

## CGYG & LIFE Bible Study: 1 Corinthians 15:35-58

**For Discussion:** Do you or someone you know suffer from a bodily ailment, weakness, or limitation? What impact does this have on that person's daily living? What impact does it have on their attitude or outlook on life?

### Read 1 Corinthians 15:35-58

**For review:** In 1 Corinthians 15:20-34, Paul proceeded from teaching about the certainty and necessity of the bodily resurrection of believers to providing a description of the events surrounding Christ's return, when all His enemies, including death, will be destroyed. As firstfruits from the dead, Christ's resurrection began a series of events that will culminate in a kingdom of peace under the sovereign reign of God the Father, who will be all in all. Christ's victory over death is also a pledge that guarantees that same victory for all His followers. Having addressed both logically and through Scripture the outright rejection of the believer's bodily resurrection, Paul then turns to answer the next line of attack from his opponents, an attempt to discredit his teaching by a deeper probing into the details of the resurrection.

### Read 1 Corinthians 15:35-49

**What examples from nature does Paul use to speak of the resurrection body?<sup>1</sup> What resurrection principles does he bring out through these?<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Paul used the examples of seeds (v.37), humans and animals (animals, birds, fish – v.39), natural and spiritual beings (heavenly bodies, earthly bodies – v.40), and celestial bodies (sun, moon, stars – v.41) to show that the principles that pertain to the resurrection body are not unique to it but can be found in other areas common to their lives.

<sup>2</sup>Death is not the end of life but new life can emerge from it (v.36) – the precedence has already been set in agriculture.

-Even in the plant world, life comes out of death. The new body breaks out of the old seed, which is destroyed for the living plant to grow from it.

<sup>2</sup>There is a difference between what is sown and what rises from it (v.37) – resurrection deniers assumed no change.

-Though it is the same entity, the plant looks very different from the seed – there is continuity along with transformation.

-It cannot be discerned from the initial body what the final body will be like (e.g., **Matt. 13:31-32**).

<sup>2</sup>God chooses the final body and He is the One who gives it to each type of seed (v.38) – both the choice and the work are His.

<sup>2</sup>There is uniqueness and distinction between the bodies/flesh of living things (v.38-39).

-Each receives a body that is appropriate for it, as God has determined.

<sup>2</sup>Heavenly bodies and earthly bodies have different kinds of glory (splendor – NIV84), which is also different from the glory of other parts of creation (v.40-41).

-The implication is that earthly bodies do have glory => speaking to those who dismissed the value of their material bodies and sought to shed them in pursuit of a purely spiritual existence.

-Like living creatures, celestial bodies have differing types/degrees of glory. Even amongst like objects (e.g., stars), the glory that God has assigned to each is unique – God's individual attention and detailed care for every part of His creation.

**Given that God has imparted glory to even our earthly bodies, how does this inform the way we view and treat them? What, if any, difference does it make if our bodies suffer from ailments, weaknesses, and/or limitations?**

### How do our current bodies compare with the glorified bodies Christ's followers will receive when He returns?

-Paul's descriptions of the body that is sown are not meant to disparage or put down God's creation, they are statements of fact and should be understood in contrast to the greatness of the body that is raised.

Current (Sown)

Glorified (Raised)

v.42 **Perishable**

**Imperishable**

-Perishable bodies are subject to decay/degradation and are susceptible to injury, disease, and other precursors of death.

v.43 **In Dishonor**

**In Glory**

-Dishonor connotes lowliness or humiliation (not pejorative) in contrast to glory => future state of righteousness.

v.43 **In Weakness**

**In Power**

-“In ...” carries both the idea of “in a state of” and “as a display of.” Dishonor/weakness and glory/power are demonstrated in the very acts of sowing and raising.

v.44 **Natural**

**Spiritual**

-“By spiritual body Paul does not mean an immaterial body but a body animated and empowered by the Holy Spirit.” – ESV Study Bible; there is also the sense of the body being fit for life in natural vs. heavenly places.

-As the full plant is greater than the bare seed, so is the body that is raised greater in every respect than the body that was sown.

-God has perfectly given all His creation what it needs to thrive. Seeing how well equipped He has made plants, animals, and humans for this life, we can have confidence that He will also faithfully supply everything we need for life and godliness in the life to come (**2 Pet. 1:3**).

