**Foundations (54 of 60) The Resurrection - RC Sproul**

What will our bodies be like in heaven? The Bible teaches that we will be resurrected. We'll also be transformed. We'll examine this topic next on Renewing Your Mind.

It's easy to speculate about heaven. What will our bodies be like? Will we be young or old? Will we recognize our family and friends? Well, today on Renewing Your Mind, we'll hear a biblical study on the resurrection from the founder and chairman of Ligonier Ministries, Dr. R.C. Sproul. Speculation can be fun, but it's important to understand what the Bible says about the resurrection.

Paul wrote about our spiritual bodies, and Jesus was given a glorified body when He rose from the dead. What can we learn about our future from these passages? Here's Dr. Sproul with a message from the series titled, Foundations. As we continue now with our study of the last things, or the study of eschatology, today we're going to look at the subject of the resurrection.

And I think it's important at the beginning to understand the very meaning of the word resurrection. The word that comes from the Greek means literally to rise again. Why is that significant? Well, it's significant for this reason, that so often we tend to think that our future expectation in terms of resurrection simply refers to our continuity of personal existence or simple life after death, by which we assert that the soul continues in a conscious state in the presence of God in heaven while the body disintegrates in the grave.

But when we're talking about the resurrection or a rising again, we're talking about the rising up again of that which has been put in the grave, of that which has decayed and undergone physical corruption, namely the body. As I mentioned in our last lecture on the intermediate state, it has been the affirmation of the church from the first century through the Apostles' Creed to say that among other things we affirm, we believe in the resurrection of the body, resurrection of the onus carnus is the Latin phrase there. And that is not simply an affirmation of the physical or bodily resurrection of Christ, but it is an affirmation of the bodily resurrection of His people.

And of course we find this treated and frequently and in numerous places in the Scriptures. In Paul's letter to the Romans, for example, in the eighth chapter and verse 9, but you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not his.

And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. Now there's a little ambiguity here in this text, and some have looked at this text and say that all that the New Testament is teaching with respect to resurrection is the renewal or regeneration of our inner man, of our transformation from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light, of being raised from spiritual death to spiritual life.

Now Paul certainly is including an interest in that quickening, that resurrection from spiritual death here, but he goes on to say that the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead, His mortal body from the dead, will also raise our mortal bodies from the dead. Now that is the principle that the apostle teaches again and again, particularly when he makes a comparison and contrast between Adam and Christ as the last Adam or the new Adam. As death came into the world through the first Adam, so then the triumph over death comes about as a result of the fruit of the ministry of the second Adam.

And again, Paul sees this as the direct consequences of the reality of Christ's own resurrection from the dead, namely that Christ's resurrection from the dead, His physical resurrection from the dead, is not viewed by the New Testament as an isolated event in the New Testament, but as an event that is the first of many that are to come. Christ becomes the first fruits of those who are raised from the dead. Again we must pause for a second and consider another question.

I just said that Christ was the first person ever to be resurrected. You say, well, wait a minute, R.C., there are resurrections that are chronicled in the Old Testament, and Jesus Himself raised the widow of Nain's son, Lazarus from the dead, Jairus' daughter, and so on. So why would I say that Christ is the first one to experience resurrection when all of these other examples are set forth in Scripture that antedate Jesus' own resurrection? Well, for this reason, even though these other people were brought back to life from the dead, they subsequently had to undergo death again.

The resurrection of which Christ experienced in His own body was more than simply a coming back to life, but there was involved in this process a significant transformation of the body that was placed in the tomb. That also causes a host of controversy and speculation, but the two things that we have to remember with respect to Jesus' resurrection is that, one, there is continuity between the body that was laid to rest in the tomb and the body that came forth out of the tomb, so that we can say it was the same body that was buried that was also raised from the dead. Now, that would also be true of the widow of Nain's son, Jairus' daughter, Lazarus, and so on, that those resurrections that we read about in Scripture show a continuity between the person who dies and the body that is dead and the body that is restored to life.

So it is the next aspect that we have to pay attention to if we're going to grasp the difference between the resurrection of Christ and these other, quote, resurrections, and that is the element of discontinuity. Even though it is the same body, namely Jesus' body, that arises from the grave on the day of resurrection, that body has undergone a dramatic change. It's the same person.

It's the same body, but the body has undergone radical changes, and those changes we refer to as the changes that produce a glorified body. Now, to get deeper insight into that, let's look at Paul's treatment of this and his most extensive treatment of it and most famous treatment of it in 1 Corinthians chapter 15. First of all, in this important chapter, 1 Corinthians 15, Paul gives his most extensive defense of the resurrection of Christ.

