



Title: Mind and Body: What Will We Be Like in Heaven?

Text: 1 Corinthians 15:35-58

Date: May 15, 2022

Main Idea:

Personal Study Guide

READ ENTIRE TEXTS: 1 CORINTHIANS 15:35-58

***This sermon series will be different since it covers a topic, not one specific text. These lessons will still be text-based but we will also focus on theological themes and ideas throughout the lessons as well.**

Explain – What does this mean?

We are going to focus on two ideas from these two passages.

- Resurrection bodies
 - Resurrected minds
1. In verses 35-41 Paul uses agriculture imagery to show that the resurrected body and mind are different than the earthly ones. Think about what you know about agriculture. What is Paul saying about our resurrected body based on what he says about the kernel, wheat, and grain in verse 36? Is it the same as our earthly body? Different? Or a combination of the old and new?
 2. Use a dictionary to define these words:
 - Perishable:
 - Imperishable:
 - Dishonor:
 - Glory:
 - Weakness:
 - Power:
 - Natural:
 - Spiritual:
 3. Paul builds his case in 1 Corinthians 15 that the resurrection is real and something we should hope for as believers. We will have new bodies and minds someday. In verses 45-48 he contrasts two men. Who are they? How does 1 Corinthians 15:12-26 explain why this “man of heaven” is our hope?
 4. Think back to last week’s lesson. In 1 Corinthians 15:50, Paul says that “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.” Based on what was discussed in last week’s lesson, why is this the case?

Apply – How does this change me?

1. Read Ephesians 3:16-19. What keeps us from comprehending these things now? Make a list of those things in your own life.
2. How has the brokenness of this world impacted your mind and body right now or in the past? How does this promise of a new body and new mind encourage you?
3. Paul makes a lot of contrast in verses 42-49. Based on these contrasting realities, what is true and better about our resurrected minds and bodies?

Respond – What's my next step?

1. Read 1 Corinthians 15:58. What fills your days? What would your life look like if you worked with this in view? Is there anything in your life that feels like it is in vain?
2. Going back to verse 36—what has to die in your life in order to be raised imperishable, glorified, powerful, and spiritual?

Chapter 3 from “The Glory Now Revealed”

In August 21, 2017, a solar eclipse made its way across the southeastern United States. That afternoon some friends and I used special glasses to view it. Even with a 93 percent eclipse, the light was not noticeably reduced—it just seemed like a normal sunny afternoon. A few of us foolishly risked glimpsing the sun unaided (if only for a split second) and instantly regretted it! The brilliance of the sun was absolutely overpowering.

If this is true of our far-off star, how much more overpowering would a full revelation of the glory of God be? When Moses begged of God, “Please show me your glory” (Exod. 33:18), he was asking for the greatest gift God could ever bestow. But that day on Mount Sinai, God could not grant Moses's request, “for no one may see me and live” (v. 20 NIV). God hid Moses in a rock cleft and only allowed him to see his back. Yet Revelation 22:4 tells us that the saints in glory “will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. “How can they gaze directly at what no one on earth could survive for an instant? All our senses in this present age can be overwhelmed: light can be blinding and sound can be deafening. How can we see God's full glory and find it delightful rather than deadly?

Prepared for Glory

Jonathan Edwards began a sermon on Elijah's contest with the prophets of Baal with these powerful words: “It is the manner of God, before he bestows any signal mercy on the people, first to prepare them for it.”¹ In Romans 9:23, Paul speaks of what God did to “make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which *he has prepared beforehand for glory*. “Every day, God is shaping his elect like a skillful potter, preparing his creation to *be glory* and see

¹ Jonathan Edwards, “On the Unreasonableness of Indetermination in Religion,” in *Sermons and Discourses 1734-1738*, ed. M.X. Lesser (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 93.

glory. God finishes with a flourish, instantly glorifying his people and completely conforming them to Christ in mind, heart, and body (8:29-30). This glorification will enable us to experience the “signal mercy” of God: displaying and delighting in the glory of God in heaven.

The Glorious Resurrection Body

Paul tells us, “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable” (1 Cor. 15:50). Our present bodies cannot handle the glory that God will pour out on us, so God must transform us radically. He makes this plain by four statements contrasting our mortal bodies with our resurrection bodies:

So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dis-honor; 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. (vv.42-44)

Perishable means our bodies on earth are continually decaying and heading toward our destination of death. The buried, rotting corpse is the final proof of that lifelong process. Adam was condemned to sink down into the dust from which he came (Gen. 3:19). Our bodies are in bondage to decay, just like the cursed world around us (Rom. 8:21). *Imperishable* means our resurrection bodies will have no process of decay but will be eternally renewed by the principle of life continually flowing from almighty God. We will never die, so our time there will be limitless. Furthermore, our physical capabilities will in no way diminish as eternity unfolds. In this world, our eyes become dim with age. But our resurrected eyes will forever remain perfectly able to drink in the beauty of New Jerusalem.

