

Easter 2020: The New Body

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 05 April 2020

Preacher: Matthew Capone

[0:00] Good morning, church. Thanks again for joining us virtually this morning. As we begin, since we don't have our normal announcements time, I just want to highlight again that Chris Bradley is holding a Sunday school class today at 4 p.m.

and it's on Romans chapter 8 on the topic of suffering, and so you can join them virtually. You can find more details about that in our Friday email, which I cannot encourage you strongly enough. To subscribe to, if you're not subscribed to it, it's at the bottom right of every page on our website. That's cmpca.net, and that's a place where you can subscribe to that. And then you can also contact Chris directly through information that's in your church directory.

I want to add to that announcement one request for you all this morning. One of the things that's really tough for me, and I'm sure for many of you about this virtual situation, is that I can't see you. So I'm looking into a camera, and I'm looking at seats that are empty.

And sometimes we can see how many folks are watching in terms of numbers, but we can't always see who. So I'd really encourage you just right now to log in and let people know that you're here by making a comment.

[1:10] You can comment in the bottom right of the video page that you're watching on Facebook. If you're watching through our website, unfortunately you won't be able to comment. But just say something like, hey, I'm here, or welcome, or ask other people how they're doing.

And it's just one way, even as we can't see each other physically, that we can know that we're with other people as we watch it. We're not anonymous. We're gathered, even though we're gathered digitally.

Today is Palm Sunday. It's easy to forget in the midst of everything that's going on in our world right now that we're actually one week away from Easter, the largest, most important holiday in the calendar of the church throughout the year.

And so today's Palm Sunday, which is the Sunday that Jesus entered Jerusalem on his way to die. And so as we turn away from 1 Peter, we're going to return to our series on 1 Corinthians 15.

Now, you may be wondering what I'm talking about. If you were with us for Easter last year, you know that we were in 1 Corinthians 15, and we covered verses 1 through 28.

[2:14] We are going to skip verses 29 through 34, and today we're going to go to verse 35 all the way through, I believe, verse 48 or 49. And this is a passage that's known as Paul's discussion of the resurrection, Paul's resurrection chapter.

And last year, when we began our 1 Corinthians 15 series, we talked about the importance of the gospel, and Paul gave us a summary at the very beginning of this chapter. Jesus died for our sins. That's what's of first importance, and he rose from the dead. Later in this passage, he's going to talk about the details of the resurrection, especially when it comes to our bodies.

And that's part of the reason we're looking at this passage. Our bodies are part of our challenge right now, right? The reason that we can't gather together is because our bodies are susceptible to sickness.

And I've been telling you that part of the reason that we have hope as Christians is that even as we suffer, we know the end of the story. And so part of the question is, what's the end of the story when it comes to our bodies?

[3:17] What does the gospel have to do with our bodies? Why is resurrection, maybe this is another way to think about it, why is resurrection a good thing? Wouldn't it be easier or better if instead of having resurrected bodies, we were just able to do away with the body entirely, and we could be disembodied souls just walking around, floating around?

In fact, maybe that's a question you're asking now because of the suffering that we're going through. Wouldn't it be just easier to get rid of the body? Doesn't the fact that we can gather virtually over Zoom or calling each other on the phone prove that our bodies are unnecessary, in fact, maybe even a liability?

Paul's going to get to that question this morning in this chapter because part of the news about Jesus' resurrection is news about his body. His physical state is going to give us a picture of our physical state, and it's also a part of our hope.

Our hope is not just that we're saved from our sins, although that is certainly our most important hope, but it's also in what's going to happen to us physically. And so it's with those questions that I'm going to invite you to turn with me to 1 Corinthians chapter 15.

It's been almost a year here, but we're going to be starting at verse 35. And as we come to this verse, this chapter, remember that this is God's word. And God tells us that his word is more precious than gold, even the finest gold.

[4 : 39] And it's sweeter than honey, even honey that comes straight from the honeycomb. And that's why we come to it now, starting with verse 35. But someone will ask, How are the dead raised?

With what kind of body do they come? You foolish person! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And what you sow is not the body to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain.

But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body. For not all flesh is the same, but there is one kind for humans, another for animals, another for birds, another for fish. 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. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars.

For stars differ from star in glory. Verse 42. So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable. What is raised is imperishable.

[5 : 48] It is sown in dishonor. It is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness. It is raised in power. It is sown a natural body. It is raised a spiritual body.

If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. Thus it is written, The first man, Adam, became a living being. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.

