

February 26, 2012

Eternal Hope for Broken Bodies

1 Corinthians 15:35-49

BI: For all who suffer with a body broken by injury, disease, or age, the gospel offers eternal hope. Resurrection makes broken bodies new!

Introduction:

One of the reasons the gospel really is “good news” is because it not only speaks to our spiritual need, it also speaks to our physical needs as well. The gospel is God’s answer to the devastating effects of sin in this world. And those effects are not only spiritual in nature, they are physical as well. The fact that our bodies wear down and wear out over time is owing to the pervasive presence of sin. We live in a world that has been poisoned by sin. And every person born into this world has both a soul and a body that are poisoned by sin.

If it were not for the gospel, there would be no hope for our souls. We understand that, right? But consider this, if it were not for the gospel our there would be no hope for our bodies either! “You mean, there is hope for our bodies?” Absolutely! I mean, some of our bodies appear to be more hopeless than others, but the reality is the gospel is our only ultimate hope for broken bodies.

I want to speak this morning to all of you who suffer chronically under the effects of a broken body. Some of you have chronic back pain, knee pain, or perhaps your spouse would say that you’re her “pain!” You may have cancer, or diabetes or an incurable heart problem; perhaps its asthma or a debilitating stomach issue. You might be deaf, blind, or unable to get around without a wheel chair. Believe it or not, the gospel is God’s message of good news to you. And I want us to see that in our text for this morning.

Turn with me to 1 Cor. 15:35-49

What I want us to see this morning, beloved, is that the gospel offers hope for your physical suffering because at the center of the gospel is the promise of resurrection.

Now, let’s begin by getting a feel for the context here. As you know, there were some in the church of Corinth who were saying “there is no resurrection.” This entire chapter, then, was written for the express purpose of refuting that false teaching. In our passage for this morning we discover that those who were antagonistic to the doctrine of resurrection were posing two questions. But they weren’t posing these questions because they wanted to learn anything. They threw down these questions in an attempt to show how ridiculous the doctrine of resurrection is. They were saying in effect, “how can anyone imagine a new body rising out of the perished corpse?”

We find their questions in v. 35. Paul writes, “But someone will say, “How are the dead raised? And with what kind of body do they come?”

Paul begins answering these questions in verse 36. If you are taking notes, vs. 36-38 Paul offers ...

I. An Illustration of Resurrection: (36-37)

1. Read v. 36-38

2. This is a pretty harsh response from the apostle. “You fool” means, “you who are so willfully ignorant!” This is the same term Jesus used in Luke 12, of the rich man who spent his whole life doing nothing but gathering wealth and building bigger barns to contain it. But one night God came to him and said, “You fool! Tonight your soul is required of you. And now who will own what you have prepared?” The point was, the rich man wasted his life!

3. Paul was calling some of the Corinthians “fools” because they failed to see the obvious. Anyone who has ever planted a garden knows how things work. You take a living seed and put it in the ground where it dies. But after it dies it comes back to life as something much more wonderful! The mystery of resurrection is wrapped up in every garden seed! Out of death comes life!

4. If you were to approach a farmer and ask with a sarcastic tone, ““What sort of body can a seed of grain take after you drop into the earth and it rots?”, the farmer would dismiss you as a fool. He has seen the effects of dropping seed into the ground 10,000 times, and it’s always the same. Out of death comes new, and exceedingly better life! So it is with the body of a man in the resurrection.

5. This is how the dead are raised. And it should not surprise us at all because it is pictured for all men in plain view in the process of sowing seed. So Paul answered question # 1 by reminding his readers of the principle of sowing and reaping as The Illustration of Resurrection.

6. Question # 2, then, “*With what kind of body do they come?*” is answered in part in verse 38. Paul assures his questioners that God has never had a problem making sure that everything He has created gets a body that is appropriate to its purpose. (Read v. 38)

7. In the resurrection, your body will, on the one hand, have continuity with your earthly body, but on the other hand, it will be quite different. Paul picks up this theme with v. 39, where unveils...

II. The Nature of Resurrected Bodies (39-42a)

1. Those who were asking the questions imagined that resurrecting people who die would simply result in decayed and mangled corpses coming back to life. But Paul is saying, “That’s not How God works!” Since resurrection is something brought about by God, you can be sure that He will provide bodies for His people that will be perfectly suited to their new lives. The reality is that He has already created many different kinds of bodies for what He has created.

2. You see, God is still the Creator. And his creative ideas and capacities are limitless. In fact, as we look at the vast array of bodies He has already created, our questions about His ability to create for us bodies that are suitable for living in heaven should be forever put to rest.

