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1 Corinthians

Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak *this* to your shame. 1 Corinthians 15:34

Paul now sums up the entire passage of 1 Corinthians 15 thus far. After this, he will head in a slightly different direction while still speaking of the resurrection. But here, after concluding his defense of the resurrection, he provides a stinging rebuke intended to keep the Corinthians (and thus us!) from heading down the path of doubt or heresy again.

In doing so, he begins with "Awake." The Greek word is *eknephō*. It is used only this once in the New Testament and can be rightly translated as "sober up!" It indicates awakening as if from a drunken stupor. When someone is tired, they may be naive about a matter but still able to think clearly. However, when in a drunken stupor, right thinking isn't possible. He had given all of the evidences and defenses necessary concerning the resurrection. Now they needed to soberly process them.

He continues on with "to righteousness." This is an adverb and so the thought is more appropriately rendered, "Sober up righteously." He is asking them to come to a state of sound doctrine and to live by it. In order to do so, he further implores them by saying, "and do not sin." The implication here (which should be taken as an axiom) is that bad doctrine is sin.

When one is presented with proper doctrine, and they either reject it or are unwilling to take the time to understand it, they err. Nobody will be able to say, "I

just didn't have time to learn the truth." Man finds time for every unnecessary thing on earth, but fails to make time for knowing, fellowshiping with, and being obedient to his Creator. This is sin.

To confirm that "do not sin" is tied to proper doctrine, he next says, "...for some do not have the knowledge of God." In particular, he is speaking about those in verse 12. There he said that "some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead." As the resurrection is one of the principle doctrines of the faith, to believe such rubbish, or to teach it, is sin.

People come along all the time making unfounded statements about Christianity, either purposefully or out of incompetence. To listen to such people can only lead down Heresy Highway and then on to Apostasy Avenue. And so to be caught up in their lies shows a true dullness of mind. In order for them to realize this, he says, "I speak *this* to your shame." He is speaking to the entire church at Corinth, but also to each individual. And because his words are recorded in the Bible, he is speaking to all churches and all individuals.

We are all individually responsible for our doctrine. It is true that teachers are more so (see James 3:1), but everyone should at least know the basics of the faith. When a cult comes knocking at the door, there should be enough knowledge of Scripture to tell them to beat it and stop teaching falsities.

Life application: What is of most value to you in this life? Everything we possess and everything we do is temporary and will eventually disappear into obscurity... except our relationship with the Lord. And the only way to properly understand this relationship is through knowing Scripture. If you aren't reading it and studying it constantly, you are showing great disrespect to the Lord who gave it to you.

But someone will say, "How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?" 1 Corinthians 15:35

Thus far, Paul has spoken about the fact of the resurrection of the dead. It has occurred in Christ and so there is a precedent for it. If there is a precedent, then it logically follows that the resurrection is a natural outcome of being "in Christ" for the believer. Now that he has fully established this truth, he poses questions which had certainly been asked of him. From this, he will provide answers sufficient for our present state and future hope.

As the fact of the resurrection is established, the introduction of the questions moves to the *manner* and *form* of it. Concerning *manner*, the question is, "How are the dead raised up?" There are almost an infinite number of things that could go through the mind concerning this. How can the dead be reanimated? What about someone who got eaten by sharks, alligators, or worms? How could a person dissolved in a nuclear blast be re-gathered together and come alive again? What about those who died 2000 years ago? How can a person be resurrected after such a long time?

Questions like this address *manner* in the resurrection process.

Next concerning *form*, the question might be, "With what body do they come?" Will the resurrected feel pain like we feel it now? Will we be able to fly? Will we be able to see in 3D? Will we need food to eat, sleep to rest, or exercise to stay fit? What about a child that dies... will he resurrect as a child? Will an old person remain old? Will we know one another? Will we have the same affections, likes, and dislikes?

On and on, we can posit questions concerning the *form* of the resurrection. This is especially the case because Paul uses the term "come" rather than "return." If the *manner* questions are logically considered and answered (for example, cannibals who once ate Christian missionaries and later came to Christ themselves), the *form* questions necessitate "coming" rather than "returning." In this, we can know that the body of the resurrection is the same in individuality, but not necessarily in material make-up. Paul will give explanations of this as he continues.