Verse 46. But it is not the spiritual that is first, but the natural, and then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust. The second man is from heaven.

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. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.

I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's word. Our Father in heaven, we thank you, as always, that we can gather together with your people, even if it's virtually.

[6 : 54] And we thank you for your word that you provide for us during times like these, that you give us answers to the questions and the problems and the difficulties that we face.

We thank you for the answers that you give us here about the resurrection, and not just the answers, but the hope. We ask that you would use this passage now to give us that hope, that hope in Jesus, in his resurrection, and the hope that we can also have in ours that we look forward to.

And we ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. In this passage of verse 35, begins by asking this question, How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?

And Paul immediately says, You foolish person. Which implies that he's answering an objection here that doesn't seem to be innocent. It's people who think that the idea of the resurrection is silly. And so he's telling them they're silly as well.

Part of the reason they might be thinking that the idea of the resurrection is silly, is they're thinking of it potentially as just a resuscitation. So we have these bodies that are faulty and frail, right?

[7 : 57] Why would it be a good thing to take a body that's so broken that it's died, and to then bring it back to life? In what sense could that be any good news? And it seems like perhaps they're even making fun of Paul for his discussion of the resurrection.

His hope that he has in Jesus being raised from the dead. And so potentially that's part of what's going on in this passage. And so that's why he tells them that they're foolish.

And then he gives them some ideas, some illustrations to explain what it's like to have a new body, to have a resurrection body. We're told first there's this image in verses 36 through 38 of a seed and a grain.

He says, What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And what you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body.

Now this seems somewhat strange at first, but there's an illustration here that he's trying to tell them that there's something that's the same and something that's different about these new bodies that they're going to have.

[9 : 02] He's using agricultural illustrations because these are things that these people understand. They understand how agriculture works. So there's a seed, and it grows into a full body, which means that there's something that remains the same.

Our body right now, our earthly body, is that seed. The body that we're going to have is the full-grown grain. In other words, this is not something totally different, but it's related to the bodies that we already have.

On the other hand, there's going to be something very different. The technical term here would be that there's going to be a continuity between the bodies we have now and our future bodies and a discontinuity, just like the seed is connected to the plant that it gives birth to, but it's also very different, right?

Plants and seeds are not the same, and yet one leads to the other. He also is making another point here, which is that the seed dies. Verse 36, But if we're in Christ, he's going to bring us to life. He's going to give us that new body. And so he's telling them, basically, this isn't just a corpse that's being resuscitated. Instead, it's a new body that God is making from your old body.

[10 : 14] It's connected, but it's also different. It's going to be something greater and better in the same way that a plant is greater and better than the seed that it comes from.

And then he goes on to use another image. So we've got the seed-plant image. And then he gets to this other discussion that seems a little strange, where he talks about animals and birds and fish and heavenly bodies and earthly bodies.

And he's talking about how they have different kinds of glory. And this discussion seems to get a little confusing at this point. And so I think one way to think about it is this. Paul is trying to make sure these people know that their new bodies are going to be physical.

In the same way that their old bodies are physical, they're also going to be different. There's physical things on earth. There's physical things in heaven. Your old body is physical.

Your new body is going to be physical. But it's going to be different. It's going to be different in the same way that there are some things on earth that are different than things that are in heaven. And so, again, there's this idea there's going to be something different, something the same.

[11 : 19] Now, we don't live in an agricultural society. And so these illustrations perhaps don't make quite as much sense for us. If I were going to rewrite Paul's letter today, I would rewrite it in this way.

I would use the illustration, potentially, of a car. I would say, you know, there's a difference, right? There's a lot of forerunners on the road in Colorado.

And there's a, say, a 1984 forerunner, the first forerunner that ever came out. And there's a 2020 forerunner. This would be sort of the seed and grain illustration. The 1984 forerunner and the 2020 forerunner are related.

They're the same make and they're the same model. They're also very, very different. They're connected to each other. They're something the same.

If you were to look at them, you would see some similarities, right? They both are going to have the Toyota symbol on the front. They both have a similar shape, but the 1984 one is going to be boxier than the 2021. That's going to be smoother.

[12 : 18] And so there's things that are the same. There are things that are different, but they're related. They are intrinsically connected. Don't imagine, then, when we think about these bodies as being the 1984 car, just redone, but it's an entirely new car that's also connected and related.

When he talks about this illustration of the different kinds of bodies, so that would be the seed and the wheat. When he talks about the different kinds of bodies, think about it this way. There's glory that comes with a minivan, and there's glory that comes with a Porsche or a Ferrari.

