

Resurrection means risk is worth it

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[0 : 00] Last week I asked, why do you Christians bother with all the good deeds and service? I mean, if you only live once, is that the best use of your hundred years?

And my friend Vijay, he's a Bible basher like you lot. And he said, you can bother because you will be raised from the dead. You'll have another life to come.

But trust me when I tell you that Vijay is overrated because how are you going to be raised? What kind of body are you going to get?

Will you be like living corpses, like a zombie? What if you die at 90 years of age? Will you be 90 for eternity? What about when a baby dies?

Will a baby be a baby forever and ever? And what if you die in an accident? Will you carry those scars forever and ever? And worse than any of that, will your body always be wearing white pyjamas?

[1 : 03] In the clouds with fat babies playing harps and all that sort of stuff. If so, count me out. This life suits me just fine.

Now, it's me again. But my friend is getting nastier every week. I think I won't invite him for a while. But my friend asks the same question that Paul anticipates in verse 35.

But someone will ask, how are the dead raised? And with what kind of body will they come? You see, Paul's aim last week was verse 55. That the Corinthians always give themselves fully to the work of the Lord.

That is, to build the church. The reason they can bother is they'll have another life to come last week. But this week, verse 58, is still his aim.

But this week, his focus is bodies. Your labor in the Lord won't be in vain because you'll have a better body too. This week has more teeth than last week.

[2 : 10] Because by the end of today, we will stare death in the face and laugh. We will start mocking death. Verse 55, where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death, is your sting? And so Paul will give us three reasons why we can bother laboring for the Lord. And so point one, please follow in your outlines there and please keep your passages open.

I'll read from verse 35. But someone will ask, how were the dead raised? And with what kind of body will they come? How foolish, says Paul. How foolish. Now, it's not foolish to wonder about what sort of body you'll have.

I think we've all done that from time to time. We all laughed at the idea of pajamas and, you know, clouds and stuff. We've all wondered. But it is foolish to assume that somehow you'll be disappointed with what God gives you in heaven.

What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. You see, the illustration here is seeds and plants. Seeds aren't really anything, are they? They're just little things.

[3 : 18] The seed, or the farmer, sorry, doesn't treasure the seed. He sows the seed. He puts it into the ground happily because he wants the crops or the plants that come afterwards.

You don't have to worry about carrying this wounded or old or unfit body into eternity. It has to die completely. It has to be sown before the plants or the new life comes.

Verse 37. When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. So I didn't have wheat, but I have something else. We're going to play a little game using the slides.

Now, I thought this was a really tricky game, but it's actually the easiest thing in the world. So anyway. So what I'm going to do is show you some seeds. And if you could forget that you're grown-ups, please just call out the kinds of plants these seeds turn into.

So, Shujen, please, the first one. The gum nut. Gum tree, well done. See, it's overrated, this game. The next seed.

[4 : 22] Excellent. That's a sequoia that I've been to. It's the largest living thing in the world. Next one. Acorn. Brilliant.

Magnificent oak tree. The point of the game, thanks, Shujen, the point of the game is that seeds look nothing like the plants or the trees that they become.

See, the Corinthians, and my friend, shouldn't mock the idea of a resurrected body. Because no one mocks the idea that a little acorn becomes a magnificent oak tree.

So no one needs to look at their body and mock. I go, what kind of body am I going to get in the future? Will I be disappointed? No. And the reason is verse 38.

But God gives it a body as he has determined. And to each kind of seed, he gives it its own body. See, when it comes to giving things a body, God knows what he's doing.

[5 : 22] It's foolish to doubt God's imagination. See, God could take an acorn and make it an oak tree. You couldn't dream of an oak tree or a tree unless you'd seen it created by God.

They've got the same sort of oak essence inside the acorn and in the tree, but also radically different. It's a fantastic illustration by Paul. Seeds and plants.

Listen to God's track record from Genesis, verse 39. Not all flesh is the same. People have one 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 body is another.

The sun has one kind of splendor. The moon another. And the stars another. And stars differ from star in splendor. And so I think this is what Paul is saying. So verse 39, God made all kinds of fleshy bodies.

[6 : 22] So people, animals, birds and fish. And then God made all different kinds of heavenly bodies. Verse 41, the sun, the moon, the stars.

And in the middle, verse 40, the splendor of the heavenly bodies is of one kind. The splendor of the earthly bodies is of another. Heavenly bodies, earthly bodies are different.

Back in Genesis 1, God never made a mistake by putting a fish in space. Nor did he ever put a star in the middle of the desert. God knows what he's doing.

He knows how to assign bodies to their correct locations, each to its kind. And we have no problem accepting that all bodies are fit for purpose in that way.

