

# The Victory of the Resurrection

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Preacher: Jonathan de Groot

[ 0 : 00 ] Well, the Princess Royal, following the death of her father, Prince Philip, she wrote this in a statement last week. She said, you know it's going to happen, but you're never really ready.

You know it's going to happen, but you're never really ready. Now, she's talking about the reality of death. We know it's going to happen. We know our bodies are decaying and that one day we will die.

But she says, you're never really ready. And she's talking about the impact that death makes on us. When a loved one dies, death has that shock factor.

It hits us hard when we experience the death of a loved one and we find it hard to cope. We struggle. But is it true that we aren't ever really ready for death?

Well, this passage says to us that we can be ready for death. 1 Corinthians chapter 15 is all about the resurrection and it speaks about the hope of the resurrection through death.

[ 1 : 07 ] And it speaks of how the resurrection and the hope that comes from it is guaranteed for us because of Jesus Christ and his resurrection from the dead. What we're reading here is that God will raise his people and give them resurrection bodies.

And the proof of that is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And so there is a certain hope and assurance and confidence through death for all those who know Jesus Christ.

And that really is the only thing that can make us ready for death. And so how does this happen? How will it all work? Well, that's the question that Paul's readers, the Corinthians, were asking.

Verse 35, we read, But someone will ask, how were the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come? Now, these questions don't come from genuinely inquiring minds.

They come from skeptics, people who are mocking the resurrection of the body. They're saying, come off it, Paul. You don't expect us to really believe in bodily resurrection after death.

[ 2 : 14 ] How can bodies that have been either buried or burned, how can they be raised to life? Now, the Corinthians were influenced by their culture, as we all are.

And they believed that it was the soul that continued after death and not the body. And so the thought of a physical, bodily resurrection through death sounded ridiculous to them, just as it sounds ridiculous to many people today.

But if you're here or you're tuning in and you're skeptical about the Christian claims about the resurrection, in other words, if you're not really convinced about the claims of Christianity, then surely, surely you would want the resurrection to be true.

Because it offers the best hope in the face of death, the most certain and the most sure hope of any other claim that this world offers.

And so let's look at two things as we look at this passage together. The first is how bodily resurrection works, verse 36 to 49. And then secondly, why bodily resurrection is needed.

[ 3 : 23 ] How bodily resurrection works and then why bodily resurrection is needed. So first, how bodily resurrection works, verse 36 to 49. So the skepticism about the resurrection is called foolish by Paul.

So in verse 36, he says, How foolish what you sow does not come to life unless it dies. So Paul wants to show how the resurrection will be a continuation, but also a transformation of the human body.

So get that? It's a continuation of the human body, but it is also a radical transformation. So it won't be reanimation like a zombie, and it won't be a reboot like a computer system.

It won't be resuscitation like a hospital patient, and it won't be reincarnation like another body. No, it will be resurrection, a transformation of this human body after death.

And so if we want to understand bodily resurrection, Paul tells us to look in two places. He says we should look at nature, first of all, and he says we should look at Jesus.

[ 4 : 32 ] So let's think about these. First of all, look at nature. And this is in verse 36 to 44. So he says, How foolish what you sow does not come to life unless it dies.

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 is determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body.

So Paul here is appealing to the natural world around us, all that we can see in our lovely gardens or out in the parks at this time of year, lovely daffodils, flowers, plants, and all the rest of it.

He's saying look at the nature you see around you and just see that there are plenty of examples of transformation, of life from death.

So Paul essentially takes us on a tour, say, of the botanic gardens to show us how this happens. So you put the seed in the ground, and the seed dies before any kind of plant life grows.

[ 5 : 36 ] And then when it's grown, the seed that you put into the ground looks nothing like the plant that is the end product. What comes out of the ground is different from what went into the ground.

Why? Well, because God does this process of transformation by transforming the seed into the plant. And so there's an amazing difference, but there is a continuity as well.

And in the same way he's saying, a Christian believer will die, but they will be transformed with a resurrection body. So just as God decides what kind of body will come from the seed, whether it be a sunflower or a cucumber or an apple tree or a mighty oak, God decides what will come from that seed, so God will give us the right body for everlasting life.

