to dust. Some people may look strong. But even a tiny flu bug makes them powerless. In our jars of clay, we discover our weaknesses and limitations. In these bodies we suffer from constant temptation from our sinful desires. We get weaker and weaker and finally, in the end, we become dishonorable. We can not and must not live forever in these jars of clay!!

The spiritual body is fully equipped to dwell with Jesus forever in the Kingdom of God. Look at verses 42b-44 again. The spiritual body is not limited. It is imperishable, glorious, powerful, and, of course, spiritual. Our bodies will be changed into these resurrection bodies. I am very happy about this. I will not go to heaven with my pot belly that doesn't seem to go away, nor with my tired muscles, vague anxieties and sinful heart. No way! All those in Christ will be given an imperishable, glorious, powerful resurrection body.

But how is this fantastic transformation possible? Look at verses 45-48, “*45So it is written: "The first man Adam became a living being^l; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit."* *46The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual.* *47The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven.* *48As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the man from heaven, so also are those who are of heaven.”* The reality is that we are born of the dust, born in the likeness of the earthly man. But at the resurrection we will bear the likeness of Christ. We can not change inner selves, no matter how much we try. Flesh gives birth to flesh and spirit gives birth to spirit. (Jn 3:6) You can exercise and take all the vitamins you want. On our own there is no way. But there is a way in Christ! Look at verse 45 again. We can and will be changed through the life giving spirit of Jesus. Praise God!

What will our resurrection bodies look like? Let's read verse 49. “*And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we^{li} bear the likeness of the man from heaven.*” To put it simply, our resurrection bodies will be like that of Jesus after his own resurrection. Jesus rose with a different body. He was not in the tortured body that he died in on the cross. He rose up through his burial clothes. (Jn 20:7) He passed through locked doors. (Jn 20:19) He ate with his disciples. He rose up into the air. (Acts 1:9). Jesus gave his three top disciples a glimpse of full glory while on the mount of transfiguration. “*²There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light.*” (Matt 17:2) John, in his Book Of Revelation, saw the glorious Jesus in a vision and wrote about him. “*I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, ¹³and among the lampstands was someone "like a son of man,"^[a] dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. ¹⁴His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. ¹⁵His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. ¹⁶In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance..*” (Rev 1:12-16) This image of the resurrection Jesus, in his full glory, was so magnificent that John fell as though dead. The Bible says that when Jesus comes again, we shall be like him. (1 John 3:2) Just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven. (49) Will we recognize each other in heaven? You bet we will. Paul says that star differs from star in splendor. We will be unique as we are now. I will take one look at Julie and say, “*Julie, Before I thought you were the most beautiful woman in the world, but wow! Look at you now!*”

Part III: Seek After The Glory Of The Resurrection

Our upcoming resurrection is glorious. Our resurrection bodies will be glorious! This is the glory that we should desire the most and seek the most while living in this world. The sad reality is that most people live for physical glory more than the glory of the resurrection. Physical glory

is the glory of the flesh – the physical body. People waste their entire lives chasing physical glory, that actually eludes them. Spending their time seeking worldly glory is akin to polishing the seed that God has given them, never allowing it to fall to the ground and die. Such people are ignoring Jesus and heavenly glory for the perishing things of this world.

But Christians are different. Christians are those who seek after heavenly glory with their whole hearts! Heavenly glory is spiritual glory. True Christians know that their immortal souls can never be happy until it achieves heavenly glory. True Christians know that their physical bodies are only seeds compared to the heavenly body God has in store for them. For these reasons and more, they seek spiritual glory with all of their hearts.

In this life I have a tendency to live for physical glory. I enjoy it when people perceive me as a noble father. I enjoy it when I sing with the Kish-wau-keys Barbershop singers at local nursing homes. Hey! A person has to start somewhere. I enjoy the feelings I get when people respect me as a nurse. I enjoy being tall and relatively healthy. All of these things are earthly glory and they tempt me to ignore Jesus and seek after the recognition and praise of the world. Sometimes desire for this glory supersedes my desires for heavenly glory and my seeking after heavenly glory wanes. But I learn from this passage that I must repent and seek heavenly glory the most. It is hard at times, but I know that through the life giving spirit of Jesus and his gospel, Jesus has provided a way for me and all of us.

Part IV: Ultimate victory (50-58)

Paul tells of the ultimate victory we have in Jesus. Let's read verses 51-52, *"Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed-in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed"* (51-52). Here, the trumpet sound signals the Second Coming of Jesus. At that time Jesus will come again as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Jesus, *"himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first."*¹⁷ *After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air."* We will be changed and dwell with our beloved Lord Jesus forever. (1 Thess 4:16-17) The last day is a day of judgment for the enemies of God, but it is a day of salvation for all who are in Christ.

We suffer a lot because the elements of death, like fear, despair, sorrow and fatalism. These have a tenacious hold on us causing stinging pain. But on that great day, the power of death will be completely destroyed. When Jesus comes again the elements of death no longer have any hold. Look at verses 54-56. Let's read those together, *"54When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."^[c] 55"Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"^[d] 56The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."* More than that, death will be swallowed up in victory, completely defeated forever more. Knowing this caused Paul to shout, *"Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"* We all want the mantra of our lives to be victory shout. But only in Jesus, who destroyed the power of death, through his resurrection, can give us the victory that we all long for.

Knowing that we will be partakers of the resurrection, how must we live? Let's read verse 58 together. *"Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain."* In this world, we can easily forget the gospel in our quest for lesser things. Our hearts are swayed by alluring philosophies of life. We are tempted and tried and have one foot in Jesus and one foot in the world. But know this fact...this world and its desires will all pass away! Only the word of the Lord remains forever. Only our resurrection bodies will live forever in the Kingdom of God. (1 Peter 1:3-4) Only the fruit of our labor in the Lord lasts forever. So let's pray that we may stand firm in our gospel faith and let nothing move us from seeking the glory of the resurrection. Let's give our hearts all the more to the work of the Lord, because our labor in the Lord is never in vain. The Risen Christ will reward believers 100 times, whatever they do for him. (Mark 4:20) Someday we will be clothed in the imperishable, immortal image of the Risen Christ. We will receive the kingdom of heaven as our inheritance.

This Easter, may God help each of you to decide to seek after the glory of the resurrection as of first importance. May you taste the glory of the resurrection even now as you allow yourself to fall to ground, living for Jesus' glory. And one glorious day...may you be enclothed in your brand new, resurrection body and meet Jesus and dwell with him forever more in the kingdom of God. May the mantra of your lives be a victory shout through your resurrection faith in Christ.

Let's read our Key verse together, verse 49, *"And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven."*