

Lake Cities Community Church  
Pastor Craig Schill  
Series: 1 Corinthians  
June 5, 2011

**“Transformed!”**  
1 Cor 15:35-58

---

What do the following movies have in common (all released in the past decade)? X Men, X2, X Men’s last stand, X Men Wolverine, The Daredevil, The Fantastic Four, Silver Surfer, Spider Man, Spider Man 2, Spider Man 3, Batman Begins, Dark Knight, Superman Returns, Incredible Hulk, Iron Man, Iron Man 2 and Thor.

Obviously – they are all **Superhero movies!** They have taken over Hollywood! Tim McWade from the Hartford Examiner said, “In the last 10 years the biggest draw at the theatres has been comic book movies.” Just out this week you will be glad to know is the fifth X-men movie and later this summer the Green Lantern and Captain America.

Question? *Why such a fascination with comic book heroes?* Entertainment writer Leslie Halpern in an article titled, “The Resurgence of Superheroes,” suggests: “Superheroes vicariously restore our sense of power and hope.” A year ago when Iron Man 2 topped \$200 million in ticket sales, ABC’s 20/20 ran a documentary on the phenomena, which concluded: “It is a most basic human urge, the age-old, universal desire to overcome our limitations, to soar and to unlock superpowers hidden within us.” Or, in other words we love the idea of a normal person exchanging their weakness for strength and their mortal life for immortality.

And to that the Apostle Paul would say, **“Welcome to Christianity 101!”** and it won’t cost you \$10 a ticket. Here in our Bible we are going to learn today that exchanging the natural for the supernatural, and weakness for strength is not fantasy but reality, in Jesus Christ!

Turn with me to the very exciting end of 1 Corinthians chapter 15 (v35-58). Paul’s beautiful essay on the resurrection. Last week Paul stressed the importance of the resurrection, that if the dead are not raised our faith is useless! Today Paul discusses the human body and what will happen to it when it is changed either through resurrection of the dead or the return of Christ.

### **Transformed Into What? (35-44)**

We will break the passage into four sections this morning, and the first is verses 35-44. **1Cor. 15:35** But someone will say, **“How are the dead raised? And with what kind of body do they come?”** The Corinthians are speaking, and say, “OK Paul if the dead will be resurrected. How? What kind of body will they live in?” Verses 35-44 answer that question, and it seems to be very natural question following the priority Paul has put on the doctrine of resurrection.

And so Paul responds - Verse 36: **1Cor. 15:36** **You fool!** Don’t you love Paul’s caring and tender way with his congregation! Why does he rebuke them? It could be that he knows their question is based on an incorrect assumption of what resurrection of the dead is and means. Or it could be Paul knows the question comes from those who do not believe

in the resurrection at all, and is intended as mockery. Either way, Paul responds with clear teaching:

(36b) That which you sow does not come to life unless it dies; [1Cor. 15:37](#) and that which you sow, you do not sow the body which is to be, but a bare grain, perhaps of wheat or of something else. [1Cor. 15:38](#) But God gives it a body just as He wished, and to each of the seeds a body of its own. [1Cor. 15:39](#) All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one *flesh* of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fish. [1Cor. 15:40](#) There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one, and the *glory* of the earthly is another. [1Cor. 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. [1Cor. 15:42](#) So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable *body*, it is raised an imperishable *body*; [1Cor. 15:43](#) it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; [1Cor. 15:44](#) it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual *body*.

In this argument Paul asks us to think about God as the creator – who creates bodies of different size and glory. All different from one another, yet in each group they also related. Think about a seed, Paul says, when buried and through its death grows a very different form of a plant or tree. The plant and the seed are different yet still related as one comes from the other. The sun, moon and stars are all heavenly bodies, yet they are also each unique. Likewise, God as creator, out of the seed of the human body will create a different glorified body.

Think of it this way – our resurrected bodies will not be like Lazarus. Lazarus was raised from the dead, but when he walked out, he was the same person as he was when he went in – still frail, sinful and subject to death.

But when you and I are raised at the return of Christ our glorified bodies will be far superior than the ones we have now. Our perishable, weak and natural bodies will be replaced by an imperishable, glorious and supernatural one.

It is just a little bit like the weak and frail Peter Parker exchanging his weak human body for the strong body of Spiderman. Like the resurrected power of Jesus Christ, our new bodies will have continuity with our old ones, but will be vastly superior and no longer subject to sin and death.

Benjamin Franklin once penned his own epitaph. Though he didn't profess to be a born-again Christian, he communicates Paul's teaching of the resurrection:

The Body of B. Franklin, Printer  
Like the Cover of an old Book  
Its contents torn out,  
And stript of its Lettering and Guilding,  
Lies here, Food for Worms,  
But the Work shall not be wholly lost:  
For it will, as he believ'd,  
Appear once more  
In a new & more perfect Edition,  
Corrected and amended by the Author.

Those who die in Christ will appear again – in a new and more perfect edition – with all the bad habits gone, all the addiction removed and the sin vanquished. A new creation yet also from this human body - to God's glory!

## 45-49 Theology of Transformation

Transformed into what? Into a perfect and glorified body! Now we move into the second part of our text, verses 45-49, where Paul provides the theological background for this coming transformation. Verse 45: [1Cor. 15:45](#) So also it is written, "The first MAN, Adam, BECAME A LIVING SOUL." The last Adam (Jesus) *became* a life-giving spirit. [1Cor. 15:46](#) However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual. [1Cor. 15:47](#) The first man (Adam) is from the earth, earthy; the second man (Jesus) is from heaven. [1Cor. 15:48](#) As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly. [1Cor. 15:49](#) Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of the heavenly.

