

“Resurrection, It Does a Body Good” 1 Corinthians 15:35-49

Introduction

- I am not old. Far from it actually. But these last few weeks I just haven't been at the top of my game physically. Nothing serious. I tweaked my back playing basketball and so this past week in order to comfortably sit at my desk I had to use a heating pad. Never done that before. About a month ago I sprained my ankle, also playing basketball, which prompted a friend to say these cautious words which I've never heard before. “At your age” he said.
- And that's just the tip of the iceberg, isn't it? Our bodies waste away and decompose right before our eyes. This bodily existence is so frail. So fleeting. It's only a matter of time, as Ecclesiastes 12:6 says, *before the silver cord is severed, or the golden bowl is broken; before the pitcher is shattered at the spring, or the wheel broken at the well, 7 and the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.* To quote the band [Kansas](#), “all we are is dust in the wind.” Yes, we take care of our bodies. We work out. We exercise. We eat right. We marvel and rejoice at the miracles of medical technology. But in the end there's still death.
- And yet as Christians we have hope. Hope in this thing called resurrection. *We eagerly await a Savior*, as Philippians 3:20 says, *who by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.* And so outwardly even though we are wasting away, on the inside we're being renewed day by day. And we hope for the day when the outside, our bodies, will be renewed too.
- In the 1980s the National Dairy Council ran an ad campaign to boost milk drinking. Maybe you remember the ads with the tag line “Milk, It Does a Body Good.” May I suggest to you that that is completely and exactly the point of 1 Corinthians 15:35-49.

Proposition

- **Resurrection, it does a body good**
- Death is inevitable. And because of the inevitability of death, the absolute best thing you can do for your body here in this life is to give it a chance of resurrection. **Resurrection, it does a body good.**
- This is our fifth week studying the resurrection. And the focus of this particular part of chapter 15 is the resurrection body. So far in chapter 15 Paul's talked about the credibility of the resurrection. He's talked about how if there's no such thing as resurrection Christianity is futile and all Christians are fools. He's talked about how the resurrection is the drop in the bucket which sets in motion a chain of events culminating in God's rule over everything—even death. He's talked about how the experience of Christianity—things like baptism and moral standards—those things are wasted efforts if there's no such thing as a resurrection. And now starting in [verse 35](#) Paul switches to talk about the resurrection body. [Verse 35](#), *But someone may ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?"* His purpose is to answer those two questions.

Transition

This morning we're going to look at...

Organizational Sentence

- **Two misconceptions about the resurrection body**
- And in answering those two questions Paul deals with two misconceptions about the resurrection body. [Charles M. Schulz](#) the creator of the cartoon Peanuts once said, "Sometimes I lie awake at night, and I ask, "Where have I gone wrong?" Then a voice says to me, "This is going to take more than one night." In a nutshell that's the Corinthian church. Their understanding of the resurrection is so incredibly misshapen, so warped. Where have they gone wrong? Everywhere. In verses 35-49 Paul specifically deals with two misconceptions they had about the resurrection body.

Transition

Before we look at those verses, let me just say a word about bodies.

Background

- There is no question, no doubt whatsoever that according to God's word, bodies are a good thing. To have an embodied existence is blessing. God created the body and all that God creates is good. And yet how many of us hate our bodies? We loathe what God has created; these exquisite works of a "divine artisan."¹ Our bodies matter to God, so much so that the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.
- And yet, the Corinthians were boondoggled into thinking that flesh and blood, the body, didn't really matter. It mattered so little to them they didn't think that there would be a resurrection of the body. There'd be a resurrection, but not of the body. I like how [Gordon Fee](#) puts summarizes it. He says, "The Corinthians are convinced that by the gift of the Spirit, and especially the manifestation of tongues, they have already entered into the spiritual, 'heavenly' existence that is to be. Only the body, to be sloughed off at death, lies between them and their ultimate spirituality. Thus they have denied the body in the present, and have no use for it in the future."² Paul's intent is to correct their misconceptions about the bodily resurrection of the believer.