Life application: God has it all figured out. If He promises a resurrection for those who are in Christ, it will come about just as He promised... and it will be glorious.

Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies. 1 Corinthians 15:36

Paul's words here are in response to the questions posited in the previous verse concerning the "how" and "what" of the resurrection. His answer is directed to those who would submit such questions in an attempt to trip up another, not specifically to someone who was merely curious about the matter. In other words, a person who asked those questions in a dismissive manner, attempting to show the illogical nature of a literal resurrection, is who Paul is responding to.

His answer begins with a mild rebuke, "Foolish one." It is equivalent to saying, "O unreasonable!" And the choice of words is supported by his continued comment - "What you sow is not made alive unless it dies." The word "you" is emphatic. What this means is that anyone who has ever planted a seed (or even anyone who hasn't, but still understands what occurs when a seed is planted) should be able to understand that it is a comparable analogy to the resurrection itself. It is seen daily and is understood clearly. As pretty much every person knows what happens to a seed in this situation, then the "you" is to be understood as all people, including the deniers of the resurrection.

A seed remains a seed until it is used for some other purpose. If it is eaten, it is no longer a seed, but it becomes a source of nutrition for the one who ate it. But if the seed is stored, even for thousands of years, it remains a seed. Seeds have been found in Israel, China, and elsewhere that go back eons. When planted, they do what seeds are intended to do. First they break down (Paul notes that it dies) and then they come back up in a completely different state.

The body of the seed as a whole "dies." It decays in order to become a source of food for the germ. In this, new life occurs. Paul is using this analogy, not because it is an exact representation of what occurs in the believer, but because it

demonstrates that even in nature there is a comparable occurrence to what is taught concerning the resurrection. Jesus uses the same terminology in John 12 -

"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain." John 12:24

Life application: We can transfer all of the data on an old vinyl disc to a magnetic tape, to a CD, or even to a computer's hard drive. The same music is retained even though it is in a different format. If we can do this with Tinker Toys, how much more can God ensure that all of what comprises us will be retained and restored as well! Have no fear that God has it all under control.

And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain—perhaps wheat or some other *grain*. 1 Corinthians 15:37

Paul continues with his remarks concerning the resurrection body, using the analogy of grains in order to show the marvelous nature of what will occur. In this, he begins with "And what you sow..." Earlier in Chapter 3, he noted the process of planting and watering in regards to the gospel message. He now returns to that analogy once again with the sowing of grain. Even though he was a Pharisee, a tentmaker, and an apostle, he had a sound knowledge of the process.

In planting a garden or a crop, you will choose a certain type of seed to sow in hopes of a future harvest. But when you plant the seed, you aren't sowing "that body that shall be." Instead, all you are doing is putting seeds into the ground, "mere grain—perhaps wheat or some other *grain*." One can discern between different types of grain, but it doesn't mean that the grain itself will look like what the seed produces.

What goes into the ground may be small, brownish, hard, and somewhat round, but from it will come something soft, green, tall, and which produces leaves, flowers, and new grains. A completely different body comes out of the ground

than what went into the ground. And yet, the original identity of the seed is completely preserved. This goes all the way back to the first chapter of the Bible -

"Then God said, 'Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb *that* yields seed, *and* the fruit tree *that* yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed *is* in itself, on the earth'; and it was so. ¹² And the earth brought forth grass, the herb *that* yields seed according to its kind, and the tree *that* yields fruit, whose seed *is* in itself according to its kind. And God saw that *it was* good.'" Genesis 1:11, 12

God ordained that things would produce after their own kind. Despite the seeds being completely different in appearance, the identity is not lost in dissolution. It is retained and yet it bears a marvelous new look. Such will be the case at the resurrection.

Life application: Though we may be planted 'neath the clods of dirt today, we shall rise again in a glorious way.

But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body.

1 Corinthians 15:38

As noted in the preceding verse, God originally created the trees and plants and each contained seed according to its nature. This was seen in Genesis 1:11, 12. Likewise, the other life which was described in the original creation account was "according to its own kind." This included the sea creatures, the creeping things, the beasts of the earth, and even man. Each thing reproduces after its own kind.