Dishonor means that the process of death is repulsive, stripping humanity of its visible dignity. The sights, sounds, and smells of an ICU or a nursing home are all the evidence we need for how dishonored the dying body is. And how much more disgusting is a corpse that has been rotting in the earth or

decomposing in the sea! Glory captures the radiance of the resurrection body. As Christ said so powerfully, "Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matt.13:43).Also, Daniel 12:3 says, "Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever." This is what I mean by saying that, in heaven, the redeemed will both see glory and *be* glory.

Weakness refers to the body's powerlessness in this world. We get tired easily, need to eat to regain our strength, and will have no power to fight off the disease that finally kills us. Nobody is weaker than a corpse about to be buried. Power will characterize the resurrection body ... limitless power! That does not necessarily mean we will be like Superman, able to fly or leap tall buildings in a single bound. Rather, like Isaiah 40:31 puts it, "[We] shall run and not be weary, [we] shall walk and not faint."

Natural refers to the body we have known in this present age of disease, pain, and death. *Spiritual* is a word that stretches the imagination to the breaking point when Paul speaks of a "spiritual body." I think Jesus's own amazing resurrection body gives us some sense of what this could mean. He had flesh and bones, could be touched physically, and could eat broiled fish (Luke 24:39-43). But he could also pass through the stone walls of the tomb and through the locked doors of the upper room. He could suddenly disappear, then reappear elsewhere.

So this will be our resurrection body: imperishable, glorious, powerful, and spiritual: a body perfectly prepared for the universe of God's glory we will experience for all eternity!

Massive Strengthening Required

Without this immeasurable resurrection upgrade, we would crumble under the weight of glory that God is planning to lay on us. See how Paul speaks of the strengthening Christians need to handle an increased revelation of God's love even in this world:

[I pray] that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that

Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. (Eph. 3:16-19)

This “strengthening” language is preparatory to an amazing work of the Spirit within us, a foretaste of Christ's love each of us will experience in heaven. Paul prays for all Christians to be strengthened internally, much like the architectural buttressing that allows the floor of a repository for gold bullion not to collapse under such massive weight. The infinite love of God that the Holy Spirit will pour into our souls is so weighty that we could not handle it without this preparation. So, in verse 18, Paul prays that we would have strength to comprehend what God wants us to comprehend. And what is that? The infinite dimensions of Christ's love for us—their breadth and length and height and depth! Imagine the incalculable distances between the galaxies or the light years between our solar system and even the nearest star. The universe in all its immensity is nothing compared to the boundless love of God in Christ for *all* the saints, *every single one* of his beloved elect. When we grasp this love fully, we will be “filled with all the fullness of God. “As full as God is, that is how full all the saints will be in our glorification!

Amazingly, the “strengthening” language here merely mentions *foretastes* of this heavenly fullness. Awesome pre-views of heaven are occasionally granted to some believers here on earth. Paul was “caught up to the third heaven “and had an experience he could not articulate (2 Cor.12:2-4). In 1737, Jonathan Edwards was out in the woods praying and had a vision of Christ that left him lying on the ground for over an hour, swimming in tears, “emptied and annihilated.”² His wife, Sarah, had a similar experience that was even more intense. She felt like a dust speck swimming in a sea of light, pleasure flowing

² Jonathan Edwards, “Personal Narrative,” *A Jonathan Edwards Reader*, ed. John E. Smith, Harry S. Stout, and Kenneth P. Minkema (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 293.

and reflowing through her body: “It seemed to be *all my feeble frame* could sustain of that fullness of joy of those who behold the face of Christ ...in the heavenly world.”³ God granted evangelist D.L. Moody a vision of heaven so powerful that he “had to ask Him to stay His hand.”⁴

Why stop so glorious a sight? Because if any more came upon him, Moody felt he would crumble and break. In the electrical wiring of a house, electricians use circuit breakers to protect the house from the heat that is generated by excessive electrical current. Three space heaters plugged into one outlet would draw such a current and so overheat the wires that the wooden frame of the house would soon be ignited and engulfed in flames. But a circuit breaker will trip and break the flow of current before that happens. God's glory is so much that we humans cannot handle the full experience of it. Without a “circuit breaker, “our feeble frame—both mental and physical—would be engulfed, and we would collapse

We see this in the physical reaction of the godly Daniel to the radiantly brilliant angel who was dispatched from heaven to bring him a prophetic message:

No strength was left in me; my face grew deathly pale, and I was powerless. I heard the words he said, and when I heard them I fell into a deep sleep, with my face to the ground.... While he was saying these words to me, I turned my face toward the ground and was speechless. Suddenly one with

³ Iain H. Murray, *Jonathan Edwards: A New Biography* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1987), 195.

