

Resurrection means risk is worth it

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[0 : 0 0] You only live once. Are you sure that's how you want to spend your hundred years? My friend Vijay, he's a Bible basher like the bunch of you. He said that, Vijay said that you can bother because you'll have another life to come.

But the question is, how are you going to be raised? With what kind of body will you get? Will you be like living corpses, like zombies? What if you die at a hundred years of age?

Will you be a hundred years old forever? What if a baby dies? Will a baby be a baby forever and ever? What if you die horribly in an accident?

Will you carry those scars into eternity? And worse than all of that, what if your bodies will be covered in white pajamas, on the clouds, with the harps and the fat babies and all that?

If that is what heaven is like, count me out. This life is all I need. Now, it's me again, not my friend.

[1 : 0 8] Sorry. My friend is getting nastier every week. I think we might give him a break. But my friend, he asks the same questions that Paul anticipates. Glenn alluded to them as well.

Verse 35. Someone will ask, how are the dead raised? With what kinds of body will they come? See, Paul's aim last week was verse 58 over the page.

Paul's aim is verse 58. That the Corinthians always give themselves fully to the work of the Lord. Paul's reason last week, why they should bother?

You'll have another life to come. And this week, verse 58, is still Paul's aim. But this week, his focus is on bodies. You can bother. Your labor won't be in vain because you'll have another body, a better one.

But this week has more teeth than last week. Because by the end of this chapter, we will be laughing at death. Verse 55.

[2 : 1 3] Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? We'll be mocking death. And so Paul will give us three reasons why we can bother. The test of whether you're persuaded is at the end if you can mock death with Paul.

And so please have a look. There's a handout there. And please keep your passage open. We'll be there in and out all the time. So verse 35.1. Someone will ask, how were the dead raised?

With what kind of body will they come? How foolish, says Paul. How foolish. And it's not foolish to wonder about what body we're going to get. We all wonder that from time to time.

It is foolish to assume that somehow you'll be disappointed with what God gives you. It's foolish to assume you'll be unhappy in the new creation.

Paul says, what you sow does not come to life until it dies. That's a seeds and plants illustration, as Michelle, who was doing the kids talk, said. You see, the farmer doesn't treasure the seed, does he?

[3 : 2 1] He quickly sows it into the ground. Seeds are nothing, really. They're just little, whatever they are, little grains. But the seed has to die first in order to get the plant.

See, you don't have to worry about carrying a wounded or an old or an unfit body into eternity. It has to die first before God will raise it to new life.

Verse 37. When you sow, you don't plant the body that will be, just a seed. Perhaps of wheat or of something else. So I didn't have wheat, so I have something else.

So, Elaine, we're going to play a little game. It sounded really good in my head. It's okay in real life. So here's the seed. Can you please guess what the tree is?

Eucalyptus. Excellent. And next one. Next slide. There it is. The most beautiful tree in the world, a eucalyptus tree. Next slide. What's the seed? Great.

[4 : 20] That's a giant sequoia from California. Fantastic. Next. Acorn oak. Too quick. Acorn oak. Brilliant. A magnificent oak tree.

The point is that a seed looks nothing like the tree it becomes. That's the point. Thank you, Elaine. That's enough. The Corinthians and my friend, they shouldn't mock the idea of a resurrected body.

Because no one mocks the idea that an acorn can become a magnificent oak tree. No one need look at their body and go, oh, is this what it's going to be like forever and ever?

And the reason why is verse 38. God gives it a body as he has determined. And to each kind of seed, he gives its own body.

You see, when it comes to giving bodies, God knows what he's doing. He doesn't lack imagination. You and I, we could never imagine a tree until God created them. God can take a seed and make it a magnificent tree.

[5 : 23] The same for the oak tree. The same oak essence is inside the acorn as is in the tree. And it's a fantastic illustration because it's the same but radically different.

Radically different. And now listen to God's track record from Genesis, verse 39. Not all flesh is the same. People have one kind of flesh. Animals have another. Birds have another.

