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Andrew M. Davis Sermon

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## **Practical Objections to Resurrection Swept Away**

**1 Corinthians 15:35-41**

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For most people, the concept of the bodily resurrection of dead people out of their graves makes no sense whatsoever to the logical mind. Our present aging bodies are liable to corruption, constantly decaying, filled with the instruments of our own final demise. When we die, our corpses will accelerate greatly in their decay... they will rot or be consumed by fire or eaten by creatures or dissolved by sea water... and this Christian doctrine teaches that AFTER THAT HAS OCCURRED, we will be RAISED UP PHYSICALLY from the dead in eternally radiant bodies, free forever from death and pain. Does this not seem at first glance like the most absurd article of faith ever? Does it not stretch the mind to the breaking point? Does this doctrine not cause people to mock and to poke holes in it and use it to prove how childish and mythological Christianity really is?

But in this section, the Apostle Paul really turns the whole thing around. Because of the power of almighty God in creation, and the power he displayed in history in raising his Son from the dead, he actually says it is ABSURD NOT to believe in the resurrection from the dead! YOU FOOL he says to the churchgoing Corinthian who declares that the resurrection from the dead is IMPOSSIBLE... that the God who made the universe would be UNABLE to raise us up from the dead. Now THAT is the absurdity!

This is another aspect of the greatest chapter in the Bible on the doctrine of the resurrection from the dead! And here, Paul sweeps away the arguments based on practical objections to the doctrine

## I. Foolish Unbelief Raises Objections to Resurrection

### A. Corinthian Objections to the Resurrection

***1 Corinthians 15:12 But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?***

1. They felt that resurrection from the dead was IMPOSSIBLE... and even UNDESIRABLE... why in the world, having been liberated from the prison of the flesh would you even want to be incarcerated again?
2. Perhaps some of the problem is that the Corinthians thought we would be raised back into the same mortal bodies we lugged around for all those years... the body subject to injury, disease, weakness, pain and death
3. Some of the Jewish rabbis taught that resurrection was exactly that... resuscitation into the same body; the two Old Testament resurrections were like that
  - a. the widow at Zarephath received her dead son back from Elijah in exactly the same condition he was in before he died, minus the sickness; so also Elisha raised the Shunammite woman's son in the same way... back to the same condition as before, minus any illness; all of Jesus' resurrections were in the same pattern as well—Lazarus came back into the exact same body he had before he got sick; Jairus's daughter the same way
  - b. Resurrection is different than that... and Paul has to teach them how... but they were laboring under this misconception that our eternal resurrection will be back into these same mortal bodies

4. And to go right back into that corrupt body... why would you want that?
5. Next, Paul addresses their objections at another level... “Even if you did desire for some weird reason to be in a physical body after death, HOW IS THAT EVEN POSSIBLE?
  - a. Many today have similar questions...
  - b. Think about people whose bodies are totally incinerated, like in a jet plane explosion, in which not a single coherent body is found... or bodies that die at sea and are dissolved by the ocean; or at ground zero of a nuclear blast (there may have been as many as 10,000 Japanese Christians who died in the atomic blast in Nagasaki)
  - c. How could resurrection even happen?
  - d. Obviously, people think these are all special cases... but actually every corpse eventually disintegrates into corruption

***Genesis 3:19 you [will] return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.***

6. So, these questions flow from several serious misunderstandings
7. But the biggest misconception of all is that GOD CANNOT DO THIS!! And Paul rebukes that kind of unbelief

#### B. Paul’s Stern Rebuke of their Unbelief

***1 Corinthians 15:36 You fool! [NASB]***

1. It is very direct! Not merely “How foolish!” but in the Greek, ...YOU FOOL!!!!
2. Why? Because these questions stemmed from basic unbelief in the power of God...
3. The basic issue here is... they DON’T BELIEVE GOD CAN DO THIS! It actually can’t be done... even God can’t track down all the particles of the body and reassemble them in order

4. BUT Jesus to the Sadducees, who also denied resurrection:

***Matthew 22:29 “You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God.”***

5. There is nothing God cannot do!!

***Jeremiah 32:27 I am the LORD, the God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for me?***

6. So it is here with us... all of us underestimate what the power of God can do; ACCEPT THE REBUKE!!!

C. The God Who Created the Universe OUT OF NOTHING Can Do Anything His Wisdom Decrees

1. God created a vast universe from nothing, by the simple word of his power

***Genesis 1:3 And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.***

2. Everything else God has done in the physical and spiritual universe is actually LESS POWERFUL than that!

3. So, if God says to the dust that once made up our bodies, “Be assembled! Come together!” he can do that!

4. But as this chapter will show... it’s a lot more complex than that

5. He will argue for continuity and difference! Keep those two words in mind over this sermon and the next one... the resurrected body has CONTINUITY with our present mortal bodies, or else we would not say IT was RAISED; but there are some radical, eternal, glorious DIFFERENCES too!