⁴ John C. Pollock, *Moody: A Biographical Portrait* (New York: Mac-millan, 1963), 90. It is interesting to note that Moody began to seek a greater sense of the presence and power of God in direct response to two obscure women who prayed for him to receive the power of the Holy Spirit: Sarah Anne Cooke and a widow named Mrs. Hawxhurst. They sat in the front row of a tent meeting Moody was preaching at, and remained a long time afterward praying for him. When Moody went to talk with them, and they told him they were praying for him to receive the power of the Holy Spirit, Moody became slightly offended and said, “Why don't you pray for the people?” They answered, “Because you need the power of the Spirit.” This had a big effect on Moody, and he began to pray as never before for the coming of the Spirit in his life. It reached a climax when he said he really did not want to live anymore without it. In November 1871, he was walking down a very busy street in New York City (maybe Broadway or Fifth Avenue) and a sense of the presence of God started to flood his mind. He hurried to be alone to pray. He went to a friend's house, brushed aside his invitation to a meal, and went to a solitary room. Pollock writes, “Moody locked the door and sat on the sofa. The room seemed ablaze with God. Moody dropped to the floor and lay bathing in the divine.”

human likeness touched my lips. I opened my mouth and said to the one standing in front of me, "My lord, because of the vision, anguish overwhelms me and I am powerless. How can someone like me, your servant, speak with someone like you, my lord? Now I have no strength, and there is no breath in me." (Dan.10:8-9,15-17 CSB)

Remember, this is Daniel's reaction to an angel, not to God himself. And the angel's remedy at that time shows the perfect strengthening that glorification will give to all the redeemed:

Again the one who looked like a man touched me and gave me strength. "Do not be afraid, you who are highly esteemed," he said. "Peace! Be strong now; be strong." When he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, "Speak, my lord, since you have given me strength." (vv.18-19 NIV)

By the strengthening of glorification, we will be able to receive the eternal revelation of God's full glory without being consumed.

Resurrected Minds and Hearts, Not Just Bodies

Glorification will also complete the radical transformation of our thoughts and affections. We may wonder how an eternal education could be pleasing to us, but glorification will eternally eliminate the corruptions that presently hinder us, such as idolatry, pride, weariness, dullness, and forgetfulness.

Idolatry. As God unfolds redemptive history in heaven, we will see his glory in everything. Yet we will not idolize the heroes and heroines of this glorious story. We will study the men and women of whom the world was not worthy (Heb. 11:38) and see their valor, wisdom, love, and achievement, yet still not fall down before them in worship. Cornelius fell down before Peter, who immediately rebuked him, saying, "Stand up; I too am a man" (Acts 10:26). In heaven we will fully realize this truth: "neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth" (1 Cor. 3:7). Our souls will be radically God-centered and Christ-centered as every act of history will ultimately display the greatness of God and his Son.

Pride. From infancy, we are fanatically self-interested. In his *Confessions*, Augustine details the sins of self-interest he committed even as a newborn infant, howling and demanding food regardless of the circumstances of his mother.⁵ Pride returns every topic to ourselves—what does this say about me? We scream for attention. If we achieve anything for God, we demand to be noticed and celebrated. If we are ignored, our flesh howls. If we see others honored, we are jealous and enraged. Joseph's brothers burned with envy when they saw their father bestow the many-colored robe on him. They “hated him and could not speak to him on friendly terms (Gen.37:4 NASB).