And fish another. There are also heavenly bodies. And there are earthly bodies. But the splendor of the heavenly body is of one kind. And the splendor of the earthly bodies is another. The sun has one kind of splendor.

The moon another. And the star is another. And star differs from star in splendor. You see, verse 39. God made all kinds of flesh with different bodies. So animals, fish, birds.

And he made all kinds of heavenly bodies with one kind of body. So the sun, the moon, the stars. And in the middle, verse 40. The splendor of the heavenly bodies is of one kind.

[6 : 24] The splendor of the earthly bodies is of another. Heavenly bodies and earthly bodies are different. Back in Genesis 1, when God was making the world, he never accidentally put a fish in space, did he?

Nor did he ever accidentally put a star in the middle of the desert. He put pigs in space in the Muppets. But that's irrelevant.

Yeah. And now we have no problem accepting that bodies go where they go. So fish go in the sea, birds in the air, and sun and the moon, the stars in space.

So why should we doubt what our bodies will be like in the future? They'll be perfectly fit for purpose in the new creation. Verse 42.

So it will be. So it will be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable. It is raised imperishable. It is sown in dishonor.

[7 : 22] 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. And here Paul is making the contrast between a natural body and a spiritual body.

And I've got a... Please, Elaine, there's a slide. Yeah, there it is. The force of Paul's argument is in the contrast.

So the Corinthians wanted everything on the left-hand side of the table. They wanted all that stuff... Sorry, the right-hand side. They wanted everything on the right-hand side, but in this life now.

So Paul said to them, I want you to devote your bodies to purity. But their culture hated the flesh because it's so perishable. And so they didn't bother.

Paul told them to serve the church and others. But serving a church, it debts your pride. It affects your position. It looks dishonorable to the world.

[8 : 22] So they didn't bother. Paul told them to base their lives around the gospel. But the gospel sounds weak. It looks foolish. No wonder they were looking for the best, most impressive preachers they could find.

Paul says, just as a seed has to be sown and die before the new life starts, it has to be sown perishable, in dishonor, in weak service of the Lord.

But it will be raised imperishable, glorious and powerful. And we all have areas of life where the service of the Lord will be contrary to wanting to preserve our bodies.

Serving the Lord will sometimes be contrary to preserving your body. But I think Paul's illustration is really helpful about the seed and the plants.

It clarifies that these bodies, those bodies are just the pine cone or the acorn. At Christmas time, which is coming up, you're not going to take a pine cone and cover it with tinsel and a bauble, are you?

[9 : 28] You're going to wait until it becomes a Christmas tree. And then you can cover it with glorious things. So, too, we can give this seed of a body, this acorn of a body, to the left-hand side of the table.

The left-hand side of the table is what you get when you serve the Lord. Because we know we'll get everything on the right-hand side in the new creation. Thank you, Elaine.

And if you doubt any of that, that's an amazing claim. If you doubt any of that, Paul points to its certainty and inevitability in our second point.

Let me read halfway through verse 44. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. So it is written, the first man, Adam, became a living being. The last Adam, a life-giving spirit.

The spiritual did not come first, but the natural. And after that, the spiritual. The first man was of the dust of the earth. The second man is of heaven. In Genesis 2, just as God laid out the dust of the earth and breathed life into it to make Adam, so, too, when Jesus was laid out in a tomb and God raised him from the dead as well.

[10 : 43] See, Jesus is the sequel. He rectifies everything that was wrong with Adam and his image. Adam can only pass on flesh and blood.

Adam can only pass on sin. Jesus is a life-giving spirit. He's way ahead of Adam. Verse 48.

As was the earthly man, so are those who are of heaven. And as is the heavenly man, so are those who are of heaven. And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man.

Here, Paul's using the language of inevitability and certainty. So, verse 48. As was, dot, dot, dot, so are. Verse 49.

And just as, dot, dot, dot, so shall. Just as God made this creation, so also God is making a new creation.

[11 : 41] As everyone in this creation is like Adam, fleshy and sinful. So, also, everyone in the new creation is like Jesus, spiritual and perfect.

