

*1 Corinthians 15:35-49 // YouVersion App Events*

*This is a free place - be yourself, we are imperfect, tired and done keeping up appearances. Meet Jesus here. He is our safety, hope and fuel for life.*

This week as I have been studying I have been thinking about how we live in light of the reality that we will die. There have been a few celebrations of life for believers close to me, and many of you, and then as I have read 1 Corinthians 15, I see Paul dealing directly with the question.

For most of the people we interact with and even see in the mirror, so much of life in light of death is lived under the mantra of YOLO... maybe we don't use the same phrase but we want to live fast, full, and hang this body up when we are done using it. And for some, that then is the end, nothing. Hope only in this life.

But others have an inkling of something more and treat our body as if it were a soul container... believing something of our essence will go on, live for ever. But as a translucent ghostly creature that floats... as a spirit. And that is where our hope lies...

This mentality reveals that we keep the physical disconnected from the spiritual - the "next life" doesn't have much to do with this one. Even those that believe in Jesus can live like this is the case... and this is exactly who the Apostle Paul is writing to and he is calling us to something different.

**The life and transformation secured by Jesus give us a defining expectant hope now.**

**1 Corinthians 15:35-49** "But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?" [36] You foolish person! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. [37] And what you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. [38] But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body. [39] For not all flesh is the same, but there is one kind for humans, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish. [40] There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is of one kind, and the glory of the earthly is of another. [41] There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory.

[42] So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. [43] It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. [44] It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. [45] Thus it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. [46] But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. [47] The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. [48] As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust,

and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. [49] Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.” (ESV)

Paul has made clear the necessity of the resurrection in belief in Christ, not only the resurrection of Jesus but the resurrection of the saints as well - that it happens. And now he turns his attention to those that can't handle the “how” of resurrection, or can't understand that they don't control it.

There had been an addition to what was preached to them. An adjustment to Christianity to fit the fancy and desires of the believers - follows our craving for control and being able to write the script of eternity for ourselves - if I am getting a resurrected body, let me design it and make sure it has all the features I want.

The Corinthians church believed they had arrived, that they were living the “heavenly existence” because of their emphasis on things of the Spirit. (Why some could deny a resurrection - why do you need it?) This develops into a discounting of earthly existence both in its physical and behavioral expressions. Like the body doesn't matter... live as you please just be “spiritual” when it counts...

What Paul appears to be doing once again is refuting both ideas. They have indeed borne - and still bear - the likeness of the man of earth. Because of that they are destined to die. But in Christ's resurrection and their being “in him” they have also begun to bear the likeness of the man of heaven.

Paul makes clear, because of the Christ's resurrection, and our coming one, there is continuity between now and then, coming transformation, and a sense that the truth of it impacts our living now. The natural and Spiritual working in unison, not disjointed or discarded.

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### **1) Continuity**

Have you ever spent much time thinking about your resurrected body? What it would be like? This is a Christian belief as outlined in Scripture, that when Jesus returns, the physical bodies of believers will be raised into what is described as glorified bodies. This week Ben says “I think we will have abs...” I have abs now, they are just hiding! Even when it comes to disease of sickness, disability, we think of it all changed, and that is right.

**Philippians 3:20-21** “we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, [21] who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body...” (ESV)

But our lowly body, our “soma” now, becomes something, it is connected to the coming resurrection.

The body we now have, the physicality we have now is sown, given over, into resurrection. Where we might look for a discarding of what we have as if it didn't matter, Paul is presenting the connection between the two.

There is continuity between resurrection and what is typically seen in the world on a daily basis. “It is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual.”

Because there is continuity, the body is not rejected, but nurtured and protected. It has its own “doxa,” a glory, honor, worth to be recognized. For a group of people placing all value on spiritual realities, as if they could experience the fullness of heaven and glory in one or two gifts of the Spirit or a mystical event; this comes as a correction, and a reclamation of their humanity. The implication: what is believed of Jesus, affects the physical, in the present, now because it is ultimately connected to the eternal, to the promised “heavenly bodies.

C.S. Lewis “There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations - these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub and exploit - immortal horrors or everlasting splendors.”

Not only human bodies, but all of creation it seems, different flesh, glory in the sun and moon, while different from each other there is good in them now, still flowing into what is coming in eternity.

