

1 Corinthians 15:32-58

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Date: 01 August 2010

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[0 : 00] to experience Eden, the Garden of Eden? Is that something that you would enjoy? Would you like to feel what it's like to be in a place before sin, before corruption, before pain?

Would you like to experience what it was like before there was dishonesty, and therefore distrust? Does that sound good to you?

Would you like to experience what it was like before violence, before harsh words that tear people down? What about what it was like before our bodies and our minds began to disobey us, to rebel against us, to fall apart?

Would you like to have experienced what it was like before that, before sin twisted God's good creation? Well, I hope you say yes.

It would be great. It would be really, really nice to experience Eden, perfection, pristine creation, before anything bad was there. There's another question, however.

[1 : 18] Do you think that that is God's purpose for creation and for you, to bring you back to that place? In the end, to bring back the pristine nature of Eden?

Is that God's purpose for this world and for you? You could ask it a slightly different way. When God raised Jesus from the dead, did Jesus have a body that was like Adam's before Adam sinned?

Well, the answer is no. No to each of those. It's not God's goal to bring this corrupt world back to where it was at the beginning. It's not his goal to restore the pristine order that Adam experienced. And it's not his goal for the bodies of those he resurrects to be like Adam's before the fall. His plan for the world and for us is much better.

What it will be like in the end, in the resurrected existence, is much better than creation ever was. That's what we're going to think about a little tonight because that's the Christian hope.

[2 : 34] It's one thing to hope for something good in light of all this bad stuff. It's quite another invigorating thing to think about something perfect and then think about what's actually better than that.

And that's what Paul does in 1 Corinthians 15. And it's that more than perfect, I guess you could say, that beyond, that unimaginable goodness and perfection, better than creation even.

It's that end at which Jesus has already arrived by his resurrection and which he's going to bring us, those of us who trust him and let us experience that.

So we're going to contemplate these incredibly good things. Now we could do this in a number of different ways. Throughout Scripture, it presents this same idea in a lot of ways.

For example, this is something we're not going to do tonight, but for example, you could compare Genesis and Revelation. Compare the first chapter of Genesis, well, the first two chapters and the last two chapters of Revelation.

[3 : 42] Let me just give you a taster of that if you're interested. There was a garden in Eden and there was a tree of life and there was a river flowing out from the garden, bringing life out.

Well, the way John describes it at the end of Revelation, the new creation, the new heavens and the new earth, he talks about a tree of life. He talks about that being on either side of a river that's flowing out, that's bringing life.

So it's similar to Eden was, yet it's not a garden. It's a highly developed city. And not only that, but John describes the main street through the new earth, through the new Jerusalem.

He describes that as being of pure gold. Not just pure gold, but pure gold that looks like transparent glass. I don't have a clue what gold that's transparent looks like.

But that's better than the dirt paths that probably were there in the garden. This is sort of the idea that John is receiving from the Lord and is presenting to the churches.

[4 : 50] I mean, what's at the end is like Eden. It's like God's first creation. And yet it's better. It's more developed. It's more rich and full. It's where God was going the entire time.

God's plan was not to stay with the Garden of Eden. It was have it develop. And that's what Jesus has brought. Now that's not what we're going to talk about tonight, Revelation and Genesis. That was a taster for your own study.

How we're going to look at the idea of the betterness of resurrection is through what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15. How Paul thinks about humanity.

The created body and the resurrected body. Now this morning we looked at some different aspects of 1 Corinthians 15. We saw how throughout this chapter Paul draws our eyes, our minds, our hearts to the raised Jesus and to the creator of all things.

And as he does that he roots our souls, anchors them to the Lord Jesus and the creator. And we have hope. Well, tonight we're going to focus on the human aspect.

[5 : 59] Because that's what Paul is ultimately driving at. It's the human body that is raised from the dead. And what we're going to see is this. For Paul, creation as a whole but also creation of the human body is wonderful.

It's really, really good. And yet when you compare that with the resurrection, creation actually doesn't look so good anymore compared to the resurrection.

So we're going to take a moment to look at those two things. First, we're going to look at how good creation is in Genesis but especially how Paul describes it. We've got to see how good it is because that's when he says that resurrection is that much better.

That has that much more weight for us. We'll understand the glories of the Lord Jesus so much better when we see the glory of creation first. So we're going to do that. We're going to look at what Paul says.

So first, the glory of creation. So like this morning, we're going to take a step back. I'm going to say a few things about Genesis 1. Then we're going to get back to what Paul says as he picks up on some of these themes in Genesis 1.

