**THE GLORY OF THE RESURRECTION**

1 Corinthians 15:35-58

Key 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."*

Introduction



In this chapter Paul has helped some some believers in the Corinthian church who lacked resurrection faith. In the first section he reminded us that Jesus’ resurrection is central to the gospel, and that it is a historical fact. In the second part we learned the logical necessity of resurrection to our faith. There is no way to live a victorious Christian life without resurrection faith that overcomes the power of death in our hearts. In today’s passage Paul answers the last accusation of the resurrection critics by describing the resurrection body in detail. The resurrection body is truly glorious. We should study this passage with one thing in mind, “What is the glory of the resurrection?”

1. Read verses 35-41. What questions did Paul address? (35) With what analogy did he rebuke the Corinthian believers? (36-38) What does it mean that each body has its own kind and splendor? (39-41)

1-1, Read verses 35-41.

But someone will ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?” **36** How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. **37** When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. **38** But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body. **39** Not all flesh is the same: People have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another. **40** There 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. **41** The sun has one kind of splendor, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor.

1-2, What questions did Paul address? (35)

***But someone will ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?”***

* These two questions are very important questions. Paul answers these questions throughout today’s passage.

1-3, With what analogy did he rebuke the Corinthian believers? (36-38)

***How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies.***

* This means that death is not an obstacle to life. Far from it: death is a necessary prerequisite to resurrection life, just as planting a seed in the ground is necessary in order to have a new plant.
* So the character of resurrection is actually shown by nature itself. The seed falls off the plant as a presumably dead thing, and it splits open.
* But when it splits open, new life comes out of it. Our body being buried under the earth is the precursor to God bringing new life up out of it.
* This is the same as the principle of the cross. The principle of the cross says that without death, there is no new life.
* Jesus said, “Whoever wants to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.” (Mk 8:35) Our flesh always resists this principle, just like Jesus’ disciples resisted it.
* Our flesh does not want to lose its life. So we have to overcome the idea that the death of our flesh is the end. We should not live in terror of death, with a sense of tragedy, like the people in the world.
* We should have the attitude to lose our life every day to find new life. In Galatians we learned that we are to treat our flesh as already dead, crucified with Jesus on the cross, and so not obey its desires. This is the way to new life.
* Our goal is not to maintain the life of the flesh forever, but to sow our life for eternal life by serving courageously and sacrificially.

***37 When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. 38 But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body.***

* Paul continues with the analogy of agriculture: “When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be.” This means that there is a big difference between the body that’s planted and what grows from it.
* You could never tell from the humble seed that such a beautiful, strong, and lively plant could come from it. So you cannot tell from the body we have right now what our resurrection body will be like.
* But we should not worry just because we don’t know. We shouldn’t worry, because God is the giver of all good things. God can make so many different kinds of bodies, more than we can imagine.
* Our resurrection body will be the best that God has been preparing for us. We should not doubt that God will give us the most excellent resurrection body.
* Our physical body is like a seed for the resurrection body. Our physical body is fit for living in this world. But our physical body is the seed of our resurrection body.
* Although we may not like our physical body (or may like it), our resurrection body will come from it and it will be glorious and beautiful.
* Death is also the prerequisite of the resurrection. Without death, there is no resurrection just as without the death of a seed there is no new plant and harvest.
* Resurrection comes after death. “No death, no resurrection.” Jesus entered his resurrection glory through his unbearable suffering and death and three days in the dark tomb. His resurrection was done according to this principle.
* Followers of Christ are those who live their lives according to this resurrection principle. We all like resurrection. But we don’t like death. But without death there is no resurrection.

John 12:24 reads,

“Very truly I tell you, 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.”

* Only when we fall to the ground and die, do we produce many seeds. The early Christians lived by this resurrection principle. They worked hard for the gospel, risking their own lives. Then God blessed them with utmost joy.
* As dawn comes after dark night, the resurrection comes after death. May we hold on to the resurrection principle and experience resurrection life!

1-4, What does it mean that each body has its own kind and splendor? (39-41)

***39 Not all flesh is the same: People have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another. 40 There 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. 41 The sun has one kind of splendor, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor.***

* “Splendor” means “Great brightness; brilliant luster; magnificence.” This points to God’s purpose in whatever he creates. God’s purpose in creating everything is to reveal his glory through splendor. “God saw all that he had made, it was very good!” Gen 1:31
* Heavenly bodies—the sun, the moon and the stars—display a splendor that is much more bright, pure, and permanent than the splendor that things on earth have.
* This analogy teaches that the resurrection body will have a very different kind of splendor than the body we have now. The resurrection body is a *truly* heavenly body, even more so than the sun and the stars, which are still part of this creation.

2. Read verses 42-49. How will our spiritual bodies be different from our natural bodies? (42-44) How are the two Adams different? (45-47) How can we, the descendants of the earthly man bear the likeness of the heavenly man? (48-49)

2-1, Read verses 42-49.

So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised 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** So it is written: “The first man Adam became a living being”[[f](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+corinthians+15&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28764f)]; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. **46** The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. **47** The first man was of the dust of the earth; the second man is of heaven. **48** As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the heavenly man, so also are those who are of heaven. **49** And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we[[g](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+corinthians+15&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28768g)] bear the image of the heavenly man.

2-2, How will our spiritual bodies be different from our natural bodies? (42-44)

***So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; 43 it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power;***

* The four characteristics of the earthly body is perishable, dishonorable, weak, and natural. The earthly body is not bad; but its defining characteristics are that it is weak and temporary.
* In contrast, the characteristics of the heavenly resurrection is imperishable, glorious, and powerful.

