

## **“Resurrection Upgrade”**

1 Corinthians 15:35-49

Take your Bible and be finding your place in 1 Corinthians 15, a chapter that we have been working our way through over the last several weeks. The central theme of this chapter is the resurrection, both of Christ and the Christian. The gospel is a resurrection gospel, which means we resurrection hope. That Christ is risen means we have a resurrection guarantee, and that provides us with some resurrection incentives as we live our lives now. In the verses that we now come to, Paul deals with the resurrection body. He answers two questions that are raised in verse 35, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?” He explains how our resurrection body will be an ‘upgrade’ from the one we currently have now.

The definition of an ‘upgrade’ is to raise something to a higher standard. It is to replace something with a newer and better version of the same thing. Now, we’re all familiar with that language when it comes to the world of technology. You’ve been using a software product for a while. You’re used to the occasional prompt asking you to ‘update’ or noticing that something works a little better than it did yesterday. In fact, you never give software update notifications much thought. Then, one day you get a request asking you to complete a software ‘upgrade.’ Why did the provider change the word use? Isn’t that the same as all the other times before? In short, no. While they sound similar, and they both involve changing your product, they detail distinct aspects of software maintenance. The difference between a software ‘update’ and a software ‘upgrade’ is like the difference between servicing your old bike and buying a new one. An update to your phone is a software improvement to the same phone. An upgrade is an exchange for a completely brand new model altogether.

When the Bible describes bodily resurrection, it is not using the language of an update but rather that of an upgrade. It means that the body you and I will receive one day will be an entirely new body altogether. The Apostle Paul explains this truth for us beginning in verse 35 of 1 Corinthians 15. So if you have ever wondered what our future resurrection bodies will be like, then you need to pay close attention to what is written in these verses.

### **1—An OBSERVATION (15:35-36)**

*“But someone will ask, ‘How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?’ You foolish person! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies.”*

Notice how Paul supposes a question that is going to be raised by those who had been questioning the doctrine of resurrection. As we have already seen, there were some in Corinth who denied the truth of bodily resurrection. Corinth was a Greek city, and Greek philosophy didn't allow for the resurrection of the dead. First century Greeks held to this philosophical approach that the body was material and temporary, and therefore a distraction from one's true being—the soul. According to their logic, what happened to the body was irrelevant to the soul. The Bible teaches that the physical body is part of God's original good creation and is an essential part of humanity. Though the body is now subject to corruption, sin, and death in a fallen state of existence, God's plan is not to annihilate the body or free our souls in a disembodied existence. Rather, God's plan is to restore and glorify the physical part of our humanity through bodily resurrection.

An eagerness to appear 'wise' in the eyes of the world had been a constant snare for the Corinthian church. Some in the church had been tempted to

succumb to the pressure of philosophical respectability by denying the truth of bodily resurrection. So the question that Paul raises in verse 35 is likely a repetition of the argument being made by these resurrection deniers. It is a question that oozes with skepticism. Back up in verse 12, he says, “How can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?” They had reasoned that the resurrection of the human body was an impossibility. After death, a body begins to break down and decompose. So these Corinthians had basically said, “We don’t understand how resurrection could happen. We can’t see or observe any process that would enable a dead body to be restored to life. Therefore, we don’t believe it could happen.” That is why Paul is so direct in verse 36—“You foolish person!”

He is rebuking and correcting those who were appealing to Greek philosophy rather than the truth of Scripture. Their own reasoning had led them down a path of unbelief. The same thing happens in the life of any person who rejects the parts of the Bible that he or she doesn’t agree with. I see this kind of thing happen frequently with those who are so immersed in the philosophy and theory of evolution that they end up ripping the first three chapters of Genesis out of their Bible. Refusal to be swept up by the predominant philosophies of the day is a constant battle for the church that prioritizes the truth. We must contend for the truth.