[7 : 07] In Genesis 1, the word good occurs over and over again. It's repeated all throughout chapter 1. Seven times in fact.

And I mentioned this morning that seven for the ancient Jewish mind would really have portrayed perfection. God saw each thing that he had made.

And when he finished that thing, he looked at it and said, that is good. You could translate it beautiful. And the fact that he says this seven times throughout his creation really intensifies the perfection of this beauty, of this goodness.

And in fact, the seventh time that it repeats this phrase, it actually doesn't repeat it the seventh time word for word. It expands it. It's the same phrase seventh time, but he says this.

And God saw all that he had made. And look, good exceedingly. Very good. Every little part was good.

[8 : 07] But when he looks at the entire creation, it is just exceedingly good. And it's as if Moses has to shout, look, it's so good. That's Genesis 1.

Creation is beautiful. Now, Paul picks up on that as he turns the Corinthians to creation. Now, we read some of these verses this morning. We're going to read them again, but we're going to focus on a slightly different aspect of them.

I got ahead of myself. We're not going to do that quite yet, actually. Let me mention a few things from Genesis 2 before we move to Paul. Not only the entire world, not only was it good, but when we focus in on God's creation of Adam in Genesis 2-7, which we read, we don't see the word good, but what we see is a potter, a craftsman, who is making something amazing out of dust.

We see God with his hands, as it were. God doesn't have hands, but this is the picture that's being portrayed, taking his hands and forming this form, this man, out of dust.

Now, picture it. It's not just a clay form of a man now. This is out of dust, but God has created skin that's soft to the touch and that holds together.

[9 : 24] He's created hair. The insides, with all of their textures. He's created all of that out of dust from the earth. It's still not alive, but imagine how incredible that is.

The brain, all of the neurons that he's created in the brain. And then God breathes into this form's face and the thing comes alive.

This is the picture of goodness, of perfection. God is doing what he wants and there's no flaw in it. The man becomes a living being. God does it again, a few verses later, creating the woman. He doesn't take dust, but he takes, he puts Adam under general anesthesia and he takes a bit out of his side and it says that he, he forms a woman. It literally says he builds a woman. God is this perfect craftsman, builds this woman in the same way that he built the man. We see the picture in the beginning is perfect.

[10:26] It's beautiful. Now we're going to jump to Paul. I'm not getting ahead of myself this time. We actually are. But not to 1 Corinthians 15. A few verses before, or a few chapters before.

In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul is talking about the creation, God's creation of the human body. So you can look there, 1 Corinthians 12. I'm going to, I'm going to read a few verses. Hopefully you'll be able to keep up even though I won't be reading all of it. And I want you to keep in mind, if you were here this morning, what we, what we looked at, that creation is about God's will, God's desire, and him doing it just like that.

And Paul picked up on that. How God gives bodies just as he desired. He's going to say the same general thing in 1 Corinthians 12. He's talking about how God is building his church, giving spiritual gifts to the different people in the church.

But to convey that, he turns the Corinthians' minds to God's creation of the human body. So in verse 11, 1 Corinthians 12, 11, Paul writes, all these spiritual gifts are the work of one and the same spirit, and he gives them to each one just as he determines.

[11:44] Now verse 12, the body is a unit. Though it is made up of many parts, and though its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. Paul already has a very good idea, a very positive picture of the human form.

If he can use that and say, that's what it's like with Christ, it must be quite special to him. So listen now to what Paul says about the human body. Look in verse 18.

God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted. That's the exact same phrase, by the way, as in chapter 15, what God does with seeds and plants in the universe, just as he wanted them to be.

Now verse 24, God has combined or composed or knit together the members of the body and has given greater honor to parts that lacked it so that there should be no division in the body, but that all of its parts should have equal concern for each other.

Paul's talking about the harmony of the human body. Each limb, each part, has a different function, its own particular function that God determined for it, and yet, at the same time, God has knit them together so that they each work with the other.

[13:02] Remember, this is ultimately, Paul is saying, that's what the church is supposed to be like. You each have a different function that God has given you, but you also are supposed to be doing it together to upbuild the body of Christ.

But to convey that, he turns us to the human body. And so he applies it in verse 27, now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you has a part, is a part of it.

So we're starting to get a glimpse, hopefully, of how positive Paul thinks of the human form, the human body. And it's positive, it's good, because God has arranged it exactly as he wants it to be.

Now we turn to 1 Corinthians 15. So if you could, turn to chapter 15, verse 37. Now I'm sorry for jumping around so much, hopefully this is fitting together though.

