



# Raised in Power

## INTRODUCTION

1 Corinthians 15:35-58

We are afraid of death because it is an unknown, over which we have no control. We cannot evade it -- it is beyond us. We are in the grip of other forces, and, what bothers us is, we have a sense that we are being plunged into accountability. Beyond death lies a settling, and an answering, for where we have been, and how we have lived, and what we have done. That is why death is such a fearsome thing. It is made all the more so by the law that says you cannot escape the evil of your past. God cannot set it aside nor can any man. It must be faced. There can be no deliverance from it. That is what makes us afraid of death.

But the good news coming to us from the resurrection of Jesus, following his crucifixion, is that this power of sin is broken. We are no longer helpless; we are no longer unable to change. Many people today are troubled by an unending struggle they feel within to try to be different, but they cannot find the way. ...

Well, the good news is that there is a way. Sin's power has been broken. We have been given a way to say, "No!" and to be able to do it despite the pressure. Even when we fail there is a way of relief so that we can have the failure cleansed and put away and it no longer needs to haunt us. What is that way? Paul tells us in Verse 57. This is really the heart of the mystery:

**"But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."**

I want you to notice that it is put in the present tense. It is not past, "who gave us the victory." It is "thanks be to God who keeps on giving us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." I do not know anything that means more to me as a Christian than the fact that every day I can lay hold of the grace of Jesus Christ. He is not a distant Savior who lived twenty centuries ago. He is alive, and I meet him every day. When I find myself having failed, faltered, and sinned, I come again and receive from him the cleansing that he has won for me on Calvary.<sup>16</sup>

## BREAK THE ICE

**What do you appreciate most about your favorite antique thing you own?**

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.raystedman.org/new-testament/1-corinthians/the-victory-of-the-mystery>

## READ IT

Read 1 Corinthians 15:35-58

## EXPLORE IT

1. What questions does Paul address in this passage?
2. What examples does Paul point to in the natural world to support his argument?
3. What must happen in order to “inherit the kingdom of God”?
4. What are we to give thanks for?
5. What is the “application” of Paul’s teaching on the believer’s future resurrection?

## APPLY IT

Paul uses the verbs sown versus raised four times, drawing a contrast between what is and what will be. We see four contrasts in these verses.

First, **the body that is sown is perishable** (phthora; cf. Col. 2:22; 2 Pet. 2:12); it will die and dissolve. The body that is raised, though, is imperishable (aphtharsia; cf. 15:50, 53, 54). The word imperishable is closely associated with eternal life (Rom. 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:10; see also Dan. 12:3; Matt. 13:43). We see the same conception in 4 Maccabees 17:12 where the reward for the righteous is ‘immortality [aphtharsia] in endless life’ (nrsv).

Second, **the body is sown in dishonour but it is raised in glory**. The body is not intrinsically evil, but it is dishonourable due to its corruptibility and weakness; however, the resurrection body will be glorious and will not suffer from frailty. We see a similar notion in Philippians 3:21: ‘[Christ], by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.’

Third, **the body is sown in weakness but it is raised in power**. Human bodies are plagued with illness, injuries, tiredness and finally death, but in the resurrection they will go from strength to strength.

Fourth, **Paul contrasts the natural body (psychikos) with a spiritual body.** Elsewhere Paul contrasts the natural person (cf. ESV) who is not a believer with those who are spiritual (1 Cor. 2:13–14). ... The natural body, then, is what all people possess upon entering the world as sons and daughters of Adam (Rom. 5:12–19). When new life in Christ comes for believers, they receive the Spirit, but they do not immediately receive a spiritual body. They will not be given a spiritual body until the end (cf. 15:20–28).<sup>17</sup>

**6. How can we value and care for our natural bodies today, even knowing that they are perishable and will one day be replaced with spiritual bodies as described in 1 Corinthians 15?**

**7. Using the Bible, how would you defend what you think Paul means when he says Christians will receive a “spiritual body”?**

Inherit[ing] the kingdom of God refers to entering the eschatological kingdom, and Paul is clear that the wicked will not participate (1 Cor. 6:9–10; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5–6). When Paul says that flesh and blood will not enter the kingdom, he does not mean that physical bodies will not be in the kingdom. Such a notion would contradict the affirmation of the physical resurrection which permeates this chapter. Instead, as the next line in the verse demonstrates, and as the whole chapter certifies, corruptible flesh and blood will not enter the kingdom. Flesh which is fallen and mortal because of sin cannot inherit the imperishable...<sup>18</sup>

**8. Read Ephesians 4:17–32. How does Paul’s teaching that “corruptible flesh and blood will not inherit the kingdom” influence the way we honor God with the bodies we have now?**

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<sup>17</sup> Schreiner, Thomas R.. 1 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries Book 7) (pp. 415–416). InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.

<sup>18</sup> Schreiner, Thomas R.. 1 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries Book 7) (p. 418). InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.

The pinnacle of Paul's teaching is the contrast between the first Adam and the last Adam. In Romans 5, Paul explains that sin entered the world through the first Adam, bringing death to all. But the last Adam, Jesus Christ, offered Himself as a ransom for many, so that where death once reigned through the first Adam, justification and life now reign through Christ. Paul reminds us:

***“The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”***

Through Christ, we have tasted the glories of the imperishable and immortal. We no longer live from a place of defeat and decay but from a place of decisive victory as we await the final fulfillment of our hope in salvation.

**9. What does it mean for you personally to live from a place of victory in Christ rather than defeat and decay?**

If we know that God is able to put together a body, even one that has decayed into nothing but ashes or particles of dust, then we should know that God never forgets even the smallest deed done in his service.

- We ought to be **constant** in God's work: “be steadfast.”
- We ought to be **committed** to God's work: “immoveable.”
- We ought to be **consistent** in God's work: “always excelling.”
- We ought to be **confident** in God's work: “because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.”<sup>19</sup>

**10. Paul's assumption is that believers are actively involved in “the work of the Lord.” What does your current involvement in the “work of the Lord” look like?**

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<sup>19</sup> Akin, Dr. Daniel L.; Merritt, James. Exalting Jesus in 1 Corinthians (Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary) (p. 296). B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

11. What would it look like for you personally to remain constant in God's work?

12. What would it look like for you personally to remain committed to God's work?

13. What would it look like for you personally to remain consistent in God's work?

**14. What would it look like for you personally to remain confident in God's work?**

**15. What things might hinder you from being "constant, committed, consistent, and confident" in the work of the Lord that you are engaged in?**