

## **1 Corinthians 15:35–49**

*August 27, 2017*

I don't understand a lot about grocery stores. No matter how many times I visit, I seem to get lost when Tiffany sends me there on the way home. I told her I can't go to Trader Joe's anymore. I can't find anything that store.

It is surprising to me how often products carry the title—New & Improved.

So much is labeled new and improved that it makes me wonder what I have been eating all the while. Or should I wait to buy this product until something new and improved comes out?

Garfield, the lasagna loving cat (only cat I have an affinity for) said, “To think, all this time I have been eating old and inferior.”

Does new and improved mean anything more than—“Hey buy our product!”

The Bible has nothing to sell and no products to peddle and so when we look at our passage and find that our existences, our very bodies will new and improved—we can think, yeah right.

But it is right.

Last week we saw from Aaron WHY the resurrection matters to Christians. Today, our focus shifts a little

from WHY it matters to WHAT the resurrection is like.

Our future life with Jesus will be new and better in every way.

We will have a new life.

We will have new bodies.

We will bear an entirely new image.

In short, the newness begun on earth will be completed in eternity.

**PROP:** In eternity, you will be forever new and forever improved forever.

We will unpack what that means as we go...

<sup>35</sup> But someone will ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?” <sup>36</sup> You foolish person! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. <sup>37</sup> And what you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. <sup>38</sup> But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body. <sup>39</sup> For not all flesh is the same, but there is one kind for humans, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish. <sup>40</sup> There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is of one kind, and the glory of the earthly is of another. <sup>41</sup> There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory.

<sup>42</sup> So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. <sup>43</sup> It

is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. <sup>44</sup> It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. <sup>45</sup> Thus it is written, “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. <sup>46</sup> But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. <sup>47</sup> The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. <sup>48</sup> As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. <sup>49</sup> Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.” 1 Corinthians 15:35-49

**PROP:** In eternity, you will be forever new and forever improved forever.

We will discover together as we examine this passage how the newness works.

New life  
New body  
New image

1. New life: Death before life
2. New body: Life with a different look
3. New Image: we will resemble the king

**1. New life—New life MUST come after death  
(35-41)**

Look at vs. 35,

“How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?” <sup>36</sup> You foolish person!”

What gives? Paul seems a little harsh.

They are not asking an honest question. They are asking a question with an edge. They are asking questions like a teenager. I was an expert at this.

I was a studied expert in asking questions with a barb or stinger attached.

For example, I would look at one of my brothers and ask, “Why are you so stupid?”

And my mom would protest and I would say, “What, I’m just wondering. What? (with an honest puppy dog look)”

My parents would rightly question my motive for asking such a question.

The Corinthians are essentially doing the exact same thing. They are asking questions like teenagers to— with a stinger attached.

To get the sense of what they are doing—I am going to go ahead and take the freedom to give you a loose translation of my own making. Let’s call it ‘The New American Teenager Version.’

The will be raised, yeah right. What kind of lame-o stupid body will they have, huh?

It made no sense to them because they were imagining a re-animated corpse. They were thinking—if the resurrection is a zombie-like existence where you re-inhabit a used-up body. No thanks.

They were saying—return of the living dead? I’m out. No thanks.

That is why Paul says, “You foolish person!” Or to used our New American Teenage Version, we might render it—You idiots.

And he goes on,

“What you sow does not come to life unless it dies.  
37 And what you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain.  
38 But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body.

Paul employs a farming analogy. Sow means to plant in the ground. You sow seeds and you harvest crop. Or you might say, you sow seeds and you reap crops. When you plant that seed, it must die for life of a different kind to emerge.

Sow a kernel and get wheat.

They are not the same, but the death of the seed leads to the life of the crop.

- Corn seed is not the same as an ear of corn.
- Wheat germ is not the same as a stalk of wheat.
- A pinecone is not the same as a Ponderosa pine.

But an ear of corn, a stalk of wheat, and even a Ponderosa pine come from little seeds that give their life so that they can grow.