And so it's foolish to doubt God's imagination for what our resurrected bodies will be. Verse 42, so it will be with the resurrection of the dead.

[7 : 20] So it will be. 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 in natural body. It is raised a spiritual body. Here, Paul is making a contrast between natural bodies and spiritual bodies. And please, Shujan, there's a slide for this. The force of Paul's argument is in the contrast. You see, the Corinthians, the Corinthians wanted everything on the right-hand side in this life.

I'll have all of that right-hand side here and now. So Paul said to them, I want you to devote your bodies to purity. But their culture hated the flesh because it was so perishable.

So they didn't bother. Paul told them to serve the church and others. It's the work of the Lord. But that dents your pride and position.

[8 : 20] It looks dishonorable to the world. So they didn't bother. Basing your life around the gospel looks foolish and weak. Hence, they went around trying to find the best sounding preachers they could.

Paul says, just as a seed has to be sown to get the plant, so too this body is sown perishable and dishonorable and in weak service of the Lord.

But it will be raised imperishable and glorious and powerful. And we all have areas of life where the work of the Lord will run against wanting to preserve this body.

And Paul's illustration is really helpful. It clarifies that this body is just like a pine cone. It's not the full tree.

You see, at Christmas time, you're not going to dress up a pine cone with tinsel and baubles, are you? You're going to wait until you've got the full tree and then cover it with glorious things.

[9 : 26] So, too, we can give this seed, this pine cone or this acorn of a body in weak or potentially dishonorable or potentially perishable service to the left-hand side of that table because we'll get far more in the new creation.

And if we doubt that, if we doubt that, Paul points to its certainty. This is point two. Halfway through verse 44, I'll start reading. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

If there is a natural, there will also be. It's a language of inevitability. So it is written. The first 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 some dust and breathed life into it and made Adam, so, too, when Jesus was laid in a tomb, did God raise him to life as well.

Jesus is the sequel. He's the second Adam or the last Adam. He rectifies everything or every mistake passed on by the first Adam.

[10 : 46] Where the first Adam was a living being, Jesus is a life-giving spirit. Where the first Adam can only pass on sort of flesh and blood and sin, Jesus is a life-giving spirit.

He can rectify this problem. 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. He is the language of certainty and inevitability. Verse 48.

As was, so also. Verse 49. And just as, so shall we. So as just as God made this creation, so also he's making a new creation.

As everyone in this creation is like Adam, so also everyone in the new creation is like Jesus. And just as our flesh and blood bears the image of Adam, so shall our spiritual bodies bear the image of the resurrected Jesus.

[11 : 58] Why bother with the work of the Lord? Because we'll have new and better bodies. That's point one. It is certain and inevitable.

That's point two. And let's go to our third point. We're given victory over death. I'll start reading from verse 51. Listen, I tell you a mystery.

We'll 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. Paul clarifies the timing of things. He doesn't want the Corinthians to be confused about when that life starts and when this life ends. Paul says it will be unmissable.

The trumpet has to sound. All the dead will be raised. And when that happens, we will put on the very best clothes, as if we're getting dressed for the very first time.

[12 : 57] 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 was from the first reading that Marina gave us. It's a quote from Isaiah 25.

Isaiah 25 is a picture of the great heavenly banquet. She read, A rich food for all people. The best of meats. The finest of wines.

And at that party, the food isn't the only thing on the menu. Death will be eaten as well. We're told that God will swallow up death forever.

Which means that that party can last forever. Isn't it interesting that last week in Isaiah, last week, Paul warned the Corinthians.

[14 : 02] He said, Don't be like God's wicked people in Isaiah. That was verse 32. He said, Don't be like the wicked people in Isaiah.

See, they said, Eat and drink for tomorrow we die. Their partying had to stop when they died. God said, Paul said, Be like God's glorious people in Isaiah, who kept partying because God swallowed up death forever.

That Isaiah passage says that death is a shroud. It covers all people. Everyone dies. Perhaps you've been touched by death recently.

But when God raised Jesus from the dead, he gives him the victory. His victory is not a one-off. Remember, Jesus is a life-giving spirit.

Verse 45, he enables us to be imperishable and immortal. And that means, that means that we can laugh at death.

[15:08] Laugh at death. Verse 55, Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? These verses are like children in a playground. You know when they say things, No, no, no, no, no, no.

Death, where is your victory? That's what's going on in this verse. Death is always sad. It is often very painful. But to death itself, the Christian can say, No, no, no, no, no. My friend started this passage mocking the idea of a resurrection body. But we finish mocking the idea of death itself.

Isn't that remarkable? Verse 55 says, Where, O death, is your sting? Verse 56, The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.