Transition

Look at [verses 35-44a](#). *But someone may 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 All flesh is not the same: Men 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. 42 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.*

¹ DBI, p. 103.

² Fee, p. 778.

Main Points

- The **first misconception** was that the **resurrection of the body was inconceivable**. “How can people possibly rise when their bodies have completely rotted away? What kind of body would arise from a heap of decomposed rubbish?”³ If you’ve ever seen the **Princess Bride**, Vizzini’s answer to everything—inconceivable. If you were to ask the Corinthians about the resurrection of flesh and blood, a body, that’s what they’d say. Inconceivable. Bodies wear out. They’re weak. They’re corruptible. There can’t possibly be a resurrection of that kind of body. And that’s the only thing the Corinthians had right. Look at **verse 50**. *Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God*. The thing is, that flesh and blood which cannot inherit the kingdom of God is changed into something else. And because flesh and blood is changed into something else a resurrection of the dead is completely conceivable.
- Look at what he says. He says the existence of a natural earthly body, like a seed, presupposes another body to come. Seeds beget plants. Always. Resurrection is like seed planting. *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*. Seeds don’t stay seeds. Natural earthly bodies don’t stay natural bodies you fools. If they did, you’re right, resurrection would be inconceivable. But they that’s not the way it works. You put a seed in the ground and it sprouts new life.
- Paul says the body we have now is like a seed that is planted. Is that which sprouts in resurrection the same as what is planted? No. It’s different. It’s changed. It’s transformed. But it’s somehow the same person—and it’s still a body. The seed and what sprouts from it are still the same species. The wheat seed and the wheat plant—they’re both equally wheat. Just different. Transformed. Changed. That’s what happens with the resurrection. **Leon Morris** says, “A dead-looking, bare, dry seed is put into the ground, but what comes up is a green plant, vigorous and beautiful.”⁴
- Paul’s intent with the seed illustration is to underscore the change that takes place between the naked seed sown in the ground and what will be harvested.⁵ What dies is nothing like what appears. What’s put in the ground, the body, is radically different than what sprouts in resurrection. **Verse 42**. *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*.
- There used to be a show on TV called *Overhauled*. I don’t know if it’s still on the air. Cars with great sentimental value are stripped down to the frame and overhauled; tricked out—transformed. “The resurrection body is not a spruced up version of the physical body.”⁶ The resurrection body is not just a tricked out body. It is completely different. It’s beyond overhauled. It’s transformed. The resurrection of the body is not just the resuscitation of a dead corpse. It is the complete transformation of a weak, tired, perishable mass of flesh into an incorruptible body that is suited for eternal life.

³ Morris, p. 218.

⁴ Morris, p. 220.

⁵ Garland, p. 728.

⁶ Garland, p. 733.

- And that's Paul's point starting in verse 39. The flesh we have now is not suited for eternity. It has to be changed. Look at the natural world; different kinds of flesh are adapted to different kinds of existence. **Verse 39.** *All flesh is not the same: Men 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. 42 So will it be with the resurrection of the dead.* Experience shows there are different kinds of flesh, right? Fish and birds, et cetera. There are different kinds of bodies suited for different kinds of life—life in the air, life in the water.
- Paul's point is that a bodily resurrection is completely conceivable if there are different kinds of flesh—which there are. Resurrection is more than conceivable because the body that God resurrects will not be the same *type* of body that died even though it is the body of the same person. Our bodies are transformed into a different kind of flesh, a flesh that is capable of inhabiting eternity. I like how **David Garland** puts it. "What is mortal will be changed by the power of God so that those who are raised will be given a body that is consistent with its new celestial habitat."⁷ A change in habitat requires a change in body.
- You know what? I think we forget how awesome this thing called resurrection really is. The perishable made imperishable. The dishonorable raised in glory. The weak made powerful. The corruptible made incorruptible. **Resurrection, it does a body good.** And all we can say in response is "that happens to us? That's what happens to our weak, frail, worn out bodies that are sick and tired with sin?" Yes. If you're under the age of twenty you ask any Christian over the age of sixty what this hope means to them. You're not going to life forever. You will die. It's inevitable. *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*⁸