They both have their own type of glory, and they differ. Now, you might be thinking, what kind of glory can a minivan have? And that's a question many people ask. Of course, we have the video from 2012.

I believe it was Toyota came out with about the swagger wagon to demonstrate that there is a type of glory that comes with a minivan. But the point that Paul is trying to make in all of this is that your body is going to be like your new body is going to be like your old body, but it's going to be different. And not only is it going to be different, but it's actually going to be better. It will be physical, but it will have different characteristics than your current one.

[13 : 34] And that, by the way, we're going to get to this in a minute. This is part of the reason it's good news that we keep our bodies. It might be tempting, right, to think, can't we just get rid of these bodies with their sickness and their limitations?

And yet it's not the body. It's not the body that's bad. But it's sin as it has effects on it, as it damages it and mars it. And so all of this is a buildup to verse 42.

So to summarize everything that's come before, there's people who have concerns about the body, and they wonder if it's even a good thing to have a new body. Paul uses an agricultural illustration to touch on that, to say that your body, the one that's going to come in the future, is going to be greater and better than the one you have now, but it's going to be connected to it.

It's not going to be a separate body, but a restored and a renewed body. And that's the point he makes here in verse 42. So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, the seed there, your old body.

What is raised is imperishable, your new body. It is sown in dishonor, that's your old body. It is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness. It is raised in power.

[14 : 45] It is sown a natural body. It is raised a spiritual body. In other words, we experience suffering in our bodies now because they are under the reign of sin.

We're susceptible to pandemics now because our bodies are affected by the fall. We're susceptible to age and decay because of the effects of sin in this world.

And so it's not the body that's bad, but sin. And when we receive our new bodies, they're going to have these new characteristics, this new glory to it. The old body is like the seed that's sown.

The new body is tied to it, but it's raised up as something even greater and better. And so for us, the point is this. There are many things about our new bodies that we can hope for and long for.

In terms of sickness, one day we will have bodies that cannot become sick. One day, no one will have diabetes and have to check their insulin.

[15 : 54] One day, there won't be urgent cares and hospitals. Those are things for bodies that are perishable, verse 42.

The new bodies that we look forward to are imperishable. It's not just sickness, but it's also age. There's going to come a time where we won't feel the effects of old age.

We won't worry about having loss in our bodies. We won't worry about losing strength and mobility. We won't have to deal with the weakness of this body.

We're told in verse 43, it's sown in weakness, it's raised in power. So we're going to go from perishable to imperishable. And we're going to go from weak to powerful.

It won't just affect us in terms of sickness and old age, but there will also be consequences and results in terms of shame. We won't associate our bodies anymore with feelings of shame.

[16 : 55] We won't associate it anymore with not feeling like we're enough. Like we have to do and change over and over just so people might find us acceptable and worthy. Instead, our bodies will be something that we take joy and pride in.

We'll delight in them. They won't bring us shame and anxiety, but instead they'll bring us glory and satisfaction. That's part of the point that Paul is making here.

People will walk around and they'll be proud of their bodies, and they'll be glad to be seen. We won't walk around wondering, man, is this part of my body wrong?

If I could just change this other part, then everything would be okay. But instead, we're going to have these bodies that are characterized not by dishonor, verse 43, but characterized by glory.

There's this holistic vision, then, of what the new body is going to look like. It's going to be untouched by sickness. It's going to be untouched by age.

[17 : 56] And it's going to be untouched by shame. It's something that we're going to always enjoy and rejoice in rather than fight against or be ashamed of.

And so, as these people, and perhaps us, are wondering what good the body is, Paul points out to them how good it is and how good it will be.

He tells us about how this is going to take place in verse 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.

Now, this can be confusing because oftentimes we're not clear about what the word spiritual means. But when Paul uses the word spiritual, what he means is something that is controlled by the Holy Spirit.

Think, for example, in this same letter, he discusses the spiritual gifts. Which are gifts that are given to us by the Holy Spirit. And so, when we talk about this natural body versus the spiritual body, he's not talking about a physical body versus a non-physical body.

[19:00] Many people have pointed out that the spiritual body, if it wasn't physical, would actually be an oxymoron. It would be a contradiction in terms. What he means is actually something different. The natural body is the bodies that we have now.

Right now, you have a natural body. It's perishable. It can be affected by sin. It's weak. It can easily falter.

It has dishonor to it. The spiritual body is the body that's to come. And it's going to be a body that's characterized by the Holy Spirit.

