

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 splendid 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.