In heaven, we will see lavish honors heaped on others. But we will be delivered from jealousy and will truly celebrate those honors as though they were our own. The unity of the body of Christ will be fulfilled: “If one member is honored, all rejoice together” (1 Cor. 12:26). This glorified perspective will enable us to be enthralled by other people's stories, no matter how obscure or ordinary those stories might seem. As we see God at work in those stories, we will *lose ourselves* in those glorious scenic vistas. Imagine standing at the Grand Canyon at sunset but being unable to tear your eyes away from your own reflection in a mirror. How disgusting is our pride! But we will be delivered from self-love by God's love. As John Piper said, “Do you feel more loved by God because he makes much of you, or because he frees you to make much of him?”⁶

Weariness. Just as our resurrection body will be tireless, so will our minds and hearts. The Psalms speak of weariness of soul and mind, and Jesus's disciples fell on the ground in Gethsemane “exhausted from their grief” (Luke 22:45 CSB). Mental exertion can make us exhausted. As the Preacher said, “There is no end to the making of many books, and much study wearies the body” (Eccles. 12:12 CSB). God's history course will last for all eternity. But we will never grow weary of these endless lessons! These thrilling revelations will be matched by our undiminished mental energy. We will have glorified attention

⁵ Augustine, *Confessions*, book 1, chapter 6, trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin (Middlesex, UK: Penguin, 1986), 25.

⁶ John Piper, “Getting to the Bottom of Your Joy: Message from Passion 2011, Atlanta,” *Desiring God*, January 3, 2011, <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/getting-to-the-bottom-of-your-joy>.

spans. Like the two disciples with the resurrected Jesus on the Emmaus Road, we will say to one another, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was explaining history to us?” (see Luke 24:32).

Dullness. Jesus rebuked his disciples for their inability to comprehend his teachings, asking “Are you still so dull?” (Matt. 15:16 NIV). In this world, we often do not understand when people try to explain hard things to us. How then can we imagine being able to take in thousands of years of redemptive history, with all the details, personalities, motives, themes, and causes and effects, and make any sense of it at all? But again, we must realize how radically transformed our minds will be in heaven, perfectly able to comprehend. After his resurrection, Jesus “opened [the disciples’] minds to understand the Scriptures” (Luke 24:45). What he begins in us now by the Spirit, he will perfect in our resurrected minds.

Not only will our mental dullness be gone but our heart re-actions will be perfect as well. We will no longer be dull emotionally. We will fervently love the things of God, both great and small. We will not shrug and turn away from some detail of redemptive history with boredom and say, “So what? “Our hearts will burn within us...burning with love for God and for our brothers and sisters. Powerful emotional displays will characterize heavenly worship: “Clap your hands, all peoples! Shout to God with loud songs of joy!” (Ps.47:1). In heaven, we will see the great moments of redemptive history for what they are: worthy of eternal celebration that God has redeemed this one or that one.

Jesus's parables of Luke 15—the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the prodigal son—show us how much joy the Father has in saving lost sinners and how much he wants others to share the celebration: “Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep/coin/son that was lost”(v.6). Jesus said there will be joy in heaven over one sinner who repents (v.7,10). I always thought that the festivities only happened in heaven at the moment of conversion. But what if these conversions are replayed in eternity so that we can continually celebrate

with the Father in his salvation of sinners, even one at a time, even one saved a thousand years ago?

Forgetfulness. Sometimes our education can seem pointless because we can scarcely remember the things we have studied. In heaven, we will be healed from our forgetfulness. We will be able to retain the things we learn and so see the limitless glory of God in redemptive history. This is quite a staggering thought, that our resurrected minds will be transformed into ever-increasing storehouses of the great deeds of God throughout the nations and throughout thousands of years.

The Limits to Our Perfection

Now that we have asserted the glories of our resurrected minds, we must establish boundaries. Our minds and hearts will be perfect, yes, but we will not become deities. God alone is omniscient. As we said, nothing new has ever occurred to God. We will never arrive there! New things will continually occur to us as we are perpetually learning. However, we will continue to think in a linear fashion: first A, then B, then C. That is what Christ means by “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end” (Rev. 22:13). History unfolds in linear fashion because that is how humans are built. God alone can think of everything at once. This is part of his infinite mind, his omniscience.

Furthermore, our perfect memories will not allow everything to be on the desktop of our minds at every moment. We will only be able to focus on a limited number of things at once. Charles Spurgeon once said he was conscious of seven different trains of thought going through his mind at one time while preaching.⁷ Perhaps we will have that kind of increased capacity, but not infinitely so. Some things will be more in the background, other things front and center. That is why the inhabitants of heaven are reacting as things

⁷ John Piper, “Charles Spurgeon: Preaching Through Adversity, 1995 Bethlehem Conference for Pastors,” *Desiring God*, January 31, 1995, <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/charles-spurgeon-preaching-through-adversity>.

happen in the book of Revelation. For example, when Jesus opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for half an hour (Rev. 8:1). Thus, heavenly worship will have ripples and pulses of reactions as new things are unveiled. Throughout eternity the past will be revealed, and we will celebrate perfectly.