6. First, however, we have to see the illustration Paul gives of the power of God to bring LIFE from the DEAD

II. God’s Power is Sufficient: Look at the Seeds!

***1 Corinthians 15:36-38 You fool! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. <sup>37</sup> When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. <sup>38</sup> But***

***God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body.***

A. The Illustration from Sowing

1. Paul argues that all farmers and people aware of the basic act of farming—the sowing of seeds in the ground—observe the principle of life rising from death
2. The seed that the farmer sows in the moist soil has to die for the new life to come... as Jesus himself said, speaking of his death:

***John 12:24 Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.***

3. The seed itself looks dead... if you don't add water to it, it never changes; it is cold and hard and seemingly lifeless; it never moves; it does not consume resources; it basically acts dead... sometimes even for centuries

In 2005, an ancient date palm seed found by archaeologists in the rubble of Masada in Israel was planted and germinated, resulting in a healthy date palm tree that grew three feet tall! Masada was destroyed by the Roman legions in AD 73... the shell of the date palm seed was tested by radiocarbon dating techniques and proven to have come from that time... almost 2000 years old!

Now the seed all that time was not actually dead, biologists tell us... but it was very much like death... like a form of suspended animation, with almost no cellular activity...

When you cast the seed into the ground, the hard shell comes off and is discarded... in the parable Jesus uses, its like it DIES...

4. So, what Paul is saying here is that seemingly dead seeds—cold, hard, dry—produce beautiful green stalks rising up from the soil; and they produce heads, and fruit or grain... all of that marvelous life coming from a dead seed—dead in that, it does nothing, doesn't move, change, grow until it is sown in the moist earth

B. Change

***1 Corinthians 15:37 When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else.***

1. There is a direct connection between the kind of seed you sow and the plant that comes from it
2. BUT the plant that comes from every seed LOOKS NOTHING LIKE the seed that is sown
3. Paul says “You do not plant the body that will be but just a seed”
4. Paul will make this very plain later... a strong contrast between our present mortal bodies and the glorious resurrection body

***1 Corinthians 15:42-44 The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; <sup>43</sup> it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; <sup>44</sup> it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.***

5. We’ll walk through those four couplets next week, God willing
6. My only point now is the agricultural analogy Paul is making... the seed looks radically different than the plant that comes from the seed
7. Which is more spectacular? A fully-formed stalk of wheat or the seed from which it sprang?
8. Which is more spectacular? A radiant magnolia tree in full bloom or the seed from which it sprang?
9. So... there will be a radical CHANGE
10. What you plant in the ground does not look like what comes up out of the ground
11. So it will be with the resurrection from the dead

C. So... Take Stock in What Paul Has Said So Far

1. It is FOOLISH to think God can never bring life from the dead
2. He does it constantly all over the earth literally trillions of times every year... seeds falling seemingly dead into the ground, and

radiant glorious life rising up from the dead seed... [massive understatement!]

U.S. Wheat farmers produce 2.4 billion bushels of wheat per year; it takes 900,000 seeds to produce a single bushel of wheat... over 2 quadrillion seeds of wheat per year just in the United States. How many acorns grow, dandelion seeds grow, grass seeds grow? It's simply incalculable. Trillions of trillions of seeds.

### III. What Kind of Resurrected Body? Continuity and Difference!

***1 Corinthians 15:38-42 But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body. <sup>39</sup> All flesh is not the same: Men have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another. <sup>40</sup> There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendor of the earthly bodies is another. <sup>41</sup> The sun has one kind of splendor, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor. <sup>42</sup> So will it be with the resurrection of the dead.***

#### A. God's Determination

***1 Corinthians 15:38 But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body.***

1. Paul keeps pointing these Corinthians back to God, to his power, his wisdom, his purposes
2. To doubt the resurrection from the dead is to doubt God himself
3. As Jesus said, ***“You are in error because you don't know the scriptures or the power of God”***
4. For us as Christians, we need to immerse ourselves in the scriptures so we can drink in the power of God
5. Here Paul says every resurrected person gets the body God wills him to have... it all comes down to the purposes and will and decree of God