**Colossians 2:8—“See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.”**

And so you can well imagine the concern Paul has as he is writing. As for the truth of bodily resurrection, he says that what you sow does not come to life unless it dies. That is a fundamental principle from the world of horticulture. Notice that he then uses:

## 2—An ILLUSTRATION (15:37-41)

*“And what you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body. For not all flesh is the same, but there is one kind for humans, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish. 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. 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.”*

Beginning in verse 37, Paul makes the important point that resurrection is not resuscitation, neither is it reconstruction. Our resurrection bodies will be something brand new, even though there is continuity between the body that has been buried and the body that will be raised. To illustrate this, notice how Paul uses the analogy of a seed. His point is that the act of planting a seed in the ground involves its own process of death and resurrection. What is sown does not spring to life unless it first dies in the earth. Whenever the farmer plants his crop, he doesn't plant wheat stalks or corn stalks. No, he plants seeds. The seeds are dry and hardened, even dead looking. He doesn't expect those same seeds to come up at the harvest. The seed dies, but from that death comes life. From those seeds emerges the body of a plant. Jesus used this same analogy:

**John 12:23-26—“The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there will My servant be also. If anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.”**

What is sown must die before new life can spring up.

**Warren Wiersbe** — *“You may sow a few grains of wheat, but you will have many grains when the plant matures. Are they the same grains that were planted? No, but there is still continuity. You do not sow wheat and harvest barley.”*

He even goes on to make the point that what comes up at the harvest is much more splendid than what went into the ground when it was initially sown. There is nothing that is attractive about a seed. Certain flower bulbs are even ugly, but when they are planted, something beautiful emerges.

Another analogy that Paul uses is that of the body itself, and the fact that there are different kinds of bodies for a variety of existences. He says in verse 39 that not all flesh is the same. Instead, there is one kind for humans, there is another kind for animals, another for birds, and another for fish. Consider these facts from the world of biochemistry:

**John MacArthur** — *“I have read that there are some six hundred octodecillion different combinations of amino acids. An octodecillion is 10 to the 108th power, or 1 followed by 108 zeros. Amino acids are the building blocks of all life. Not only does each type of plant and animal life have a distinct pattern of amino acids, but each individual plant, animal, and human being has its own unique grouping of them. No two flowers, snowflakes, seeds, blades of grass, or human beings—even identical twins—are exactly alike. Yet each is completely identified with its own species or kind.”*

There are earthly bodies as well as heavenly bodies, such as the sun, moon, and stars. Just as no two stars are exactly alike, and no two flowers are exactly alike, no two people are identical but are unique. The point is that God has infinite

creative capacity, so why would we think it is too hard for Him to re-create and resurrect our body, no matter how He chooses to do it?

Nature itself has lessons to teach humanity! It seems that our generation is determined to ignore those lessons while thinking that we are ever so wise. Yet all the while, we are going the way of Romans 1. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools and have exchanged the truth of God for the lie.

### **3—An EXPLANATION (15:42-49)**

*“So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is 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. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. Thus it is written, ‘The first man Adam became a living being’; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. 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. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.”*

Paul dealt with the first question raised in verse 35, “How are the dead raised?” In verses 42-49, he now deals with the second question—“With what kind of body do they come?” In what way will our future resurrection body be different than our body now? How will it be an upgrade?

#### Perishable vs. Imperishable (v. 42)

*“So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable.”*

To say that something is ‘perishable’ is to say that it has a shelf life. You understand this from your grocery shopping list. The items that are non-perishable are placed into the pantry, while items that are more ‘perishable’ are placed in your refrigerator. Perishable items tend to break down and spoil with time.

**“Perishable”** — *subject to ruin and corruption*

Our current bodies are in the process of wearing out. You may not think that they are while you are young, but it does not take long for us to figure that out the older that we get. Aging takes its toll out on the very best of us. While it can be concealed somewhat, it cannot be reversed. No person explains this process any better or more poetically than the ‘Preacher’ of Israel:

**Ecclesiastes 12:1-7—“Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near of which you will say, ‘I have no pleasure in them,’ before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars are darkened and the clouds return after the rain, in the day when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men are bent, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those who look through the windows are dimmed, and the doors on the street are shut—when the sound of the grinding is low, and one rises up at the sound of a bird, and all the daughters of song are brought low—they are afraid also of what is high, and terrors are in the way; the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper drags itself along, and desire fails, because man is going to his eternal home, and the mourners go about the streets—before the silver cord is snapped, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher is shattered at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern, and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.”**

These verses are perhaps the most poetic description for the aging process that you find anywhere in all of literature. To begin with, Solomon writes of mental aging and then he addresses the process of deterioration that happens in our physical bodies. The symbolism that he uses is that of a house that is slowly breaking down and falling apart. Our eyes dim. Our ears deafen. Our senses dull. Slowly but surely, these bodies wear down and deteriorate until the time comes that they completely shut down in death. And the reason is because they are perishable bodies that are subject to corruption brought on by a fallen existence.