3. Consider, for example the different bodies He has made for animals. (v. 39)
4. Second, consider the fact that He has created bodies for things that don't even exist on Earth. (read v. 40-41).
5. So God has created earthly bodies and planetary bodies and all of them are glorious in their own way. That is, all of them reflect the glory of God in unique ways. Moreover, just as there is significant difference between earthly bodies and heavenly bodies, so there will be a significant difference between our present human bodies and our future resurrection bodies. (Read 42a)
6. So Paul has given us An Illustration of Resurrection, and revealed The Nature of Resurrected Bodies. Next, he unveils...

III. The Superiority of Resurrection Bodies (42-44)

1. Read 42-44
2. Now here is where our hope really kicks in. Are you suffering the effects of a body that is sick, broken, and handicapped in some way! The promise of the gospel is this: God has promised you a brand new body in the resurrection! Watch now as Paul describes four differences that believers may anticipate between their present mortal bodies and those we will receive at the resurrection.
3. First, Paul says our bodies are sown “perishable.” In other words, from the day we are born our bodies are subject to deterioration, wearing out, and evening dying.
 Psalm 103:14–16 “For He Himself knows our frame; He is mindful that we are *but* dust. ¹⁵ As for man, his days are like grass; As a flower of the field, so he flourishes. ¹⁶ When the wind has passed over it, it is no more, And its place acknowledges it no longer.”
4. It doesn't matter how healthy you may be right now, some day your body is going to wear out. It is perishable. We are all born with perishable bodies. But behold the promise of the gospel (v. 42), your body will be raised imperishable!
 In the resurrection, you will have a body that can never die! It will never suffer the effects of sin. No sickness, no deterioration, no decay, and no death.
5. Second (v. 43), our bodies are “sown in dishonor.” In the beginning, God created our bodies in all perfection to show forth his glory. But sin had a profound effect upon our ability to set God's glory on display. Our minds and bodies are now severely handicapped relative to our ability to fulfill the honorable purpose for which we were created. In fact, much of what people do with their bodies in this world dishonors God. Even the most spiritually mature believer has to admit that they have a long history of dishonoring God in various ways in this life.

6. Nevertheless, we have great hope because the gospel promise is that one day our bodies, which were sown in dishonor, will be “raised in glory.” That is, we will have glorified bodies that are perfectly restored to fulfill the purposes for which God created us. We will for every moment of eternity be able to please, praise, and enjoy the presence of God who created us. Moreover, our bodies will be more beautiful than they ever were here on earth. What is “glory” if it is not also “beauty.” Like a caterpillar that transforms into a butterfly, so will our bodies be transformed from that which is dishonorable to that which is glorious!

7. Third (v. 43) our bodies are “sown in weakness.” The older we get the weaker we become. We not only become weaker in terms of our physical strength, but also in terms of our ability to fight off disease and heal from injuries. In fact, there are some injuries that even the strongest young people among us cannot ward off. I think of young Peter Helms who was in that terrible car accident less than two years ago. Even the strongest of us are subject to debilitating weakness.

8. But that will not be the case in the resurrection. We are “sown in weakness” but we will be “raised in power.” No longer will we ever be tempted to say, “The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” There will be no more weakness! Anything we have a mind to do we will be able to accomplish for the glory of our King.

9. Fourth (v. 44), it is “sown a natural body.” By “natural” Paul means that we are subject to the characteristics and desires of this age and governed by its own sinful will. But that will not always be the case.

10. In the resurrection, our natural body “will be raised a spiritual body.” In other words, we will be perfectly suited from heaven. When we arrive in the presence of God our bodies will be completely subject to the will of the Holy Spirit and responsive to the Holy Spirit’s guidance. We will never struggle with sin again. We will never have to face that debilitating temptation again for all eternity!

11. So you see, the promise of the gospel is not only will you have eternal life with Christ, but when you arrive in heaven your body will be significantly changed! You’re gonna get to gather up all those pills you take every day and throw them all away. You’ll never have to look at God’s creation through cataracts or trifocals ever again! You’ll leave the crutch, cane, or wheelchair behind. Your hearing will be perfect, your memory will return in full, which means I’ll never lose my place in my sermon notes again.

15. Never again will you take a shot of insulin or have to wear that awful bipap machine to sleep. In fact, you will never have to sleep! There will never be night again for eternity. We will live in the eternal day where our bodies never tire, our mental capacities never err, and our souls are free to worship in the joy of holiness and purity forever! Beyond all that, there you will never be tempted by sin ever again.

16. That’s what the resurrection will be like. And if you’re still struggling with what that kind of body will look like, Paul even shows us a prototype.

IV. The Prototype of Resurrection Bodies (45-49)

1. Read 45-49

2. Genesis 2:7 tells us that “Adam became a living soul.” He was the perfect man who bore the image of God perfectly. But Adam failed to represent man in such a way that would enable man to retain perfect fellowship with God, the world, and one another. And so, there was need for a second Adam.

3. The last Adam was Jesus Christ. He was not just a “living soul.” He was “a life-giving spirit.” He was the One who had the power to reverse the curse upon man. By his perfect life He fulfilled every requirement of righteousness on our behalf. By His bloody death, He paid the penalty for all our sin. And by His resurrection He conquered death so that we too would experience resurrection.

