

Introduction

I remember when I was younger, I used to love watching the TV show Top Gear. Maybe some of you guys have seen it. I still remember the episode where they took this incredible sports car through the middle of a very small, crowded, busy city, and it was just a nightmare.

The car would go over a speed bump, and it was so low that it would be scraping. There was this horrible sound as the car got damaged. You couldn't park it anywhere. And then they go shopping and they come out with their shopping bags and they open the boot. Well, there really isn't a boot, and there was just nowhere to put the shopping. It was a bit of a disaster. A sports car is really wasted when you're driving it through a city like that.

But then they take that same car out on the open road (and somehow Top Gear manage to always just shut off this whole road). There's no traffic and they're just winding down the coast, just opening up the engine, powering around the corners, and it's beautiful to watch. You see, there are different cars that have been designed for different environments. That car was perfectly designed for racing. Other cars, maybe for going off road or for driving around the city and nipping into a car park. They're all cars, but they have different purposes... and in a similar way at the resurrection, Paul says, *we will still have human bodies, but they'll be very different from the bodies we have now because they will be perfectly designed for heaven.*

And this teaching was actually a bit of a shock to the people that Paul was speaking to because in Greek and Roman culture, they thought that bodies were for earth, and that when you got to heaven, it was a place of souls. You wouldn't have a body in heaven. And you kind of hear that question in verse 35. Verse 35, someone will ask, how are the dead raised with what kind of body will they come? And in response, Paul says, Well, we will have bodies. We will still be humans. But they're going to be very different from the bodies we have now because they're going to be perfectly suited to the new world that we'll be living in.

Three Analogies

And then he explains this with three different analogies three pictures. So in verse 37, he talks about a seed and then a full grown plant. So just like you plant a tiny little seed, which gets transformed into a beautiful plant, so our earthly bodies will be buried in the ground, but then they will be transformed into beautiful resurrection bodies.

Then the next analogy is in verses 38 and 39. He says just as there are different bodies for birds and for fish and for animals, so there are different bodies for humans on earth and humans in heaven.

And then in verse 40 to 41, there's one more analogy. Just as the sun and the moon and the stars are all glorious, but each in their own way, so the resurrection body will be glorious, but in a different way to the glory that we have now.

And I'll forgive you if that's all a bit confusing. But there's really just one simple point to all of what he's saying there. *At the resurrection body, at the Resurrection, you will have a glorious new body. And it will be perfectly designed for eternal life with God.* That's the big point.

And our goal today is to think about what that body is going to be like. Let's just spend some time appreciating how awesome it will be.

I think we need this encouragement today, because it's easy to forget that this is coming, it can fade into the background. We need to remember it in sickness, in poor health when we just can't cope with life, when we're struggling in our fight with sin, when we're scared of dying, when we're very aware that we seem to be getting older and weary and things aren't working like they used to, or when we're just wondering what might happen after death. Whatever part of this fallen world discourages us and tempts us to despair, that's when we need resurrection hope. So what I want to do is focus just on verses 42 to 44, and we're going to look at these four beautiful comparisons between our earthly bodies and our heavenly bodies. All the ideas are interconnected, but we're going to break them down into some smaller parts and appreciate what our bodies will be like.

Our resurrection bodies will be imperishable

So number one, our resurrection bodies will be imperishable. It's there in verse 42. The body that is sown, into the ground like a seed, is perishable. It is raised imperishable.

What does it mean to be perishable? Well, we saw that just before with the stinky compost bin, didn't we? Organic matter breaks down things that were once healthy and lovely, becoming slimy and furry, and they start to merge together until eventually, trickling out the bottom of your compost bin is juice. That's what happens to organic matter.

And gory though that might be, it's actually a picture of what happens to our bodies throughout our lives. From quite a young age, we start to decay. Bones break, eyes fade. Hearing worsens, teeth decay, energy wanes. Just as bread gets moldy, just as coffee gets cold... so human bodies deteriorate. I remember before I became a student at Bible College, I was working as a builder's labourer. I started studying just a couple of months later, and I couldn't believe how my body had changed. All that fitness. All those muscles... gone, just faded away. And ultimately, the decay of our bodies leads to death. That's where it ends, I don't know if you've seen the latest statistics, they're pretty shocking. Average mortality rates in Australia say that *one out of one people die*. Death doesn't discriminate.

Why, though? Why are our bodies in a constant state of decay leading ultimately to death? Paul talks about this in verses 47- 48, he says, Well, we're children of the dust. We're children of Adam. The man of dust. The Earth has been broken and cursed ever since Adam and Eve, and we share in that. We share in all the weakness, in the frailty that belongs to the world, and it's not just out there. We live it in our bodies.

And it's a tragic story, isn't it? It's a horrible reality, that our bodies and our world are in a constant, relentless, vicious cycle of death and decay. And just as horrific is that people think that's all there is. That it's normal. It's natural. No wonder there is so much despair in our society - we try to conceal it, pursuing our work and our comfort and our entertainment - but if you look at depression and suicide statistics, they tell a different story. Our world desperately needs the hope of the resurrection, to know that death is not the end. Verse 36 says it's the gateway to a new life, an imperishable life.

