

## 1 Corinthians 15:35-58

### “Victory Through Our Lord Jesus Christ”

“Stop *sinning*... & start *sharing* Jesus!” This is where we left off last week. “Awake to righteousness & do not sin... for some do not have the knowledge of God.”

Some of the Christians in Corinth were flailing & floundering around because they were being bamboozled into believing that there was no resurrection... & As we’ve noted before, what we believe will determine how we behave! & If you don’t believe there’s a resurrection, if you believe that this life is all that there is, then living in extreme debauchery & depravity would make sense. Defile yourself to the fullest because there’s no hope, nothing to look forward to, no joy or fulfillment beyond what you grab hold of in this world (of which you won’t be in very long).

Because if the dead don’t rise, then Christ isn’t risen. & If Christ isn’t risen, then we can’t be saved... so why bother w/all the service, all the sacrifice, all the spreading of this message that will very possibly result in problems (persecution, affliction, oppression) in my life? Paul is saying, “If the dead don’t rise, & Christ isn’t risen, then I’m a fool. I’m a fool for spreading the message, I’m a fool for (literally) risking my life on a daily basis, for leaving behind the power & prestige I had before I was a Christian...”

These are the kinds of arguments that Paul has been setting up & knocking down throughout this Ch. & We’ve taken time to work through it because as I told you when we began this Ch, the content it contains (that Paul was inspired to communicate) is of profound importance.

Listen, if your hope is in J.C. the resurrection means everything to you. We place all of our eggs in that single basket, so you should be left w/no doubt. It’s the proof positive that Jesus is everything He said He was & accomplished everything He said He would in abolishing the power of sin & the grip of the grave...

But Paul is persuaded that there still may be some pseudo intellectual standing around, trying to argue his point against the resurrection, so he continues on... notice.

### Vs 35

Now; it’s completely possible that I’m wrong here but somewhere in my mind this argument came from one of the Judaizers that liked to follow Paul around & sow seeds of doubt into the validity of his ministry. (Meaning, I get the feeling this isn’t the 1<sup>st</sup> time Paul has been confronted w/this question).

Let’s remind ourselves that before Paul was a Christian he was a Pharisee. As a Pharisee he was hyper-legalistic but believed in the resurrection.

As a Pharisee he received from the Torah (the 1<sup>st</sup> 5 books of Moses) as well as the Psalms & the prophets. Essentially the entire O.T. –

There was another sect of Jewish leaders called “Sadducees”, who only considered the 1<sup>st</sup> 5 books of Moses as inspired Scripture. So they *didn't* believe in the resurrection because they purported that Moses made no mention of it, it's nowhere to be found in his writings, therefore it's false doctrine. & They had all these (what they considered to be) profound/irrefutable arguments against the resurrection by which they believed they could prove the foolishness of that kind of thinking.

You find them there in Matt 22 seeking to refute the teaching of the resurrection by presenting Jesus w/a problem. They're all, “Teacher, Moses says that if a man dies, having no children, his brother should marry his wife & raise up offspring for his brother.” They're baiting the trap, they need the nod, they get it... “There were 7 brothers who lived among us. *The 1<sup>st</sup> died, didn't have any kids. So his brother took her, he died as well w/out kids, so the next brother married her. I know it sounds crazy (I mean, what are the odds) but this happened again & again until all 7 brothers married her... Then last off all the woman herself died... Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife will she be since she had legally, bindingly been married to all 7 brothers?*” The trap snaps shut! (Riddle me this; right?)

& What the Lord said next was a mic drop kind of moment. He said, *“You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God.”*<sup>1</sup> #1 If you're going to argue from the Scriptures, make sure you *know* the scriptures! (Truth be told, this happens all the time. People try to justify their position, or debunk your position using the Bible. But they don't really *know* the Bible & it's obvious by the way they're *using* the Bible.) #2 *How big is your God? Is there anything too hard for God? You obviously don't know the power of God. So you're saying that He can speak & the universe will out of nothing, burst into existence. He can breathe into the form of a man made out of dirt & every complexity that exists within the physical being of humanity (cardio vascular system, reproductive system, nervous system, skeletal system, muscular system, digestive system, on & on...) will instantly, harmoniously come into perfect fruition/function... But the resurrection is simply an impossibility? That one is out of God's reach? – Jesus said, “1<sup>st</sup> of all, concerning the resurrection, people aren't married or given in marriage in the resurrection, you were presuming on faulty logic.”*

<sup>1</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Mt 22:29]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Then He said, *“But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.”*<sup>2</sup> He went back into the passage of the burning bush (which Moses wrote of) & reminded them of how God identified Himself... as the God of Ab, Isaac & Jacob. He said, “Listen, God isn’t the God of the dead... but of the living.” Wow...