**In contrasting the natural and the spiritual body, Paul returns to a comparison of Adam and Christ that he began in verses 21-22 to teach about their headship and representation of others. What other contrasts does Paul draw between the first and last Adam?**

- | <u>First Adam</u>   | <u>Last Adam (Christ)</u>          |
|---|------------------------------------|
| v.45 <b>Became a living being</b>   | <b>Became a life-giving spirit</b> |
| -Adam became a living being (natural body) through creation ( <b>Gen. 2:7</b> ). He was a recipient, life had to be given to him.   |                                    |
| -Christ became a life-giving spirit (spiritual body) through His resurrection (15:22). He is the source and gives life to others.   |                                    |
| v.47 <b>From the earth, of dust</b>   | <b>From heaven</b>                 |
| -The descriptors for Adam and Christ have more to do with the states of their bodies than with their origins.   |                                    |
| -Adam was literally made from the dust of the earth and was fit to live an earthly life.  |                                    |
| -Christ was born with a natural body but raised with a glorified body and is fit to live a spiritual life.  |                                    |
| v.49 <b>All bear Adam's image</b>   | <b>Some bear Christ's image</b>    |
| -Through natural birth all bear Adam's image, only through supernatural birth will some bear Christ's image ( <b>John 3:6-7</b> ).  |                                    |
| -Those who currently bear the image of the man of dust will be transformed to bear the image of the man of heaven. We will be made like Christ so that He will truly be firstfruits among us (v.51-52, <b>Rom. 8:29, Phil. 3:20-21, 1 John 3:2</b> ). |                                    |

### **Read 1 Corinthians 15:50-58**

**What is the relationship between law, sin, and death (Rom. 3:20, 5:20-21, 7:7-11)?<sup>1</sup> How does Paul describe death's defeat and the means by which is it accomplished?<sup>2</sup>**

- <sup>1</sup>Death works by means of sin, which is enabled by the law (v.56). The law sets the standard for righteousness (thus, identifying those who fall short of it) and mandates condemnation for trespasses, which results in death (**Gen. 2:16-17, Rom. 6:23**).
- <sup>1</sup>Death is unnatural – it is an aberration and deviation that was introduced with sin from the life that God created.
- <sup>2</sup>Death's defeat is described as a swallowing up (**Isa. 25:8**). Its consumption shows it to be a completely broken enemy.
- <sup>2</sup>Paul was able to taunt death because it had no power over him (**Hos. 13:14**). Any threat that it presented had been neutered.
- Even in its current antagonism, death is now made to serve God's purposes (**Phil. 1:21**).
- <sup>2</sup>Immortality and imperishability are the perfect counter to death, granting complete immunity and negating the menace of death.
- The imagery is of being cloaked in it or covered by it (**2 Cor. 5:2-4**) rather than a discarding of the old and replacement by the new.
- <sup>2</sup>Christ's victory also encompasses the law and sin. Having perfectly fulfilled the law and defeated sin in His body, He has taken care of every element that leads to death.

**In light of Christ's victory over death and the glorious life that awaits those who are His, what response did Paul call on the Corinthians to give?<sup>1</sup> In what ways is our resolve to stand firm in this truth under attack?<sup>2</sup> What would it look like for our lives to abound in the work of the Lord?<sup>3</sup>**

- <sup>1</sup>What Paul began with an affirmation that the Corinthians had indeed taken their stand on the true gospel (v.1) and a warning that wavering from that path would result in their faith being in vain (v.2), he now concludes on the same two ideas with an exhortation to continue standing firm in the truth and an encouragement that the labour that springs from it is never in vain (v.58).
- <sup>1</sup>Paul encouraged the Corinthians to persevere, repeating his instruction to be steadfast (stand firm – NIV84) and immovable in their faith (not giving up ground or being deterred), since his occasion for writing them was in response to a false teaching that had already entered their church.
- This reminder to hold on to right teaching reinforces Paul's earlier instruction for them to think rightly so that they would stop sinning and live rightly (v.34).
- <sup>1</sup>Paul also called for them to fully invest themselves in the work of the Lord, an attitude that he was already demonstrating in both his zeal and his dependence on the Lord (v.10).
- He was able to confidently regard expending himself to build God's kingdom as not in vain because of his assurance of that kingdom's ultimate triumph over all others (15:24-28).

### **Reflection and application**

Throughout this chapter, Paul has been building a case to answer the challenges of those who denied the bodily resurrection of believers. In one of his final points, he addresses the need for a body that is suitable for the coming spiritual age. Since our natural bodies were only made for life outside of eternity, they need to be transformed into spiritual bodies that are marked by power, glory, and imperishability in order to inherit the promised kingdom. Not all will experience resurrection from death but all who would enter life with Christ must be conformed to His image. Even though our current bodies pale in comparison to what they will be on that day, God has graciously given them to us as a good and generous gift. As we await the sounding of the last trumpet, let us recognize and praise God for the glory of our earthly bodies (Ps. 139:14), suffering well in His strength as He calls us to, and use them to abound in His work in hope and expectation of the perfect glorified body that will one day be eternally ours.