

Over the last couple of weeks, we've been learning about death; dying; and what happens between the time of death, and the resurrection that happens when Jesus returns...

And, as disciples of Jesus, we believe in the **bodily** resurrection of the dead.

The Christian understanding of "eternal life":

- isn't that we're going to be some kind of free or floating spirit;
- We won't become a star up in the sky;
- We won't be bouncing around in the clouds
- We won't be absorbed into some kind of mega-spirit...

We believe in the resurrection of the body...

God will create a new heaven, and a new earth, and we will be living on this new, beautiful earth, with Christ, in our glorified bodies...

But the resurrection of the body, to many people, sounds "So ridiculous".... *You know as well as I do, what a rotting carcass looks like – A dead roo on the side of the road, after a few days in the hot sun – it decomposes pretty jolly quickly...* And who could possibly envisage, a dead carcass, that's been eaten by bugs and bacteria, coming back to life again???? It doesn't sound particularly glorious at all...

And when Paul wrote this, he was writing to a people, who were in a "Greek" culture, and to the Greeks (and their philosophy), the whole notion of "the resurrection of the

body”, was a complete and utter nonsense... **They** wanted to be **free** of the body. They wanted to evolve into some kind of a higher spiritual being – that was **their** hope.

And so he pre-empts what most good Greeks would ask “How are the dead raised?...” And, What kind of body will the dead have???

And he’s pretty blunt in his answer, Our English translations say, “**You foolish person!**” Maybe a better translation might be, “You idiot!”...

I mean, we see this happening all the time – in our own garden... You take a seed and you plant it... It doesn’t look at all like it’s living... But given the right conditions, a few days in the moist soil, and it sprouts, and it grows up into a beautiful, green plant...

And what the crops that we grow???

You can’t plant another wheat plant, until the **first** plant reaches physiological maturity, and it dies. Only then, can we take a seed, from that dead plant, and put it in the ground, and it grows into new life...

And just like that, our bodies die. They get planted in the ground. And one day, we’ll be raised to life again...

The second part of the question was, “What kind of body will the dead have?”

And he gives an example of, how even in our world now, there’s all different types of bodies, for all different types of purposes.

And we know this, don't we? We see it in God's creation all the time. God designs different bodies, for different purposes.:

- He designed birds to fly, and gave them feathers;
- He designed some animals to live in the snow, and He gave them fur;
- He designed some animals to swim in the sea, and He gave them fins;
- He designed monkeys to swing in the tree, and He gave them a tail;
- Some animals he designed to hunt by night;
- Others He designed, to **hide** from the hunter...

God created different animals, with different bodies, for different environments...

And the bodies that you and I have now,,,, Well, they might be suitable for **this** earth and for **this** environment,,,, but they're **not** suitable for eternity. V<sup>50</sup> I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

*Our bodies, aren't up to it... I'm not even 50 yet, and my body already gets aches and pains. I've got a fused ankle – that's the best they could do to repair it – My ankle will never bend again. I'm not as strong as I was 10 years ago. And in 10 years' time, I probably won't be as strong as I am now....*

One news article I read said: “*Most bodily functions peak shortly **before** age 30 and then start going downhill.*”<sup>i</sup>

So, if you're in your late 20's and you feel your body isn't as resilient as it used to be, guess what... It's not... And if you're in your 70's or your 80's, you might be feeling your body's starting to get worn out... Guess what... It is. Our bodies, are not designed for eternity.

Our bodies are perishable – they have a “use-by” date – They certainly have a “best-before” date.

**Our** bodies, are perishable... To join Jesus in His Glory, we've got to have the suitable equipment. We have to have a body that's **suitable** for glory – a body that's **not** perishable. We have to receive a glorified body. :

- an eternal body
- a body that **never** gets old;
- a body that **never** gets tired
- a body that **never** gets sick, or
- wears-out; or
- dies

What is sown is perishable; what is **raised** is **imperishable**. – a body that won't perish... Imagine that... Who wants one of them???

