**The Glory of the Resurrection**
(We Shall be Like Jesus)

April 4, 2021

1 Corinthians 15:35-58

Key Verse 15:49 “And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man.”

In the book, “Hope for the Flowers,” Stripe and Yellow are two caterpillars. They realize that there must be “more” to life than just eating leaves. They sense that there must be a way to go up into the sky. They search for a way and find a pillar made up of caterpillars. In the caterpillar pillar, the caterpillars are all struggling to go up into the sky as well. Yellow feels bad about what must be done to achieve this goal. You have to literally step on and climb over all the other caterpillars who are also trying to reach the top of the pillar. So she decided not to go up. But Stripe continues and eventually succeeds at being on the top of the caterpillar pillar. But he was disappointed to see that there is nothing there. He only sees countless other caterpillar pillars. Is this all on the top? Yellow, however, started to spin a cocoon and eventually emerges from the cocoon transformed into a butterfly and flies into the sky. She has found the real answer to the feeling that there must be more to life than eating leaves, and who caterpillars really are. She shows the disillusioned Stripe her empty cocoon, and pleaded with him to make a cocoon of his own. Finally, Stripe emerges transformed into a butterfly, and they fly off together. This book is an allegory of our life. We struggle so much in this world trying to find meaning and purpose, competing with others to get ahead. We do not think about the glorious resurrection body we will have in Jesus Christ. May God give us the glorious hope that we will be like the glorious Jesus when he comes again.

Look at verse 35. *“But someone will ask, 'How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?’”* It was unthinkable for the Corinthians to accept resurrection faith. It was even more unthinkable for them to imagine the bodily resurrection. Many people thought that the resurrection body was like a corpse walking around. Nobody wants to die. But nobody wants to be raised as they are, with their wretched body and bad habits. Moreover, the attachment to life in this world may be the strongest attachment any person can have. But no one wants to repeat the miseries and agonies of life all over again. When I was 25, life was so hard to survive. There was no reason to live except one petty desire which was to have my own laptop before I die. That desire made me earn money in daily labor market early in the morning and finally got a used laptop and tried different models of laptops again and again. Now 20 years later, I still like to try new gadgets but I know that it doesn't give a reason to live. I have got almost everything I want to have, but it doesn’t give me everlasting happiness. Many wealthy people’s suicides show that what you have and what you accomplish do not give you ultimate happiness.

What is your hope or dream? To graduate school with high marks, get a good Job, marry with dream girl or man, get a nice home and car, make a happy family, get rich, be famous, go on a trip to whole world, eat delicacies? There are endless lists which humans can desire. Modern culture keeps whispering to enjoy your life and pursue your dream. But there is no happily ever after before death. There are also thoughts of YOLO, You only live once. It looks inspiring and encouraging but it is only about ‘I or Me’ centered life. However, all those things are meaningless and wasteful things. Like the caterpillar Stripe, you will find nothing special on the top without Jesus Christ.

Look at verse 35 again. *“But someone will ask, 'How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?’”* In some Asian countries, they don’t burn the dead bodies because they believe that they need the dead bodies for next life. Many people believe in reincarnation after death. They believe that they will be born as snakes or roaches if they do bad stuff. All these questions and beliefs come from their fear of death. Even if they have to suffer endlessly, they want to live in this world forever. For example, in this country many terminally ill patients stay in a hospital in order to stay alive one more minute. They think that they can overcome death with the medical technology. So when Paul mentioned about the glory of the resurrection they rejected his teaching in their hearts and they mocked the idea of resurrection.

Look at verse 36. *“How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies.”* Here Paul teaches us the resurrection principle. The resurrection principle is that death is prerequisite to resurrection: unless someone or something dies there is no resurrection. Without death there is no resurrection. Paul, who grasped the glorious resurrection principle, said in 1 Corinthians 15:31, *“I face death every day.”* It didn’t mean physical death, but it meant that he did not despair in all situations, but worked hard for Jesus. There is no thought of death to those who accept the principle of the resurrection. Instead, their hearts are filled with the glory of God. On the other hand, those who reject the resurrection principle are under the shadow of death. A caterpillar must die in order to become a butterfly.

Look at verses 37,38. *“When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. But God gives it a body as he has determined, to each kind of seed he gives his own body.”* Here Paul compares man’s body to a seed that has been planted. No seed is pretty enough to look at with wonder. But the bodies that come from seeds have fascinating beauty beyond imagination, like the beautiful flowers and all kinds of plants which came from their seeds. As we saw in the video clip, somewhat ugly caterpillar turns to beautiful butterfly. Because we have a physical body from Adam, we have many weaknesses and bad habits. Look at verses 42b-44a. *“The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, 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.”* Paul explained that the physical body is the seed of the spiritual body and that the resurrection body is splendorous and glorious. Most importantly, Paul makes it clear that the physical body is the seed of the glorious spiritual body. What a glorious hope it is to be clothed with the resurrection body! In this world, we must suffer. We have sorrow and pain. In the course of living in this world, all men become old and look wretched. Some people have been eaten by cancer. We have to struggle with Calculus and Economics. As we study, our heads seem to explode and we cannot take it anymore. We cannot sing as well as we would like. We struggle with our pimples. We are very frustrated at times because of our sinful habits. It is because we inherited a physical body from Adam.