So, how are the dead raised? Listen, at the risk of oversimplifying it, God does it! Remember when Paul (Acts 26) was testifying before King Agrippa? He said, *“Why should it be thought incredible by you that God raises the dead?”*<sup>3</sup> Why is this such a big deal? Think about who God is, His endless, infinite, unlimited power... He is “omnipotent” ☺, all powerful. What does “all powerful” mean? It means there’s nothing beyond the scope of what He can do. So why is it thought incredible by you that God raises the dead?

The next question Paul will entertain for a little while. “W/what body do they come?” It’s a foolish question, but a question he’ll entertain nonetheless... Why do I say it’s a foolish question? Look at Vs 36

### Vs 36-38

The translator here was more kind than Paul was. The literal rendering isn’t “foolish one”, it’s simply “Fool!” It not only means someone lacking intelligence, it means, “w/out reflection”. In other words, “You’re showing your hand. You really haven’t stopped to reflect on this, to think it through, you’re speaking rashly w/out giving it any real thought & it shows...”

Notice that Paul is careful to explain that “resurrection” is not “reconstruction”. It’s not simply God reassembling our decomposing bodies or ashes from the urn... It won’t be this body in all of its lacking glory.

& This is where the brilliance of his analogy breaks through. Your resurrection body is *your* body, but it’s not exactly the *same* body. There’s continuity, but not a copy. In other words, when you plant a seed, the seed doesn’t spring out of the ground. There’s definitely continuity (like an acorn to an oak tree, or the bulb to the tulip, or any # of variety of seeds, perhaps wheat or some other grain). What it produces isn’t a copy, but there’s continuity.

<sup>2</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Mt 22:31-32). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>3</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Ac 26:8). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Now; we may not understand every *nuance* of the process but we recognize a *necessary* process nonetheless. It's as seedtime & harvest. The seed is sown into the ground, time goes by & what comes up is remarkably different even though it's directly related. Paul is saying, "This is the relationship between the natural body & the resurrection body." The seed dissolves; & what rises up is irrevocably related *to* the seed (in fact it's *of* the seed) but the body it now has is vastly different.

So when we die, what "goes into the ground" dissolves, what rises up will still be us (same person) but different body (in the sense of acorn to oak). The body is dissolved by death, changed in the resurrection, but it's still you. (You don't sow that body that shall be).

We might also acknowledge this. A farmer never sows in sorrow, they sow in hope of what's to come. Even so, when a loved one dies in Christ, we don't sorrow as those who have no hope. (& This is where you write down 1 Thess 4:13-14 so you can read it later). It's true that we sorrow over our temporary *separation*, but we have a great *anticipation* that we will soon see them & rejoice w/them again.

But Paul points out that God has put the principle of resurrection all around us in nature. When we plant a seed, you don't expect that seed to come up, God gives it a body as He pleases. So though we don't understand everything about our resurrection body, we know that it in some manner comes from our present body (as the oak from the acorn) & that it will be well pleasing to God. & I think we can rest assured that if our resurrection body is "pleasing" to God, it'll be "beyond phenomenal" to you. 😊

#### Vs 39-41

The naysayers may not have put much thought into it, but it's pretty obvious that Paul had. He continues on, "All flesh isn't the same flesh. You've got the flesh of men, of animals, of fish, of birds..." The idea being that God has uniquely fitted each creature to be suited for the environment in which they live. (& He's going to develop this a little farther here in a minute, but he'll land the plane at the fact that for now, we're suited [designed to live temporarily] for/upon the earth. It's only reasonable to expect that He will provide for a body fit for resurrection life, eternally in heaven!