<sup>43</sup> It is sown in dishonour;

Why do we bury bodies? Or burn them??? Because we can't bear the stench. And we can't bear to see our loved ones decomposing... But what is sown in dishonour – no matter how pompous the funeral – the body essentially gets 'disposed

of? – it is sown in dishonour, **But what is sown in dishonour, gets raised in glory.**

**It is sown in weakness;**

Even the toughest of men, aren't strong enough to live on – their bodies weaken and die...

- The battle-fields are strewn with the toughest of men, who's bodies weren't strong enough...
- The hospital wards are filled with the aged or infirmed, relying on machines or medications to prolong their life.
- Even those who are obsessed with their health – those people who will only ever put into their bodies, what they consider to be the most pure and natural of foods, and they push themselves with exercises to keep themselves young.... , but in the end, they won't be strong enough either....

Unless Jesus returns before we die, **none** of us are strong enough to beat death. **I'm** not. And neither are you. Your body, and my body, will be sown in weakness,,,,, but the body that is raised to eternal life, **is raised in power.**

The Power of God will raise us from the dead. And our bodies won't be feeble and weak any more.

....

Our **natural** body dies, but it will be **raised a spiritual body.**

Paul has a bit of a favourite analogy –

- the comparison between the first man and the last man, or
- “The First Adam”, and “The Last Adam”.
- It’s the comparison between the natural man and the Spiritual man.
- Between the original human, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the beginning, God created man in His own image. He created him from the dirt, and he named him, “dirt”... You thought I was going to say “Adam.” Well, I did.

The construction of the Hebrew word אָדָם “Adam” (which means man [mankind], **or** the personal name “Adam”), is so close to the Hebrew word for “dirt” אֲדָמָה (adamah), it’s like saying “dirt man” or “earth person” or “earth-ling”...

The first man – Adam, was **not** a spiritual man. He was made out of dirt – that’s his ingredients. And that’s **our** origin. *If we were to analyse the chemical composition of our bodies, there’s not a single element in our bodies, that cannot be found in the crust of the earth.*

We were supernaturally created, as a physical being. But Jesus wasn’t. Jesus **is not** a created being. Jesus Christ, has forever been. He was present at the creation of the world. Jesus Christ, is the creator. He is above nature – He is **beyond** nature. He is the Spirit, who has always been. No physical human being, had the capacity to save us... Only the Spiritual man could do that.

When God created Adam, He created Him a physical being, and gave to him “*ruah*” (breath or spirit). **But** when **Jesus**

was born, He was **already** Spirit, and God (who is Spirit), put on a physical body.

**“The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit.**

You know, some people think of “God” as this big, nasty spoil-sport, who’s waiting for an opportunity to squash us like a bug... That couldn’t be further from the truth. Jesus came, as a **life-giving spirit** .

The bodies that we have now, are bodies like Adam had – bodies made of dust, that will return to dust... But when we are raised, we will have a new, glorified body – a body like the glorified body of our Lord Jesus Christ – a spiritual body.

“How?”, you might ask... How do we make that transition???

Paul says, “Look, I’ll tell you a mystery...”

And I’d better explain that word (mystery). The Greek word is *μυστήριον* (*mystērion*). And it doesn’t mean “It’s a mystery” – it’s something we couldn’t possibly understand, or we could never fathom it... It’s more like “a secret”. It’s like he’s saying, “Let me let you in on a little secret.” It’s something that **used** to be hidden, but now it’s been revealed...

Before someone comes to faith in Jesus, the whole death / dying / resurrection thing, can be an utter mystery – the great unknown... But when we respond to the gospel, and become

disciples of Jesus, He opens our eyes, and he lets us in on a little secret... And here it is:

**We shall not all sleep...** Death isn't the end... We don't just go into an eternal nothingness. Not even our bodies go into an eternal nothingness...

**We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,**  
<sup>52</sup> **in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.**

The resurrection's going to be a very noisy event... Shouts of angels and blastings of trumpets... *I heard one preacher say, "It's going to be noisy enough to wake the dead"...* And it will...

We will be changed (snap), just like that. <sup>52</sup> **in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye**

It doesn't take eons for God to make one species from another – I believe our God is as mighty as His word reveals - mighty enough to create **all** of the different animals in **one** day.

Creating bodies, isn't anything new for Him. It's not very difficult at all, for God...

