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STUDIES IN 1 CORINTHIANS 15

H. C. HEWLETT

4. The Resurrection Body (Vs. 35-49)

Hitherto in this chapter Paul has set before us the certainty of the resurrection of Christ, and, as a necessary consequence, the certainty of that of His people. He now goes on to consideration of the manner of their rising again, and of the dignity of the new body. Evidently those in Corinth who denied that there could be any resurrection had sought to clinch their arguments by propounding two questions which they deemed unanswerable.

'But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?' Throughout the Scriptures God tells us of His purposes for the future. Mainly, however, His revelation relates to what He will do, not to how He will do it. Faith rests on the promises, and leaves to Him the manner of their accomplishment. Much of what is thus hidden is necessarily so because of our present immaturity, and therefore our incapacity to appreciate further revelation had it been given. Nevertheless, the second question particularly is one which still exercises the minds of believers, who, accepting without doubt God's power to bring resurrection to pass, look wistfully to the Day of Christ and seek its comfort, especially in regard to loved ones who have passed within the veil.

With what sort (or kind, *ποιος*) of body do they come? In its fulness 'it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him' (1 John 3:2). But in our chapter Paul gives sufficient glimpse of the vastly increased dignity of the future body to bow our hearts in adoration and stir us to steadfastness of service.

'Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die.' In rebuking the folly of questions which query God's power, Paul appeals to the experience of the questioner himself. 'Thou' in 'thou sowest' is emphatic, and is rendered by the Revised Version 'thou thyself'. Even the objector must admit the lesson taught by his own, and indeed every garden. God has made nature

to bear incessant witness to the truth that death necessarily precedes resurrection. The seed placed in the ground must die before a plant can rise from it. The death of the seed has in purpose the new life that shall come from it. The decay of the body at death is therefore no argument against its resurrection.

'And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain.' The question was asked, with what body do they come? The answer will be that there is far-reaching contrast between the body which goes to the grave, and that which will come forth from it. Paul illustrates this by reminding the objector that the seed sown in the ground, whether of wheat or any other grain, is an insignificant thing. It is 'bare grain' (*gummos kokkos*, i.e., mere grain, not the plant itself). It is bare in contrast with the plant in its leaf dress. Look at the seed. How small it is, and devoid of beauty! Look at the tall plant with stalk, leaves and ears. How different from the grain! Equally great is the difference between the present body with its weakness and the future body with its wonderful capacities and glory.

'But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him, and to every seed his own body.' To each bare grain God gives a body according to the pleasure which He exercised in creation. The aorist tense—as it pleased Him—points to His act in determining the nature and development which each species should possess. Likewise God gives to the one who has fallen asleep a new body in resurrection which will be in accord with the good pleasure of His will. In that glad day we shall know how good God's pleasure has been. To every seed his own body. Each seed in its development is true to its own species. (See 'after his kind' in Genesis 1). The wheat seed produces a wheat plant, not barley. So in the resurrection the body will be the individual's own body, in every way true to his being. The link between the corruptible body and the incorruptible is *not in identity of particles, but in continuity of personality and individuality*. The new body will not be in any sense strange, but even more suited to the redeemed man than was the old one, for there will be no shackles of weakness to hinder its enjoyment of the fulness of life.

Verses 39-42. Further illustrations from Creation,
Terrestrial and Celestial

'All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds.' As in Genesis, so in 1 Corinthians, Scripture knows nothing of evolution, Darwinian or otherwise. Far from one species evolving into another, it is insisted that the flesh of men, of beasts, of fishes and of birds, are all separate in nature. But the evolutionist, in spite of recent discoveries of essential cellular distinctions in these varied fields, remains unconvinced, and vainly imagines that the creature knows more about it than the Creator.

'There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory.' Here Paul alludes to further distinctions in the created universe. There are celestial (i.e., heavenly) bodies, and there are terrestrial (i.e., earthly) bodies, but their glory is not the same. Then he points out that these celestial bodies (by which he means sun, moon and stars, according to usage both ancient and modern) vary one from another. Even the stars differ one from another in splendour and brightness.

'So also is the resurrection of the dead.' The points he has been making Paul now shows to be illustrative of resurrection. All the diversity in creation, whether in things earthly or heavenly, is paralleled by the difference between the present body in its humiliation and the future body in its dignity. That the believer should receive from the grave the body which was buried is contrary to the analogies of things created as well as to the express testimony of the Word. The difference between the splendour of the celestial and that of the terrestrial is no more than that between the resurrection body and the mortal body. That even stars differ in glory, each having its own radiance, indicates that in resurrection believers will retain their individuality, while all possessing glory. Each will manifest a glory his own (albeit it springs from the glory of the Lord).

Verses 42-44. The Wondrous Change

'It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption.' Analogy is laid aside, and vivid contrast is given between the state of the body sown into the ground in death, and its state as raised therefrom. Corruption is the entail of the Fall, and is involved in the sentence in Eden: 'Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return' (Gen. 3:19). Decay is inevitable when life ceases. But in the new body no mark of the curse, no trace of decay shall be known. It is incorruptible, being not only without corruption, but free from all possibility of it.

'It is sown in dishonour: it is raised in glory.' This 'body of humiliation' is to be fashioned like unto Christ's 'body of glory' (Phil. 3:21). Even in life we learn its humiliation, for suffering and disease afflict it, and then at death it must be buried out of sight. It is raised in glory, in excellence of nature and of faculty.

'It is sown in weakness: it is raised in power.' Weakness or infirmity is a characteristic of the present body, and at last it is powerless to ward off death. Frailty is the mark of our mortality, but the resurrection body shall be marked by triumphant power which shall know neither depletion nor decay, power for the full realization of our destiny, power for unhindered and unceasing fellowship with the almighty Saviour.