So that's his first stop, the botanic gardens. Next, he takes us on a trip to the zoo. So look at verse 39. Not all flesh is the same.

People have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another, and fish another. So in nature, not all flesh is the same. And you know this, especially if you have a dog, because as humans, we've got skin like this.

[ 6 : 56 ] But look at the rhino, checkered skin, very different. Then look at the parrot, different kind of skin again. Then look at the clownfish, different kind of skin again.

So obviously, we are all different. That's your science lesson over. It's clear. We're all different. But Paul's point is that God has given us and he has given every single creature what is needed to both exist and survive in our individual habitats.

So fish doesn't work out of water and so on and so on and so on. So God gives life in many diverse forms and he gives diverse bodies to fit with the environment.

So he's taken us to the botanic gardens. He's then taken us to the zoo. Next, he takes us to the observatory to gaze into space. So verse 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. The sun has one kind of splendor, the moon another and the stars another and stars differ from star in splendor.

[ 8 : 07 ] Okay, so earthly bodies, physical human bodies, but we're to check out the heavenly bodies. So the sun, the moon, and the stars, they're all different in form.

They're all glorious, full of splendor, but God created them to exist exactly where they are. And so Paul's argument is, it's ludicrous, therefore, to suggest that God might struggle to give his people a resurrection body that is fit for eternity.

And so he drills this home in verse 42 to 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.

So when we see how God has created many different kinds of bodies, earthly bodies and heavenly bodies, it shouldn't be difficult to grasp that we can have a natural body right now and then a spiritual body in the future.

That's what Paul is saying. So the resurrection body to come, the future body, will be far superior to this human body. And that's why Paul compares our present bodies to our future bodies.

[ 9 : 32 ] And if you notice, there's a fourfold contrast between what is sown here and then what is raised. So first, the body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable.

So this body, my body, your body, look around at the people sitting next to you, their bodies will all perish. And we're aware of that. We decay as we grow older and then we die, whether it's a virus or a disease or an accident or old age, we will perish.

And it's not nice to hear, but we all have a sell-by date. Someday, we're going to die. One day, people will gather at our funeral in the same way that we have gathered at the funerals of people that we know and love.

This body won't go on forever, but pulsing the resurrection body will, because it will be raised imperishable. It won't perish. It will last.

And then secondly, he says, this body is sown in dishonor. It is raised in glory. So this body carries dishonor because it is corrupted by sin. It has been used and abused in dishonorable ways.

[10:49] But he's saying the resurrected body will be raised in glory. It will be glorified and it will be made perfect. And the third thing he says is, this body is sown in weakness.

It is raised in power. This body is weak and fragile. I know it doesn't look it, but it is. We all have aches and pains.

Things go wrong with our bodies. Things go wrong with our minds. And we need all kinds of medications, all kinds of operations. And even if we think that we live a fit and healthy life, nothing proves weakness so much as a dead corpse.

But Paul's saying the resurrection body will be raised in power. It won't be subject to a weak and fragile existence like you and I have right now. We will have a super body.

Then the fourth thing he says is, this body is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. So the natural body he speaks of really describes our experience of life in this world, in the here and now.

[11:56] But that kind of life and that kind of body is no use for the future, for future life beyond death. And so we need a spiritual body that is suitable for the resurrection life.

And he's saying it will be a perfect body, still physical, but supernatural. natural. And so all of this implies that with a resurrection body we will be the same person, but transformed with a different physical substance.

So the spiritual body will have different qualities, but we will remain recognizable as the same person. So Paul tells us, first of all, to look at nature, but then he also goes on and tells us to look at Jesus in verse 44 to 49.

So he shows us how the risen body of Jesus Christ is evidence of a spiritual body, which is where he's moved on to. So those who are united with Christ, he's saying, will bear his image.

So let's look at those verses again, 45 to 49. If there's a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. So it is written, the first man, Adam, became a living being, the last Adam, a life-giving spirit.

[13:16] The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man is of heaven. As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth, and as is the heavenly man, so also are those who are of heaven.

And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so we shall bear the image of the heavenly man. So Paul is contrasting Jesus with Adam.

So Jesus is the last Adam that he is referring to. And so he quotes Genesis chapter 2 verse 7 to say that God made Adam and he became a living being.

