

THE GLORY OF THE RESURRECTION (III)

(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."

We studied the contents of the gospel and the power of the resurrection. The last part is about the glory of the resurrection. The resurrection is glorious beyond our imagination. So let us learn the glory of the resurrection and live with this glorious hope in our hearts.

1. The glory of the spiritual body (35-49)

Look at verse 35. There are many people who cannot conceive of the greatness of the resurrection. So some asked, "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 to the Corinthians to think of the resurrection. It was also inconceivable to think of how the dead are raised, even though it had been preached to them that Christ has been raised from the dead. Some asked, "With what kind of body will they come?" To many it was

horrible that the dead would be raised and walking around. They thought the resurrection body was like a corpse walking around. They did not know that the resurrection body will be glorious. To many people, the marriage problem is urgent. But the resurrection body seems to be of no use. The resurrection of Jesus sounds very vague and makes people's heads ache.

Look at verse 36. "How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies." In this verse Paul gives the principle of the resurrection. As we know, whatever is born in this world dies away someday. But death is not the end of everything. After death, there is the resurrection. Death is the prerequisite of the resurrection. So Paul clearly said, "What you sow does not come to life unless it dies." To us, the physical body is precious. So we are afraid of dying. But the death of the physical body is for the sake of the resurrection body. It is the same as saying, "No pain, no gain. No cross, no crown. No suffering, no glory. No death, no resurrection."

According to Paul's principle, the resurrection is likened to a seed that has been planted and comes back as a body. 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 looks pretty or gorgeous. But the bodies that come from seeds are most beautiful. See the beautiful flowers and all kinds of plants.

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 there are two kinds of bodies--earthly bodies and spiritual bodies. 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. Paul's main point here is to convince us that man is not only flesh, but also spirit.

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 substance of the glory of the flesh. Human glory is based on five kinds of desires and seven kinds of feelings. Among them, the desires to eat a little more and to get recognition are strongest. Man exerts great effort to achieve the glory of the flesh.

But man dies too soon to enjoy 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 glory that belongs to the earth, even though it is perishable. But we also have

immortal souls, and our souls long for heavenly glory. So far, Paul explained the resurrection principle. He made a logical progression from earthly bodies to heavenly bodies, from physical glory to spiritual or heavenly glory, so that he might lay a foundation upon which he might speak about the resurrection body.

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." One of the criminals who hung there with Jesus said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise." (Lk 23:42) This criminal was a dishonorable person who was crucified because of his crime. But he was raised as one of the heavenly princes and went into the gate of heaven. In this world, we must suffer. We have sorrow and pain. But by faith in the resurrection of Jesus, we wretched human beings can put on a glorious resurrection body.

How is this possible? Verse 45 reads, "So it is written: 'The first man Adam became a living being'; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit." From the first Adam we received a physical body and a soul. But he could not give us a glorious resurrection body. But Jesus can because through his death and resurrection he became a life-giving being. The second Adam is Jesus who gives life to everyone who believes in him.

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." 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 and strong." It is a white lie. Still, it works. 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. 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 all 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. Paul says that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Verse 51 begins, "Listen, I tell you a mystery..." Wow! What is the mystery he is going to tell us?

First, the salvation of believers. (51-53) Verses 51-53 read, "Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed--in a flash, in a 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." We don't know when Jesus comes 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." Jesus' people will all be changed to be like him. There will be no more suffering. There will be no more burdens of final exams and no more marriage problems. Christ our King is the Lamb of God who shed his precious blood and died for us on the cross, and rose again. When Jesus comes as King, all who belong to him will be changed into beautiful children of God and will inherit the kingdom of heaven in an instant.

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. Actually, there are no evil men or women; the problem was the power of death and sin in them which made them sick and violent. But the power of sin and death are destroyed by the resurrection of Jesus. Like a beast shot in the heart by a poisoned arrow, the power of death will completely lose its power. 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. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (55-57)

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 philosophical meaning. When the Christians in Corinth looked at worldly people, they were making money freely in

many ways and seemed to be having an easy life. Christians saw worldly people enjoying their freedom for their own pleasure. Satan whispered to them 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 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, our 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 resurrected Christ. He will receive the kingdom of heaven as his inheritance.