There are no insignificant hills or valleys, rivers or dessert... the wild blue yonder, is connected and heading toward something amazing.

All of it, all of us, like a seed planted, lived, used, worn out, and put into the ground. A bare kernel. Connected to what is to come next... a transformation, “so it is with the resurrection of the dead.”

## **2) Transformation**

God gives a body as he has chosen. The seed grows into a plant. I am thankful for this description from Paul, because we can get this. This last week the kids planted a pot full of “forget me nots.” A beautiful flower. But the seeds are nothing, a dot of what looks to be dead and unmemorable. But nurtured, watered and exposed to appropriate amounts of sun, and that seed will grow into something quite different from what was planted... It will be transformed.

What is sown will be raised... the natural is made supernatural. Paul doesn't tell us about height (6'1") or features, or even about ability (dunk the ball, leap over mountains), but he does tell us

our bodies will be imperishable, it can't be degraded, ruined or brought to an end. This is the body, human flesh as designed, to be eternal...

It will also be raised in glory, having its own splendor given by God. Like encounters with the resurrected Christ, there was an awe inducing splendor (certainly for Paul) and our bodies too will be like this. From "not much to look at" to honorable, glorious.

A transformation that brings power... vigor, vitality, energy... I think there will be coffee, glorified coffee in the resurrection, on earth as we dwell with Christ, but we won't need it to get through the day. "Dynamis," the ability to act... to flourish.

This is the natural made spiritual. Renewed, remade, resurrected into Christ.

"The transformation of the body consists in its being infused and re-created by the life-giving Spirit of Jesus. It is a move from a natural body to a supernatural body. It is a move from mortal to immortal. But the body is still present."

But oh what a presence it will be!

**1 Corinthians 15:48-49** "As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. [49] Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven. (ESV)

Bearing the image of the glorified Christ; eternal, whole, healthy, thriving... forever.

What a glorious truth the resurrection is... not only are you eternal, raised to eternal life in Christ, but you are raised transformed... I don't even think we can fully wrap our minds around it but it gives us such hope in what is to come. As we now of our salvation in Christ, the forgiveness of sin and union with Jesus, we also know of our coming resurrection into glory. What a day that will be...

The anticipation is not only for us... but also creation - the mountains and oceans vast, while spectacular, won't hold a candle to what is coming!

**Romans 8:22-25** "For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. [23] And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. [24] For in this hope we were saved..." (ESV)

And this body, this bag of bones, is connected to that. It is being remade, vibrant, even now as we head toward that full and final transformation.

Because there is an ultimate transformation coming we live sowing to be raised. That our physicality and our coming transformation into super-physicality are connected gives us the defining motivation of life... and our living now is changed.

### **3) Living**

**1 Corinthians 15:22** “For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.” (ESV)

Made alive now. Even in verse 49 the verb used by Paul to describe the owning of Christ’s image is a present unfolding. Transformation is not only for then, but beginning now and in that we live...

The Corinthians, “They are being urged to conform to the life of “the man of heaven” as those who now share his character and behavior... They are being urged to become what they are by grace...” Fee

We are being urged to become what we are by the grace of Christ!

First off this means we can enjoy life - as we enjoy Jesus. There is glory still in earthly bodies (flesh, all kinds, human, animal), in the Sun, the moon... in creation. In those things that have the fingerprints of our creator and they can be enjoyed. They are a shadow of what is to come, but they point to the promise...

From the most immense expansive mountain range, to the backyard flower closing its petals after the sun goes down... in the extravagant events of life and in the mundane moments, those in Christ, have a foundational compass that points to him in all things, and it transforms how we live and what we live for. We live to flourish not only in that glorious day, but today... and Wednesday at 2 in the afternoon...

We live not with a clock running down to our meeting with death... the long journey away from this life... But freed from death as a master, given full life in Jesus.

“If we hang on the resurrection, we can face anything in life. There can be peace in the midst of difficult circumstances in life when the reality and hope of the resurrection is indeed the foundation of one’s life.”

And we live nurturing what we have been given now - driven by the hope of what is to come.