This precept dismisses both a long-term creation and any sort of evolution. The trees were created, not evolved, and they were created as fully functioning and capable-of-reproducing because they bore their seed. The same is true with each form of animal life. Paul's words bear this out. These things didn't "evolve" into what they are. Rather, he says, "But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body."

And not only is this true at the original creation, but it is true with the resurrection. The form of the resurrection body is according to the pleasure of God. The same life that went into the ground as a seed will spring forth anew with the body that God chooses for it. Likewise, the same life of the person that was planted in the ground at burial will spring forth anew with the resurrection body that God has prepared for it.

Life application: 1) We will not "evolve" into a resurrection body. Instead, God has prepared one for us, and this is what we will wear in our eternal walk in His presence. 2) Whatever this body will be like, it will be wonderful. Be prepared to be amazed!

All flesh *is* not the same flesh, but *there is one kind of* flesh of men, another flesh of animals, another of fish, *and* another of birds. 1 Corinthians 15:39

Paul is still answering the question found in verse 35 - "How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?" After those questions, he used the seed as an example we could grasp. Put a seed in the ground and out comes a plant, and yet it is the same life. So why should it be considered impossible for the resurrection body to be substantially different than the earthly body while still being the same person?

To highlight this further, he notes that, "All flesh *is* not the same flesh." The word flesh here denotes the body as much as the material with which the body is made. Each animated being has a body unique and perfectly suited for the environment in which it lives. Thus he notes that "*there is one kind of* flesh of men, another flesh of animals, another of fish, *and* another of birds."

The body of man is given to man based on his capabilities. He was given dominion over the earth and in order to fulfill that, he was given hands to grasp, legs to run, a mind to think, etc. But he was also given the ability to swim in the ocean. With the development of technology, he can swim under the waters, even for extended periods of time. And because of technological developments he can also

fly. Thus man has a body which is designed by God to fulfill the commission he was given.

The animals all have their own bodies, each suited for the purpose God intended. Squirrels eat nuts, but they also store them. Sometimes, those nuts are forgotten, covered over by mud from a flood, or maybe even the squirrel dies, leaving the nut uneaten. When this happens, the nut sprouts into a tree. And so squirrels serve a purpose in this way, helping to sew new forests or continue forests that exist. This is just one example in an almost infinite variety of things that various animals do with the bodies they have been given.

Paul notes also that there is "another of fish." If flesh were flesh without variety, then we would think it impossible that a being could live under water. We would have no concept of something that could accomplish this feat. But there are fish. Because there are, we can see that life can live and thrive where we cannot. So why should we think it is impossible that we will someday be given bodies that are substantially different than the ones we have now, ones which are able to live and act in a way we cannot yet comprehend?

Paul finishes this verse with, "another of birds." Will we be able to fly in our resurrected bodies? Birds can fly even though we can't. They have another type of flesh than we have. They have been designed to do what birds do. Like the squirrel, many birds provide transporting services for seeds and nuts. As they do, new life springs up. Along with this, they live their lives doing all those things that birds do, working harmoniously within the realm for which they were designed.

A final thought concerning animal life and the resurrection body would be to consider the butterfly. It transforms into its beautiful state from a mere caterpillar. If this is possible within the natural creation, why should we assume that it is impossible for the resurrection body to be wholly different than what we now know while still being the same life-force that we always have been, memories and all.

Life application: If we have nifty bodies that can do really amazing stuff now, imagine what God has prepared for us in our resurrected bodies! Don't be afraid of death, it is a temporary and necessary step on the way to amazing glory.

There are also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. 1 Corinthians 15:40

If this verse isn't read as a part of the whole paragraph and one immediately goes to the next verse (verse 41), it may leave the misperception that verse 41 is explaining verse 40; that the "celestial bodies" are the sun, moon, and stars mentioned there. This however, would not properly explain Paul's use of wording. Instead, it would "provide a false antithesis to 'bodies terrestrial'" (Pulpit Commentary).

