THE GLORY OF THE RESURRECTION (3)

(We Shall Be Like Jesus)

1 Corinthians 15:35-58

Key Verse: 15:49

**"And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly**

**man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven."**

In the first lecture we studied the gospel of the res­ur­rection: Jesus died for our sins and rose again on the third day according to the Scrip­tures. Through his resurrection the Risen Christ forgave all our sins and gave us new birth into a living hope in the kingdom of God. In the second lecture we studied the power of the Risen Christ. In a vast field of death in history, Jesus is the only one who rose again from the dead and he became the firstfruits of eternal life with his resurrection pow­er. The Ris­en Christ destroys all domin­ion, authority and power of all un­­right­­eousness. Next he destroys the power of death. Finally the Risen Christ re­stores the kingdom of God so that God may be all in all, and men can live in the kingdom of God forever and ever with Christ who was once slain for our sins and is now sitting on the throne. In the third lecture we learn the res­ur­rec­tion prin­ciple and the glory of the resurrection. We also learn that at the time of the second coming of Jesus there will be the bodily res­urrec­tion of the saints, and at the same time all the ene­mies of God will be completely destroyed. Let's study today how glo­ri­ous is the resurrection of Christ. The resurrection is glori­ous beyond our im­agina­tion. So let us study the glory of the resurrection and live with this glori­ous hope in our hearts.

I. The resurrection principle (35-49)

**First,** the prerequisite of resurrection. (35,36) Look at verse 35a. "But someone may ask, 'How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?'" In time past and present, no one has ever been raised from the dead. Everyone was swallowed up by the power of death. So it was inconceiv­able for the Corinthians to accept resurrection faith. It was even more inconceivable for them to think of the bodily res­urrec­tion. Whether they believed it or not, the resurrection of Christ was a historical fact, and the bodily resurrection of each man will occur. John 5:28,29 says, "Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out--those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned." But some asked, "With what kind of body will they come?" To many, it was horrible that the dead would be raised and walk around. They thought that the resur­rection body was like a corpse walking around. No­body wanted to die. But nobody wanted to be raised as they were, wretched and abominable. Moreover, the attachment to life in this world may be the strongest attachment any person can have. But no one wants to repeat the miseries and agonies of life over again--never! So some Corinthians asked rebel­liously, "How are the dead rais­ed?" and "With what kind of body will they come?" These two questions are basic­ally the same.

But the question, "How are the dead raised?" came from their fear of death. They did not want to die. Even if they had to suffer endlessly living in this world, they wanted to live in this world. In view of history there were many em­pires with many slaves. Slaves under their masters had no mean­ing to live in this world at all. But the more they were driv­en to work harder through whipping, beating, and hurl­ing insults, the more they wanted to live, partly because of their family members, but mainly because of their attachment to their own lives. So when Paul mentioned about the glory of the resurrection they rejected his teaching in their hearts. But they did not say, "We reject the glory of the resurrec­tion." Instead, they turned what they had in their minds around into a theological argument, like many worldly Chris­tians who do not put what they know into practice.

Paul knew what the problem was in their hearts and taught the resurrection principle. The resurrection principle is the most glorious truth of God. Look at verse 36. "How fool­ish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies." The res­urrection principle is that death is prerequisite to resur­rection: unless someone or something dies there is no resur­rection. With­out death there is no res­urrection. It is the same as saying, "No pain, no gain," or "No cross, no crown." This principle ap­plies to the present life. One woman Ph.D. student was hap­py to be­come a Christian after studying the beautiful Jesus. Soon she found out that if she wanted to be a good Christian, she has to deny herself and take up her cross daily. Then she began reading many books to discover how to enter the glory of the resurrection by another way, not through the way of the cross. Finally she came to a con­clusion that she is not able to get a Ph.D. in physics unless she stu­dies, suffering al­most unto death. When she realized the principle of the res­urrection she made a bitter smile.

