

Christ was Raised According to the Scriptures
1 Corinthians 15:1-58, Key Verse: 15:3-4

Easter Sunday Message 2012, by David Hull (35-58)

"For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day, according to the Scriptures...."

III. The Glory of the Resurrection (35-58)

Now in the third part of the chapter, verses 35-58, I'd like to share on the 'glory' of the resurrection. How do we understand the term, 'Glory'? When I was a teenager, Bruce Springsteen had a song 'Glory Days'. The memorable lyrics are, "they'll pass you by Glory Days..." Now that I'm almost 40, maybe my glory days were when I was 18. When we are tied to our struggling lives in this world, we want to reminisce about better days. But there is no glory in our sinful lives on earth at all. However, if we hold firmly to the gospel and believe in the power of the resurrection there is a glorious day for us all. It is the day we will be raised up with Jesus in a new, spiritual body. Let us think about the 'glory' of the resurrection now.

First, the resurrection principle. As we learned in the last section, many Corinthian believers could not believe or even imagine there was a resurrection. Their questions became sarcastic. Paul shared them in verse 35, "But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?" These Corinthians knew that their bodies were getting older. When they looked at their corrupt and decaying flesh, they thought the resurrection was impossible. They wondered, "Are we going to be walking around like zombies?" But Paul responds in verse 36, "How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies." He introduces here a very clear principle. It is the fact that death is the prerequisite for the resurrection. We cannot expect to live eternally in our earthly bodies which are full of the curse of sin and death. I recall one of my bible students once commented, "Eternal life? That sounds boring!" His problem was he was thinking about his difficult and suffering life in the flesh. He didn't want to continue forever in that. Who would blame him? He needed hope in the resurrection beyond the disappointments of this life. Paul would agree. Our earthly bodies must first die in order to gain eternal life. Paul says in verses 37-38, "When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body." A seed is a seed. Before they are planted there is no difference between them. Seeds look very plain and ugly. But after the seeds are planted they can change into beautiful and flourishing flowers of many distinct kinds. The same is intended for our bodies. They are just a shell of what is yet to come. Our dirty and sinful bodies must first die before it is resurrected in glory. Paul next continues to explain God's distinctive artistry in comparing the various kinds of flesh. God's creatures are all unique. There are so many beautiful kinds like lions, bears, giraffes, eagles, and little clownfish. They are magnificent yet different from us. God did not intend us to have gills and scales like a fish. We have to wear scuba suits and air tanks to say hello to them. Likewise, Paul also speaks about the unique splendor and awe of the celestial bodies: the sun, moon, and stars. The sun is glorious and blazing. It sustains all life on the earth. The moon is so shy and romantic. It leads us to sleep at night. The Lord's creation and personal touch on each of these creatures and elements of the universe are overwhelming amazing. Everything has its own matchless splendor given by God according to His will. When we look at our weak bodies from a human or scientific point of view the resurrection seems impossible. But everything is possible for God. He is full of wisdom and power. He can do it. God who gives us each an earthly body will surely give us a resurrection body as He has determined.

Second, the resurrection body. Let's think about the design of a new wonderful resurrection body in more detail. Look at verses 42-44. "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." In comparing the earthly and resurrection bodies, we can see exact opposites. We all know our earthly bodies very well. We take care of them and see them in the mirror every day. Men like myself like to flex our muscles and think we look good. Many women invest lots of money in cosmetics to look beautiful. But in time we learn our earthly bodies are temporary, perishable, dishonorable, weak, and fragile. As we grow up, wrinkles suddenly appear, our hair starts falling out. Some like to doctor their photos with photoshop, or visit the plastic surgeon. Our knees and back start to ache; we get arthritis and buy some Bengay. Recently I was simply lifting up a box in my storage unit. I felt a little tweak. Ever since when I try to lift up my arm slightly to the side, I cringe in pain...I guess the resurrection body may be coming soon. The will of God is that our

perishable bodies will die, yet indeed we shall receive a resurrection body as well. The resurrection body will be spiritual, imperishable, glorious, and powerful. We cannot really imagine how glorious it will all be. But we know we will be forever young. There will be no aging process. Our bodies will not experience pain. There will be no diseases like cancer. The resurrection body will not see death. Our ugly dying earthly bodies will be made the most beautiful resurrection body.