And then from Adam came all human beings. So our natural body is patterned after Adam. But Paul is saying our spiritual body is patterned after Jesus.

So because Jesus, the last Adam, is a life-giving spirit, so the spiritual body comes after this natural body. Paul says Adam is from the dust of the earth, but Jesus is from heaven.

[14:28] So just as the origins of Adam and Jesus are different, so too are the destinies of those who are in Adam compared to those who are in Christ.

And so we have a body like Adam's right now, a body that will die compared to those who are in Christ, a body that won't decay and die, but a body that will last forever.

And just as real and certain is this physical body we can touch and pinch and poke, so real and certain is the resurrection spiritual body that Paul is talking about here.

And it's real and certain and we can be sure that is the case because of Jesus and the fact that he rose from the dead. And so if you look around at believers in church today, their natural bodies will die, but they will be raised with glorious spiritual bodies that will bear the image of Jesus.

So no matter how ugly, misshapen we might look right now, one day for those who know and love Jesus Christ, we will reflect and bear his image and it will be one of beauty and glory and splendor. [15:47] And we don't know exactly or specifically what it will be like, but we can be sure that like Jesus, our new bodies will have a continuity with our earthly ones and yet will be transformed into spiritual bodies.

I think Paul sums this up really well in Philippians chapter 3 verse 21 where he says Jesus will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

So for those who believe in Jesus and who are united to Christ, then they will have a resurrected, transformed, glorious, perfect body.

Now, our culture rates fit and beautiful people, doesn't it? And however good their bodies are right now, however good they might look, it is going to fade if it hasn't already faded or if it hasn't been touched up with a photograph.

photograph. Because when it comes to our natural bodies, there is no amount of makeup, no amount of exercise, dieting, Botox, or even plastic surgery that is going to stop us deteriorating and dying.

[17:02] And so if you are looking for the perfect body, if that is what you long for in your life, to get the perfect body, work out at the gym, wear makeup, plastic surgery, whatever, then you will only get the perfect body with Jesus.

And it will literally be a body to die for. And it will be a body that is out of this world. That's what Paul is saying here.

And that's why the resurrection really is our best hope. So even if we don't believe in the resurrection, we should want it to be true because it promises an existence where there will be no pain, blindness, deafness, disability, dementia, mental illness, multiple sclerosis, cancer, disease, which means no doctors or nurses.

Lots of people here will have to find new things to do when they get their resurrection life. No hospitals, no care homes, no wheelchairs, no antibiotics, no medicine, no surgery, no graveyards, no crematoriums, and no funerals because there will be no more death.

And isn't that the kind of world that we all long for? Of course it is. That is where we want to be. And the promise of this passage is that it is coming because of Jesus and his resurrection from the dead that all those who trust in him will follow in his wake with new resurrection bodies.

[18:40] And so the promise of a resurrection body couldn't be better. Whenever I think of the resurrection body, I'm reminded of Joni Erickson Tadda.

She's a Christian woman. You may have heard of her. And she was in a tragic diving accident when she was just 17. And it left her a quadriplegic, so paralyzed from the neck down.

And in her book, *Heaven, Your Real Home*, she writes about being at a convention when the speaker asked everybody to kneel on the floor in prayer. And so five or six hundred people got down on their knees.

And this is what she says. She says, well, with everyone kneeling, I certainly stood out. And I couldn't stop the tears. I wasn't crying out of pity or because I felt awkward or different.

Tears were streaming down because I was struck with the beauty of seeing so many people on bended knees before the Lord. It was a picture of Heaven. And then she goes on, she says, sitting there, I was reminded that in Heaven I'll be free to jump up, dance, kick, and do aerobics.

[19:49] And sometime before the guests are called to the banquet table at the wedding feast of the Lamb, the first thing I plan to do on resurrected legs is to drop down on grateful, glorified knees.

And then she adds, I, with shriveled, bent fingers, atrophied muscles, gnarled knees, and no feeling from the shoulders down, will one day have a new body, light, bright, and clothed in righteousness, powerful and dazzling.

Can you imagine the hope that the resurrection gives someone who is a spinal cord injured person like me? Isn't that amazing? So no matter what you go through in this life with this body, if you believe in the crucified and risen Lord Jesus, then you can look forward to being raised one day with a resurrection body for everlasting life.

