

Resurrection Hope

1 Corinthians 15:35-58

Introduction

1 Corinthians 15 Review: This watershed chapter in this letter has been a clarifying moment for Paul to the church in Corinth. So far he has reminded them of the centrality, reality, and necessity of the resurrection, now he is going to show the nature and importance of the resurrection.

Fear of Death Affects Your Life: John Madden: Based on age -either- superbowl winning coach who still holds the highest winning percentage (of coaches who coached 100 games) -or- color commentator who popularized the thanksgiving 'turducken' -or- the namesake of the popular football video game.

- He famously was afraid to fly (for some good reasons), but to the point that he would travel the country very inconveniently in a motorcoach (planes are the safest form of transportation by far). If death was really his worry, then flying would be the best choice. It was the *fear* of death that was really the problem (especially the illusion of control).
- Death has more to do with our lives than we think. Until we deal with our eternal destinies we'll never be able to live in the present reality without fear.
- What you believe about eternity impacts the way you live today (e.g., Covid; prudence vs. fear).

The hope of the resurrection gives us a reason to live with purpose and confidence in the face of death.

³⁵ But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?" ³⁶ You foolish person! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. ³⁷ And what you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. ³⁸ But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body. ³⁹ For not all flesh is the same, but there is one kind for humans, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish. ⁴⁰ There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is of one kind, and the glory of the earthly is of another. ⁴¹ There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory. ⁴² So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. ⁴³ It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. ⁴⁴ It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. ⁴⁵ Thus it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. ⁴⁶ But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. ⁴⁷ The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. ⁴⁸ As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. ⁴⁹ Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven. ⁵⁰ I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. ⁵¹ Behold! I tell you a

mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. ⁵³ For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. ⁵⁴ When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” ⁵⁵ “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” ⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁵⁸ Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

1. Resurrection Body (vv. 25-49)

The Question: ³⁵ But someone will ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?” It seems to be with the body (This broken thing, what good will it be?). What’s my heavenly body going to be like? What will resurrection look like?

- It’ll be nice to have an Easter resurrection body rather than an Easter candy body (finally get met before and after pic).

³⁶ You foolish person! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. Fool!¹ (You know better). Apparently this is a dumb question (“There are no dumb questions” usually prefaces someone asking a “dumb questions”). There *are* dumb questions, and I’ve asked plenty of them. It’s okay to ask dumb questions. *You* are not dumb if you ask a dumb question. You won’t know it’s a dumb question until you ask. They’ve imbibed the thinking of the day, that eternity is for the soul and not for the body (last week = embodied eternity). In Corinth it was a lot of “body bad” and “soul good” thinking. We are not just immaterial souls (Gnostic, “anti-materialist”) or physical (materialist), we are body and soul.

- Two ditches: (1) Material; genetic and chemical determinist; identical twins; clones). (2) Immaterial; bodies don’t matter.
- We are body and soul.

Death Transforms: Death is the path to transformation. “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit” (Jn 12:24).

- On the other side of death is transformation. We were dead in our sins, and we are made alive in Christ (Eph 2:1). We are given a new heart, and made new creatures (2 Cor 5:17). To access this salvation we have to die to ourselves!

Seed Analogy: ³⁷ And what you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. He uses the picture of a seed to show the continuity and discontinuity between what we are and what we will be. The seed and the tree are the same organic thing, but the growth and transformation is significant (to the point that an uneducated person can’t be blamed for looking at an acorn and an oak tree and not knowing they are different things).

¹ Substantival adjective (foolish one; ἄφρων). “Foolish one might overly soften the tone of “fool.” cf. Ps 14:1

- A dead tree is still a tree, but it is hardly the same as a living tree. The transformation is profound.
- In God's sovereignty he has fitted us with bodies for the earth now and he will fit us with bodies for heaven later (v. 38).

Degrees of Glory: ³⁹ For not all flesh is the same, but there is one kind for humans, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish. ⁴⁰ There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is of one kind, and the glory of the earthly is of another. ⁴¹ There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory.

