

**“Resurrection Future”**  
**1 Corinthians 15:35-57**  
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**Introduction:**

What would it be like to win the lottery? Would it be like David Sneath who won a \$136 million Mega Millions jackpot back in 2008? Sneath had worked for 34 years at a Ford Motor Co. parts warehouse, but after winning he yelled to his boss, “I’m out of here!”

With his winnings he plans to buy a cottage in northern Michigan and maybe a few new fishing boats. Tired of misplacing his glasses, he plans to get laser surgery to correct his vision. And even though he’s 60, he’s considering going back to college to finish his degree for which he was only a few credits short. (“Lottery winner to boss: ‘I’m Out of here’”, April 4, 2008)

Well, what would it be like? What would you do?

- Pay off the house, or better yet get an upgrade?
- Sock away the kids’ college?
- What about a second or third home?
- Would you take care of mom and dad’s retirement?
- Would you get plastic surgery?
- Would you splurge: expensive vacations, designer clothes, fancy sports cars, the best restaurants?
- Would you give it away: to church, your favorite non-profit, to help educate the needy?

For most of us, we think winning the lottery would be undiminished blessing. However, for many who really win blessing is the last thing they experienced. For example, Evelyn Adams won the New Jersey lottery not just once, but twice, winning \$5.4 million. Yet within a few short years all of her winnings were gone and she was living in a trailer. She said, “Everybody wanted my money. Everybody had their hand out. I never learned one simple word in the English language—‘no.’ Adams also lost much of her money playing the slots in New Jersey’s Atlantic City. She says, “I was a big-time gambler.” (“8 Lottery Winners Who Lost Their Millions”, on Bankrate.com)

In that same article about Ms. Adams were the stories of seven more similar winners, whose lives were diminished because of their inability to handle their new fortune.

Would we differ, though? It is not as though we all want to win the lottery. However, we all long for a glorious future, safe from loss and full of enjoyment and privilege. **Yet, neither the lottery nor anything else in this world can guarantee the security and fulfillment we seek for one simple reason; they all still participate in the world that is perishing. In fact, all of our efforts to secure some present form of this world’s joys, no matter what they are—health, money, dwellings, perfection, etc.—are bound to disappoint.** The apostle Paul gives us the reason in 1 Corinthians 15. Here, he teaches us that this world and we ourselves are perishing and subject to decay. This world cannot secure our future and nor can it completely fulfill our lives.

Now, this does not mean our service in this world has no purpose. In fact, we will turn our attention to verse 58 next week, which reminds us just how important our present labor in this world is. Nevertheless, for those who are in Jesus Christ this world—its blessings and its curses—is not the end or even the best part of our story. A glorious future awaits every single Christian. In other words, it is a mistake to read the Gospel story of salvation as one of simple forgiveness. **Far from it, God has promised us a new world, which will be experienced by us in renewed or resurrected bodies.**

**Main Idea:** **This is the hope of our future resurrection.** As Christ’s body was resurrected to a renewed and imperishable form of existence, so will all those who have put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ. Paul writes in verse 23, “Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ (15:23). That’s us!

## 1) How does this happen?

This is Paul's question that he asks rhetorically in verse 35, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?"

Again, according to the Corinthians the resurrection was undesirable because of their negative associations with having an embodied existence. Their spirit/body dualism led them to denigrate any future embodied existence. It was simply inconceivable. Nevertheless, Paul wants us to see that resurrection is not beyond conception; it in fact has patterns throughout God's already created order. Seeds are planted and then transformed into fruit-bearing plants and trees. Earthly bodies are characterized by one kind of glory and celestial bodies, like the sun, moon and stars, are characterized by another. Paul is making comparisons: all of this differentiation and change reflects the even greater and better transformation and distinction, characterized by our future resurrection.

### a) We shall all be changed to become like our Savior (44, 49, 51-53)

Paul calls it a mystery, but his point is that we shall be changed at the return of the Lord Jesus Christ into having resurrection, spiritual bodies (44)! Verse 49 reads, "Just as we have born the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven."

The old order of our natural existence shall be translated into a superior order of existence. Like a seed that is planted and becomes something new and wonderful, yet retains continuity with its seed, so our future resurrection doesn't negate our embodiment. Even so, the character of our future resurrection body shall be so wonderful that it cannot be fully imagined now.

But Paul does try to describe it:

- **He calls it the resurrection of heaven's glory! (43)**

But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him" 1 Corinthians 2:9

"There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations—these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit—immortal horrors or everlasting splendors. It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you can talk to may one day be a creature which, if you say it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship...." C. S. Lewis

Suffice it to say that our future resurrection glory shall be like the glory of Jesus' resurrected body. This is the explicit insight of John, the apostle, "Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him" (1 Jn. 3:2)

- **He calls it the resurrection of power! (43)**

Our new resurrection bodies shall no longer be subject to decay. We shall no longer be fragile creatures vulnerable to latest tragedy in this world. Rather, the resurrection brings an imperishable body, which cannot suffer loss.

I am now old enough to realize that my body is not the same as it was in my twenties. I remember scoffing at those who stretched. I remember thinking, "Who needs a warm-up?" Not so any longer. In fact, the last several years I have learned the hard way that just how important both stretching and warming up are for those whose muscles are not as elastic as they once were and whose joints are not as supple. It is no fun to realize that your body has succumbed to the long, yet undeniable process of decay.