And so that's the first thing we see is how bodily resurrection works. The second thing is why bodily resurrection is needed. Verse 50 to 57. It's needed simply because we can't enter the kingdom of God with this body.

Verse 50. Paul says, I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

[ 21 : 15 ] So he's saying a major change is needed. Our flesh and blood bodies are marked by sin, they're marked by death, so they're perishable.

They're not fit for the kingdom of God and so they must be transformed. God must change our bodies to make us fit for his kingdom. And now Paul is saying this to the Corinthians because they were under the illusion that they were living their heavenly existence in the here and now on earth, thinking somehow that they had already arrived.

But Paul's saying a transformation is needed because we can't enter eternity as we are. We need to be changed. And so Paul describes what this is like.

Verse 51 and 52. 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. It's described as a mystery, but Paul's talking about the end of the world as we know it, about the return of Jesus.

[ 22 : 24 ] And so the trumpet will sound, that's the sudden signal of change, a new situation, the trumpet will sound and when Jesus returns, all believers, those living and dead, will enter God's perfected kingdom through the transformation of their bodies.

So all will be changed, he's saying. And the transformation won't take place gradually over a period of time. He says it will happen instantly, in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye.

We sometimes say, blink and you'll miss it. That's the kind of immediate change that Paul is talking about here. And so believers who are alive at the time will have their mortal bodies transformed into a glorified body and simultaneously, believers who have died will be resurrected with a glorified body.

And so he goes on in verse 53 to say, for the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has clothed itself with the imperishable and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true.

Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? And so here again, we've got this continuity as well as the difference of a transformed body.

[ 23 : 48 ] The perishable body will be clothed with the imperishable and the mortal will be clothed with immortality. So all believers, he's saying, will be radically transformed with a resurrection body that will be fit for the kingdom of God, perfected kingdom of God, which will last forever.

One of my favourite sporting events is the Augusta Masters, one of golf's four major tournaments. And it took place last weekend in Augusta, Georgia.

And the golf courses are amazing. I think they spray them green because they're so unnaturally green. But the Masters was won last week by its first Japanese men's major winner, Hideki Matsuyama.

And when you watch the Masters, it's not just the golf that is amazing, but it's my favourite bit is at the end when the previous year's winner gives the new champion his green jacket.

Because every winner gets a green jacket that is part of the Augusta Golf Club. And every year before the tournament, they have a champions dinner where all the champions or the masters from previous years get together before the tournament and last year's winner picks the menu for the champions dinner and then they all put on their green jackets and they enjoy a meal together.

[ 25 : 14 ] But if you're going to get into the champions dinner, how do you get in? Well, you need a green jacket. You can't just walk in. You need to be clothed with your green jacket that has been fit for you.

And Paul's saying something similar here. He's saying the only way to inherit the kingdom of God or to be fit for life after death is if we're changed. So we need the right outfit as it were.

We need to be suited and booted accordingly. We need this transformed body if we are to get through death and on into everlasting life.

And so whatever our bodies are going to be like, they will no longer be subject to death. Because death will be destroyed once and for all.

And if the believer's body is to be resurrected, to be immortal and imperishable, that means that death can't touch us. So right now, in our world, death does seem to be victorious.

[ 26 : 18 ] Death does touch everybody. At every funeral, as the coffin is lowered into the earth or as the coffin rolls into the crematorium incinerator to be burned, it looks like death has won.

But Paul's saying here that death won't triumph in the end. And so rather than death have its way, he's saying that those who trust in Jesus can laugh at death and shout, along with Isaiah and along with Paul, where, oh death, is your victory?

Where, oh death, is your sting. And you can only shout and sing and laugh at death when you know Jesus Christ. Paul says, verse 56, the sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law, but thanks be to God.

He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. So when Jesus Christ died on the cross, it looked as if death had the victory, but not at all.

Through his death and resurrection, the power of sin and death was defeated by Jesus. And so the punishment for sin was taken by Jesus on the cross.

[ 27 : 32 ] Paul says, the sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law. So the law, because we can't keep it, pronounces our death sentence. But Jesus, because he did keep it and lived a perfect life, he satisfied the law's just demands through his death on the cross.