Imperishable. It's the opposite of perishable, right? No more death and decay. Immortal. There's still continuity. It's still you up there. But it's a body perfectly designed for eternity, an eternal body for an eternal life. *An eternal body for eternal relationship with an eternal God*. This is the hope that our world needs, isn't it? That we didn't just evolve, but we are created by a loving Father. That

decay is not natural... it's evil, it's wrong. That death is not the end. That's a hope that we need to be holding out as central to our message of evangelism, isn't it? We say, 'Yes. Yeah, I feel what you feel. The world is broken and hurting, and that's why I love the gospel. That's why God is so amazing because he's doing something about it.'

So first, our resurrection bodies will be imperishable. Second, our resurrection bodies will be glorious.

Our resurrection bodies will be glorious

It's in verse 43. It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory. Dishonour means to be treated shamefully to be humiliated. It can just be a general term for anything that's dishonoured, but it's interesting that a few chapters earlier, in chapter four, Paul used this word and spoke about being *dishonored as an apostle*. He talks about having to suffer for Christ. He talks about being hungry and thirsty, poorly dressed, homeless, persecuted, abused. He even uses these words: he says. I'm the scum of the Earth. The garbage of the world. That's dishonour.

And that's part of what it's like to be a Christian, isn't it? As if the pain of just having a decaying body isn't bad enough, Christians have the added burden of suffering for their faith. We see this again and again in the Bible. We've seen it lots of times in our Philippians series that we've just finished: this emphasis that the Christian life will be hard.

God seems to be trying to tell us something: it will be hard. It's going to be difficult. And when it does, we mustn't think that God has abandoned us. As we think about Vision 2030, about where our church is going... as we think about the challenges of sharing the gospel with our unbelieving friends and families... as we think about the possibility of us planting a church... We may meet opposition. There will be weariness. We may not see as much growth as we hope for. We need to know that God has not abandoned us. We suffer because Jesus is our representative also suffered. If we follow Jesus, well, we expect to be dishonoured. To be mocked and persecuted.

But here's the good news. *Jesus isn't just our representative in suffering. He's also our representative in glory.* Because after the cross, God gave him the name that is above every name. The highest place of glory. That's the pattern: suffering, followed by glory, suffering, followed by glory. And so it will be for you and me. You may be being bullied at school for believing in God. You may be excluded in your workplace because of some of your opinions. Your own family may cut you off because of your faith. But just as surely as Jesus rose from the dead, we also will be raised from the dead. We'll be raised in glory.

Philippians 3:21 says Jesus will transform our lowly bodies to be like his glorious body. And that's really the big idea of verses 45 to 49 in our passage. We'll be like Jesus. Our bodies will be like Jesus body. There's glory waiting for us as we see his face. And so our sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

If you're finding it hard to be a Christian at the moment, don't give up. Now you are a traveler. You haven't arrived yet. One day, you will know that you are truly at home, when you arrive in the glorious presence of God himself.

Our resurrection bodies will be powerful

Verse 43. It is sown in weakness. It is raised in power. Weakness is the inability to cope with life. It is the failure to function as we wish. And we all struggle with feeling sometimes like we just can't cope, don't we? Stressed. Overworked. Weary. Fatigued, anxious, overwhelmed, burdened with sickness, with injury, with disability. The reality is that as humans, we are profoundly weak. The proof of our weakness is that we can't overcome it. I felt this over winter just gone, I got a cold like six or eight times, I couldn't do anything about it. Take some more echinacea and vitamin C. Well, what can you do? You know, if you get it, you got it. That's weakness. And then you just have to ride it out. I see this in my siblings with their chronic illnesses. The weakness of their bodies just haunts them every day. It's inescapable.

And I think it's important as Christians that we are willing to admit our weaknesses. I don't think it's all that common in our society. It's easier to put on a brave face and to polish up your social media feed. That is not what the church should look like. Christians should be the first to say, I'm weak. Church should be a place where it's okay to be broken, where you can walk in here on a Sunday morning, and you can *not* be OK and you can have red puffy eyes because you've been crying half the week.

Admitting that is simply being honest about the effects of sin in this world. Yeah, we are powerless. We are desperately in need of help. *And it's when we see our own weakness that we also get to see the power of God.* When we look at the life of Jesus, we just see the most incredible display of power, don't we? He healed people who couldn't walk. He touched the eyes of the blind, and they just suddenly could see. He even brought people to life who were lying there, dead. And when we think about those miracles, don't we just long for some of that power in our lives? Why not me? If he can do that, why won't he do that for me? There's no simple answer to that question, but one thing is sure: if you trust in Jesus, you will be healed. He will heal you. Maybe not in this life. But he will heal you one day... heal you more completely than you can even imagine.