In other words, Paul has three separate groupings from verse 39 to 41 -

Verse 39 - flesh; men, animals, fish, birds

Verse 40 - bodies; celestial bodies, terrestrial bodies

Verse 41 - glory; sun, moon, stars (and star from star)

The word for "celestial" here is *epouranios*. It signifies that which is heavenly. It is used 19 times in the New Testament and it is consistently speaking of a heavenly matter, meaning a spiritual one. One of those 19 examples will help clarify what this means -

"But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, ⁷ that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in *His* kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."
Ephesians 2:4-7

In this, the word "heavenly" is speaking of the "spiritual" realm of heaven, not the cosmos where the sun, moon, and stars are. We are currently seated with Christ in God's redemptive plans even though we have not actually arrived there yet. This is the type of "heaven" that the word signifies.

Understanding this, we can properly perceive what Paul is writing about here. It is not specifically angels, but "heavenly" beings. These are being contrasted to earthly, or "terrestrial," beings. This same word, *epouranios*, will be used 3 times in verses 48 & 49 when speaking of our resurrection bodies which will be like the resurrected body of Christ. Therefore, Paul is showing us a taste of that now by placing this comparison between two examples of natural types of bodies - those in verse 39 and those in verse 41.

As noted, this is not speaking specifically of angels, but it is a comparison to such heavenly beings. This is stated by Jesus concerning those of the resurrection in Matthew 22:30 -

"For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven."

To further substantiate this, we can see a similar analogy of the resurrected bodies to stars. This is found in Daniel 12 -

"And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake,
Some to everlasting life,
Some to shame *and* everlasting contempt.
³Those who are wise shall shine
Like the brightness of the firmament,
And those who turn many to righteousness
Like the stars forever and ever." Daniel 12:2, 3

And so we can see in this verse, Paul is using both of the natural types of bodies (those of verse 39 and those of verse 41) as examples to help us understand the difference between the heavenly and the earthly bodies of verse 40.

Life application: Whatever our coming heavenly bodies will be like, they will be amazing. They will be so vastly superior to what we are clothed in now, that we should rejoice at the thought of heading off to be with Jesus. Let us not fear the temporary hold of physical death. It has no mastery over us!

There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory. 1 Corinthians 15:41

In the previous verse, Paul noted that there are "also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial *is* one, and the *glory* of the terrestrial *is* another." This verse now is not explaining that, but rather it is confirming the truth in another way. Just as there are different types of flesh on the earth, there are different types of glory in the sky above us.

When we look up, we don't see just one object in the sky. Rather we see different objects at different times and they have a variety of purposes. First, "there is one glory of the sun." The sun rules the day time. It provides heat to the world and it lights the day. God purposed this. It is a certain distance from the earth so that the right amount of heat and light arrive for life to continue.

There is also "another glory of the moon." When the sun is hidden from our sight, the moon is often there reflecting the light of the sun. It appears closer or farther away at various times and it can go from a tiny sliver to a full circle as it moves. It serves God's purposes in a variety of ways for the benefit of His creatures on earth.

And Paul notes that there is even "another glory of the stars; for *one* star differs from *another* star in glory." Not only do the stars differ in the glory they radiate

on earth in comparison to the sun and the moon, but they also do so in comparison to one another. They are set in the heavens and often appear as groupings which we call constellations. The North Star remains fixed in one spot. Some stars appear bluish, others have a silvery or reddish tone. Every one of them is there for a purpose and not one is unknown to God (see Psalm 147:4).

Genesis 1:14-19 notes that each and all of these heavenly orbs have a purpose according to the wisdom of God -

"Then God said, 'Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years;¹⁵ and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth'; and it was so.¹⁶ Then God made two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night. *He made* the stars also.¹⁷ God set them in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth,¹⁸ and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness. And God saw that *it was good*.¹⁹ So the evening and the morning were the fourth day."

Life application: If God has put such minute care into the structure of the heavenly bodies, which were placed there as "signs and seasons" for man, then how much more can we be certain that God cares for man! And if in our fallen state He attends to us, then how much more attention can we hope for when we receive our resurrected bodies! Whatever He has planned for our eternal abode, we can trust that it will be magnificent.