'It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.' Natural (*psuchikos*) refers to that which pertains to the soul (*psuchē*), even as spiritual (*pneumatikos*) refers to that pertaining to the spirit (*pneuma*). The contrast between the present body and the body that shall be is akin to that between soul and spirit. As Adam was made a living soul (see v. 45) and Christ a quickening spirit, so the natural body is conditioned to the life received from Adam, and the spiritual body to the life received from Christ. The one is suited to man's environment and circumstances on earth, and the other to the environment and circumstances which will be his in heaven. As the spirit is of a higher order than the soul, for in contrast to the soul which is the seat of the choices and the will, the spirit is that part of man which 'qualifies him to lay hold of incomprehensible, invisible, eternal

things' (Luther), so the resurrection body is of a higher order than the earthly one.

'If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body' (R.V.). These words are not a repetition of the preceding ones, but indicate that it is just as reasonable that there should be a body conditioned to the spirit as that there should be one conditioned to the soul.

Verses 45-49. The Two Headships

'So also it is written, The first man Adam became a living soul. The last Adam became a life-giving Spirit' (R.V.). The words are quoted in part from Genesis 2:7, where 'the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into this nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul'. In this section of our chapter a deeper meaning is given for the change to take place in the believer's body. Earlier we considered the fact that 'as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive'. Here the matter of the two headships, that of Adam and that of Christ, is shown to necessitate a change in the body. The contrast is between a dying Adam and a life-giving Christ. The first Adam became a living soul, so that he transmitted natural life. Christ imparts eternal life, being Himself the life-giving Spirit. Here is distinct allusion to John 20:20, where the Lord Jesus breathed upon His disciples, and said unto them: 'Receive ye the Holy Spirit'. The breathing of the Lord God in Genesis 2:7 by which man became a living soul finds wonderful parallel in John 20:20 in the breathing of Christ as the Lord God of the new creation. As the life imparted in the two cases, so the bodies ultimately befitting the recipients.

Christ is the last Adam. There shall not be another head after Him. All God's ways are complete in Christ. In Him is absolute finality.

'Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual'. That the natural precedes the spiritual is the order of experience and of history, and necessarily so, for that which is temporal must precede that which is eternal, and at last give place to it.

'The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second Man is (the Lord) from heaven.' Here the origins of Adam and of Christ are contrasted. Adam is 'of the earth (*ek gēs*) earthy (*choikos*, made of dust)'. This is in accord with Genesis 2:7—'of the dust of the ground'. The expression 'the second man' limits headships to two. It is not only that after Christ there shall not be another, but that when man had fallen One alone, and He therefore the second Man, could give to men anything better than that they derived from Adam.

'From heaven' (*eks ouranou*). Christ was 'He that came down from heaven' (John 3:13), 'from heaven' (John 6:38); 'from above' (John 8:23), even as He said: 'I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world' (John 16:28). The words of the Authorized Version—'the Lord'—are omitted by the Revised Version, and by J.N.D., etc. What is in view is not His title nor the glory of His Person, but that He came from heaven.

'As is the earthy (one) such are they also that are earthy, and as is the heavenly (One), such are they also that are heavenly.' Adam's posterity are of one kind with him. As he was made of dust, so are they. He was of the earth, and limits them to earth, so that as at death he returned to the dust, so do they. Similarly, Christ's people are of one kind with him, i.e., in respect to their life being from His life. As He is heavenly, so will they, in resurrection, be heavenly. He is of heaven and takes to heaven. Thus those who are earthy, and those who are heavenly, are alike true to their respective heads.

'And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.' 'We have borne' is better rendered by 'we bore' (aorist). Paul writes as though looking back on the path on earth of believers as complete. 'As to the past, he says, we bore the image of the earthy one. As to the future, we shall bear the image of the heavenly One'. 'Image' (*eikōn*) speaks not of mere similarity, but of a derived resemblance. We bore the image of the earthy because we came from him. We shall bear the image of the heavenly because we received life from Him. What was true of Adam was displayed in us. What is true of Christ shall be displayed in us. We shall therefore be like to Him

not only in resurrection body, but in that wondrous holiness and beauty of character, both of spirit and of soul, which are His. Thus this section of the chapter reaches its climax. We shall be 'conformed to the image of His Son' (Rom. 8:29).

THE PRE-EMINENCE OF LOVE

(1 Cor. 13)

R. NORTH

Our English word 'charity' commonly denotes tolerance, benevolence, or almsgiving which, as 1 Cor. 13:3 shows, may be without love. 'Love' is the word used in the N.T. for the highest form of love: the love of the Father for His Son, the love which the Father has given to us, the love that His children should have for one another. We could not say 'God is charity'. God is love.

The gospel and epistles of John are so full of love that we might almost imagine 1 Cor. 13 came from the pen of the apostle John. Yet it is in perfect harmony from what we know of Paul from his other writings. For in many of his epistles we can almost hear and feel the throbbing of his heart, as he longs after the saints in the tender mercies of Christ Jesus. Moreover, this chapter fits in very beautifully with its setting. In chapter 12 the apostle writes concerning spiritual gifts; in chapter 14 concerning the exercise of spiritual gifts, and of godly order in the church of God: chapter 13 comes in between to show the spirit in which every gift is to be exercised—the spirit of love. The Corinthians were in danger of coveting the lesser gifts, such as healing and speaking with tongues. The apostle tells them to desire earnestly the greater gifts (12:31). 'Since ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church' (14:12). We ought to desire to be able to speak unto men to edification, to exhortation, and comfort; to build up, to stir up, and to cheer up. Yet there is a way of more surpassing excellence, a pathway upon which everyone of us must tread, whatever our gifts or place in the church, if we would be of any value in the service of God, and of any blessing to the saints: *the way of love*.