Is there resemblance? Yes.

Are the seeds the same as the fully-grown plants? No.

There is a resemblance but the plant is completely new and different having different properties than the seed.

The same is true for our resurrection bodies.

The Corinthians did not understand how the resurrection could be true and so they decided that it was not true. It is a common mistake to make—just because you cannot understand something does not make it untrue.

It could be that you are not able to understand everything.

And the Corinthians began to realize this.

The point of this stark newness and staggering variety is furthered in vs. 39,

“For not all flesh is the same, but there is one kind for humans, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish. <sup>40</sup> There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is of one kind, and the glory of the earthly is of another.

4<sup>1</sup> There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory.

4<sup>2</sup> So is it with the resurrection of the dead.”

In other words, just like there are many bits of creation in the known and unknown universe all made by God—from:

Quasars to Aarkvards  
Neutron Stars to Neural Synapsis  
Marlins to Moons  
Elephants to Asteroids  
Dogs to Dwarf stars  
Plankton to Blue Wales  
Raccoons to Baboons  
Scorpions to leeches

There is an endless variety of creatures and creations in heavens and on earth and ALL of it is God’s handiwork.

Just as God made a menagerie of things so different and yet so very much from him—he is able to remake our new bodies even though we die.

You see, written in to the fabric of the universe is the sense of death before life. You can see this with the smallest of the seeds—death of a seed brings forth a bountiful crop of food. You can see this when you put compost on your grass to make it grow lush and green. You can see this as a sparrow eats a worm.

The death of our body will bring us life in a new body.

PROP: In eternity, you will be forever new and forever improved forever.

That is the nature of our newness. We will have a new life after our necessary death because death precedes our new life.

What else is new?

## **2. New Body—Completely new and different (vv. 42-44)**

What are the particulars of our future bodies?

It is here beginning in verse 42b that Paul spins off a series of contrasts that describe in detail the differences between our current bodies and our resurrection bodies.

His description sets 4 contrasts side by side for us to see the monumental differences.

Look at verse 42,

“What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable.’<sup>43</sup> It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power.<sup>44</sup> It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body.”

Did you see the contrasts?

Perishable → Imperishable (v. 42)

Dishonor → Glory (v. 43)



Weakness → Power (v. 43)

Natural (old) → Spiritual (new) (v. 44)

Let's take them one at a time—

**‘What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable.’**

The bodies we now inhabit have an expiration date. Time, gravity and disease all conspire to send us steadily careening toward death.

And even the healthiest of us will find ourselves will one day find ourselves at the gates of death.

We are perishable. Mortal.

But we will not always be so limited. We will not always wear the indignity of a perishable body.

We will take on an imperishable body. It is not just that we won't die but we will lack the ability to die. Our new bodies will be indestructible.

What we will be is exactly the opposite of our situation now. The mortality rate will go from 100% to 0% in the new heavens and new earth.

We will go from a reality where we are constantly harangued by death to a reality where death is extinct. Death will be a distant memory and no longer a threat.

Death, the great enemy of mankind will be forever and finally gone. Death will be dead.

That is new.

We go from perishable to imperishable.

What else?

PROP: In eternity, you will be forever new and forever improved forever.

*‘It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory.’*

What does he mean by dishonor? Our bodies are exposed to many different shameful dishonors.

It is shameful that the wisest of us—the mature—armed with life experience and wisdom would have to bear the dishonor and limitations of growing older.

How many of us are stooped with the limitations of age? Shameful.

It is shameful that the most innocent of us—the children—armed with innocence and naiveté would have to bear the dishonor of birth defects.

How many children are born with limitations that will mark their lives from now on? Shameful.

It is shameful that the most vulnerable of us—ones with special needs—armed with virtue and kindness

are shackled with conditions like: Downs, Asperger's, Bi-Polar just to name a few.

How many people struggle with the indignity of disabilities? Shameful.

It is shameful that our bodies cannot always ward off cancer or auto-immune difficulties or arthritis or bad eye-sight.