Nevertheless, our future resurrection reminds us that this present decay will not get the last word. A future, powerful body awaits those who are in Christ that can never suffer decay.

Our future existence will be characterized by an undiminished experience of the life-giving power of the Lord Jesus Christ. In our future existence, no loss shall be experienced b/c Christ's power shall reign over us so thoroughly. Moreover, his power shall bring the fullness of blessing, for which we now long.

#### **b) We shall all join our Savior**

But this is not merely a change in our existence. The resurrection is the celebration of our Savior's presence. We are not merely like him, we will be with him! When the trumpet sounds and our lives are changed, they are changed because Christ, our Savior, has come. We become like him, when we see him. Our faith, in a moment, will be changed to sight!

At our house, we often recite the children's catechism's question, "Can you see God?" The answer reads, "No; I cannot see God, but he always sees me." There is much truth in that answer, but it is nevertheless incomplete. One day, we shall see God, our Savior—the one who took on flesh and blood and conquered all our enemies—sin, death and the devil. In one moment of his presence, all the twists and turns of my life shall find explanation.

### **2) Why must this happen? (50)**

Ultimately the reason for the resurrection is that our future existence cannot be experienced by our weakened, present existence. **The future we long for cannot be entered until we have attained our new resurrection bodies. This is what Paul writes in verse 50, "I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable."**

In the example I gave earlier about winning the lottery, many people lack the maturity to manage the blessing of immediate, unearned wealth. Dare I say, the glory of heaven far outstrips anything this world could dream up, and if we were to experience in our current, fallen estate disaster would surely ensue? Our current, perishable condition of sin and death must be transformed if we would enjoy the security and fullness of heaven.

It is for this reason, that *we must* be resurrected. Our future resurrection demonstrates that we have joined Christ in his imperishable, glorious existence. This future world is one where sin has lost its condemning sting and death has lost its powerful grip (54-56). Think about it; through Jesus Christ, sin and death no longer have their hold on the saints of God's people. Our future resurrection...

#### **a) Guarantees security**

##### **i. Our loved ones are now secure**

Because death shall be overcome, it means that those who have already died in the Lord are secure. Contrary to the secular, naturalistic philosophy of this world, when we die we do not cease to be. Rather, Paul teaches us that all those who are in Christ "sleep" in the Lord. We understand from elsewhere in the Bible that death creates a separation of our spirits from our bodies. Though this separation is not God's final goal for our lives, it is nevertheless, an improvement. Paul says to "die is gain" because in death our spirits are brought immediately into the presence of the Lord.

This ought to give great comfort to us as we suffer the loss of our loved ones that are in the Lord. The resurrection of Christ guarantees their lives are secure, even though their bodies lay in the grave.

Many of us experience the untimely death of a loved one, whose life seemed cut short. A miscarriage. A teenager's life lost to a drunk driver. A husband stricken in his 40s with terminal cancer. Friends, it is no cliché for us to remember that death's sentence has been

repealed for all those in Christ Jesus. While we grieve their loss, they do not. Instead, their lives are secure in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ.

**ii. We ourselves are secure**

Perhaps it is easier for us to grasp that security for our loved ones as death creeps closer. But do we ourselves know this security when death creeps closer to our bodies? **Do we ourselves live day to day in the gracious confidence of our future resurrection?**

It is not enough to say that we have trusted in Jesus Christ to have our sins forgiven. Have we entrusted ourselves to the future glory of our own resurrection, or do we still hang on to what we think this world owes us? Many, many of God's people fail to grasp the future security of the resurrection because they have failed to long for its blessings. As a result, we spend our time trying to secure things that will always shift in this world.

Only at our resurrection will we experience the...

- fullness of the health of our bodies
- ultimate freedom from sin's guilt and power
- restoration of relationships

The reality we long for is secure, but its security remains in the life we have yet to see.

**b) Guarantees peace (51)**

*We shall all...*

Our future resurrection shall be experienced by *all* in Christ at precisely the same moment. As a result, no one can boast as though they have already "arrived" ahead of their fellow Christians. B/c the resurrection is future and secure for all, we now relax before one another, even though our present trials are difficult.

**c) Guarantees reunion (51)**

*We shall all....*

In rural areas, where historic churches remain you will often find the cemetery on the grounds of the church property. This is the case for Hickory Springs Primitive Baptist Church, located in rural, southern Georgia where many of my relatives on my father's side are buried. That the cemetery would be so close to the church building perplexes a lot of people today. Those saints of old, though, displayed a wonderful theological insight. At the Lord's return, those living and worshipping the Lord would be immediately reunited with those who had earlier passed on. One of my favorite memories is that of hearing my father remark while walking those graves of our departed family members, "One day all of these will rise from their grave." Friends, the return of Christ will be the ultimate High School reunion—one where the comparisons won't matter and the joy could not be richer!

**Conclusion:**

Friends, it is not wrong for us to hate death. It is an intrusion into God's good world. It is a sign of this world's curse on account of humanity's sin. Even so, we do ourselves no favor to focus on it so much that it cripples our hope and robs us of joy. Death, though it be terrible, does not get the last word. The last word on each life in the Lord Jesus Christ is resurrection.