To understand the theology of the transformation of the body – think about adoption. When John and Tami adopted Liana from China – for Liana to now live in America, she needed to begin to take on the characteristics of the new culture - language and clothing, customs, etc. – and so she is *been transformed* from a Chinese toddler to an American toddler.

Same with you and I. When we only belonged to Adam's earthly family we only needed a natural body that was made from the dust of the earth. But, because (by faith in Jesus) we were adopted into God's family, before we enter into His physical presence, we will need not only new clothes, but a whole new resurrection body!

## Why Transformation is Necessary (50-53)

Paul continues this thought in our third section of verses 50-53 where he talks about the necessity of having a transformed resurrected body.

1Cor. 15:50 Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 1Cor. 15:51 Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, 1Cor. 15:52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. 1Cor. 15:53 For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.

The mortal, sinful, frail bodies we have will simply not be able to enter the final Kingdom of God! It would be like going to the North Pole in your Bermudas and flip-flops. You would die – and this body, which is still subject to sin cannot be in God’s presence. We must be changed or transformed. When will this happen? Upon the return of Christ (51). How long will it take? The blink of an eye – instantly! Who will be transformed? All believers - the dead in Christ and those who are still alive at His coming (51).

### **APPLICATION OF THE TRANSFORMATION “Die with Hope and Live with Passion”**

Let’s review. So far, we have learned that our bodies will be changed and transformed from weakness to power and this is needed because the Kingdom of God cannot be inherited by flesh and blood. When will this happen? Sometime down the road – in the future, when Christ returns; which begs the question – “So What? What difference should it make in my life today?”

Paul gives us two responses: **the first is about dying** the second is about **living**.

1Cor. 15:54 But when (in the future) this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, “DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory. 1Cor. 15:55 “O DEATH, WHERE IS

YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?" [1Cor. 15:56](#) The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; [1Cor. 15:57](#) but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

I don't know if you noticed it – but Paul has just done a very surprising thing - He has associated the word "victory" with the word, "death". Not once but three times. Death swallowed up in victory! So where, death, is your victory? We have victory in Jesus Christ! Word associations are very natural to us – and pain, grief, loss and tragedy are easily related to death. But now, Paul instructs us - because of the resurrection - to consider death only in light of victory!

In terms of application – you might remember it this way: **Christians die with hope.** Because of Jesus' victory, we grieve, yet not as those without hope.

I've put together for you some final words of Christian saints through the ages. Listen to their attitude about death and hope and victory: 17th century Scottish theologian Samuel Rutherford said just before he died: "Mine eye shall see my Redeemer. He has pardoned, loved, and washed me, and given me joy unspeakable." He died with hope! John Calvin's wife said on her death, "O glorious resurrection! O God of Abraham and of all of our fathers, the believers of all the ages have trusted on Thee and none of them have hoped in vain. And now I fix my hope on Thee." Martin Luther said on his death bed: "Our God is the God from whom cometh salvation: God is the Lord by whom we escape death." Victory!! John Wesley said as he died: "The best of all is, God is with us. Farewell! Farewell!"

F.B Meyer said: "I have just heard, to my great surprise, that I have but a few days to live. It may be that before this reaches you, I shall have entered the palace. Don't trouble to write. We shall meet in the morning." Hope of resurrection! D.L. Moody said something

similar: "You will read in the papers that D.L. Moody of East Northfield is dead. Don't believe a word of it! At that moment I shall be more alive than I am now!" Victory over death!

Do I have that kind of attitude about death? Do you? Have we made application of Paul's great and surprising teaching? I'm afraid many of us still fear death too much. I am not in any way minimizing grief, or the pain of loss, but that at the core we stand on the confession that the hope we have in Christ's victory trumps the power of death.

Ghandi, with all his wisdom and insight into the human condition did not have hope in Christ and said upon his death: "My days are numbered. For the first time in 50 years I find myself in the slough of despond. All about me is darkness..." No victory or hope. Mark Twain the witty American writer and strong critic of Christianity wrote shortly before His death: "A myriad of men are born; they labor and sweat and struggle... they squabble and scold and fight; they scramble for little mean advantages over each other; age creeps upon them; infirmities follow; ...those they love are taken from them, and the joy of life is turned to aching grief. Death comes at last--the only unpoisoned gift earth ever had for them--and they vanish from a world where they were of no consequence, A world which will lament them a day and forget them forever."

Beloved this is NOT our heritage!! As one young minister was doing his first funeral, He comforted the grieving by teaching that though the spirit departs from the body, yet one day we will see them again, through the resurrection of the dead. He pointed to the corpse in the open casket and said, "Folks, what you see he is just a shell. The nut has already departed."

It may have been an unfortunate analogy, but **Christians die with hope!** Paul's second application is that Christians **live with passion**, verse 58: [1Cor. 15:58](#) **Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not *in vain* in the Lord.**

What you do in service of Christ and the church matters because of the resurrection – that is why we labor and struggle in church ministry. That is why many in the world endure persecution. Because what we do for God is not in vain. This is not all there is – we always live in anticipation of the life to come.

If you fear death, you will also fear life, but if you believe that Christ has conquered death, then fear is gone and you have the freedom to live with passion for His glory.

Let me put together what we have heard this morning from God's word in a little rhyme. **"Die with hope, live with passion, by the glory of the resurrection."** The resurrection gives our lives meaning and our deaths purpose.

That teaching might not sell \$200 million dollars of tickets at the box office like X-Men 5 hopes to do over the next few weeks – but it should. Because the resurrection of the body is not fantasy, but a reality that changes how we live and how we die. Amen.