- The beautiful tension of our resurrection hope is that our future bodies are the same and different. They will be the same essence as our earthly bodies but their substance appears to be superior.
 - **Same, same but different** (e.g., Fake rolex; Chihuahua vs. Great Dane; Me and Shaquille O'Neill).
 - Bodies matter, but they will be transformed.
 - Jesus was physical after the resurrection, but different (it's hard to say which differences were because of his resurrected body and which were because of his unveiled divinity; he ate fish but also passed through walls). Clearly human but not easily recognizable (but some same essence).
- They will be imbued with a **glory** fit for heaven rather than decay characteristic of earth. Whatever heaven is, it is far better than this earth. And whatever our resurrected bodies, they are far better.

Raised: ⁴² So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. ⁴³ It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. ⁴⁴ It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

- Resurrection requires and necessitates transformation into a spiritual body (free from decay and weakness in the present life).
- Our current bodies are sown in weakness. That is the reality of our current situation! Our weakness is meant to make us long for God's resurrection (weakness is a gift).
- Our earthly bodies break down, our heavenly bodies won't.
- All of us are born into this world, the natural world, but not everyone is born into God's world (the spiritual world).
 - Spiritual vs. natural (not visible vs. invisible). Spiritual can still be embodied (physical).
 - We have received a spiritual down payment in salvation that will be mirrored in physical future.
- "Heaven is reality itself. All that is fully real is Heavenly. For all that can be shaken will be shaken and only the unshakeable remains" (C.S. Lewis).

Like Christ: ⁴⁵ Thus it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. ⁴⁶ But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the

spiritual. ⁴⁷ The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. ⁴⁸ As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. ⁴⁹ Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.

- All of us inherit the qualities of our first parents, including their sin. We are born as sinners, frail and lost on our own.
- But the last Adam, Jesus Christ, has come to give us eternal life. Life of a different quality and essence.
- No longer do we have to be marked by the characteristics of Adam, we can be marked by the characteristics of Christ.
 - But, to do that we have to be born again, born from above. The invitation of Christ is a call to be re-born in the image and likeness of our Savior, by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself (Phil 3:20-21).
 - The hope and pattern of our resurrected life is Jesus himself. It is precisely Jesus' resurrection that tells us about ours (it will be physical). More importantly, **it is Jesus' resurrection that guarantees ours.** "The incarnation means he became like us; the resurrection means we'll become like him" (DeWitt). "His resurrection is the pledge and pattern of ours" (John Newton).
 - A sort of layaway? Jesus paid now but we receive our resurrected bodies later.
- Do I possess a nature that belongs to the world (with its desires) or have I been remade into the image of Christ (with his desires)?
 - Discipleship is becoming like Christ. We shall also bear the image of the man of heaven -or- (maybe) [let us] bear the image of the man of heaven. **Become who we already are in Christ. Isn't that the Christian life?**

2. Resurrection Victory (vv. 50-57)

⁵⁰ I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. ⁵¹ Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. ⁵³ For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. ⁵⁴ When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." ⁵⁵ "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" ⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Inheritance: ⁵⁰ I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

- Maybe we've gotten off into the weeds. Let's recenter. You cannot enter the KoG unless you are born again. Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit" (Jn 3:3-8).

Changed: ⁵¹ Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.

- The hope of the Christian is not ultimately that you'll be more disciplined, or respectable, or well-behaved (though those might be byproducts), but that you will be supernaturally changed to be like Christ.
- This is the great hope, that things will not always be this way. Whether we die or the Lord returns, those in Christ will be changed to be like him.

It is a mystery. If you understood it all, you'd be God. I don't know how he's going to resurrect all those whose bodies have decayed into dust or been cremated but I know he makes beauty from ashes. There is no jigsaw puzzle too hard for him to complete. And if he can make Adam from dust then he can remake all of us.

Resurrection: ⁵³ For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.