So also is the resurrection of the dead. *The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption.* 1 Corinthians 15:42

Paul now begins to respond to the question in 1 Corinthians 15:35 with specific details. These are based on the analogies he provided in verses 36-41. This particular verse is responding to verses 36-38. The seed went into the ground in corruption, it sprang into a new and exciting form, and yet it was the same life

which went into the ground. The analogy has been given, it is appropriate, and Paul confirms it with the words, "So also *is* the resurrection of the dead."

What happens with the seed will also be the case with those who die. This then is speaking of the *form* of the resurrection, not the *manner*. Their body "is sown in corruption." When a believer is planted in the ground, they decompose and return to the form of the basic elements from which they were taken, eventually becoming nothing but dust once again. But this is not the end of the story. Like the seed, the body of the believer will change and it will be "raised in incorruption."

This change will take place and its results will be explained in greater detail in verses 51-54. The body we now have is corruptible; the body we will be given will be incorruptible. The body we have now is prone to weakness, sickness, fractures, infection, etc; the body we will receive will not have such characteristics of corruption. Instead, like the body of the plant which is completely different than the seed, the body of the believer will be completely different from what we now experience.

Life application: Unless we have observed a particular type of seed being planted and growing into a plant, we could never guess what that plant would actually look like and what its characteristics would be. The same is true with our resurrection bodies. We cannot fully imagine what lies ahead. But we can know that it has been planned by the Creator of all things. Because all things are possible to God, we can be certain that what lies ahead for us will be marvelous. If you're struggling with some human weakness today, just remember that it is but a temporary and light affliction compared to the glory which awaits!

It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. 1 Corinthians 15:43

Paul is speaking of the form of the resurrection, responding to the question which had been asked, "With what body do they come?" Like the previous verse, he gives contrasting thoughts. When our current body dies he says, "It is sown in

dishonor." Why do we bury bodies? The answer is because they quickly begin to degrade and become offensive to the senses, and so we secret them away because of the shame (the dishonor) which occurs in them. This state of decay is a direct result of something else which is shameful, sin.

When Adam sinned against the Lord, he hid himself and covered himself with fig leaves. There was dishonor in what occurred. When the man sinned, he died spiritually. Further, as a result of this spiritually dead condition, the Lord told him he would also die physically. He would return to the dust from which he came. After this, the Lord clothed him with a tunic of skin, thus covering him. All of this indicates that shame and dishonor is associated with this life in which we live. The stain continues in all men because all are in Adam and thus all have sinned. The result of this is death. And the result of death is being "sown in dishonor."

However, for those in Christ, the seed that is planted will be "raised in glory." There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ. Sin is no longer imputed to us because we have moved to Christ. Therefore, when this body of sin is taken away, what comes from it will be glorious. The Greek word for "glory" is *doxa*. It carries the meanings of, "honor, renown; glory, an especially divine quality, the unspoken manifestation of God, splendor." The fallen image of Adam will be replaced with the glorious image of Christ.

In addition to this, Paul notes that, "It is sown in weakness." Our human lives are exceedingly frail. Our bodies are susceptible to all kinds of limitations and potentially catastrophic occurrences. We cut easily, bones break, sickness is always around the corner from infections, pollens, viruses, etc. The earthly body that we exist in is temporary and degrades in just a few decades. At the end of our days, it is sown in this same weak condition and degrades even more swiftly until it is nothing but dust once again.

However, for those in Christ, the seed which is planted "is raised in power." As Paul is giving contrasts, the word for power is to be taken as the opposite of "weakness." It is the Greek word *dunamis*. It can carry a host of meanings including physical strength, endurance, and the like. The "weakness" spoke of

frailty and eventually death. The "power" then is speaking of robustness, hardiness, and life. We will not be susceptible to the same limitations and ultimate termination that we now face. Instead, a whole new order of existence will be realized.

Life application: At this time, we can only imagine the state of our future body in relation to what our current body is like. We can make logical assumptions of what lies ahead, but we cannot know exactly what it will be like. However, we can be certain that our bodies will be fitting for being in the presence of the God of glory, and they will be sufficient to last us for all eternity there in that wondrous place.