

Sermons on 1 Corinthians:

Victory in Jesus (1 Cor 15:50-57)

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I. INTRODUCTION.

A. Benjamin Franklin wrote his own epitaph. Here's what he wrote: "The Body of B. Franklin, Printer Like the Cover of an old Book Its contents torn out, And stript of its Lettering and Gilding, Lies here, Food for Worms, But the Work shall not be wholly lost: For it will, as he believ'd, Appear once more In a new & more perfect Edition, Corrected and amended by the Author."

B. Do we not often long for that "new & more perfect Edition, Corrected and amended by the Author"?

1. As I lay in the hospital last week, I desperately wanted a new body—one that doesn't get short of breath, one that doesn't have chest pain, & one that doesn't get woken at 4 am to have blood drawn!

2. However, the bodies we currently inhabit are full of problems.

a. I have little doubt but that each of you knows full well the problems these bodies have: high blood pressure, high cholesterol, worn-out joints, arthritis, and the like.

b. We read of biblical characters who suffered intently in their bodies.

1) "Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and struck Job with loathsome sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. And he took a piece of broken pottery with which to scrape himself while he sat in the ashes" (Job 2:7-8).

2) "Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha" (Jn 11:1).

C. We know important truths about our bodies.

1. We know that sickness and death are in this world because of sin: "Just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned" (Rm 5:12).

2. We also know that, unless the Lord returns first, these bodies are going to die.

- a. We know that from experience: We've all lost loved ones & we've all visited the funeral home more times than we could mention.
- b. We also know this truth from Scripture: "It is appointed for man to die once" (Heb 9:27).
- 3. We also know that those in Christ will be resurrected with new bodies.
 - a. "The Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord" (1 Thess 4:16-17).
 - b. However, as we mentioned last week, some of the Corinthians doubted the resurrection & their major stumbling block was the state of the resurrection body.
 - 1) In the text we discussed last week, Paul says that God raises the dead & that he gives new bodies as he wills.
 - 2) In this morning's text, Paul explains the resurrection body in even more detail.
 - 3) He informs the Corinthians of THE MAKEUP OF MY NEW BODY, THE MAN OF MY NEW BODY, & THE MOVE OF MY NEW BODY.

II. THE MAKEUP OF MY NEW BODY, vv 42-44.

- A. This body will be placed in the ground as perishable but raised as imperishable.
 - 1. The bodies we have now are capable of decay.
 - a. Have you ever passed by a dead animal on the side of the road? If that animal has been there a few days, it's not going to be a pretty site, is it? The bloating, the flies, the organs hanging out ruptured orifices are testimony to the perishable nature of physical bodies.
 - b. Human bodies left to the elements go through the same processes as those animals.
 - 1) To Adam God says, "By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return" (Gn 3:19).
 - 2) "All are from the dust, and to dust all return" (Eccl 3:20).
 - 2. However, our new bodies shall not be susceptible to decay. Our new bodies shall be designed to for an eternity & they shall never perish.
- B. This body will be sown in dishonor, but it shall be raised in glory.
 - 1. How will our bodies be sown in dishonor?
 - a. Death is God's enemy: Jesus "must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death" (1 Cor 15:25-26).
 - b. It is not at all honorable to fall victim to God's great & last enemy!
 - 2. Yet, our bodies shall be raised in glory, for our bodies shall be like Jesus' glorified body: "Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is" (1 Jn 3:2).

- C. This body will be sown in weakness; it will be raised in power.
1. These bodies while they are alive are extremely weak.
 - a. In the Garden, Jesus says to the disciples, “The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Mt 26:41).
 - b. “We know that law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate” (Rm 7:14-15).
 2. If these animated bodies are that weak, how weak they are when the spirit leaves them!
 - a. Have you ever known a body to show itself to the hearse when the funeral home comes?
 - b. Have you ever known a body to walk itself to the grave without the help of pallbearers?
 3. But, these weak bodies will be raised in power.
 - a. The Gr preposition “in” can be translated “by.”
 - 1) That seems to be the best understanding here.
 - 2) These weak bodies shall be raised by the power of God.
 - b. It is that power that raised Jesus from the dead: We know “what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead” (Eph 1:19-20).
- D. Our bodies shall be placed in the ground as natural bodies, but they shall be raised as spiritual bodies.
1. It makes perfect sense that we sow natural bodies but reap spiritual bodies.
 - a. The bodies we currently inhabit are not fit for the spiritual realm: “I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable” (1 Cor 15:50).
 - b. We see this principle in biology all the time.
 - 1) Koalas are uniquely designed for their life in the trees—their feet & hands are made in such a way as to give them a vice-like grip on the tree.
 - 2) Beavers are designed for their unique lifestyle—their noses & ears have valves that close when beavers submerge; their large tails act as rudders & allow beavers to maneuver logs to build dams.
 2. When God made the animals, he designed them perfectly for their environment. When we come forth from the grave, we shall be perfectly designed for our heavenly environment.
- E. When baseball great Ted Williams died, his son had the body flown to Scottsdale, Arizona to the Alcor Life Extension Foundation where the head was separated from the body and they were both individually placed in cryonic suspension.
1. The idea of the Alcor Life Extension Foundation is that if my body is frozen after I die, scientists in the future will be able to thaw me out, give me new life, and cure whatever caused my death.
 2. In essence, I will have a new body—one that diseases which currently plague us will not be able to touch.

3. While that idea is both scientifically & spiritually lubricous, there is no need to have my body frozen & then thawed, for GOD IS GOING TO GIVE ME A NEW BODY!