6. Keeping with the agricultural analogy, the kernel of wheat produces a wheat plant... not an avocado or a peach or a daisy
7. Seed packets carry the picture not of the SEED within, but of what that seed will PRODUCE when fully formed... the FINAL MATURE PLANT
8. Imagine a seed company that made no distinction between their various seeds... you buy a packet labelled "SEEDS"... but what you get will be a mystery! Perhaps in the packet of 100 seeds, there are squash, cucumbers, wildflowers, morning glories, pumpkins, and watermelon seeds all MIXED TOGETHER... foolish!
9. But God in his infinite wisdom has made a permanent connection between the seed and the kind of plant that will spring up from that seed
10. The Genesis account calls it "kind" saying each reproduces according to ITS KIND

***Genesis 1:11-12 Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds." And it was so. <sup>12</sup> The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.***

11. So it is with the resurrection body... there is a strong connection, a continuity... but also a radical difference

#### B. Different Kinds of Bodies

***1 Corinthians 15:39 All flesh is not the same: Men have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another.***

1. Paul now describes the difference between our present bodies and our resurrection bodies by showing the present world of variation
2. "All flesh is not the same flesh"
  - a. This speaks of the astonishing variety of creatures God has made



- b. In biology, there are an almost limitless variety of creatures... the flesh of humans is genetically different than the flesh of beasts, which is genetically different from the flesh of birds, which is genetically different from the flesh of fish
- c. The science of genetics has come a long way since Gregor Mendel wrote his treatise on genetic differences he observed with pea plants at his monastery in Brno, Czech Republic in 1865
- d. Since that time, the Human Genome Project has published the amazing map of the human body genetically
- e. The genetic makeup of all living cells is similar to one another in some ways, but radically different in the essential ways...

Amino acids are the basic building blocks of all living cells. There are twenty of these amino acids, and apparently six hundred octodecillion ways that those 20 amino acids can be combined... that's a 6 followed by 108 zeroes... that's close to infinity for us mortals!! The specific ordering of those amino acids is what differentiates an oak leaf from a tadpole, or a baby sparrow from an infant human.

These differences were designed from the beginning by God... each species would reproduce "according to its kind"... in other words, wheat seeds would produce wheat plants, acorns would always produce oak trees, apes mating would always produce apes, cats mating would always produce cats... and humans would always reproduce by having human babies. There is not a single proof that species have ever evolved into other species

- 3. Paul's point is none of this, of course... evolution is our problem, it certainly was nothing Paul addressed in his day
- 4. Paul's point is that the flesh of one is DIFFERENT THAN the flesh of the other; in the same way, the present earthly flesh of mortals is essentially different than the flesh and bones we will have in our resurrection bodies

5. And **we will** have flesh and bones in our resurrection bodies, because Jesus does in his resurrection body

***Luke 24:39-40 Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have."***  
<sup>40</sup> ***When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet.***

### C. Heavenly Bodies vs Earthly Bodies

***1 Corinthians 15:40 There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the glory of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the glory of the earthly bodies is another.***

1. Paul is setting the table for the radical change that will happen with our resurrection bodies
2. We are presently created in the image of God, and even in our fallen states, we human beings in our physical bodies display the glory of God

***Psalm 139:14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.***

3. Heavenly bodies, like the sun, moon, and stars, display God's glory in a different way than our earthly physical bodies
4. So each takes its appointed place in the created order, all has its level of glory
5. But they are different from one another
6. The present earthly body, even in its decaying state, has one kind of glory; but the resurrection body that Paul is about to describe has a different kind of glory
7. Continuity... but difference!!

### D. Star Differs from Star in Glory

***1 Corinthians 15:41 There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory.***

1. God created each of the celestial bodies to have certain roles
2. The sun was appointed a much greater role than the moon

***Genesis 1:16 God made two great lights-- the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night.***

3. And the stars also have a role... much less light than the sun or the moon, but they give glory to God by their quantity and their varying colors

Naturalist Donald Peattie spoke of the varied glory of different stars:

“Like flowers, the stars have their own colors. At your first upward glance all gleam white as frost crystals, but single one out for observation and you will find a subtle spectrum in the stars. The quality of their lights is determined by their temperatures. In the December sky you will see Aldebaran as pale rose, Rigel as bluish white, and Betelgeuse orange to topaz yellow.”