He goes even further! "There are celestial bodies & terrestrial bodies, but they vary in glory one from the other. The glory of the sun varies from the glory of the moon, the glory of one star varies from another star..." Each one being suited to its own particular environment.

Now check this out. Even though every-body will be a *glorified* body, it seems that Paul is suggesting here that the glory of one may differ (being greater or lesser) from another. You might look at it like this. Every cup will be full, but some cups will be bigger than others. What makes the difference? *Sacrifice, service... ultimately faithfulness to that which God has committed to your trust. "Well done good & faithful servant..."* Those are the words you're looking for when you stand before Jesus. You want that "abundant" entrance supplied to you (2 Pet 1:11)... *Any entrance is wonderful, but let's go for the abundant entrance.* – So... what's sown, isn't exactly what rises. There are different kinds of bodies, different degrees of glory...

### Vs 42-45

Here Paul is continuing to help us get a grasp of the "now/then" relationship of the resurrection. But what he wants you to realize is that in every way & on every level the resurrection body will be far superior to the body you dwell in now.

*Your mortal body is perishable, your resurrection body will be imperishable. Your current body is subject to sickness & death (neither of which are applicable to your resurrection body). Your current body is temporal, imperfect & weak. Your resurrection body will be eternal, perfect & powerful.*

You might look at it like this, incorruption triumphs over corruption. Glory triumphs over dishonor. Power triumphs over weakness & spiritual triumphs over natural. There is no manner in which your resurrection body won't be exceedingly greater than the mortal body of which you are in now. How can we know that? Paul points it out in Vs 45. All you have to do is consider the source.

*The 1<sup>st</sup> perfect man, Adam, gave us one kind of body, a natural body. The 2<sup>nd</sup> perfect man (Jesus, the last Adam) gives us another kind of body, a spiritual body. (You won't be a bodiless spirit, you'll have a spiritual body.)*

### Vs 45-49

Adam couldn't give you more than he was. He was a man, made of dust. That's what we inherit in him, bodies of dust. After Adam had sinned & God was telling him the curse that he had brought on himself, He said, *"In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you are, And to dust you shall return."*<sup>4</sup> It's no wonder that Jesus would tell Peter, "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

<sup>4</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Ge 3:19]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

You may *want* to do the right thing, but so often (in & of your own strength) you fail. Contrary to what we like to think of ourselves, there's not much capacity in us. Don't get me wrong, we're fearfully & wonderfully made, but these frames are weak, corruptible... In Ps 103 David wrote, *"As a father pities his children, So the Lord pities those who fear Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust."*<sup>5</sup> You make these goals, you put pressure on yourself (& that's fine & well, perhaps healthy in a certain context), & we kick ourselves when we fail. But God remembers, we don't have much to work with, we're dust... We bear the image of the man of dust.

But in Christ, the day is coming when we will bear the image of the heavenly Man, even Jesus Himself. To the Philippians Paul put it like this, *"For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself."*<sup>6</sup> Notice our lowly body will be conformed to His glorious body. *If you want an idea of the kind of body you'll inherit, the best example we have is the resurrection body of Jesus Himself. It was material, He could eat, you could touch Him, feel Him. But He could be in one place in one moment, someplace else in another. Meaning He wasn't there, then He was. He could pass through walls, in the ascension He essentially flew... ☺ He wasn't bound by laws of nature. & John tells us in 1 Jn 3:2 that when we see Him, we will be like Him. You will bear His image.*

Now... one might wonder. If death is destroyed, why then do Christians die? Now you know. It's because your body isn't fit for the eternal, you must be changed. As Paul is about to tell us, "Flesh & blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." ... But what then of the Christians who are alive at Christ's coming?

### Vs 50-53

Vs 51 is what I've encouraged the nursery to paint on their walls for years, but they're just not feelin it ☺. "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—"

Be that as it may, Paul says here that we can't as we are inherit the kingdom of God. "Corruption does not inherit incorruption." We aren't going to populate heaven in bodies subject to disease or injury or death. Our present bodies aren't fit for heaven... So what then happens if we're alive when the trumpet sounds, the dead are raised incorruptible but we aren't dead? Paul tells us.