***44 it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.***

* Sometimes when people try to envision something spiritual, they think about something disembodied, like a ghost. What is a ghost, but a spirit without a body?
* Obviously God did not make us to be ghosts. “If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.”

2-3, How are the two Adams different? (45-47)

***If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. 45 So it is written: “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. 46 The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. 47 The first man was of the dust of the earth; the second man is of heaven.***

* Adam’s life was a natural life, and so he was given a natural body. This is the kind of life we all started with. That’s God’s order; the natural life comes first.
* Jesus is called the “Last Adam” and also the “Second man.” Jesus is the man from above. He is the spiritual man who died to give life to the world. When we believe in Jesus, we receive a new kind of life. We receive a spiritual life from the Holy Spirit.
* But it is a fact that everyone who is in Christ has a spiritual life, because this is the very thing Jesus died to give us.
* Paul says that for the two kinds of lives, there are two kinds of bodies. As we first had a natural life, and now we have a spiritual life, we can definitely expect that we will have a spiritual body after our natural body is done with.
* For now we have some conflict because we have a spiritual life living in a natural body. It seems there is some limitation to our spiritual life, due to the sinful desires of our flesh.
* But soon we will live a spiritual life in a spiritual body. The new spiritual body will be perfectly suited to live abundant spiritual life forever.

2-4, How can we, the descendants of the earthly man bear the likeness of the heavenly man? (48-49)

***48 As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the heavenly man, so also are those who are of heaven. 49 And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man.***

* In the image of Adam we all grow old and die one day. The progressively sagging wrinkles, the belly fat, the fading visions and the decay of teeth and you name it.
* We also suffer in our fallen nature inwardly just as Adam did. We suffer and cry inwardly because of our sin of pride, selfishness, unbelief, fatalism, impure thoughts, impatience, laziness and so forth.
* In this way, we suffer outwardly and inwardly because we bear the image of the earthly man.
* But Jesus the heavenly man will give us the resurrection body. And we shall bear the image of the heavenly man, Jesus.
* After finishing our pilgrim journey on earth, we shall be clothed with the glorious resurrection body like the risen Christ. More than that, our inner beings will be changed and become like beautiful Jesus.
* We shall be as humble as Jesus. We shall be as gentle as Jesus, and as sacrificial as Jesus. We shall be as pure and sinless as Jesus. What a glorious resurrection body it is. We will resume God’s image!
* Imagine the community of the resurrection where everyone is pure, loving, sacrificial, humble and gentle. We are heading to this community in heaven. With this glorious hope we can live daily as holy children of God.
* For this very reason, we should have great confidence that we will *also* become like Jesus became, in the imperishable glory of his resurrected body.

3. Read verses 50-58. Why must we be changed? (50-51) What change will take place in believers at the last trumpet? (52-53) What will happen to death? (54-57) What is Paul’s exhortation? (58)

3-1, Read verses 50-58.

**50** I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. **51** Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— **52** 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. **53** For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. **54** When 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.” **55** “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” **56** The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. **57** But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. **58** Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, 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.

3-2, Why must we be changed? (50-51)

***I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51 Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—***

* Paul continuously reminded us that our current flesh cannot live forever. We should not be like those who have no hope and spend all their time trying to keep their life in the flesh for it is like a dead end street!
* The mystery is “We will not all sleep, but we will **all** be changed” All is all. In Christ all will be made alive (v22). Paul used the word, “sleep” because there is no hint of death in the Risen Jesus Christ any longer.

3-3, What change will take place in believers at the last trumpet? (52-53)

***52 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. 53 For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.***

* In a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.” One thing is clear: for us to inherit eternal life, we must be changed. How will God carry out this change?
* When time is up, the trumpet will sound and the power of God will instantly raise the dead and simultaneously transform the bodies of those who are still alive.
* This mystery answers the question, “How are the dead raised?” This is the mystery of how God gives immortality. This is how God grants eternal life to everyone who loves him and believes in Jesus.
* That’s not a vague hope. Nothing is too hard for God to do for his beloved people, even to change their bodies into imperishable, immortal bodies so they may live with him forever.

3-4, What will happen to death? (54-57)

***54 When 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.” 55 “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” 56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.***

* Death is the greatest enemy. The power of death stings people in their very heart and makes them broken, wounded, and fearful people.
* But Jesus faced death for us all. He died, not for himself, but for our sins on the cross, taking away the law’s death sentence and granting us eternal life.
* Jesus takes away the sting of death. In this way he makes us perfect victors over everything. “The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.”
* Many things in this world discourage us, and we seem to have more failures than victories. No doubt about it: sin and the law make us big losers.
* But the spiritual reality is that in Christ we are free from all these and more than conquerors. So we say, “But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Through resurrection, life in Jesus is one-sided victory.

3-5, What is Paul’s exhortation? (58)

***58 Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, 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.***

* If even death has no sting, what can really disturb us? What can move us out of our hope and trust in God? Of course, there is no one who believes perfectly all the time.
* But if we want to grow spiritually, we should focus on having confident resurrection faith. If we want to serve God better, we should believe better. God’s victory also means that nothing we do for Jesus is in vain.
* On this basis, we can give ourselves fully to the work God gave for us to do. We know that it’s not our righteousness but his grace and resurrection power that makes us victors.
* God’s love for those he called is not limited by anything, past, present, or future. May God bless you to have victory in resurrection faith.

**Conclusion**

We Christians have glorious hope of the resurrection and we are waiting for the second coming of Jesus. Now as the holders of this glorious hope, how should we live? We must stand firm and let nothing move us. Many things of the world try to shake our Christian lifestyle. But those who have the hope of the resurrection will have utmost joy and happiness as giving ourselves fully to the work of the Lord.

**One word: We shall be like Jesus!**