And just as our flesh and blood bears the image of Adam, so our spiritual bodies will bear the image of the heavenly man. So, why bother with the work of the Lord?

You will have a new and better body. It is certain and inevitable. And also, our third point. Because it will be death proof.

First, I'll pick it up at verse 51. 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, the last trumpet.

For the trumpet will sound. The dead will be raised imperishable. And we will be changed. Paul is clarifying the timing of events. He doesn't want the Corinthians to be confusing that life with this life.

[12 : 43] Paul says, the next life will be unmissable. The trumpet will sound. The dead will be raised. And when that happens, that will be like getting dressed for the very first time in the very best clothes.

Verse 53. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true.

Death has been swallowed up in victory. That saying is from Isaiah 25. That was our first Old Testament reading that we had today. Isaiah 25 is a picture of the heavenly banquet.

It's a feast of rich food for all people. And the best of meats, the finest of wines. And the food isn't the only great thing on the menu at that party.

Did you know that death will be swallowed up as well by God at that party? Which means that the celebration can go on forever. You see, last week, Paul warned Corinth.

[13 : 56] He said, don't be like God's wicked people in Isaiah. See, their partying had to end because they were going to die. Verse 32 over the page.

Eat and drink for tomorrow we die. Their partying had a time limit. Paul says, be like God's glorious people in Isaiah.

Their partying doesn't ever stop. Why? Because death has been swallowed up forever. And when God raises Jesus, he gives him a victory over death.

His victory is not a once-off. Remember that Jesus is a life-giving spirit. He enables us to put on imperishable and immortal clothes.

And that means, this is the main event today, that means we can laugh at death. Laugh at death.

[14 : 54] Verse 55. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? You see, these verses mock death the way children do in a playground.

You know when children do this? No, no, no, no, no. Death, where is your victory? Do you know when children do that? That's what you will be able to do to death itself. Isn't that remarkable?

Dying is always sad. It's often very painful. But to death itself, the Christian can say, no, no, no, no, no. My friend, he started today mocking the idea that we can be raised from the dead.

But by the end of the chapter, we are mocking death itself. Do you notice that? Where we started, where we finish. Verse 55 asks, where, O death, is your sting?

The sting of death is sin, and the power of the sin is the law. The imagery here is a stinging animal, like a scorpion. You see, death is like a scorpion.

[15 : 59] A huge one, obviously. But one where the scorpion's stinger is full of poisonous sin, powered by the law. All people are stung by the scorpion, because all people have broken God's laws.

And so the scorpion wins as death takes us. Verse 57, but thanks be to God. He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through Jesus' death on the cross, he takes the scorpion, and he stings himself with it.

He's confident that he's obeyed all of God's laws. And so death has no victory over him. And therefore, he can give us the victory.

Give us present tense. You see, sin and the law are death's only weapons. But they were disarmed 2,000 years ago on the cross, and when Jesus rose again.

The human consequences of death are always terribly sad. We all bear Adam's perishable image. But the victory over death has started, because Jesus came alive again.

[17 : 11] My sin cannot hurt me. The poison of death has been drawn away by Jesus. And so verse 58, Therefore, Therefore, Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, 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. Why? Why bother? Because you'll be given much better bodies.

It is certain and inevitable. They are death-proof and imperishable. So we can even laugh at death. And as we move to apply this, as we finish here, let's remember that the work of the Lord is to build the church.

The work of the Lord is building the church. That is done as we serve one another, as we serve Christians here and Christians elsewhere, as we serve other people.

It's done as we tell non-Christians about Jesus. And there are many ways which serving the Lord comes into conflict with wanting to preserve your body.

[18 : 24] And so let's look at a few. So loads of people signed up to serve here for next year, which is really amazing. I've been giving thanks to the Lord for all of you. Thank you for serving.

There's ways to serve publicly. There's a team of about 20 people each week that serve publicly in a service. But there's just as many that serve behind the scenes. If you only had one life, if you only have one body, why would you bother to serve in a way that isn't very glamorous, like praying for people, or doing morning tea, or welcoming, or on the band?