It sounds too good to be true. How is this possible? Look at verse 45. "So it is written: "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit." God created our earliest ancestor Adam in the Garden of Eden. But after Adam sinned, man was cut off from God and the curse of sin and death entered the world. However from the beginning God was planning redemption for mankind. He sent his one and only Son Jesus, the second Adam, to forgive our sins and give us the gift of eternal life. In our sins, we are all like Adam. But when we accept Jesus as Lord and Savior all our sins are washed away. We become new creations and begin a new life in Christ. Therefore Paul says in verse 49, "And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man. "We most certainly will not bear the image of our sinful selves at the resurrection. Rather in our new resurrection body, we will bear the image of the heavenly man. We will be like Jesus!

Third, final victory. In verse 50, Paul reveals that our flesh and blood cannot by any means inherit the kingdom of God. The perishable simply cannot inherit the imperishable. How we are changed and obtain our resurrection body is truly mysterious. Yet God promises it will be a spectacular and monumental event. Look at verse 51-54. "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." Wow, we cannot imagine the magnitude of this event. The second coming of Jesus will come at a time when we least expect. It will happen in a flash, but we certainly won't miss it. It will be announced with God's holy trumpet. At the moment that our change occurs, 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."

For a long time, death had its way with man. No one could overcome the power and sting of death. Life seemed meaningless with endless sorrow, frustration, and pain. But when Jesus was raised from the dead, it all changed. Jesus resurrection crushed Satan and destroyed the power of death. No longer will we be knocked down from death's heavy punch. We will rise up from the canvas and our arms will be raised as the winner. At this we will all sing a victory song in Jesus, "Where, o death is your victory? Where, o death is your sting?" .When we hear that trumpet call it will be a day of victory for all believers. Through Jesus, we have won the victory over the power of sin, and most importantly the last enemy of death. Now we can have absolute joy and peace. At the moment of his return, Jesus Christ will come and gather his elect for all corners of the earth and bring us with him to his kingdom. We won't need to stop at Target or the mall to buy a new outfit. We will be wearing a hot, new Jesus brand. Jesus will clothe us with a beautiful and new resurrection body. Most of all it will be free! Thank God for Jesus who gives us the victory over the devil and a new spiritual body for eternity! Amen.

Finally, what shall we do in the meantime while we await Jesus' return and the glory of the resurrection? Look at verse 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." There is a saying that "a little hard work never hurt anybody." In fact, Paul encourages all believers in Jesus to devote themselves fully to God's work, not compromising or falling into any temptation that may lead us astray, but rather to stand firm. Our ministry certainly is one that believes in hard work for the gospel. All three of us speaking today are part of the Tentmaker message team. As one of them, that means I volunteer in the church while working a full-time job. I also study part time in a Master's program, while taking care of my wife and daughter. Still I choose to prepare messages, teach the bible, and participate in many other areas of discipleship ministry. Serving in this way is not easy. It is hard work and sometimes it feels like dying. Other men in the world may look at me and think that guy is foolish and is in a losing business. But I know that my labor in the Lord is not in vain. When we serve Jesus we lose nothing. Rather God promises we will reap 100 fold of what we sow. In Jesus, we will always be successful and prosperous. So let's invest our whole life in Jesus. Let's put our trust in him. Let's stand firm and let nothing move us. Hold firm to the gospel and believe in the power of the Jesus resurrection. When we do so we know a glorious resurrection awaits us also in God's heavenly kingdom. Praise Jesus who rose from the dead! Let's serve him with all our hearts, soul, and strength while we await his second coming.