4. What will our bodies be like when we are raised? They will be like the resurrected body of Jesus Christ. What were the characteristics of Jesus’ resurrected body? One author writes,

[After His resurrection] Jesus appeared and disappeared at will, reappearing again at another place far distant. He could go through walls or closed doors, and yet he also could eat, drink, sit, talk, and be seen by those He wanted to see Him. He was remarkably the same, yet even more remarkably different (*1 Corinthians* by John MacArthur, p. 439).

5. I can think of no better way to describe it. In the resurrection we will be remarkably the same, but even more remarkably different.

6. The apostle John said it this way, “Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is” (1 John 3:2).

Conclusion:

1. How should the promise of the resurrection and glorification of our bodies affect the way we live today?

First, it should inspire us to worship God for His unfathomable, precious, glorious grace! Oh, how kind our God has been to us, not only to forgive all our sin; not only to treat us as if every act we ever performed in this life was altogether righteous, but then to add to that the promise that one day He will transform our perishable, dishonorable, weak and sin-scared bodies into something beautiful, powerful, and glorious? Behold the infinite goodness of our God! Behold the unfathomable grace, the unsearchable mercy, the inestimable love! He is worthy of our worship! He is worthy of all glory, honor and praise!

Second, the promise of resurrection bodies should give hope in our suffering. Sometimes our hopelessness comes from the thought that our suffering will never end. But that's a lie! The promise of the gospel is that because Christ is risen, our suffering is only temporary! Job said, "If a man dies, will he live *again*? All the days of my struggle I will wait until my change comes" (Job 14:14). Oh, my suffering friend, don't lose heart. Your suffering will not last forever. Soon the Lord will return with a shout and the infirmities of your body will be peeled away and you will be made new again. Be faithful! Be faithful in your suffering.

Third, embracing God's promise of resurrection should free us up to take calculated risks in ministry. The biblical promise that one day our bodies will be transformed and renewed should free us from being overly concerned about remaining healthy. For example, Shannon and Danielle Hurley and their children live in Uganda. They realize that there are mosquitoes that carry malaria there. They also know that you cannot continue taking malaria medication indefinitely. At some point you need to decide between returning to America for the sake of your health or staying on the field and risk getting sick. The Hurley's have made their choice. It's not a reckless choice. It's calculated and poses some real danger, but to them it's worth it because they are following Christ.

Fourth, the promise of resurrection helps us understand that our suffering is not meaningless. God has a purpose for your suffering. Paul told the believers in Philippi, "For to you it has been granted *for Christ's sake*, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer *for His sake*" (Phil. 1:29). I take that to mean that God has purposes for our suffering.

1. Your sanctification: Personal suffering tends to expose the idols of our hearts. When we are in pain (physical or emotional) we typically run to whatever we love most. If that's not Christ, we need to know it. In this case, suffering is grace to us because it exposes our sin and calls us to repent to the glory of God and our own joy.

2. Christ's glory: I submit to you that God is more glorified in our faithfulness through suffering than he is through our healing. The world has no explanation for a Christian who remains faithful - even joyful - when he suffers. The question is *NOT*, "Why won't God take my suffering away?" The question is, "How can I glorify God in the midst of my suffering while I wait for Him rescue me from it either by healing or by resurrection?"

2. Oh beloved, do you understand how awesome the gospel is? Do you understand how magnificent God's promises to you are?

BI: For all who suffer with a body broken by injury, disease, or age, the gospel offers eternal hope. Resurrection makes broken bodies new!

Exegetical Outline
1 Corinthians 15:35-42

35 But someone will say,
“**How** are the dead raised? [Question #1]
And **with what kind** of body
do they come?” [Question #2]

36 You fool!
That which you sow
does not come to life unless it dies;

37 and that which you sow,
you do not sow
the body which is to be,
but a bare grain,
perhaps of wheat
or of something else.

38 But God gives it a body
just as He wished,
and to each of the seeds
a body of its own.

39 **All flesh is not the same flesh,**
but there is one *flesh* of men,
and another flesh of beasts,
and another flesh of birds,
and another of fish.

40 There are also heavenly bodies
and earthly bodies,
but the glory of the heavenly is one,
and the *glory* of the earthly is 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 also is the resurrection of the dead.

It is sown a perishable *body*,
it is raised an imperishable *body*;

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 So also it is written,
“The first man, Adam,
became a living soul.”

The last Adam
became a life-giving spirit.

46 However, the spiritual is not first,
but the natural;
then the spiritual.

47 The first man is from the earth, earthy;
the second man is from heaven.

48 As is the earthy,
so also are those who are earthy;
and as is the heavenly,
so also are those who are heavenly.

49 Just as we have borne the image of the earthy,
we will also bear the image of the heavenly.