Why wouldn't you want a glorious job, like my job? It's not that glorious. Yes. This church is very large.

There are many events all the time, weddings, funerals, functions, and the like. Many events that need cooking and cleaning. Why would you bother being part of the catering team if you've only got one life?

I found out yesterday the catering team aren't paid. They're here on a volunteer basis. I should have known that, obviously, but there you go. Why would you bother doing that? For some people, even coming to church every week, maybe because of old age or young children, even turning up every week is a slog.

[19 : 45] Why would you bother? You know that 10.30 is perfect brunch time, or sleeping time. You can enjoy a smashed avocado instead. The St. John's plants.

Planting at St. John's will cost this body and our individual bodies a lot, financially, prayerfully, various kinds of work to support the ministry.

Why would we bother if we've only got one body? Why not just go for comfort and let someone else bother? Evangelism, evangelism, it costs our bodies a lot of time and effort to see people, to invest in relationships enough so that when we talk to them about Jesus, they will trust us.

Why would you bother using your body like that? Melbourne will offer you many other ways, many better ways to use your body, many other ways that won't feel so humiliating.

Why would you bother? Why would you bother? What about serving the Lord? So it says, give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord.

[20 : 55] Maybe giving yourself fully to the work of the Lord will mean going into full-time ministry. Let me tell you that full-time ministers aren't paid very much. Why would you bother?

It's not glorious. It's not glamorous. It's dishonorable. It feels weak almost all the time. But if you've got more than one life, maybe giving yourselves fully to the work of the Lord will mean studying some subjects at a Bible college and giving up your career to serve the Lord full-time.

Money decisions. If we made every money decision for this body alone, in five years you'll have... I'll look at the room. I'll say in five years, if you kept your money to yourself, I'll say maybe 50 grand.

In 20 years, hundreds of thousands. At the end of your life, maybe even a million. Why bother with anything else? I guarantee you, in a hundred years, or a thousand years, in the new creation, no one there will say, no church member, no missionary will say, wow, I'm really glad you kept your money to yourself rather than support me.

Career. Career. There are many ways in which serving the Lord at work will affect the career choices you make with your body. I'll just illustrate with two friends to finish.

[22 : 20] Two of my friends are very sort of senior workers, Mark and Philip. Mark is a very senior lawyer, and Philip is a manager in a large company. Both of them are extremely clever and talented, and every year, Mark and Philip get offered promotions and pay rises and the like.

And every year, Mark and Philip knock them back. Mark knocks them back because he knows to become a partner in his law firm will mean he can kiss his life goodbye. It will mean he can't lead a Bible study on Wednesday nights at his church.

It means he can't be a warden and serve. It'll mean he can't even turn up to church on Sundays. He can't even turn up to church on Sundays. Philip knocks back promotion because he knows that if he's promoted, he'll come out of his team of eight people where he's spent, I think, nearly 10 years, where he uses that team to tell people about Jesus.

You see, you wouldn't bother doing these things if you had one life. But they know, Mark and Philip know, they can get their career and esteem and financial buzz in the new creation.

And in five years' time, their decision will have cost them hundreds of thousands of dollars. In 20 years, their decision will cost them millions of dollars. And by the end of their lives, you know, who knows how many millions.

[23 : 42] But no one in the new creation from Mark's church or any one of Philip's colleagues who he's converted over the years will say, wow, I really wish you'd taken that promotion instead.

Instead of laboring for the Lord, new and better bodies, certain and inevitable, death-proof and immortal. Don't you want to labor for the Lord?

It almost seems too little to ask. And so let's pray. Father God, we thank you that you raised Jesus from the dead, that you will raise us from the dead, that we will have glorious, death-proof, immortal bodies.

And Father, thank you that that makes all our labor for you worthwhile, that our labor is not in vain. Please keep our eyes fixed on that new creation, our new lives, our new bodies.

Help us give everything, even our lives, if it would serve you and Jesus. In his name.
Amen.