

SERIES: PRESCRIPTIONS FOR A HEALTHY & HOLY CHURCH:

A Study in 1 Corinthians Applied To The Church Today

III. MAINTAINING PROPER DIET & EXERCISE

E.) POWER LIFTING (Resurrection)

“Gaining The Power”

(1 Cor. 15:35-58)

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INTRODUCTION:

As many of you know by now, one of my all-time favorite people and authors is the Russian great, Fyodor Dostoevsky. In 1849, as a young political radical, he was arrested for plotting against Czar Nikolai I. Convicted of treason, he was sentenced to death by firing squad. Having already been blindfolded and lined up in the freezing weather, anticipating the imminent sounds of gunfire, the executioners were ordered to stop. Dostoevsky's sentence had, at the last minute, been changed from death to exile and hard labor in the gulag. Having survived five years in the gulag, he was released in 1854, gave his life to Christ and abandoned his revolutionary ideology. Reflecting on his life, Dostoevsky once commented: *“The certainty of death fills us with dread. But the uncertainty of what follows death is the most dreadful anguish in the world.”*

Have you ever wondered about death – particularly your own death? Ray Stedman observes: *“The fear of death keeps us in bondage. It turns us into driven workaholics. It makes us feel that we must seize every opportunity, because life is so short. We dare not stop or rest but must be driven, driven, driven by the fear of death! This fear makes us anxious and obsessed with our health, with threats and dangers, with the aging process. It robs us of our joy and our sleep. The fear of death haunts and oppresses us . . . We fear death because it is an unknown. We can't control it, evade it, or avoid it”* (pg. 249).

Sadly, in the process, we often fail to recognize just how much our views, opinions and fears about death affect how we live our lives in the meantime! **The correlation and impact is humongous!** Most often, it is a negative impact. BUT, in Christ, it can and should be a tremendously positive impact and source of hope and excitement. The writer of Hebrews pronounces:

. . . so that through His death He might destroy the one holding the power of death-- that is, the Devil-- and free those who were held in slavery all their lives by the fear of death. Hebrews 2:14b-15

PRAYER

I.) THE **NATURE** OF RESURRECTION (vv. 35-49)

A.) Where Does The Resurrection **Body** Come From? (vv. 35-39)

- A great challenge for many to either truly believe in or put great hope and excitement in the BODILY resurrection is the details of how such a thing could really be possible.
- For many of the Corinthians, it was all about the 'spirit.' The body was seen as a temporary temple and liability. Therefore, they anticipated only a rising of the spirit as it is one day freed from the tethers of the physical body.
- This, however, is NOT the teaching or example of Christ.
- Scripture here addresses these issues further.

1.) Dealing With **Decay** (v. 35)

- A fresh body being resurrected, most of us can understand and deal with. But what about decay? What about the body that has already been decaying and subject to the elements, creatures and microbes of nature for years, decades, even centuries?
- Not to mention a body that has been cremated or drowned in the sea or consumed by predators. What then?
- Those are all very common and seemingly sensible questions that many continue to ask and ponder today. And yet, Paul – inspired by the Holy Spirit – says here that such questions and challenges are “*foolish*”!
- **Why? How can he say that?**
- In this biblical context and word choice, Paul is saying that they are “*foolish*” because they are demonstrating ignorance about something that they have been taught and should better understand – through Scripture, Christ's example, and even through examples in nature. Paul is saying: “*How can you call impossible or too far-fetched to trust that which, at least in principle, occurs physically and visibly all around you?*” “*How can you fail to take into account the all-powerful Hand of God?*”
- The Corinthian Christians were struggling based on false presuppositions that were based on their 'reason' and expectation rather than the clear example of Christ and throughout nature.
- Specifically, they pre-supposed that if there is to be a bodily resurrection, and that resurrected body is to appear identical to the previous, then it must happen through a physical reanimation of the corpse. And that certainly seems impractical if not impossible for a body that has completely decayed, burned, been consumed and/or has had parts transplanted or used for other medical purposes.
- The PROBLEM, friends, is that Scripture never describes resurrection that way. Resurrection does present an 'end product' that *appears* physically identical, but the emphasis – rather than reanimation - is on a process of **transformation**.

2.) Old **Seed**, New **Body** (vv. 36-37)

- A more accurate description of our future bodily resurrection in Christ, according to the Bible, is seen in the natural example of plants that are all around us.
- **First**, the resurrection of the plant from one season to the next must necessarily begin with the death of the present plant.
- **Second**, the source of the resurrected plant is not the dead plant, but rather the seed of the dead plant. This seed, in turn, must be buried and allowed to seemingly rot and die. Yet, in the proper time, from it will emerge a new, fuller life.
- **Third**, the new body that emerges the next season appears the same as what was there last season and yet is new and different. Even more profoundly so from the seed that it actually emerged from.

3.) Different **Bodies** for Different **Environments** (vv. 38-39)

- Land creatures are different from water creatures are different from air creatures. They are all similar in most ways and have much more in common than not, but there are necessarily distinct differences relative to their distinct environments.