And so, it's going to be a body characterized by strength and power. It's a body that won't perish. And so, when he's talking about that, what he's talking about is the animating force behind the body.

You have a body right now that's controlled by sin in many ways. You will one day have a body that's controlled by the Holy Spirit if you have faith in Jesus Christ. That's what the resurrection means for you.

[20:05] So, it's a discussion about what the animating force is, right? Jesus did not sin, but his body was subject to sin before he died. After he rose from the dead, his body was no longer subject to sin.

He had a spiritual body. You could think about it this way as well. When you became a Christian, you didn't stop becoming susceptible to viruses, right?

You didn't suddenly, if you had a cold when you became a Christian, that cold didn't suddenly disappear. While the Holy Spirit came into your life, you still had a body that was under the reign of sin. Jesus now has a body that's powered by the Spirit.

You will have a body one day that's powered by the Spirit as well. And it's still physical. If we're going to continue our car illustration, it would be like this.

The old body, a car powered by gas. That's the natural power, right? The new body is going to have a different power.

[21:10] Maybe it's an electric car. Still a car, right? Still physical. And it's powered by something radically different. The same is true of the bodies that we look forward to.

They're going to be powered by something radically different. Because they're going to be spiritual bodies. They're going to be powered by the Holy Spirit. And so this explains a lot of things for us as Christians.

Of course, it explains our hope, right? We look forward to these imperishable bodies. It also explains why our bodies matter so much now.

This is why Christians have such a strict sexual ethic. It's because we believe that our bodies and our souls are connected. Our bodies aren't just something that's an instrument that we use now that at some point we're going to throw away.

But what we do in our bodies affects our souls. It affects our spirits. That's the point that Paul makes earlier in this book in 1 Corinthians 6. So our bodies are incredibly important.

[22:16] Our bodies are going to be renewed. We're going to have new bodies one day. That's why it doesn't satisfy us to be virtually present with people. That's why even though you can see me and I can't see you, and we're present with each other in a sense, there's a sadness because our bodies are away from each other.

God made us to be physically present, to be with each other in our bodies. And so that's part of what makes what we're going through right now really sad is that we were people who are in bodies and we were made for bodies.

Bodies are part of God's design. They're part of what he wants for this world. If you're a hugger, that's part of the reason this is challenging for you.

It's one thing to see someone over FaceTime or Marco Polo or Zoom. It's another thing to give them a handshake or to be able to give them a hug. God made us in bodies for a reason.

And so he's also going to restore our bodies. That's part of why it matters now, and that's part of why it matters for our hope. We can look forward to people who know the end of the story when it comes to our bodies.

[23 : 31] We can look forward in hope, knowing that God is going to cleanse and heal and renew and restore. Finally, there's going to be something new about our bodies.

It's not just that we're not going to experience all these bad things, but there seems to be some things that are even more glorious that we can't even imagine about our bodies. Remember the illustration of the seed and the plant.

Seed and the plant are the same. They're connected, and they're radically different. There's something much more wonderful and full about a plant than its seed.

And so the same thing is going to be true of us as well. There's going to be something more full and wonderful about the bodies that we have after the resurrection than the bodies that we have right now.

Now I'm going to say something that I think is going to be controversial, and I think many of you are going to disagree with me about. When it comes to the Narnia books, my very favorite of all of them, I'm just going to say it, is the last battle.

[24 : 35] Now I don't think that's true for many people. After the last battle, I would say it's a toss-up between the horse and his boy and the magician's nephew. But in the last battle, and this is part of what I love about it, C.S. Lewis gives this picture of what the new heavens and the new earth might look like.

Now it's out of his imagination, right? The last battle is not the Bible. We don't take it as a statement of truth, but he's applied his imagination to what it might look like to have new bodies and a new heaven and a new earth. And there's one scene, there's a chapter called Further Up and Further In. And in that chapter, the characters begin to run in the new Narnia. And as they run, they notice this, no one got hot or tired or out of breath.

There was something new about their bodies that was beyond just the absence of sickness. Now, I don't know if that's going to be true of our new bodies when we run in them. It may be true, it may not be true.

That was C.S. Lewis' vision. But it's there to highlight that there's going to be something even more glorious. And we can only imagine now the way that God is going to restore and renew our bodies in such a way that we're going to experience things we've never been able to experience before.

[25 : 45] And so this understanding of the body, it gives us an understanding of what's so hard now about living in bodies. Gives us an understanding about our hope for the restoration of our bodies.