“If people believe the body has eternal significance, they can fight death because it has already been defeated. Stewardship for the created world can also be achieved because it also has lasting significance. The body, like the physical things of this world, is not something to escape from but to embrace and beautify.”

It is something to be sown.

C.S. Lewis *“There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations - these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub and exploit - immortal horrors or everlasting splendors. This does not mean that we are to be perpetually solemn. We must play. But our merriment must be of that kind (and it is, in fact, the merriest kind) which exists between people who have, from the outset, taken each other seriously - no flippancy, no superiority, no presumption.”*

This life of sowing is a giving over all of who we are for the greater things Jesus has for us.

Sowing what is perishable... the temporary, our brokenness, our sweat, our flesh now. Rather than clinging to it for ourselves, we give it up for others... Sacrifice for things that truly matter.

Sown in dishonor... giving over what is tainted by sin, the underlying disregard of God that all of humanity suffers from. Laying it all at the feet of Jesus and living from the honor he says is ours.

In weakness... even our best ability, is exhaustible, less than, weak. All of our striving, effort, success and failures. We give it, we place it in Christ, over and over again.

All of this natural, sown for something so valuable, worthwhile, so good. We give Jesus our worst and he gives us his best.

And his best is for now as much as it is for that glorious day.

**Colossians 2:6-7** “Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, [7] rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. (ESV)

**Colossians 3:4-5, 10** “When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Put to death therefore what is earthly in you... put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.” (ESV)

Your life now matters and in Christ you are headed toward something incomprehensibly beautiful. And that means your life can be different now.

“The man of Heaven took on a body of dust in order that people who are made of dust might take on a heavenly body. He became like a grain of wheat - buried in the ground - but counterintuitively transformed to bear much fruit... The imperishable became perishable that the perishable might become imperishable. Jesus, the glorious one, experienced dishonor so that the dishonorable might experience glory. Jesus, the powerful one, became weak so that the weak might become powerful. Jesus who deserved life experienced death so that those who

deserved death might experience new life. Jesus, the “man of heaven,” made himself a Son of Man - a man of the earth - so that the sons of Adam, men of the earth, might become men of heaven. In this Jesus the natural and supernatural come together. The present and the future converge. This is how individuals can be certain that “just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.” If one belongs to Jesus, his or her future supernatural resurrection body is just as certain as his or her present natural body. Christ is in us - we already have the DNA! We are like the seed that will be planted and will sprout to counterintuitive, unexpected new life.”

Believe in Jesus today - the real Jesus that took your place to satisfy the punishment you deserved for sin. That he was raised and you will be raised too, alive in Christ.

Live a life of sowing, of surrender to Jesus - *White Flag* - all to Christ, believe what he says of you (redeemed, loved, approved) and live full from that truth. Live with expectant hope of what Jesus will do now and in the transforming resurrection he has promised. Let others see it and join in...

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*New City Catechism*, #1 “What is our only hope in life and death?”

A: “That we are not our own but belong, body and soul, both in life and death, to God and to our Savior Jesus Christ.”

What a hope it is! All because of Christ, all for Christ. Headed to glory. Living to sow, to love, to see each other as valuable and to recognize the blessings we have together in Christ.

This week I read J.R.R. Tolkien’s “Leaf by Niggle.” It is a story of sowing and experiencing glory, about having a long view of what we encounter now.

Tolkien had just finished the languages for the Lord of the Rings, but he had yet to write the story... and WW2 broke out. He was worried, rightly so, that he would not be able to finish the story... so he processed his situation through the lens of another tale.

He writes of the retired school teacher - set for a coming long journey - that is determined to finish his life’s work, a massive painting of a peaceful place with trees and a mountain... a large canvas... but no one notices that he is a painter and the other characters distract him and take him away from the painting. But he has accomplished some vivid, detailed and exquisite leaves... life like on the canvas... Then the journey comes and it is actually the experience of death.

All that is left of his work is one little corner of the canvas that is kept in the town museum before it is eventually forgotten, “Leaf by Niggle.” But for Niggle, he lives in the completed

painting, his masterpiece of trees, lakes, mountains... peace. What he sowed, seemingly insignificant, was raised to something far beyond its seed.

May the hope of this resurrection given to us by Jesus, make us expectant sowers, that we would be planted for his glory...