However, the body that we will receive in the resurrection is an ‘imperishable’ body! That means it will not be subject to corruption. It will not have a shelf life, but will instead be fit for eternity. That means instead of winding down, it will always be revved up. Instead of aging, it will always be in the flower of youth. Instead of deteriorating, it will always be in its prime—no glasses, hearing aids, or canes needed!

#### Dishonor vs. Glory (v. 43a)

*“It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory.”*

The word that is translated as ‘dishonor’ is a word that indicates shame or disgrace. There comes a point in our life when these bodies age to such a degree that we are dependent upon others for care. When we are young, we take care of our children. When are old, our children take care of us. And so it goes. Swindoll says:

**Chuck Swindoll** — *“Paul also may have had in mind the condition of the body after its death, when it is ‘sown’ (that is, buried) in dishonor, hidden away in the earth or in a tomb because of the intolerable stench of death and the unbearable decay that ensues within days.”*

Such dishonor will in no way apply to the body that you and I will be given at the resurrection. It will be incorruptible and glorified, like the resplendent beauty of a flower that bursts forth from a seed planted in the earth.

#### Weakness vs. Power (v. 43b)

*“It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power.”*

The word ‘weakness’ means feebleness or frailty. As far as the body is concerned, it describes our common weakness or our fragile health. When applied to the soul, it speaks of the absence of strength to understand something, or to do something, or to bear up under stress. We can all identify with that definition, can’t we? We know our limitations. We know what we personally struggle with.

The body that is raised, however, will be raised in ‘power,’ and the word there is ‘dunamis.’ It speaks of an explosive power and ability. All weaknesses will be vanquished and we will live in a powerful, perfect, and permanent existence.

**William Barclay** — *“It is nowadays fashionable to talk of man’s power, but the really remarkable thing is his weakness. A drought of air or a drop of water can kill him. We are limited in this life so often simply because of the necessary limitations of the body. Time and time again our physical constitution says to our visions and our plans, ‘This far and no farther.’ We are so often frustrated because we are what we are. But in the life to come the limitations will be gone. Here we are compassed about with weakness; there we will be clothed with power.”*

#### Natural vs. Spiritual (v. 44-46)

*“It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. Thus it is written, ‘The first man Adam became a living being,’ the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual.”*

Now, it is important that we understand what Paul is saying here in these verses. He is not saying that the resurrection body isn't physical, because we know that it most certainly is. We don't have to look any further than what the gospels say about the body of Jesus after His resurrection.

**Luke 24:36-43—“As they were talking about these things, Jesus Himself stood among them, and said to them, ‘Peace to you!’ But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. And He said to them, ‘Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Touch Me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.’ And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, He said to them, ‘Have you anything here to eat?’ They gave Him a piece of broiled fish, and He took it and ate before them.”**

The resurrected, glorified body of Jesus was physical, but it wasn't simply natural. It was supernatural. Patterned after His, Paul says that our resurrection body will be a spiritual body. He doesn't say that it will be a spirit, as in a ghost or apparition. The natural body that we currently have is prone to weakness, deterioration, and eventual death. But the body we will be given in a spiritual body that will be perfectly fit for eternal existence. We need to understand the adjective that Paul is using there for 'spiritual.'

**Alan Gomes**—*“To have a ‘spiritual body’ is not to have a body made out of some kind of spiritual stuff, much less to be raised as a disembodied spirit. Rather, to have a ‘spiritual body’ is to possess a body controlled or directed by God’s Spirit. The idea behind the word ‘spiritual’ is that of control, not substance or matter.”*

The contrast is not between a body made out of physical stuff versus one made out of spiritual stuff. Instead, the contrast is between the present body which is corruptible, decaying, and doomed to die, and the future body which is incorruptible, undecaying, and never to die again. It is a supernatural upgrade, that’s what it is! But someone says, “Well, what about what Paul says there in verse 45?” The first man Adam became a living being, but the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. Does that say that Jesus rose from the dead without a body? Not at all. Paul is quoting from Genesis 2:7 where the Bible says Adam received his natural life from the breath of God. The Lord God breathed into Adam the breath of life, and he became a living being or a living creature. In contrast, Paul says Christ became a ‘life-giving spirit’ meaning He received a Spirit-empowered quality of life at His resurrection. He gives that same life to those who trust Him by faith, and they too will one day rise with a brand new body just like His.