It is shameful that we cannot avoid Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, heart disease, strokes, aneurisms...Shameful.

Many of us have to bear the shame of not liking how we look. Some want to gain weight, others want to lose it. Some bear the dishonor of bad knees, bad ankles, bad backs and bad eyes.

Shameful.

But we will not be dishonored forever by physical limitations.

In the life to come—

Age will NOT carry a hint of limitation. As we age we will stronger and more able. Our bodies will never be stooped by age but be marked by glory.

No one will bear the dishonor of disease or disability but only of glory.

In those days we are going to have to re-purpose our language. We are experts at describing symptoms and maladies, but then we will have to have new words that describe how glorious things are.

We lack the vocabulary.

The dishonored will be glorified.

What else is new?

‘Sown in weakness; raised in power.’

No one has to convince us of our weakness. Even the strongest of us is shockingly weak. Our bodies will begin to break without food, water, sleep in a short amount of time.

We are profoundly and exceedingly weak. We can control very little, often not even our own desires or motivations.

But this condition is not forever, our weakness will end.

We will one day be raised in power.

Imagine a world where the only limitations are those of imagination. No sin. We will have great power—power for building, excavating, exploring, creating to infinite degrees.

We will have power to do all that we can imagine. I don't know what we will be able to do, but I bet:

- We will have a limitless power to learn
- We will have a limitless power to explore
- We will have a limitless power to build
- We will have a limitless power to create

Think about what this means for:

Music

Sport

Writing

Art

Travel

Buildings

Poetry

We will have power to do all to God's glory that we can't even imagine now.

That is not to say that we will be raised by the power of God—that is true—but the verse says that we will be raised and be powerful.

We will be strong, both body and mind. No longer will we be limited by human frailty. To be human will completely and utterly be redefined, recreated so that humanity is synonymous with strength.

The angels will speak of their limitations in comparison to humans and say, "What do you expect? We are only angelic, we aren't human."

Even the superheroes that seem so popular on the silver screen these days compared to us—are lightweight pansies.

Captain America—how cute.  
Superman—yawn.  
Wonder Woman—boring.

We will be directly connected to the power of God and finally our bodies will be completely controlled by the Spirit and the power of God.

We will be strong because he is strong.

Just as Jesus shared in our weakness in his life on earth—we will share in his strength in our life with him in the new heavens and new earth.

Lastly,

**‘It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body.’**

Before we talk about what this means we need to get our vocabulary straight. When I read, ‘natural body’ and ‘spiritual body’ and they are supposed to be opposites—it doesn’t come across in English very well.

The comparison between ‘natural body’ and ‘spiritual body’ seems to be a comparison between physical and non-physical bodies.

But it is not.

When you and I hear spiritual body—we think a body that is see-through, light and wispy, kind of like a ghost. Or fake. Lacking substance and form.

Not true. It is better to think of the opposites as old body and new body.

We are apt to think in terms of the physical and non-physical. Things that science can measure and things that science cannot measure. Natural = common sense.

And some of you here might say that you believe in science and what can be measured and that is why you have never gone in for this Jesus stuff.

The problem with that is that science only acts like it can measure everything. It can't. Did you know that Einstein when he discovered his theory of relativity he was so spooked because saw in it the hand of a creator?

The math didn't lie. The universe was created and Einstein didn't know what to do. He assumed the that the universe was eternal and then the math told him it wasn't. And the problem has confounded scientists ever since.

When Watson and Crick discovered the double helix, DNA strand they found so much information that they said, there is no it could have evolved by chance. Not enough time.

So, the new atheists, who believe in science end up saying like Richard Dawkins that life on earth was seeded by aliens.

Let me ask you—what is more believable?

A benevolent God who invites men and women to come to him and have new life and meaning in your current life or a blind faith in something like an alien race that seeded life.

Hmm.

I'll pick God over ET.

Please understand, I am not saying here that if you are an atheist that you must—like Richard Dawkins—must believe that humanity was seeded by aliens. I am saying that to be an atheist takes tremendous amounts of faith. A blind faith you might say.