And so Jesus has removed the sting of death by taking the sting himself. He has won the victory over sin and death and he allows us to share in his victory.

I can remember when my daughter Rebecca was really small, I can remember playing football with her in the garden and there was a huge bumblebee that was buzzing around on the grass and so we bent down and we looked at this bee and the bee started to get agitated and Rebecca started to get scared because she knew she was old enough to know that bees do sting.

And so I wrapped my arms around her and the bee stung me. Instead, Rebecca was still scared because the bee was still buzzing around but I reassured her that because the bee stung me, it couldn't sting her because it could only sting once.

And so as Jesus died on the cross it was as if he wrapped his arms around us to draw the sting of death into himself willing to take our punishment for our sin.

[ 29 : 00 ] And so when we go to Jesus for forgiveness death no longer has any hold on us because death has lost its sting. And that's why we can say thanks be to God because he gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

And so there is a glorious future that lies in store for all God's people. But here, despite the fantastic focus on the future that Paul gives in the resurrection body he speaks of, Paul wants us to keep our feet on the ground.

So he says in verse 58, therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm, let nothing move you, always give yourself fully to the work of the Lord because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.

You know, sometimes we can become over-obsessed with the future. When I started out in my first church in ministry I was asked my view of the future.

So first Sunday at church an older lady came up to me and wanted to know whether I was pre-millennial, post-millennial or amillennial. And I said, oh, okay, nice to meet you too.

[ 30 : 16 ] Because we can be so obsessed with the future and what it's going to be like and what kind of questions we've got. But Paul here reminds us that the resurrection is coming so hope in it, be certain and sure it will happen but right now get on and live life in practical ways.

That's what he's saying in verse 58. And so he concludes this massive long section of teaching on the resurrection by saying stand firm, let nothing move you, always give yourself fully to the work of the Lord.

And so the resurrection of Jesus Christ doesn't cause us to withdraw from this present world into some kind of holy huddle and wait for Jesus to return. No, the resurrection causes us to engage with the world fully because we know the future and we know what is definitely coming.

And so the reality of the resurrection of Jesus means that we live now with certain and sure hope of victory to come. And when you know that you will have the victory, it will change how you live your life.

And that's why Paul's really saying we shouldn't write off this present life or this present body or this present world but getting a firm grasp of the implications of the resurrection of Jesus and what it means, that will keep us steady in this life.

[ 31 : 47 ] And so at times we will struggle, we will face difficulties and there will be hardships and we might even question why living for Jesus is even worth it.

But from eternity's perspective, Paul is saying it is definitely worth it. It is the best investment for your life that you could possibly make.

And so the problems and the difficulties of life in this world won't last. Our tired and weak and decaying bodies will die. But what Paul has done is he has opened up the beautiful and glorious reality of life after death and so he says don't give up.

Hang in there. Stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourself fully to the Lord because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.

And so as a Christian believer, we never waste our time or we never waste our energy by devoting our lives to serving Jesus. Whether that's in public or in private, it is always worth it.

[ 32 : 56 ] Whatever we do is never in vain. And so every prayer, every effort to witness, every act of service, every relationship we invest in, every temptation we resist, every time we repent, every struggle to obey, every expression of worship, every role routine part of life.

However, meaningful it seems or mundane it seems, none of it is in vain when it's for the Lord. So as we close, are you living right now in light of the resurrection hope?

Or even, do you have resurrection hope in Jesus Christ? Because if you don't have that hope, then really you have no hope.

Because what we're talking about here is not empty fantasy or wishful thinking or pie in the sky when you die. What we're talking about here is reality, as real as the air that we breathe right now. And we know it's real because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. and so let Jesus Christ today and every day give you the strength to face every fear in life and every fear for this world.

[ 34 : 18 ] He is able. He's with us. He's working towards the day when he returns. And then it will be a great celebration, the wedding feast of the Lamb with glorious resurrection bodies, seeing him face to face, worshipping him forever.

That is coming and you don't want to miss out. good. He has a great bird. You can do it. Thank you. Did you find a gentleman thank you.

He's a good person for heights. You can do it. And there's health famos and he's someday with that, that's gonna be ch■ enough to wash in a position and yeah with that, it's close.

And here gets to watch both beasts and those off andiczs and you canviolent so get