1 Corinthians 15, 37. So now again, remember, Paul is talking to those who are wondering what kind of body the raised people are going to come in.

[14:11] and he turns them to the creator, to the seed that is, the seed that you sow in the ground that it looks different than the plant that comes out, so there's different bodies.

Now listen to what he says in, I'm going to skip to it, to verse 39 actually. He says, all flesh is not the same. Men have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another, fish another.

There's also, there are also heavenly bodies, and there are earthly bodies, but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is of one kind, the splendor of the earthly bodies is of another.

Now that word splendor, it's the word glory. Does that strike you as odd that he would say that earthly bodies have glory?

Hopefully not after what we just read that he thinks of the human body. The earthly bodies he's talking about are what he's just mentioned. There's human bodies, human flesh, there's animals, there are birds, there are fish.

[15:15] These are the earthly bodies that God has created just as he wants them to be, and now Paul describes them as glorious. He also describes the heavenly bodies, that is those that are in the heavens that he's about to mention, the sun, the moon, the stars, and he talks about their glory, their splendor.

When Paul looks around at creation, at what he sees, at you and me, if he were here, and when he thinks about what God was doing in the beginning, what he sees is incredibly positive creation. You, in fact, are glorious as something that God has created. And notice that Paul is not talking about the past. He keeps saying is and are present.

There are heavenly bodies. There are earthly bodies. He's talking about a sinful world here. We know how deep Paul's understanding of sin was and how corrupt this world is and how twisted everything is.

And yet, at the same time, he can see that what God has created, because God has created it just as he wants, it's great. In fact, it's glorious. One might even say exceedingly good.

[16:27] This is how positive Paul sees creation. I wonder if we, if we're like that. If we look at things around us, the things God has made, and we see beauty, we see glory even.

Probably we do with certain things, like mountains, water, waterfalls, things like that. You can say, wow, that's breathtaking, that's glorious. Do you do that with people?

With people who might not fit the world's, or not the world's, our culture's understanding of beauty? Can you see beauty? What about with your own form that God has made you with?

I don't know if anyone here would struggle with eating disorders. I know a lot of people do. But what does Scripture have to say about that?

Is it describes your body as glorious, because God knit you together. I wonder if that would affect how we treat others, and even ourselves, God?

[17:30] Now that's, that's the glory of creation, according to Paul, and according to all Scripture, actually. The glory of creation. The glory of the heavens and the earth, and particularly, the glory of the human body, because God made it the way he wanted.

The glory of Adam's body. God made it the way of creation. And he said, in verse 42, however, Paul shifts attention. He shifts from creation to the resurrection.

He has been looking at creation, God's ability to give whatever kind of body, whatever kind of flesh, whatever kind of glory he wants to give, and he shifts to create, to resurrection, says, that's the way it is with the resurrection.

So now we're going to shift our attention and see the greater glory of Christ's and our resurrection. He's just painted a beautiful picture of what creation is, and he's about to compare creation with resurrection, and creation is found wanting. Resurrection existence is that good.

[18:41] And I want us to see that because this is our hope. This is what we can look forward to and begin to live toward. So let's look at what Paul says. Verses 42 to 44.

Verse 42. So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable. It's raised imperishable. It is sown in dishonor.

It is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness. It is raised in power. Now pause there for a second. Now those three contrasts, what the body that is sown is like and what the body that is raised, what it is like, those three contrasts are referring to what our bodies are like now.

And that includes the sin-wracked nature of these bodies. He's contrasting our bodies now as perishable things, as dishonorable things, as weak things, contrasting that with the raised body. Now that should already be intriguing, shouldn't it? Well, I'm going to get ahead of myself again. I want you to contemplate that for a moment first. The fact that we, in our bodies, in our minds, who we are, that we have pains.

[20:04] Physical, emotional, mental pains. Think about your weaknesses. It says that our body is sown in weakness. Contemplate the weakness that you know you have.

Because it's not going to be there anymore when God raises you from the dead. Not only is it not going to be there, but you're actually going to be powerful in your body.

Now contemplate your dishonor. The dishonor that you've caused to others, but also that which has been given to you.

Contemplate that. Think about the shame of this world, of our bodies at this time. Because in the resurrection, that's not going to be there.

Not only is it, are we not going to experience shame and dishonor, but we're going to experience glory. Now contemplate perishability.

[21 : 05] The idea is actually the ability to corrode, to decay. Contemplate that. I know you experience it. Probably more so the more years you have under your belt.

Our bodies are falling apart. They are corroding. Contemplate that because that's not going to be there when God raises you from the dead if you trust in Christ.