When we say natural vs. spiritual we are not saying real vs. unreal. Another way to say it is old vs. new body.

The nature of our eternal existences will be physical. The body that is fading away will be traded in on a new body. You will not lose your personality. You will not lose your identity. You will be finally who you were created to be.

**PROP:** In eternity, you will be forever new and forever improved forever.



In summary, our bodies will be NEW not just different. No more:

Perishable  
Dishonor  
Weakness  
Old

Then—it will be

Imperishable  
Glory  
Power  
New

What does this mean?

Many things—but one is that we must remember that we will not always wander in the shadowlands living by faith and not sight.

That is only a temporary condition.

You can get wrapped up in thinking that the things that really matter are things that you cannot see with your eyes:

Love  
Kindness  
Gentleness  
Mortification  
Prayer

We can think that the Spiritual things are things that we can't see and measure, can't touch or know for certain. That is true, now.

But not forever.

We are not going to be subsumed into the great ether and lose ourselves in the great collective or some singularity.

Rather, we will be who were always supposed to be.

PROP: In eternity, you will be forever new and forever improved forever.

Imperishable  
Glory  
Power  
New

What else is new?

### **3. New Image: We will perfectly resemble the King (45-49)**

vs. 45,

“Thus it is written, “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. <sup>46</sup> But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual.”

What is he saying?

Verse 45 is a direct quote from Genesis 2:7 where God created Adam with his own hands from the dust of the earth. We bear Adam's image to this day. We are made of dust and will one day decompose into dust.

The first Adam gave life in the normal way.

The last Adam—Jesus Christ—gives life in a different way.

**4<sup>8</sup> As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. 4<sup>9</sup> Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.**

The point is not that Jesus will enable us to escape these bodies of flesh to enter the spiritual world of perfection BUT to get back to the original image of God and perfectly bear the image of the second and ultimate Adam.

What about our future bodies?

First Adam was animated with the normal breath of life.

The last Adam will animate his followers by the Spirit of God—and they will be completely controlled by the Spirit of God.

The life of God in the heart of mankind.

PROP: In eternity, you will be forever new and forever improved forever.

Who cares?

You might be saying—who cares about all this new body stuff. How does it impact me today?

What does it matter now?

Good question.

Besides freeing you from the lie that you only live once on earth and when you die it is over—besides that.

Here are a couple of ideas.

What if you have regrets?

I can imagine in a room this size that there are many of us in this room who carry around a backpack full of regrets.

Regrets for what you did.

Regrets for what you did not do.

Regrets for who you were.

Regrets for what you are.

Regrets for words spoken.

Regrets for words not spoken.

Regrets in this world can and do push us to many other things that we will regret in the future.

Isolation  
Drinking  
Relational Paralysis  
Hopeless  
Loneliness

You see, the problem with regrets from the past is that they often control our future. We can be so seized with fear that we stop hoping, stop feeling and eventually stop living.

But it doesn't have to be that way.

The Christian is controlled by the future and not the past. For those in Christ, their identity is not in the mistakes of the past but in the destiny of the future.

We are not yet what we will become, but we are not what we once were. The man from heaven invites us all to come to him, and he will forgive our every sin and remove our every guilt (regret).

So, we are free to look ahead to what we will be and NOT what we once were.

Secondly, Is there anything you would change about your appearance?

Have you ever noticed that the beautiful people don't have the beautiful souls? The ideal body type put forth in the media is not one most of us have. And if we are honest, we all have things about our appearance we would change.

Do you?

We all do.

But you see what this passage is saying? There will come a day that the beauty of Christ that beats in the heart of every Christian will be expressed on the faces and the bodies on the outside.

Now, Christians are known by their love—THEN we will be known by our new and improved body.

One day—

We will all put off the perishable for the Imperishable.  
We will discard the dishonor for the Glory.  
We will abandon weakness for power.  
We will lose the old for the new.

New and improved.

PRAY