- Must! Our bodies are not abandoned or destroyed, they are changed. **Change is required.** This can't be all there is. **We need change.** Feel your mortality. Recognize you and I need transformation.
 - A little self-help won't do (e.g., dead tree won't help to fertilize; dead body won't help for diet tips). We don't need resuscitation, we need resurrection.

Death Defeated: ⁵⁴ When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." ⁵⁵ "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?"

- The last enemy to be destroyed is death. We don't like to think about death. We want to keep death as far from us as possible, but it continues to intrude. It comes in big ways: major catastrophes, violent intrusions, unexpected interruptions. But it is also on our minds with smaller reminders, bodies that break down, sickness that we can't shake, the frustrating problems of aging.
 - In years past, people would frequently die in their homes, surrounded by family. Now, we relegate death to hospitals and nursing homes. We try to avoid looking at or thinking about death.

- We can look death in the eye because it doesn't have the last word, it doesn't get the final say. God has so completely defeated death that, in the end, death won't even get your body.
 - E.g., not going to the dentist because we don't want to admit something's wrong; can help you; might hurt but it will also heal).
- When you fear the right thing, you don't fear the wrong thing (e.g., fear the disease more than the shot). When you fear God more than death, you don't have to fear persecution, suffering, tribulation, loss of reputation, poverty, sickness, etc. The one person we should fear, we don't have to be afraid of because he loves us and is for us (e.g., fear a good father).
- There is a tradition of remembering death called *memento mori*. It is not meant to be morbid but to clarify our purpose. We all will die, so we should live this life now with that in mind. What must I do before I die? What happens after I die? What is worth living for? What is worth dying for? "When the reality of death is far from our minds, the promises of Jesus seem detached from our lives. Once we've learned to see the shadow [of death], we'll be able to apply the light of Christ. [S]o long as death remains someone else's problem, Jesus will remain someone else's Savior. The more deeply we feel death's sting, the more consciously we will feel the gospel's healing power. The more carefully we number our days, and the more joyfully we'll hear that death's days are numbered too. When we think carefully about death and how it swallows up what we love about life now, we're prepared to see that what Jesus offers is what we've needed all along. Jesus offers eternity, the promise of deathless life, to all who trust in him. And that means he offers joy that won't be clouded by sorrow. We're often focused on what we want from this life. But Jesus doesn't promise to give us more of what death will only steal anyway. He wants to give us what death can't touch" (McCullough, *adapted*).

Promises: All of this fulfills scripture. Paul alludes to Hosea 13:14 and Isaiah 25:6-8. In Isaiah, the prophet says: "[God] will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces" (Is 25:8).

- The swallowing of death reminds me of certain sacrifices in Leviticus, where the sins of the people were paid for by an animal sacrifice and the priests at the temple at the burnt offering. "Holiness swallows impurity; life defeats death." This points to the day when the Messiah would eat death and swallow sin for us, and that day came and went when Jesus took our sin on the cross and defeated death at the resurrection.
- And it points to a day when sin and all of its effects will be finally and completely removed: "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away" (Rev. 21:3-4).
- "When the transformation occurs and our flawed bodies are clothed in immortality at the resurrection, that will be the fulfillment of God's long-promised triumph over the powers of sin and death."

The resurrection of Jesus is proof that God keeps his promises.

- For most of Christian history, the promises of God were the fuel that kept the spiritual fire burning during dark times. The Bible was a lifeline to the real story of what God is doing. Unfortunately, for many in our day, rather than trust, the promises of the Bible become an obstacle. Cultural pressure is often more formative in our lives than biblical truth. Rather than the gospel story being the true story against which we judge the false narratives of the world, we fall victim to our limited perspective and fleeting feelings.
- The biblical story is intentionally arranged to show us that Jesus is the fulfillment of the promises of God to save his people from their sins. The high point of the gospel is the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, having completed what he was sent to do.

Already and Not Yet: Easter is as much celebration as it is anticipation. We live in between the resurrection and the second-coming. In many ways, our lives are not the catastrophe of Good Friday or the celebration of Easter Sunday, but the silent waiting of Holy Saturday.