Peter made a confession of Christ, "You are the Son of the living God." (Mt 16:16) It was a confession of love more than a the­ological statement. But whenever Jesus taught him the meaning of his death and resurrection, Peter was not happy to hear his words. So once when Jesus spoke to his disciples con­cerning his death and resurrection, Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. Jesus rebuked him back, "Get behind me Satan! You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men." (Mk 8:33) Then Jesus taught them the attitude toward the resurrection principle plainly. "If any­one would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and fol­low me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but who­ev­er loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it." (Mk 8:34b,35) The resurrec­tion princi­ple is the life-giv­ing principle.

Paul, who grasped the glorious resurrection principle, said in 1 Corinthians 15:31a, "I die every day." When he said, "I die every day," it did not mean physical death, but it meant that he did not despair in all situations, but worked hard for Jesus as a matter of life and death. Again he said in 2 Timothy 1:8,9: "So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, who has saved us and called us to a holy life--not because of any­thing we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time." There is no thought of death to those who accepted the principle of the resurrection. Instead, their hearts are fill­ed with the glo­ry of God. Romans 8:18 says, "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us." On the other hand, those who reject the resurrection principle are under the shadow of death. Let's read verse 36 again. "How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies."

**Second,** the earthly body is the seed of a spiritual body. (37-41) Some Corinthian Christians wondered what kind of body would come at the time of resurrection. There were some Chris­tians who believed in Jesus as the Son of God. But they did not know that God is Spirit and he is omnipotent and om­ni­­present. They also did not know that man is both body and spirit. Most of all they had no idea that the body is the seed of the resurrection body. So Paul likens man's body to a seed that has been plant­ed. Read verses 37 and 38. "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 has deter­mined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body." No seed is pretty enough to look at with won­der. But the bo­dies that come from seeds have fascinating beauty be­yond im­agi­n­­ation, like the beau­tiful flowers and all kinds of plants which came from their seeds.

Look at verses 39-41. "All flesh is not the same: Men have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another. 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 star differs from star in splendor." Here Paul explains that the physical body is the seed of the spir­itu­al body. Paul also explains that when God created all things, he gave each thing its own kind of body and its own splendor or glory. Each body is different. Each has its own kind of splendor. Likewise, the resurrection body is indeed splen­dorous and glorious.

In verses 35-44, the word "glory" or "splendor" is re­peat­ed five times. Here, "splendor" or "glory" refers to the in­herent greatness that is found in each of God's works of cre­ation. Every part of God's creation was created to give glory to God, and at the same time, each created thing re­veals its own special greatness. So, one who discovers him­self or her­self in God is indeed great, and, all of creation finds sat­­is­faction as it fulfills God's purpose in creation.

What is physical glory or the glory of the flesh? It is hu­man honor, love and wealth. These three things are the glo­ry of the flesh. This is the reason man must seek honor, glo­ry and immortality first before seeking a fleeting plea­sure or thrill. Nevertheless, human glory does not satisfy man's soul, because it is based on five desires and seven feel­ings of fallen mankind. Among them, the desire to eat and to get hu­man recognition may be strongest. Man exerts great effort to achieve the glory of the flesh.

But man dies too soon before enjoying the glory of the flesh. Only the glory of heaven satisfies human souls, be­cause God created man in the image of God with both body and spirit. Man is a soul. Because we have physical bodies that belong to the earth, we need the worldly glory, even though it fades away too soon. If a man does not know about God's truth that the body is the seed of the resurrection body he can­not but be a mental patient in his inner man. But a man who knows the body is the seed of the resurrection body longs for heav­enly glo­ry with gladness and utmost happiness in his inner man. Also, he can be a good husband to his wife, think­ing that she is his pre­cious partner of pilgrimage for the glorious heaven­ly kingdom. So far, Paul explained that the physical body is the seed of the spiritual body and that the res­urrection body is splen­dorous and glorious. Most im­por­tantly, Paul makes it clear that man is both body and soul: man has both a physical body and a spiritual body, and the physical body is the seed of the glorious spiritual body.