Transition

What's the **second misconception**? Look at **verses 44-49**. The Corinthians falsely assumed that the body the Christian had in eternity was a spiritual, nonmaterial body. They seemed to have the impression that if we did have bodies **they'd just be thinned out wispy waif-like bodies**. Paul says no. Not a chance. And so he goes on to describe what it really means to have a spiritual body. Follow along. *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 from heaven. 48 As 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. 49 And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven.*

- In **verses 44** Paul says *if there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body*. He's already established the need for a different kind of body to inhabit eternity. Different kinds of flesh are adapted to different kinds of existence. Only a spiritual body can inhabit eternity. And so now he explains what he means by *spiritual body*. A spiritual body doesn't mean an

⁷ Garland, p. 725.

⁸ 1 Peter 1:3

immaterial body—this thinned out wispy waif-like ghost-like existence. A spiritual body is not a disembodied experience.

- Sometimes I think we think that's what heaven is like. It's a cloud-like wispy not really real dreamlike kind of existence. Somehow I think we think this world is the real physical world and heaven is this less real, spiritual realm. That's bogus. It's actually the other way around. This world, the one we're in now, is the shadow, the copy of the reality to come. Colossians 2:17. *These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.* Heaven is a physical place with physical things like eating and work and play. And it's inhabited by physical people who have been given transformed, spiritual bodies. Heaven is the real reality. This life is just the warm-up.
- Now here's the key. For Paul, to have a spiritual body means to have a body that is like Christ's body. This is so important that you get this. Ultimately, the story of the Bible and the hope of the Christian is not just that after you've died you come back to life again; somehow this Jesus person allows you to cheat death. No, sorry, but that's an incomplete picture of the Christian story. The hope of Christianity is that one day those who are in Christ are raised to new life, in glorified bodies, to be like Jesus himself. Through resurrection, we receive glorified spiritual bodies and we become more fully human than at any time in our existence. To be human is to be like Jesus. Our hope is not for some thinned out wispy waif-life super spiritual body that is free of decay and disease and sickness because there's no body for those things to attack. Our hope is that one day we will be like Christ. One day we will bear his image. [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.* We trade in the image of Adam, the image of dust and corruptibility and finiteness, for the image of Christ—the image of glory and incorruptibility and full humanity. Through Christ's death and resurrection we get to experience what it really means to be human. Resurrection, it does a body good.

Conclusion

- The story of *Pinocchio* is a 19th-century children's story about a lonely old woodcarver named Geppetto who carves a little puppet boy and names it Pinocchio. Whenever he sees the marionette, he thinks how wonderful it would be to have a real son.
- Upon seeing the wishing star in the sky, Geppetto wishes Pinocchio would become real. That night, the Blue Fairy brings Pinocchio to life, removes his strings, and instructs the wooden boy to turn from evil and follow good. But although he has life, Pinocchio is not yet fully alive—his body is still made of wood. He longs to be a "real" boy.
- That's us. That's our story. We are Pinocchios. In this life our experience is frail, fragile, and wooden. If we've trusted Christ to bear our punishment for sin then Christ has given life to our dead spirits. We are alive in Christ, yes, but we are not yet fully alive. It takes a resurrection for the realness to set in fully and completely.
- At the end of the story, after Gepetto is swallowed by a whale and Pinocchio dives into the water to save his father, Pinocchio drowns and is washed ashore. And the Blue Fairy returns and speaks to Pinocchio, "Awake, Pinocchio, awake." And Pinocchio is supernaturally transformed from a wooden boy into one who is fully alive, complete with flesh and bones.
- One day Jesus will say to all who are his "awake, awake." And we will marvel and worship in awe at this thing called resurrection. Let's pray.