The image you hear is of a stinging animal, like a, say, a scorpion. So death is like a scorpion, a great big one, that's never been defeated. And the scorpion stinger is full of sin, powered by the law.

[16:18] You see, all people are stung by the scorpion, and the sting is deadly, because all people have broken God's law. And so the scorpion called death, he wins.

Verse 57, But thanks be to God. He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. See, through his death on a cross, Jesus takes that scorpion and stings himself.

He's confident that he's kept all of God's laws. Hence, he rises to new life. And therefore, he gives us the victory.

He gives us the present tense. You see, sin and the law are death's only weapons. But 2,000 years ago, Jesus disarmed that scorpion.

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

[17:23] My sin can't hurt me. The poison of death has been drawn away or taken by Jesus. Verse 58, Therefore, therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm.

Let nothing move you. Always give yourself fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. Why is it not in vain? Because we'll be given much better bodies, which are certain and inevitable, which are imperishable and immortal.

So we can even laugh at death. And as we move now to apply this, let's remember that the work of the Lord is to build the church.

Building the church is done as we all serve in many ways, public and private. It's done as people tell people about Jesus. And we said before there are many different ways in which the work of the Lord will come into conflict with wanting to preserve these bodies.

And so let's look at a few of these ways just as we finish. So, I've got serving the church. Loads of people here serve HCD publicly and privately, but but if you only had one body, why would you serve in a less glamorous way like praying for people or welcoming people?

[18:54] Why would you serve like that? Why not serve for something glorious like try and take my job? It's not that glorious. You all know this.

This church is very large. There are many events here that need cooking and cleaning. Did you know the catering team doesn't get paid? I found that out yesterday. I probably should have assumed that, but anyway.

Why would you bother with the hard slog of catering? There was a massive wedding here yesterday and a couple of the catering team were still here at the end of the day long after people had left.

Why would you bother with that slog of that work if you had one life? For some people it's really hard to even get to church. It's a real physical slog.

Why would you even bother to slog it out to get here every week? Why not just sleep in? 9am it's a pretty good brunch time.

[19:54] Lots of avocados to eat instead. Why not just do that? We're planting a church in St. John's. St. John's and the whole ministry and the whole effort will cost this whole body and our individual bodies a lot in service and money and prayers and other support.

If we are making decisions for this body alone why don't we just let it go? Why don't we just not get involved and go for something more comfortable and stable?

What about evangelism? It costs our bodies lots of time and effort to see friends and family enough so they'll trust us to talk about spiritual things.

It costs a lot to invest in relationships like that. It can be scary and humiliating. Melbourne will offer you a million better ways to use your body.

Why bother? And what about money? If we made every financial decision for this body alone it means in five years you could have thousands more.

[21 : 06] Thousands. In twenty years tens of maybe hundreds of thousands. At the end of your life maybe even a million dollars more if you made your money decisions for this body alone.

But what about in a hundred years time? Or a thousand years time? In the new creation no church member no missionary no one who's going to benefit from that forty grand we raised will say wow I really wish you kept your money for yourself.

And same for career choices. Many choices we make about our career affect how much we can give ourselves to the work of the Lord.

Two Christian friends of mine one named Mark another named Philip. Mark is a very senior lawyer and Philip is a manager in a big company. Mark and Philip are both extremely clever and talented and every year they get offered promotions and more money and all that sort of stuff.

And every year they keep knocking the promotion back and stay at their level while all their contemporaries rise up around them. Now Mark knocks back promotion because if he gets made a partner of the law firm he won't be able to lead a midweek Bible study group.

[22 : 26] He won't be able to serve as a church warden. He won't even be able to turn up to church regularly on Sundays because he knows at that level his life won't be his anymore. Philip knocks back promotion because he wants to stay in his team of eight people because for years and years and years Philip has been sharing the gospel with these colleagues.

See you wouldn't bother doing these things if you only lived once. But if you live twice if you have another body you can get all the career and esteem and other buzz you like in the new creation. And in five years these guys their decisions will have cost them hundreds of thousands of dollars. In twenty years millions and at the ends of their lives who knows how much.

But in the new creation no one from Mark's church and none of Philip's colleagues whom he has converted over the years will say wow I really wish you took that promotion instead instead of laboring for the work of 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 so let's pray.

[23 : 54] Father God would we labor for the Lord? We thank you that our labor is not in vain. Thank you for so many reasons why. Thank you for another life last week and thank you for this week.

New and better bodies death proof certain inevitable. Thank you that our new bodies will be glorious and powerful and Father please then would we give ourselves to you to your service help us to make tough decisions when serving you comes against preserving this body would we give you everything as Jesus gave everything so that we too can be like him glorious and powerful in Jesus name Amen Amen