<sup>5</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Ps 103:13-14). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>6</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Php 3:20-21). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

& Ladies & Gentlemen, this is what we refer to as “The Rapture” of the church. Christians who are alive at the coming of Christ won’t taste death, but they will be changed nonetheless. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye (the idea is suddenly, instantaneously). *But notice there’s an order, we don’t precede those who’ve died. They will inherit their resurrection bodies in that moment & then those who are alive & remain will be changed. Now; it’ll happen so fast that from a linear perspective, I can’t imagine that it’d be seen as anything but simultaneous. But the Bible is clear, “the dead will be raised incorruptible, & we shall be shall be changed.”*

Paul shared this same truth w/the Thessalonians. & He told *them* that it was “by the word of the Lord.” Here he says, “I tell you a mystery.” Same thing. A “mystery” in the Bible isn’t something you can solve if you work hard enough to put together the clues. It’s something you could *never know* if the Lord didn’t reveal it. God hadn’t revealed this in the O.T. But under the N.C. (to the church) He did, because it’s applicable to the church... In 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians we read it like this, *“For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep* (we won’t go 1<sup>st</sup>). *For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.”*<sup>7</sup>

This is where people have trouble because they say that the word “rapture” isn’t in the Bible. That’s only sort of true (BTW the word “trinity” isn’t in the Bible either but we receive it because it helps bring appropriate understanding to the principle of the Godhead). The word “rapture” helps bring appropriate understanding to what’s meant here by “caught up”. It’s the word “*harpazo*” in the Greek. It means snatched away suddenly/violently (in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye). When translated into the Latin Vulgate they used the word “*Rapiemur*” or “*Rapturo*” from which we get our English word, “Rapture”.

But it’s in this moment that believers receive their resurrection body. When a believer dies, their spirit goes immediately to be w/the Lord. But from what we can discern, until the time of the rapture, we abide in this “intermediate” state of sorts w/out a material body.

<sup>7</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). (1 Th 4:15-17). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

At the time of the rapture, those who've already died will at that time receive their resurrection body & those who are alive upon the earth will be instantly changed & suddenly caught up to the clouds w/them to meet the Lord in the air & thus we shall *always* be w/the Lord... Brothers & sisters, resurrection is your destiny. Now you see why Paul is taking the time to rebuke & re-establish the Christians in Corinth of this reality!

**Vs 54-57**

Ladies and Gentlemen: Freud was wrong when he said: "And finally there is the painful riddle of death, for which no remedy at all has yet been found, nor probably ever will be." The resurrection of J.C. ended the reign of death, "Death is *swallowed up* in victory"! Sin brings death, the law identifies sin, Jesus fulfilled the law & defeated death... & Through our Lord J.C. God gives *us* the victory... What then should be the practical application of such a powerful principle?

**Vs 58 (Close)**

Listen, *because we know death is defeated & you have an eternal resurrection destiny w/through & thanks to J.C. That should cause you & me to stand firm, & unshakeable in our service to Him here & now... Always *abounding* (increasing) in the work of the Lord, resting assured that your labor is not in vain in the Lord...*

The question comes down to this. Are you living w/a view toward this natural, temporary life, or eternal, resurrection life? You may not see a whole lot of plus in serving somewhere in the church, or volunteering at some outreach. & Honestly it may not do something grand for you in this life... *But when you see Jesus, you'll be glad you did. Your reward will be... out of this world. 😊 Don't worry about being "successful" by the measure of this world (in your service to the Lord). Be diligent to be found "faithful". For you can be sure that your labor in the Lord, is not in vain.*

**Prayer Points:**

Father, what a timely word of encouragement for us today. For the times to which You've called us, help us to be faithful. Steadfast, immovable, always *abounding* in that for which You've laid hold of our lives. We thank You for the promise of Your word & we give You praise...

What a wonderful promise to be assured of today. However, it only applies to you if you're *in Christ*. Victory/salvation is yours in Christ, alienation/condemnation awaits those who are not. Jesus has made a way, where there was no way, believe on Him today & be saved...