It is funny that each person thinks, even if he or she does not really believe so, that they are the most handsome man or the most beautiful woman. People think so to forget about their hidden human agonies. One of the human agonies is that each person loses his or her beauty when he or she gets old. So, to old people we flatter them, “Oh, you look very young.” It is a white lie. Still, it works remarkably. Man wants to be a poetic teenager and live in the world forever and ever. But he gets old and dies. Not only that we have to worry about getting fat, high cholesterol, and arthritis. We all bear the likeness of the earthly man. If there is no resurrection body, man’s life is too sorrowful to think about. Those who have no resurrection faith are all too sorrowful, thinking they will be decorated by funeral service men when they die.

But when we have resurrection faith, we do not suffer from the thought of death. Rather, we live in the world with glorious hope. Look at verse 49. *“And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man.”* Paul said in verses 42-44 that the image of the heavenly man is imperishable, immortal, glorious, powerful, and spiritual. We can also find how risen Jesus was described in the gospels. He can be invisible, radiant and beyond time and space. Also he had the resurrection body to be touched and he ate, and even had the nail marks. Most of all, with the resurrection body, he can enter the kingdom of God. With the resurrection body, we will be perfect, without any infirmities, sickness, or disease. What do you think? Is it not like super heroes? There are many kinds of imaginative super hero movies and stories with super-human powers. But the risen Jesus already had these powers in the Bible. Wasn't that amazing? We will get this body and the powers. Hallelujah! When we keep the faith, and fight the good fight, and run the race to the end, we will be clothed with the resurrection body by the Risen Christ. What will we look like? We will not look as we were. We will all look like beautiful Jesus. It is totally unbelievable. But it will be so.

Look at verse 49 again. *“And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man.”* During our lifetime, we Christians all suffer endlessly to keep the faith and run the race of faith. We suffer endlessly because of false accusations of God-haters. Most of all, we suffer because of fallen man’s tendencies in us, though we struggle hard to be like Jesus. But when we die, not only are we clothed with the likeness of Jesus, but also the Risen Christ makes our inner man to be like beautiful Jesus. We will be as humble as Jesus. We will be as gentle as Jesus. We will be as obedient as Jesus. We will be as glorious as Jesus. The man from heaven is Jesus Christ. We die in an ugly and weak body; but when we believe in Jesus the man from heaven, we will be raised up in a glorious resurrection body. We will bear the likeness of Jesus. We shall be like him.

How glorious is our hope of salvation and our hope to bear the image of Jesus! With this glorious hope of heaven in our hearts, we can live every day as holy children of God. But our greatest and most glorious hope is far bigger than just our own personal salvation and glorification. What we Christians hold in our hearts with joy is the sure fact of Jesus’ coming again. What happens to us when he comes again? Look at verses 51-52. *“Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed--in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.”* At the time of the second coming of Jesus Christ there will be the bodily resurrection of all people. Bodily resurrection has deep meaning in it. Those who thought death is the end of everything will find that they were wrong. Those who lived in this world as the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, and those who practiced magic arts, the idolaters and all liars cannot hide anymore in their graves. They will be raised to be judged according to what they had done. On the other hand, Jesus’ people will all be changed to be like him and will inherit the kingdom of God and live forever with the Risen Christ in peace and love.

So now I want to ask or challenge you. There are only two ways before you. One way is “You Only Live Once.” Try and live whatever style of your choice of life for yourself. You maybe successful and famous with loving families which many Facebook or Instagram friends envy. But in the end, there is no meaning in life just as Stripe found on the top of caterpillar pillar. The other way is, “You can live forever like Sons and daughters of God in the kingdom of heaven with this glorious and powerful resurrection body.” There will be amazing party with all heavenly guests in the Bible. Additionally, during this earthly life, you can fully depend on God who hears you when you try to live like Jesus. Also you can pursue what you want for the glory of God. Without Jesus, our every struggle will be meaningless. However, when we accept Jesus’ death on the cross and resurrection, all our struggles in this life become meaningful for sanctification and we will get the glorious resurrection body when Jesus comes again.

Paul encourages us in verse 58. *“Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.”* Paul strongly encourages Christians to work hard for the Risen Christ. Nothing done for God goes to waste. We may not see how it all fits or works – but we know that there is a future – a future renewed body – and everything we do here, regardless of results, leads us into that future. All our struggles and sufferings will be part of our glorious resurrection body. So take heart. Move forward to what is ultimately ours through the work of Jesus Christ. Paul himself showed hope for this glorious resurrection to the end. He said in 2 Timothy 4:7-8, *“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.”*

Before preparing this message, I myself did not much think of the resurrection body: Just living day by day, hoping and praying for myself and my family so that we may not get into trouble and get hurt or sick. Heaven or Resurrection seems too far away. It was so vague like daydream. I thought, “It will be good if it is true.” Jesus washed my sin on the cross. That is enough. But today on this Resurrection Sunday, God gave me the hope that I will be like Jesus with the glorious resurrection body. No more worry or struggles, all our pain for the glory of God turns to holy scar. When he comes again, Jesus will say with wide open arms, “Welcome home, Rochelle. Welcome home, Sai, Welcome home, Lazo, Welcome home, all of you.” Because Jesus lives, His resurrection is my hope today. So shall we bear the image of the heavenly man!

Big Idea: We will be glorious like the Risen Christ