Miracles, the miracles of Jesus, they're just a little foretaste, a little entree of the healing that every Christian will receive one day. Miracles are like a window, and it opens up and you get to peer through it and you get a little glimpse of the new heavens and the new earth and what it will be like. And we peer through and we get a glimpse of the world as it was meant to be, the world as it *will* be. It is an assurance of what is coming.

In the resurrection, Jesus will transform your body from weakness to power. It will be pulsing with energy. You'll never be weary. There will be no more disabilities. There will be no more death. No more painful Monday mornings. No more funerals. No cemeteries, no hospitals. No pharmacies, no Nurofen. No Panadol. So hang in there. Encourage each other with these truths. We don't say, oh, don't worry about your struggles. They're not important, they'll go away soon. Don't worry about them. No! We deeply acknowledge our struggles and our hurts and our weakness. They're real and we hurt with each other, and we long for that day. We cling to that hope.

Our resurrection bodies will be spiritual

Verse 44. It is sown a natural body. It is raised a spiritual body. Now, it's not saying natural as in physical, and spiritual as in 'just a soul'. That can't be right. He's talking about our bodies. The whole point is that we're going to have real bodies. Natural, I think, means *unspiritual*. By nature, we are not controlled by the Holy Spirit. We are slaves to the sinful nature because of Adam's sin. And we live with the realities of that sinful nature every day.

You know what I'm talking about. Those sins that just seem almost impossible to eradicate. That deep seated anger and irritability. Untamable lust. A reckless tongue. Perpetual discontentment. Worry, that just takes over uncontrollably. Selfish interest that threatens to ruin almost every relationship in your life. Those are the ugly faces of our sinful nature. And they're the things that led Jesus to the cross. And there he took our guilt on himself and he broke the power of that sin in our lives. His Holy Spirit is poured into our hearts, and every Christian right now can have victory over those sins. We are given the ability to say no and to fight.

This work has already begun in us right now. But it's not complete yet. And I'm not promising you perfection now, because our experience in this life is the experience of a battle, of a tug of war. Torn between our old sinful nature and the freedom of a new life in Christ. And this tug of war won't be complete till Jesus comes again. Only in the resurrection will our natural, unspiritual bodies become truly spiritual bodies. Not at war anymore. Sin won't exist. Your life will flow with the Holy Spirit, you'll never struggle with sin again, you'll never be tempted again, you'll be perfect. Just as Jesus, your representative, is perfect.

What does that mean for us right now? Well, it means that we are living in the middle of a war, but it is a war that we know we're going to win. We're in this tension. We often talk about it as *already not yet*. It's the best way you can describe it really: the already- not-yet - tension. We're already saved from sin. We're not yet free from its consequences. We're already given the power of the Holy Spirit, but we're not yet free from temptation and sinful desires. But this is an amazing encouragement that we will be victorious. Imagine going into the boxing ring facing up against a scary dude. And you know, in advance, that you will win. That's a good feeling. That gives you courage, it gives you confidence.

The battle with sin, it can be tough, it can be discouraging, but I want to urge you to persevere with confidence. Here's your victory. It's guaranteed. Even now, the power of the Holy Spirit is in you. And one day his work of making you holy will be complete. You'll be perfect.

Conclusion

In 1967, a 17 year old girl by the name of Joni Erikson had a terrible diving accident. She became a total quadriplegic. And at some point as she lay on a hospital bed, it became clear to her that this was permanent. This was here to stay, and Joni is brutally honest about how difficult that was. She talks about her anger and her bitterness and her frustration and her suicidal depression, and 'rebellious temper tantrums against God.' But as she lay on her bed, she eventually started reading the Bible. And as she did, she started to trust God. And as she began to trust God, she started to come to terms with her disability. She learned to paint with her mouth - hold a paintbrush in her mouth. She started writing some great books.

And she says that the greatest comfort she found was in the resurrection, specifically the resurrection of the body. This is what she wrote in one of her books.

'I, with shrivelled bent fingers, atrophied muscles, gnarled knees and no feeling from the shoulders down, will one day have a new body light, bright and clothed in righteousness, powerful and dazzling. Can you imagine the hope this gives someone spinal cord injured like me? Or someone who has cerebral palsy, brain injured or who has multiple sclerosis. Imagine the hope this gives someone who is manic depressive. No other religion, no other philosophy promises new bodies, hearts and minds. Only in the Gospel of Christ do hurting people find such incredible hope.'

What an incredible God we have! That this is his plan for us. That he wants to heal us, not just spiritually but even *physically*. We don't know what those bodies are going to be like. But we know that they will be profoundly physical and utterly glorious. *Perfectly designed to know and enjoy him forever.*

And so Paul finishes talking about the resurrection with these words in verse 58. This is his conclusion. 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.

That is the confidence that the resurrection gives us. Confidence that nothing can shake us, not even death itself. Confidence that the gospel is worth sharing, that people desperately need this because it's so powerful and it's so wonderful. It's the hope the world is longing for. Confidence that you can persevere through every hardship. Until at the end, all of our weaknesses and limitations and our suffering on this earth will be forgotten, and we will stand before our Savior with glorious resurrection bodies.