**Third,** we will bear the likeness of the Risen Christ. (42-49) Verse 42a reads, "So will it be with the resurrection of the dead." What, then, will the resurrection body look like? Ver­ses 42b-44 read, "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." What a glorious hope it is to be clothed with the resurrection body! This is the reason Jesus invited all kinds of sinners to him­self. Once Jesus was passing through Samaria. There Jesus met a Samaritan woman whose soul was thirsty. She had had five hus­bands and a boyfriend. She was a smelly woman. Jesus hum­bled himself and said, "Will you give me a drink?" At that moment she saw in Jesus the Messiah, the Savior of the world. Through this event the smelly woman was accepted into the king­dom of God as a heavenly princess. Once Jesus was passing by the road of Capernaum. Jesus saw a tax collector named Levi. Jesus said to him, "Follow me." It was an invitation to be­come one of his disciples. More fundamentally, it was an in­vitation to the kingdom of God. Through that event this dis­honorable man was accepted into the kingdom of God with the most honorable resurrection body. Once a man with leprosy whose eyes were barely supported by their sockets, oozing, came to Jesus and said in a hoarse voice, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean." Jesus cleansed his leprosy and made him as white as snow. Through this event he was ac­cepted into the kingdom of God with an imperishable body.

In this world, we must suffer. We have sorrow and pain. In the course of living in this world all men become old and look wretched. It is because we inherited a physical body from Adam. Look at verse 45. "So it is written: 'The first man Adam be­came a living being'; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit." But from the Risen Christ Jesus we received life-giv­ing spi­rit, that is, a glorious spiritual body. As the phy­si­cal body came first, so the spiritual body also comes. As Adam came from the dust of the ground and gave us a physi­cal body, the Risen Christ, the second Adam, came from heaven and gave us a spiritual body. (45-48)

Verse 49 reads, "And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven." It is funny that each person thinks, even if he or she does not really believe so, that he or she is the most hand­some man or the most beautiful woman. People think so to for­get about their hidden human agonies. One of the hu­man agonies is that each person loses his or her beauty when he or she gets old. So, to old people we are ready to say, "Oh, you look very young." It is a white lie. Still, it works re­mark­ably. Man wants to be a poetic teen­ager and live in the world forever and ever. But he gets old and dies. We all bear the likeness of the earthly man. If there is no res­urrection body man's life is too sorrowful to think about. Those who have no resurrection faith are all too sorrowful, thinking they will be ornamented by funeral service men when they die.

When we have resurrection faith we do not suffer from the thought of death. Rather, we live in the world with glo­ri­ous hope. Look at verse 49. "And just as we have borne the like­ness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the like­ness of the man from heaven." When we keep the faith, and fight the good fight, and run the race to the end and die, we will be clothed with the resurrection body by the Risen Christ. What will we look like? That's a good question. We will not look as we were. We will all look like beautiful Jesus. It is total­ly unbelievable. But it will be so. Look at verse 49 again. "And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven." During our lifetime we Christians all suffered endlessly to keep the faith and run the race of faith. We suffered end­less­ly be­cause of false accusations of God-haters. Most of all, we suf­fered because of fallen man's tendencies in us, though we strug­gled hard to be like Jesus. But when we die, not only are we clothed with the likeness of Jesus, but also the Risen Christ makes our inner man to be like beautiful Jesus. We will be as humble as Jesus. We will be as gentle as Jesus. We will be as obedient as Jesus. We will be as glori­ous as Jesus. The man from heaven is Jesus Christ. We die in an ugly and weak body; but when we believe in Jesus the man from hea­ven, we will be raised up in a glorious resurrection body. We will bear the image of Jesus. We shall be like him.

II. The glory of the second coming of Christ (50-57)

How glorious is our hope of salvation and our hope to be restored in the image of Jesus! With this glorious hope of heaven in our hearts, we can live every day as holy chil­dren of God. But our greatest and most glorious hope is far big­ger than just our own personal salvation and glorifica­tion. Paul says in verse 50, "I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot in­herit the kingdom of God, nor does the perish­able inherit the imperishable." This verse tells us that we can enter the glo­ry of God only by faith in the Risen Christ. Verse 51 says, "Listen, I tell you a mys­tery." What is it?