And not only will it not be corrodable, decayable, but your body is actually going to be indestructible, not able to corrode or decay.

That's incredible. Now, a side question. Why? Why is God doing this? Why would God take these weak things, these negative things about our experience, why would He take these away and exchange them for these incredible qualities?

Why would He do that? And the most central answer is because Jesus decided to come and take weakness and take the ability to corrupt, to corrode, to decay.

[22 : 22] A dieable body. To take that, to take shame and dishonor and to be raised in glory and power and incorruptibility and to give that to us.

That's the reason we get to experience it is because of what Jesus decided to do. Doesn't God love you so much that He would decide to do that for you?

Doesn't that make you long to get to see Jesus face to face and say, thank you. Thank you for what you've done. I don't know why you did this. I don't know why you love me like this. But this is an unimaginable gift that you've given me.

You don't need to stand face to face with Him to thank Him, by the way. You can do that now. I can't wait until we can do it face to face also. So, hang in there as your body is falling apart, as your mind is experiencing weakness and dishonor.

Hold on there. Keep serving the Lord. Because the end that is so good, it is secure. Because Jesus has already started it. So, hang in there.

[23 : 32] That was an aside. We now come back to the text to verses 44 and 45. Paul shifts from comparing the body that is as we experience it now, from comparing that to the resurrected body, he shifts to compare the created body to the resurrected body.

So, read in verse 44. He says, it is sown a natural body. It is raised a spiritual body. Now, this is the key contrast that he's really getting at.

The others are great and needed descriptions of what it will be like now and in the end. But this one is really what he's driving toward. It's the one he carries through the rest of the passage.

The natural body versus the spiritual body. Now, why do I say that the natural body is what God created it to be? It's not a sinful existence.

It's the created body. It's because of what he says in verse 45. Look at verse 45. So it is written, the first man, Adam, became a living being.

[24 : 48] The last Adam, a life-giving spirit. That's a bit confusing. And part of that, unfortunately, is because it's very difficult to translate into English. Paul is making a word play that makes sense in Greek.

Most of the time we can understand the Bible really well without needing the Greek or the Hebrew. They add nuances and richness, but it makes sense in English.

But sometimes it just doesn't capture what the author was getting at. Paul's making a word play.

The word natural is the same basic Greek word as the word being in verse 45.

He says, there is a natural body. The word, you could say, there is a soulish body. See, that doesn't make sense in English, but that's sort of what he says. There's a soulish body and there's a spiritual body.

Because, verse 45, he says, the first man, Adam, became a living soul is the actual word. There's a soulish body.

[25 : 52] The first man, Adam, became a living soul. He's making a play on words here that doesn't come out in English. Well, he's quoting Genesis 2, 7. God formed the man from dust, breathed into his face the breath of life, and the man became a living soul.

Paul's quoting that. Now, isn't that interesting? That in all of this comparison between what our bodies are like now, but what they'll be like when they're raised, he doesn't quote a text about sinful existence.

He quotes the text about creation, when God actually made the human. And he says, let's contrast that, Adam, his body in Genesis 2 with Jesus and his body raised from the dead.

Now he's comparing creation with resurrection. And what you see is that resurrection is a lot better. Because the existence that Jesus has now as a raised person is glorious and powerful and indestructible, something that Adam did not actually experience.

If you think about the natural body, the soulish body of creation just a little bit, we're going to focus on that, and then we're going to focus on the spiritual body of Jesus.

[27 : 12] The natural body, if you compare Genesis 2, 7, where God created Adam, compare that with Genesis 3, 22, where God decided to exile Adam from Eden.

What God says in Genesis 3, 22, is, now man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil. So, lest he stretches out his hand and takes from the tree of life and eats and lives forever, and then God exiles him, barring the way to the tree of life, so that that can't happen.

Now, what that means is that Adam, as he was created, he did not have eternal life as he was. He had to take from the tree of life to get eternal life.

He didn't have everything. God created him with a body that could die. That's not to say that God created him as a dead being or on the way to death, but he created Adam with a body that was able to die that would only be preserved in eternal life if something was added to it.

The gift from God, the tree of life. So, Adam did not experience, even before sin and before death, he did not experience eternal life. He was living in a body that was able to corrode.

[28 : 35] It was able to decay. Now, it would take sin to make that a reality, but it was possible.

Well, Jesus' resurrected body, he's already experienced that type of body.

That's what he came in and he died for our sins. But now that he's raised from the dead, his body can't do that. His body can't decay. It can't die again. Death has no hold on him.