- I feel very much like I am inhabiting a Holy Saturday season. I live in light of the sacrifice of Friday and the hope of Sunday, but the silent waiting can be deafening. God is speaking even when he seems silent. He is working even while we're waiting.
- The time between Friday and Sunday is a reminder that there is always a "what it seems like" and a "what it really is." If you're in the silence of Saturday, you can continue to trust in the promise of Sunday despite what you see and feel.

Victory: ⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

- The sting that death gives has been defeated, the power of sin has been overcome. We are made alive in Christ. We are free from sin and free to live for God. Jesus has satisfied the claims of the law and broken the power of sin.
- "Genesis ends with Joseph's death; Deuteronomy ends with Moses' death; Joshua ends with Joshua's death; the Gospels end with Jesus' resurrection—and that changes everything" (Merida).
- Thanks be to God.
- This is the message of 1 Corinthians 15: when God raised Jesus from the dead, it wasn't just for him but for us. We share in his victory. We share in his resurrection.

Victory starts now.

- No longer slave to sin. Power of sin is broken (e.g., asthma cured; get a full breath; breathing through a straw).

Victory lasts forever. Pakistani Christians, murdered for their faith are alive with their savior. Sudanese Christians killed by extremists are more alive in the presence of Christ. You and I, when our bodies breathe their last on this earth, will be with Christ, "even if you die, you will live" (John 11:25).

- To the weary; he is risen. To the wounded; he is risen. To the doubting; he is risen. To the discouraged; he is risen. To the mourning; he is risen. Therefore, don't give up. Don't grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up (Gal 6:9).

3. Resurrection Living (v. 58)

So What?: ⁵⁸ Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

- Without Christ, life has no meaning ("everything is a loss to the surpassing greatness of knowing Jesus" Phil 3:8) and death has no purpose. **With Christ, everything we do on this earth ripples into eternity.** In Christ, our work here is not in vain. Without Christ, all of our effort thrown in the trash (e.g., dissertation lost to computer hard drive failure).

The resurrection changes everything because it gives you (as the song says) "strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow."

- "I'm a complete idiot. My future is incredibly bright. Anyone can get in on this" (Ortlund).
- Death isn't sovereign; Jesus is. Sin didn't triumph; Jesus did. He took our judgment and gave us his righteousness. The death of Jesus was the death of death. His resurrection is the guarantee of ours.

Because of the resurrection, **we can press forward** with risk-taking, trial-enduring, death-defying obedience to Jesus. We can go where he calls us to go, do what he calls us to live.

- "Only one life to live, 'twill soon be past, only what' done for Christ will last" (Studd).
- If Jesus is king of death, king of heaven, king of all this earth and all that is under the earth, if he is king in this life and in the life that is to come then **he is king over you.** He has the right to call for and receive your obedience. Whatever he tells you to do, you should do. **Whatever he tells you not to do, you should not do. Wherever he tells you to go, you should go.**
- With resurrection hope we can be steadfast and immovable. Without it, we are fickle and unstable, tossed too and fro by every cultural fad and passing temptation.² But when our hope is anchored in the resurrected Lord, we can withstand these light and momentary afflictions in view of the eternal weight of glory that awaits us.³

Because of the resurrection, **death has no more sting.** The worst pain is temporary. "You and I aren't suffering from anything that a good resurrection can't fix" (Carson).

- And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second (ultimately eternal) death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire (Rev 20:13-15).
- For those in Christ, this world is as close to hell as you will ever come; for those outside of Christ, this world is as close to heaven as you'll get (and that's pretty sad).

Because of the resurrection, **living for Jesus is the only thing that makes sense.** What is your only comfort in life and in death? That I am not my own, but belong—body and soul, in life and in death—to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ (Heidelberg Catechism). If you have not trusted in Christ as your Lord, then death is an enemy to be feared. But if you surrender to Christ, then death has no power. Jesus said to her (to Martha), "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" (Jn 11:25-26).

² Eph 4:14; Jas 1:6

³ 2 Cor 4:17

- Do you believe this?