B.) **Earthly** vs. **Heavenly** Body? (vv. 40-44)

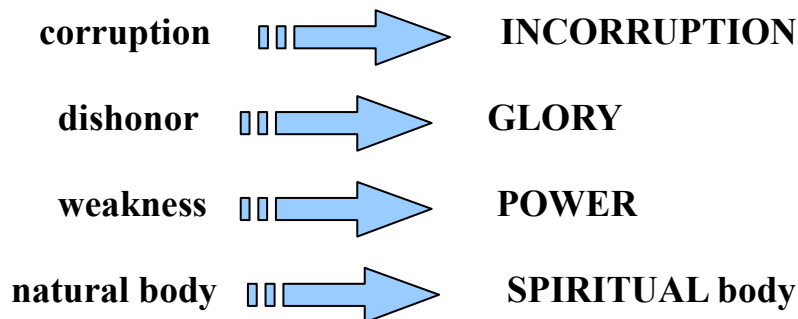
- Scripture now more clearly applies this to what should be the expected differences between a human body designed for earthly living and the resurrected human body designed for heavenly living.

1.) **Creation's Example (vv. 40-41)**

- This truth is even more evident from a cosmic perspective.
- The earth, sun, moon and stars are all distinctly different. Even the stars, though categorically the same, appear and function differently to us. And, yet, they each display their own "*splendor*."
- All bodies God has created has a "*splendor*," but they are not all the same. There is particularly a profound difference between the 'earthly' bodies and the 'cosmic' or 'gaseous' bodies. From a distance, it may not be so discernible. For instance, from earth it is difficult to distinguish the light from the planets (Mars) versus those of stars.

2.) **Application in Resurrection (vv. 42-44)**

- The same is true of the difference between our first, earthly bodies and our second, resurrected heavenly bodies.
- The former is made for the earth, but the latter for the heavenly realm.
- The former is merely the seed, but the latter is the 'final glorious product.'
- **The former is sown in . . . but the latter is raised in . . .**



C.) In What **'Image'**? (vv. 45-49)

- Scripture tells us not only here, but throughout the New Testament, that there are two 'prototypes' of what constitutes a human being. The 'First Adam,' the Adam created from the dust of the ground, is the prototype of an 'earthly' human being. The 'Second Adam,' the resurrected Jesus Christ, is the prototype of a 'heavenly' human being. Both are fully human, and yet they are distinctly different – not only spiritually but physically as well.
- **Why?** Because they are each constituted for distinctly different environments.
- Jesus was 'sown' in a 'First Adam' body, but He was resurrected in a 'Second Adam' body.
- *Looking at and contrasting how Scripture describes the two bodies and the example of Christ in His 'born' body versus His resurrected body tell us much about what we can expect will be different about our resurrected body, though it will be physical and appear identical.*

1.) **Genderless**

- Our resurrection bodies will be "*like the angels*" in that they will be genderless.
- Please note, this does NOT mean we will be "angels," in fact quite the contrary!

- Also, it does not necessarily mean that our *appearance* will be genderless.
- What it does mean is twofold: (1) These bodies will not propagate; and (2) There will no longer be any necessary sex/gender differences. We will look and interact with one another's bodies, not as male and female, but simply as redeemed people; not as objects for this or that, but as glorious companions; not according to different inherent strengths and weaknesses, but as complete equals.

2.) **Independent**

- That is it will be freed from the physical dependencies such as food, water and sleep. It doesn't mean we can't still enjoy food (as the resurrected Christ did), but that we no longer need it and, presumably, will not need to digest and dispose of it in the same way we do now (**6:13**).

3.) **Composed of Light**

- As Jesus and the departed saints were shown on the Mount of Transfiguration and Jesus again when appearing to Saul on the road to Damascus, our resurrected bodies will somehow be composed of light.
- The intensity of that light, however, will differ from individual to individual according to each one's earthly devotion and faithfulness.

4.) **Incarnable**

- No decay or deterioration (including aging!). Nor any weakness or temptation.

5.) **Unhindered**

- "*raised in power.*"
- Now, in this body and this environment our bodies are weak and do often function as a hindrance to our spirit. Our new bodies, however, will be truly one with our spirit.

6.) **Spiritual**

- Please note, Scripture says a *spiritual* body, not a *spirit* body. What's the difference?
- A spirit body is itself a 'spirit' such as one may think of a 'ghost.'
- Rather, a spiritual body is one that is perfectly integrated with and under the control of the spirit, as opposed to the natural body which is separate from but inhabited by the spirit and principally under the control of the soul – our seat of personal will and emotions.

II.) **THE GREAT MYSTERY: ETERNAL VICTORY (vv. 50-57)**

- Remember, in Scripture a "*mystery*" is something that has been hidden but is revealed to the 'initiated.'
- The word "*sleep*" is a euphemism for "death." The tired, worn and sick earthly body has been put to rest until Jesus comes to awaken it.

A.) **Universal Change** (vv. 50-53)

- "*ALL*" will be changed.
- Often, when we think of the Day of Resurrection, we only imagine the dead bodies of the redeemed believers being transformed.

- However, Scripture says “*ALL*” redeemed believers. This means that those who have not bodily died and are taken up in the rapture will also experience a profound bodily transformation.

B.) Total Elimination of Sin (vv. 54-57)

- At the resurrection of the redeemed, for them and in their new bodies Sin, its transports and implications will be utterly destroyed and eliminated.
- There will not even be so much as a lingering pain or 'aftertaste.'
- At the same time, victory in Christ Jesus will be complete, final and eternal!!!

III.) POWER FOR THE PRESENT (v. 58)

- BECAUSE the redeemed in Christ have the promise of resurrection, our attitudes, behavior and choices in this life should be radically different than those who do not!
- BECAUSE the redeemed in Christ have the promise of resurrection, we live in the present confident in His Power now!
- BECAUSE the redeemed in Christ have the promise of resurrection, we have a hope that no circumstance should be able to extinguish!

Therefore, my dear brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the Lord's work, knowing that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.