And also our hope of greater and more glorious bodies. Paul then goes on to tell us that this is a result of Jesus.

Verse 45, Paul's making two points here.

First, there's a sequence. We live in bodies of dust right now. We live in bodies that are characterized by Adam rather than Jesus.

That's what we have now. We look forward to the day when that sequence will finish. That's why he says in 46, not the spiritual that it's first, but the natural and then the spiritual.

[27 : 05] We're in the natural now, we'll be in the spiritual later. But the second and more important point is that we will be in the spiritual because Jesus is in the spiritual. We saw in the book of 1 Peter that we're connected to Jesus.

What's true of him is true of us. And in that book, the point was about suffering. Jesus suffered, we'll suffer. He is glorified, we will be glorified. In this section, it's the same point applied differently.

What's true of Jesus' body will be true of our body. He has a new and glorious body that's imperishable. We will have a new and glorious body that's imperishable as well.

He has a body that was characterized by weakness but is now characterized by glory and power. We will one day have bodies that are characterized by glory and power as well.

And this is true because Jesus chose to suffer in his body so that one day we would be free of suffering in ours. Jesus came and lived in that natural body on this earth.

[28 : 07] He suffered the things that we suffer. He suffered sickness. He suffered limitations. He suffered weakness. And he did all of that without sin so that he could ultimately suffer on the cross for our sins.

But our hope is not just in his death but also in his resurrection. Because he died in his body, but he was without sin. He paid the penalty for our sin.

He was raised. He was resurrected. And so we also, because of that, are going to be resurrected too if we have faith in Jesus Christ. And so what's true of Jesus will be true of us.

Verse 49 sums that up. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven. We won't just look like Jesus in our character, in our holiness.

We will also look like him in our physical existence. We will also look like him in our bodies. When I was growing up in my neighborhood in Southern Maryland, there came a time when a lot of signs went up at the end of our street that they were building a new section to our subdivision.

[29 : 27] These homes were going to be larger than the other homes in the neighborhood. They were going to be more elaborate and they were going to be more expensive. And of course, when you build a new subdivision, one of the first things that you do is you create the model home if you're a builder.

It's the first one that you build, most likely. And that model home is the first one that you build because you want prospective buyers to walk through it. You want them to see, oh, this house shows us what the rest of the neighborhood is going to look like.

We can buy with confidence. We can have a hope in our houses that are not yet built. We can purchase these new homes because we've seen a model of what the home will look like. And of course, often those homes are given lots of extra bells and whistles and features on them so that people can see all the options that they have as they build their new home.

Verse 20, earlier in this chapter, told us that Jesus was the first fruits. In other words, he's the first part of this harvest of new bodies that Paul's talking about.

He shows us what the rest of the harvest is going to look like. His resurrection body shows us what our resurrection body is going to look like. In other words, Jesus is the model home.

[30 : 44] He shows us what the new reality is going to be like. He shows us what we have to look forward to. And he shows us what we long for. But what's amazing about this is not just that Jesus is the model home, but that he's also the builder.

We're told in verse 45, the first man, Adam, became a living being the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. In other words, we have new bodies because Jesus, the last Adam, is a life-giving spirit.

He's a spirit who gives life to us. And so what does the resurrection have to do with the body? Why is it good news that we're going to receive new bodies?

It's good news because Jesus is the model house. He shows us what our bodies are going to look like. They're going to be bodies characterized not by weakness, but by strength.

They're not going to be perishable or corruptible, but imperishable and incorruptible. And they won't be characterized by shame, but they'll be characterized by honor.

[31 : 57] And this will be true because Jesus is not just the model for us, but he's the builder. He's the one who's going to breathe that life into us and give us new bodies. We'll see next week that he's going to do that for those who have died when he returns and for those who are alive.

And so we can have hope in our bodies and hope for our bodies, knowing that Jesus suffered in his body so that one day we would be free from suffering in ours.

That's our hope and our confidence. Please pray with me. Our Father in heaven, we thank you for your word, which encourages us and strengthens us.

I ask for this passage that it would give hope to the people of Shine Mountain Presbyterian Church that you'd use your word to do what it always does, to challenge us and encourage us.

We'd be challenged by our need for faith in you, and we'd be encouraged that you're doing it, that you're bringing a new work not just in our hearts and our lives, but also in our physical bodies.

[33 : 05] We ask these things knowing that we are people of weakness or people who are perishable. But Jesus is strong and he is imperishable. And so we ask these things in his mighty name.

Amen.