He is addressing those who are skeptical about resurrection in general, who are saying there is no resurrection from the dead, and Paul argues with them in a classic method of argumentation that was perfected among the Greek philosophers, which was called ad hominem argumentation, not the fallacious ad hominem abusive approach where you attack the opponent rather than the opponent's argument, but the method made popular by Zeno of antiquity in the so-called reductio ad absurdum mode, where you take the premise of your opponent and take that premise to its logically necessary conclusion and show that if they are consistent with their premises, that logic demands that they come to a conclusion that is absolutely absurd. That's the principle, and that's what Paul is doing in 1 Corinthians 15. He's trying to reason for the implications of the premise that there is no resurrection from the dead.

He says if there is no resurrection from the dead, then Christ is not raised, manifestly. If you have a universal negative, you can't have a particular affirmative. That would violate the laws of immediate inference, and so the apostle is saying that if there's no resurrection, Christ isn't raised.

Okay, let's consider the implications of that. If Christ is not raised, you're still in your sins. You're false witnesses of God.

You're Jehovah's false witnesses because you're running around testifying that it was God, in fact, who raised Jesus from the dead. And then he goes on and spells out all of the implications of these things and shows that you can't have the Christian faith without resurrection. He's trying to demonstrate that the concept of resurrection is absolutely central and essential to the whole of the apostolic faith.

Now, I say that for a reason, parenthetically. We live in a time where a host of theologians have come to the conclusion that we can have a vibrant Christianity without all this supernatural business that attends it, such as death and resurrection of Christ and so on. Rudolf Bultmann, for example, who remarkably gives one of the most precise and insightful exegesis of 1 Corinthians 15 that I've ever seen.

I mean, it's impeccable in its grammatical treatment, and he sets forth clearly what the apostle says, and then when he's finished with his analysis, he says, this is what Paul teaches here, but of course Paul's wrong. I mean, Bultmann doesn't shy away from the conclusion of so many in the contemporary church that the apostolic testimony of the central significance of the resurrection, they say, is false. Now, I can only say to that in passing that people can have a religion without believing in resurrection, and they can call it a Christian religion, but it has nothing to do with the biblical message of Christ and the original Christian faith, and that it is involving, in my judgment, a dishonest claim to be Christianity, if we understand what Paul is saying here.

No resurrection, there is no Christian faith, and we are of all people the most to be pitied because we have placed our trust and our hope in that which is simply not true. Now, I also want to say in passing before I go on here that the apostle, and as we've mentioned when we looked at the doctrine of the resurrection in the past, does not rest his case for the truth of Christ's resurrection on the basis of deducing what the negative implications would be without resurrection. I mean, just think about it.

Paul is saying, if Christ isn't raised, we have no reason to believe that anyone will ever be raised, and when you're dead, you're dead, and those who have died have perished, and we live in a nihilistic universe where you only go around once and there's no ultimate significance to your life or to your death. It doesn't really matter. He doesn't say, oh, and if that's the conclusion, and life would be so grim if we think that death is the ultimate end of all things, then for the sake of our peace of mind, we must therefore affirm life after death.

Paul doesn't argue that way. He doesn't say that we should believe in the resurrection simply because the option to it is grim. He goes on to say, but now Christ is raised from the dead, and he then appeals to the manifold witnesses to that in the ancient world, to the testimony of the apostles, to the 500 people that saw Christ at one time, and in the final analysis he says, I'm telling you that there's a resurrection because I saw Him with my own eyes as one born out of due time.

But then again, what our main concern today is not so much with Christ's resurrection, but what are the implications of His resurrection for ours? And Paul again says that because Christ has been raised and given a glorified body, He is raised as the firstborn, or the firstfruits here, the firstborn of many brothers, and what God has done for Him, He promises to do for all who are Christ. And so it is in 1 Corinthians 15 that Paul then gives his most expansive treatment of this concept of our resurrection. He says, for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ also be made alive, but each one in his own order.

Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ at His coming. Then comes the end when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, and He must reign until He put all His enemies under His feet, and so on. Then he goes on to say, but someone will say, verse 35, how are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come? In other words, what are our resurrected bodies going to look like? I'm sure you've thought about that.

What do the saints in heaven in the final resurrection appear to be? Will I be overweight? Will I be old? Will I be bald? Will I be what I look like at the age I die? What about infants that die in infancy and go to heaven? Will they look like babies forever? What are they going to look like? What kind of bodies will they have? Now listen to how Paul answers this question. Foolish one, this verse is foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies, and what you sow you do not sow that body that shall be but mere grain, perhaps wheat or some other grain. But God gives it a body as He pleases and to each seed its own body.