Let me tell you, one of the reasons that people don’t long for eternity as much as they ought to may be due to the fact that they have an unbiblical understanding of what it will be. Just think about how seldom you hear the truth of bodily resurrection emphasized at a funeral. Our eternal destiny is not a disembodied existence whereby we will be floating around on a cloud. No, God’s plan for you and me involves an embodied existence in a perfect environment. We will run and never grow weary. We will eat and never get fat. We will rest but not because we are dog tired. We will enjoy unending companionship with those we

love. And most important of all, we will be in the presence of the Lord Jesus. In know that today is Mother's Day, and many of you are thinking about your mom who is already with the Lord in heaven. The time will come when you will see her again. This truth of bodily resurrection means that the time will come when she as well as you and all who believe will receive a glorified body fit for eternity in the new heaven and the new earth.

#### Earthly vs. Heavenly (v. 47-49)

*"The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second Man is from heaven. 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. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the Man of heaven."*

This is Paul's main point here in these verses. As those who are naturally born humans, we bear the same physical and earthly nature as Adam. But when we are resurrected, we will bear the same spiritual and heavenly nature as the Lord Jesus. Spiritually, I have already been raised with Christ. His life is flowing through me as someone who has been saved by grace through faith. And the only thing I am waiting for now is the future redemption of my body. When that happens, we will be totally free from the domain of sin. And though these earthly bodies in which we currently live are destined to perish, it is only temporary. Because there is coming a day when our spirits will be reunited with our new and glorified bodies. They will have been miraculously transformed and glorified and made fit for eternity.

Keep in mind the fact that all of this is intended to have a very practical impact on the way we live our lives in the here and now. Paul wants the church to understand the truth in order to live with confidence and hope.

*God designed your body for you, so accept it as it is.* If He has designed a little seed to be unique in what it is, think of how much more unique you are as someone who has been made in His image. None of us are perfect. We all have blemishes that we try to hide. But God made each one of us unique, and our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

*God distinguished your body from someone else's, so don't compare yourself to others.* You may not have the looks that someone else may have. You may not have the brains that someone else may have. But that doesn't make you any less of a person than they are. God has made each one of us different, and the world would be a boring place if he didn't.

*God determined your body have its limitations, so stop beating yourself up.* The older we get, the more of these limitations we experience. Some of us have physical and mental handicaps. However, this does not mean you are deficient. It just means you just haven't yet received your upgrade. But don't despair—you soon will!

I imagine that most of you are familiar with the story of Joni Eareckson Tada. She was left paralyzed from an accident and has spent most of her life as a quadriplegic in a wheel chair. She once wrote:

*"I still can hardly believe it. 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 this gives someone spinal cord-injured like me? Or*

*someone who is cerebral palsied, brain-injured, or who has multiple-sclerosis? Imagine the hope this gives someone who is manic-depressive. No other religion, no other philosophy promises new bodies, hearts, and minds. Only in the Gospel of Christ do hurting people find such incredible hope.”*

There are questions that we all have when it comes to the afterlife. We're not given answers to all the questions we may have, but we are given sufficient truth to believe. Our inability to understand or explain something should never be a reason for rejecting it if it is clearly taught in Scripture. When a Christian dies, he or she goes to heaven and is in the immediate presence of Christ and all the redeemed who have died. God will raise our mortal bodies from the grave, just as He raised Jesus' body from the grave. And if that is what the Bible says, though we may not understand exactly how God will bring this about, we must still believe it simply because God has said it is so. Why would you consider it incredible that God raises the dead? (Acts 26:8)

**Wayne Grudem**—*“The God who created the universe and created each one of us, who sovereignly rules over every bit of creation at every moment, and who upholds all things by His word of power—this God can certainly keep track of the parts of our physical bodies that He wishes to preserve and use as the ‘seed’ from which a new body will be made.”*

When told that he and Sarah would have a son in their old age, Abraham had a hard time understanding how. But he was asked by God, “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” Is this fact of bodily resurrection too hard for an omnipotent God? The God who spoke worlds into existence will take what remains of our mortal body and transform it into the likeness of Christ's own resurrection body.

**Colossians 3:1-4—“If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.”**