Beyond the differing colors, stars have different sizes... some single stars are as large as our Solar System... some stars appear larger to us on Earth because they are closer; Polaris, the North star, is noteworthy because it holds perfectly steady in the northern sky while all the other celestial bodies seem to move around it.

4. Paul’s point here is: each star has the glory assigned to them by the plans and purposes of God... and their glory differs from other glories that God has made
5. So the resurrection body in which we will live for all eternity is of an essentially different nature from the glory of our present earthly bodies... and he will say it is A MUCH GREATER GLORY
6. God willing, next time, we will describe in more detail how the resurrection body is immeasurably, infinitely superior to our present mortal bodies

#### IV. Varying Levels of Glory in the Resurrection

##### A. One Final Point... I Will Make This Much More Next Time...

B. Every Resurrected Saint Will Be Glorious, But Not Equally Glorious

***1 Corinthians 15:41-42 star differs from star in glory. <sup>42</sup> So is it with the resurrection of the dead.***

C. The Glory of the Resurrection Body is Clear

***Matthew 13:43 Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.***

D. BUT The Varying Levels of Glory Can Be Surprising

E. Glory Connected to Earthly Lives

1. It is part of our rewards... part of the varying display of the glory of God in the way we lived our lives
2. Paul spoke of the churches he planted as his glory

***1 Thessalonians 2:19-20 For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? <sup>20</sup> Indeed, you are our glory and joy***

***Philippians 4:1 Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown***

F. Jonathan Edwards: Differing Glory, But No Pride, No Jealousy, No Boasting

Jonathan Edwards, *Heaven is a World of Love*: In heaven there shall be no remaining enmity, or distaste, or coldness, or deadness of heart towards God and Christ. Not the least remainder of any principle of envy shall exist to be exercised toward angels or other beings who are superior in glory; nor shall there be aught like contempt or slighting of those who are inferiors. Those that have a lower station in glory than others, suffer no diminution of their own happiness by seeing others above them in glory.

V. Applications

A. Come to Christ!

1. The resurrection into a glorious eternally alive body is only for those who have trusted in Christ
2. It is part of our salvation... that we who have believed in Christ in this world should be made like him in the next
3. In order to have the eternal blessing of this glorious physical resurrection, you must first have the blessing of a spiritual resurrection... apart from Christ, every sinner is DEAD in transgressions and sins; I was like that once myself! God made me alive through the gospel, through faith in Christ
4. What is the gospel? It means “good news,” and it is the most wonderful news there could be. But to understand how good this news is, you must first understand the BAD NEWS of standing under the judgment of God because of sins... all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God! All of us have violated God’s laws through our lusts, and selfishness, and anger, and pride and covetousness... we stand in danger of eternal condemnation in hell
5. BUT GOD sent his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ... born of a woman named Mary... he was fully human, but also fully God; he lived a perfect, sinless life... he did amazing miracles to prove his deity and his compassion for us in our sickness and death; he died in our place on the cross as our SUBSTITUTE... God transferred our sins onto Christ and he died; and he offers you the gift of forgiveness through simple faith in Christ; God RAISED HIM from the dead physically, in a resurrection body; and God promises to give you a resurrection body as well if you trust in him

Christians:

B. Meditate DAILY on the Certainty of your Future Resurrection from the Dead

***John 6:39 This is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day.***

1. As you see your own body aging... as you address fears of diseases, like cancer, or heart disease, or COVID-19... let your faith have the LAST WORD over your fears

2. Realize that you are not any different or any better than the ancient Corinthians who stumbled over this doctrine... you need to continually renew your faith in the resurrection, for everywhere around you you see clear evidence of decay and death

3. But God raised Christ from the dead, and he will raise you as well!

#### C. Let This Knowledge Drive You On in the Two Journeys

1. Personal holiness

***Acts 24:15-16 there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. <sup>16</sup> So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man.***

2. Service to the Kingdom

***1 Corinthians 15:58 Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain***

#### D. Don't Try to Get All the Answers!

Our enquiring minds always press on to speculations about heaven and the resurrection of the body

Will an elderly person whose body was ravaged by an incurable disease be raised as a youth?

Will an infant who died in a car accident or disease be raised like an adult? If so, will the people who knew that infant in life – his mother, let's say – recognize him or her in heaven?

For that matter, how will we recognize people we knew on earth when they are so different in heaven?

And how will we recognize the great men and women of church history in their heavenly glory?

Many of these kinds of details must wait for heaven to be answered.

E. So... Get Ready to DIE WELL! Die in faith...die in courage... die in hope... die testifying openly to your faith in the resurrection!