And on the day of resurrection, He will create for us, new, glorious, resurrected bodies, in a period of time, that is so miniscule, it cannot be divided. The Greek word is ἀτόμω,

(atomo). ... *It's the word, from which we get our word "atom". And for a time, the atom was the smallest thing a scientist knew, and they thought it couldn't be split ...*

In an instant, it will happen. One mili-second our bodies will be corrupt and decayed... The next mili-second, we will be resurrected and glorious...

Isn't that wonderful??? Our current mortal bodies, will become **immortal**... That simply means that our bodies that are now subject to death, will no longer be able to die.

"Death is swallowed up in victory."

<sup>55</sup> "O death, where is your victory?

O death, where is your sting?"

Where is it? What is the power of death over the body? If, on the day of resurrection, we are given immortal bodies, what's the bother with death??? Where's its power???

The sting of death is sin. Death is swallowed up in victory, but only if sin is dealt with...

In Romans 6, we read: <sup>23</sup> For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

You see, the worldly attitude is “If God loves me, surely He’ll just accept me as I am, and give me eternal life too – My sin shouldn’t be an issue....”

But God can’t ignore sin, because **our** God is a **just** god. There is zero tolerance for sin in God’s glorious new heaven and earth. If the New Earth was a place of sin, it wouldn’t be new – It would just be the same old, same old...

The **sting** of death is “sin”, but the **power** of sin is “the law”... What’s deep... What’s he trying to say there??? God’s wonderful, wonderful, beautiful, life-giving law... - and yet God’s law, is the power of sin???? ... What’s that about???

God’s Law, reveals our true nature...

God’s Law, is divine; Holy; Righteous; Good. But the Law can’t save us... It just reveals how utterly sinful we are... If I break just one of the commandments of God, I’m a sinner... David used to write songs about how beautiful God’s Law is, but at the same time, God’s law made him fall to the ground, in repentance, because he was so deeply convicted of his sin.

...

How good does somebody have to be, to earn eternal life??? The answer to that’s easy. If you want to earn eternal life, all you have to do, is love the Lord your God with all of your heart and all of your mind and all of your strength, and love your neighbour as much as you love yourself... (Jesus told us, “That sums up all of the Law and the Prophets”)... All you have to do, is:

- love God with every part of your being, and
- love others, and
- never **not** do that, and
- **never** put yourself before God, or
- before others,

and va-la – you’ve earned eternal life..... How are you going with that??? But who **can** do that??? ... No one.

The only one who **could** do it, was the Spiritual man – Jesus Christ. The Law condemns us... The Law reveals the sin that’s part of our true nature...

Oh boy, those who are self-righteousness, don’t want to be told that. Even churches today, are redefining “sin”... We don’t want to rely on grace. We don’t want to repent of our sin... We don’t want the Law to tell us that we’re sinners, and so even churches today, are attempting to redefine the Law – to redefine God’s word – to redefine what is, and is not “sin”...

You see, the demonic lie, is “You can break the power of sin, by redefining the Law”...

But that in itself, is the grossest sin. Imagine the arrogance, to say to God, “God, Your definition of “sin” – well, it’s not a very good one – it’s too restrictive. You’re not a very good law-maker – I’ll just tweak it a bit.” We saw the Uniting Church of Australia, do this again last week, when they decided they would begin to celebrate same-sex marriages...

What a perversion of God’s gift of marriage...

The demonic lie, is “You can break the power of sin, by redefining the Law”... “Just convince yourself that you’re OK” “Believe that you’re a good person, and that God would be very honoured to have you in His glorious new kingdom, and you don’t have to worry about the sting of death...”... That’s the lie of the devil.

**God’s** solution, is that the sting of death is removed – the power of sin is broken, by pardoning sin... Man’s answer, is to **condone** sin – God’s answer, is to **pardon** sin...

Eternal life, is neither deserved, nor is it earned. On my own merit, **I** deserve to go to hell, and so do you... And unless we can accept that truth, then we’re not in a right attitude to receive salvation...

It’s not the self-righteous who find eternal life – **it’s the repentant**... It’s the broken, humble, repentant sinner, who falls on his/her knees before God and cries

“God, have mercy on me, a sinner...”