Now Paul here does something I find fascinating. He applies to nature for an analogy, and it's interesting because it's the same argument that Plato makes in his dialogue, putting it in the lips and the mouth of Socrates, for life after death, where Plato argued the analogy of the seed, that just as in the natural world, if you want to grow flowers or vegetables, you have to plant the seed, and before the seed can bring forth its life, it has to undergo a certain decay and corruption. It has to rot, and as it were, die before it can bring forth the living fruit.

But the finished product that you receive as a result of planting the seed that dies does not look like the seed. You plant a seed for a magnolia tree or something, what you get looks radically different from the seed that you put in the ground. And so this is how Paul is saying the way it is with us in our resurrection.

This body that goes to the grave is like the seed. We have to die. But when this body dies and is changed and transformed, there will be continuity, just as there is continuity between the seed and the flower, but there will also be significant discontinuity between the seed of our bodies and the final body that we will have in heaven.

All I can tell you about that final body in heaven is that it will be human. It will be in some kind of human form. It will be recognizable.

There are all kinds of mysterious things that happen with the appearances of Jesus in His resurrected body, and people didn't always recognize Him right away. We think of the men who were walking to Emmaus, and we don't know whether it was because there was simply an inherent difficulty of recognizing Jesus or if for His own reasons God hid recognition from their eyes. We know the trouble that Mary Magdalene had initially in the garden before she heard the voice of Jesus, and He addressed her.

And yet at the same time when He appears to the disciples in the upper room, they instantly recognize Him. The wounds are evident and so on. So, there are changes, but the degree of those changes we don't know.

In fact, we don't even know that the body Jesus appeared in in the upper room was in its final state of glorification. Whether there were still changes that were going on, remember His enigmatic comment to Mary, don't touch me for I have not yet ascended to the Father, which some have suggested indicates a cryptic hint that Jesus was giving that I'm still in process here of being reconstituted in my glorified body, but that again is speculation. We can assume that all of our basic human faculties will be with our new bodies.

That is, we will still have minds, we will have volitional faculty, the will and affections and so on. But the basic difference is that the new body will not be capable of corruption or of dying. Now, here we have to be careful because Paul is going to say here in a minute that we are sown mortal bodies, we are raised immortal.

Careful. That we will be immortal in heaven is not because we will be inherently or intrinsically immortal. That's a Greek concept that is applied to the soul, that souls are eternal, they're incapable of destruction, nothing could make them fall apart.

Where we believe that the soul is created, is not eternal, and we believe it will live forever, and we will live forever in heaven, but not because we will have an inherently indestructible created existence. We will be rendered immortal by the decree of God. God will not allow us to perish.

Now, that may seem like a distinction without a difference, but it's an important one. What guarantees our immortality is the preserving grace and love of God, of His people in heaven. This is what redemption is.

Not that if we wanted to, we could rebel again against God and say, ha ha, you can't hurt me now. No. The reason why we cannot die is because He won't allow that to happen.

All right, there are, he says, all flesh is not the same flesh. There is a kind of flesh of men, another kind of flesh of animals, another of fish, and another of birds, and we're all aware of that. This is part of our everyday experience, and again Paul is giving us analogies drawn from nature.

There are celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies. The glory of the celestial is one, the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, another glory of the stars, for one star differs from another star in glory.

One of the things he's pointing out here is look around you. You see life in millions of difference of form. You see bodies in millions and billions of different types of manifestation.

Why would you think that the highest form of life that there ever will be in this universe is the life you participate in for your three score and ten years on this planet? Why would we think that the very apex and pinnacle of living existence is what we've experienced to this point when we see all around us lower forms of life, different kinds of life, and Paul says there's still another kind of life, a life that transcends the life that we're enjoying in this world now. So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption.

It is raised in incorruption, sown in dishonor, raised in glory, sown in weakness, raised in power. It is sown a natural body. It is raised a spiritual body.

There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body, and so it is written, the first man Adam became a living being. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first but the natural, and afterward the spiritual.

The first man was of the earth, made of dust. The second man is of the Lord from heaven, and so as was the man of dust, so also those who are made of dust, and as is the heavenly man, so are those who are heavenly. And here's the key point, and as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we will also bear the image of the heavenly man.

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He also explains the centrality of the Kingdom of God to the Christian worldview. When will the Kingdom come? And what is the church's role in the Kingdom? So we invite you to listen next weekend to Renewing Your Mind.