III. THE MAN OF MY NEW BODY, v44-45.

- A. “If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. Thus it is written, ‘The first man Adam became a living being’” (vv 44-45a).
 1. The existence of a natural body requires the existence of a spiritual body.
 - a. We understand that there are vast differences between the physical & the spiritual realms.
 - b. However, Paul’s statement here presupposes one constant: a spirit needs a body.
 - 1) Our spirits cannot be left naked. “While we are still in this tent [our physical bodies], we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life” (2 Cor 5:4).
 - 2) Thus, when we rise from the tomb, our spirits shall not be naked but they shall be clothed with the spiritual body.
 2. Adam became a living being.
 - a. God formed Adam from the dust of the ground “and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature” (Gn 2:7).
 - b. Every one of us has physical life because we are descendants of Adam.
- B. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit, v 45b.
 1. Paul is clearly using type-antitype here.
 - a. The life we have in this world is through Adam. We were born into this physical world because of the physical laws God set in motion at the Creation.
 - b. But, we have life in the next world because of Christ.
 2. Think of what a horrible world it would be if the only truth we knew was that “The first man Adam became a living being”!
 - a. We suffer intently in this world because of that first Adam.
 - 1) How many of us have been hurt because of the Pandora’s Box of sin Adam opened in the Garden?
 - 2) How many of us have suffered physical ailments in this world because of sin?
 - 3) How many of us have lost those who meant more than life itself? Does not all death occur because there is sin in this world?
 - b. If all we knew was that the first man became a living being, death would be nothing but a huge monster seeking to devour us.
 - 1) In such a case, our faith would be pointless and we would still be bearing all our sins (v 17).
 - 2) Also, we’d go straight to hell when this world was no more (v 18).
 - 3) Plus, we’d deserve pity above all others (v 19).
 3. But, the second Adam is a life-giving spirit.
 - a. We should not at all be surprised that Jesus became a life-giving spirit, for it was God who gave life to the first man: “The LORD God formed

the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature” (Gn 2:7).

- b. God gave Adam his physical life & it is his Son who gives spiritual life (vv 20-23).
 - 1) Jesus tasted death for us all. It was he who took the sting of death. It was he who took God’s punishment of sin.
 - 2) Because Jesus was raised from the dead, he has conquered death & if we die before he returns, he shall raise our bodies.
- C. In 1979 an experimental steam-driven submarine bearing the proud name, Resurgam (“I Shall Rise Again”) was launched with great confidence and celebration.
 - 1. During its trials, however, the submarine sank and never rose again. “Resurgam” was an empty boast.
 - 2. Yet, when we are lowered in the ground, we may confidently say, “I Shall Rise Again” for Jesus is the MAN OF MY NEW BODY.

IV. THE MOVE OF MY NEW BODY, vv 46-49.

- A. The point here is that my new body is going to move. My body now dwells upon the earth, but my new body shall be fit to dwell in the heavenly kingdom.
- B. The physical comes before the spiritual.
 - 1. We understand that the physical comes before the spiritual, for we are in the physical world now.
 - 2. Why would the Spirit inspire Paul to write something so blatantly obvious?
 - a. I cannot imagine God would have an apostle write something so obvious unless it were also important.
 - b. In Paul’s day, many Christians over-emphasized the spiritual realm.
 - 1) In Thessalonica, many stopped working because they were certain the Second Coming was nigh (2 Thess 3:10-12).
 - 2) Paul could very well be dealing with the same mentality here, and saying, “Yes, the spiritual is more important than the physical. But, the physical comes first & you must live in the physical world.”
 - 3. You & I understand how much more important the spiritual is than the physical, but we also live in this world.
 - a. Jesus taught us to live in this world.
 - 1) “Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (Mt 5:16). We cannot allow our lights to shine before others if we do not live in this world.
 - 2) Notice how Jesus describes his Second Coming: “As in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left” (Mt 24:38-41). It’s not that

those who are taken are simply to be waiting around for the Second Coming.

- b. We must live in this physical world.
 - 1) We must not be “so heavenly minded that we are no earthly good.”
 - 2) We must live in this world to provide for our families & to care for the less fortunate.
 - 3) We must engage with this world, be familiar with the things of this world, so that we can let our lights shine & call others to redemption in Jesus.
- C. The first Adam was from the dust, and we bear his image. We are as mortal as was he.
- D. The second Adam is from heaven, and we shall bear his image.
 - 1. In other words, our next existence shall be like Jesus’ heavenly existence.
 - a. “Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is” (1 Jn 3:2).
 - b. There are many similarities between our spiritual body & Jesus’ spiritual body.
 - 1) In his heavenly state, Jesus is alive forever: “I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades” (Rv 1:18) & in our heavenly state, we shall never die: “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die” (Jn 11:25-26).
 - 2) We shall share the glory of Christ in our heavenly state: “When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory” (Col 3:4).
 - 3) We shall live in heaven as does the man of heaven: “The Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord” (1 Thess 4:16-17).
 - 2. At the funeral of former Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev, his widow carried out a powerful, silent protest.
 - a. She stood motionless by the coffin until seconds before it was closed.
 - b. Then, just as the soldiers touched the lid, Brezhnev’s wife performed an act of great courage and hope: She reached down & made the sign of the cross on her husband’s chest.
 - 1) There in the citadel of secular, atheistic power, the wife of the man who had run it all hoped that her husband was wrong. She hoped there was another life, the life given by the One who died on the cross.
 - 2) We do not have to hope for a new life, a new body—we know that we are going to have that new body when these bodies move to heaven!

3. Do you have the hope of a new body this morning?