“I agree with Your Law... It reveals my true nature – I’m a sinner... I agree that I have done gross wrong – I have embraced evil and rejected good... I repent of my sin. I turn away from it... I put myself at Your mercy, and plead for Your forgiveness...”

And when we repent of our sin, and submit to Jesus Christ as Lord, we’re forgiven. Sin is pardoned... The Law has done its job – it’s revealed the sin; I’ve repented of sin; God’s

forgiven my sin,,, and in Christ, we have life... Pure; Holy; Spiritual; Eternal...

thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Isn't that wonderful!!!! That's why it's called "the gospel". That's why it's called "the good news"... But it doesn't stop there. V58 begins with the word "Therefore"...

Now, I hope you always take notice of the word "Therefore", when you're reading your Bible. Whenever we see in the Scriptures, the word "Therefore", it's usually either going to tell us another great theological truth to build on what we've just heard, **or** it's going to give us a very important practical application of what we've just heard... And here we have the latter.

**<sup>58</sup> Therefore, [because God gives us the victory over death, through the Lord Jesus Christ] my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labour is not in vain.**

Here we are given 3 commands:

- Be **steadfast**;
- Be **immovable**;
- **always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labour is not in vain.**

I want to clear something up here. There are 2 opposite errors we can fall into, when it comes to works and salvation...

- The first, is the one that most of society are prone to – the belief that by being good, I will earn eternal life.
- The second, is an easy-believism that's being preached in many growing churches today – the belief that all I have to do is to believe that Jesus died for my sins, and accept His saving work on the cross. It's a belief that says "You don't really have to change" If God wants you to change, He'll do it for you... It's also a belief that says, "Labouring for God, that's trying to earn your way to heaven – that's salvation-by-works – not salvation-by-grace"

The truth is, we are saved by grace, but we're **not** saved to stay the same. We are **not** saved from sin, to go back to sin. And when we're saved, to be involved in the work of the Lord – even labouring to the point of weariness, is not in vain...

We've been saved by Christ, and we love Christ, and so we serve Christ.

While we await the day of resurrection, how should we live???? Be **steadfast**.

That means to stand on a firm foundation, and not be shifted from it... The Lord Jesus Christ, is our foundation. Never lose faith. Never give up. Never deny Jesus...

Jesus told us that many will fall away<sup>ii</sup>, and the love of may will grow cold.... Let's not be one of them... Be **steadfast**.

**Be immovable.**

That means, “Don’t waver in what we believe.”... Jesus warned us, that there would come false teachers – people who would try and lead us away from the truth... Be immovable... Don’t be double-minded... Don’t waver...

**And work!!!**

No preacher ever wants to be that pastor who’s always putting the guilt-trip on his congregation: To work harder; To do better; To put in a bit more effort... No preacher wants to be that person, and no preacher wants to ever be accused of preaching a ‘works-based’ gospel, so we rarely hear this very important Biblical truth ever being taught from a pulpit today... But you know what??? For me to do justice to God’s word this morning, I have to share with you this command: **Be always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labour is not in vain.**

That means, excel. Be full and overflowing – never ceasing in the work of the Lord (do oodles of it).

By the grace of Christ, we’ve been saved to eternal life...  
**Therefore!!!**

The life of the redeemed, is a life of activity for the Lord, **knowing that in the Lord your labour is not in vain.** It’s not worthless. The Lord’s labourers will be rewarded.

Eternal life, compels us to be steadfast, immovable, and to tirelessly serve the Lord. It’s a compulsion... Do we feel that

compulsion??? Those with an eternal perspective will feel this compulsion:

- a compulsion to be steadfast;
- a compulsion to be immovable; and
- a compulsion to do oodles of work in serving the Lord

Don't fight the compulsion, because it won't go unrewarded, in God's eternal Kingdom.

His eternal Spirit compels us.  
Amen.

Questions:

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.news.com.au/lifestyle/health/the-age-your-body-breaks-down/news-story/977ca7bb15385d6570941b2fa91826d0>

<sup>ii</sup> Matthew 24:10–12 (ESV)

<sup>10</sup> **And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another.**

<sup>11</sup> **And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. <sup>12</sup> And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold.**