**First,** the salvation of believers. (51-53) Look at verses 51-53. "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. For the per­ishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mor­tal with immortality." In this verse, "at the last trum­pet," refers to the time of Jesus' second coming. We don't know when Jesus will come again. When Jesus came first to this world, he came as the good shepherd and Savior of the world. He became a friend to everybody. He healed the sick and preached the good news of the kingdom of God. But when he comes again, he will not come as a shepherd and friend; he will come as the Judge of the living and the dead.

Many people abuse God's long-suffering patience, say­ing, "Where is God's judgment? Let's eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." But we Christians live a holy life, eagerly wait­ing for the second coming of Jesus Christ, because we have a se­cret in our hearts. The secret we Christians hold in our hearts with joy is the sure fact of Jesus' coming again. What happens to us when he comes again? Look at verses 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." At the time of the second com­ing of Jesus Christ there will be the bodi­ly resurrection of all men. Bo­dily resurrection has deep mean­ing in it. Those who thought death is the end of every­thing will find they were wrong. Those who lived in the world as the cowardly, the unbeliev­ing, the vile, the mur­derers, the sexually immoral, and those who practiced magic arts, the idolaters and all liars cannot hide anymore in their graves. They will be resurrected to be judged according to what they had done. On the other hand, Jesus' people will all be changed to be like him and will in­herit the kingdom of God and live forever with the Risen Christ in peace and love.

**Second,** enemies destroyed. (54-57) The coming of Christ means joy and salvation to believers. But the time of his second com­ing is the time of condemnation and suffering for the ene­mies of our God. They crucified Jesus and thought they would see him no more. But they will see his coming with their own eyes. They were the ones who persecuted God's people ruth­less­­ly. But they will not be able to persecute them anymore, because they will be thrown into the lake of eternal destruc­tion. Finally the last enemy, the power of sin and death, is destroyed by the second coming of Jesus Christ. Actually, at the time of the resurrection of Jesus the power of sin and death was destroyed. But Satan has been wagging his tail be­cause the vestige of last breathing remained in the end of Satan's tail. This wagging tail of Satan has frightened man­kind until now. But at the time of the second coming of Je­sus, sin and death, that is Satan, will be com­pletely de­stroyed and there will be no more Satan--the liars and mur­derers. So Paul cried out to this power of death which has been rendered helpless, "'Where, O death, is your vic­to­ry? Where, O death, is your sting?' The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law." Here Paul says sin is the law. In this case the law is not God's law but the law made by evil men to oppress the children of God.

III. Therefore, my dear brothers (58)

Look at verse 58. "Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let noth­ing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, be­cause you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain." Paul ex­plained in this chapter the mean­ing of the resurrection of Jesus, the power of the res­ur­rection, and the glory of the resurrection. Paul strongly en­cour­ages Christians to work hard for the Risen Christ, for only work done in the Lord is not in vain. The last words of verse 58, "in vain," have a deep spiritual meaning. While worldly people were only making money and living an easy life, Satan whispered to the Corinthian Christians as he does to us, "The Christian life is no fun."

But Paul says that what worldly people do is in vain. They make much money by cheating and being cheated. They enjoy all kinds of plea­sures free­ly, but they have no resur­rection faith, so they do all these things to cover up their deep in­ner despair at the power of sin and death. What­ever they do is nothing but the expression of their despair. But in Christ, labor for the Lord is not in vain; we do not de­spair at our lives because we have faith in Jesus' resurrec­tion. It is this con­viction that is the basis of resurrection faith. One who is convinced that his labor in the Lord is not in vain is the one who will someday be clothed in the image of the Risen Christ. He will receive the kingdom of heaven as his inheri­tance. May God help us to enter the glory of God through the resur­rection of Christ.