His body is glorious in a way that Adam's never was. His body is indestructible in a way that Adam's body never was. And that was God's intent. God made Adam's body as he wanted it to be.

And that was not as good as what God was planning for his son in the resurrection and for all those who trust in his son who get to be resurrected in the end.

Even in the beginning, God had something more in mind and he started, well, you could say he started with a seed. But that's not the plant. He had the plant in mind. But he started with a seed.

[29 : 36] Let me mention something about Christ as a life-giving spirit and a spiritual body. Just a few things to avoid confusion that are very easy to experience.

It says, Christ, the last Adam, Jesus raised from the dead, became, in the resurrection, became a life-giving spirit. Now, that does not mean that he didn't have a physical body.

That's abundantly clear from the Gospels where Jesus' raised body is able to be touched and handled and seen. So, the spiritual body, that does not mean immaterial body.

That's not what he says. That's not what he means. The reason he calls it a spiritual body is because of Jesus becoming a life-giving spirit. That's what he says.

The soulish body, that's because Adam was made to be a living soul. Spiritual body, that was because Jesus was raised to be a life-giving spirit. Now, that's confusing because we know that Jesus is not the Holy Spirit.

[30 : 51] The Holy Spirit is not Jesus. However, the two are so linked, I guess you could say. Our language falls short of this, but they're so linked that Paul can talk about Jesus as the Spirit.

Let me mention two things that we need to keep in mind. the risen Christ was given the authority to pour out the Spirit on his followers.

For that reason alone, it's probably enough for Paul to be able to say that Jesus is basically the life-giving spirit because he's the one who pours out the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, on his people.

He pours it out as a down payment of what's to come. Now, that's one thing to mention. But the second thing is that Christ's risen body has been changed from what it was before he rose from the dead.

It has undergone a change. Jesus lived by the Holy Spirit. He worked by the Holy Spirit before he died. Yet, as I already mentioned, his body was able to die, which was the point of him coming to die for us.

[32 : 08] So, something changed in his own body that has now made him indestructible and glorious. And that is what the Spirit is doing even in his body.

The Spirit is working in Jesus' human raised body in such a way that Paul can talk about the body as a spiritual body. You should probably capitalize the spiritual body because it's talking about the Holy Spirit's activity and purposes in our bodies.

When we get raised from the dead, we get to experience that too. Such a working of the Holy Spirit of God that we have not experienced yet. We get glimpses, foretastes, a down payment now, but what we're going to experience when God raises us from the graves, our bodies will be such, so imbued by the Spirit of God that they cannot be destroyed and they are perfect in glory.

That's something to look forward to. That's something Adam, even before he sinned, never got to experience. Let's draw some of these thoughts to a close and then we're going to praise this God who has done this for us and who promises it to us.

Let me read some scriptures. For one, Paul says in 1 Corinthians, earlier in the letter, he says, it is written, no eye has seen and no ear has heard and no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him.

[33 : 44] And now in chapter 15, he really fills that out, doesn't he? It's so much better than creation ever was. Not even Adam could contemplate the things that God has prepared for those who love him through Jesus.

So what do we Christians have to hope for? Is it nothing? Is it some undefined better existence, better life?

Or can you actually think in more detail about it? Is it the perfect harmony of Eden? No, no, it's better than all of that. Our hearts should be absolutely invigorated with passion for God because of what, because of his eternal kindness, his kindness to give us a share in what he's already given to his own son.

Now let me read a few other scriptures from Paul that capture some of these ideas. And this is what I'm going to conclude with. I'm not going to make any comments on them. I'm just going to read a short passage from Philippians, two passages from Romans 8, and one from the end of 1 Corinthians.

So listen to what Paul says, but more importantly, listen to what God has to say to us through Paul's pen. Our citizenship is in heaven and we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who by the power that enables him to subject everything to himself, will transform our bodies of lowliness into the same form as his body of glory.

[35 : 21] In Romans 8, if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who already lives in you.

Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation. But it's not to the sinful nature to live according to it, for if you live according to the sinful nature, you're going to die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. Now, if we are children, then we are heirs, heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ. If indeed we share in his sufferings, in order that we may also share in his glory.

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed.

[36 : 35] For the creation was subjected to frustration, futility, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves who have the first fruits of the Spirit groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

For this hope, in this hope, we were saved. Listen, I tell you a mystery. We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.

For the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised, imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable and the mortal with immortality.

When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true. Death has been swallowed up in victory.

[37 : 59] Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law, but thanks be to God, He gives us victory through our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. Please pray with me.