Affirming Our Faith through the Apostles' Creed
I Believe in the Resurrection of the Body

Text: Philippians 3:20-21 -- But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

Introduction: Well, it has taken us about four months, but we've now arrived at the next to the last statement of the **Apostles' Creed which is ... *I believe in the resurrection of the body*.** The word for resurrection in the language of the New Testament means **"to cause to stand up."** There is much to the concept of resurrection in the Bible and it includes more than just rising from the grave. **It is the completion of the saving act that Christ performs for us. He has already saved us from the penalty of sin (*spiritual death*), and from the power of sin (*by giving us a new nature through the ministry of the Holy Spirit*). When Christ returns for His people and we are raptured to meet Him in the air, He will do away with the presence of sin that has resulted in the weakness and corruption of our natural bodies. The Lord will accomplish this by raising up perfect ones. At this point, every believer who had died or is alive at the time of Christ's return for the church will be wholly and completely redeemed. Perhaps the story *"Pinocchio" will provide a little bit of a picture of what I'm talking about.*** It's about a lonely old woodcarver named **Geppetto** who carves a little puppet boy and names it **Pinocchio**. Whenever he sees the marionette, he thinks how wonderful it would be to have a real son. Upon seeing the wishing star in the sky, Geppetto wishes Pinocchio would become real. That night, **the Blue Fairy** brings Pinocchio to life, removes his strings, and instructs the wooden boy **to shun evil and follow good**. But although he has life, Pinocchio is not fully alive—his body is still made of wood. He longs to be a "**real**" boy. ***There's a lot more to the story but jump ahead to the end with me***. One day Pinocchio discovers a gigantic whale has swallowed Geppetto and the family pets. Pinocchio dives into the sea in an attempt to save his father. After helping to free Geppetto, Figaro the cat, and Cleo the goldfish from the belly of the whale, Pinocchio drowns and is washed to shore. Geppetto is brokenhearted and kneels over the boy sobbing. The Blue Fairy speaks above Pinocchio, "**Awake, Pinocchio, awake**." Pinocchio is supernaturally transformed from a wooden boy into one who is fully alive, complete with flesh and bones. He sits up and rubs his eyes. Seeing Geppetto weeping over his bed, Pinocchio calls out, "**Father**! **What are you crying for**?" Unable to comprehend what has transpired, Geppetto answers, "**Because you are dead, Pinocchio**." Released from his former life, Pinocchio replies, "**No, I'm not. I'm alive. See? I'm real. I'm a real boy**." Finally, Geppetto can see the truth. What appeared to be death was just the opposite. **Pinocchio is at last complete**.

As we walk this earth, Christians understand that we've been rescued by God through the voluntary sacrifice of His Son, Jesus. who died on the cross for our sins. His death is what brings spiritually dead people to life. And while we'll be eternally grateful for our redemption, the final act of salvation (the redemption of our bodies) will not occur until the words of the Apostle Paul are fulfilled ... **if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised**

Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you--Romans 8:11. Now let's see what God wants us to learn about the resurrection of our bodies from our text and another well-known passage. Let's start where Paul does ... with our present situation.

Our Present Situation **(Verse 20 -- For our citizenship is in heaven...)**. This is a way of saying that we as Christians are citizens of the commonwealth of God. Of course, not everybody is! **Unbelievers are enemies of the cross of Christ** (**Philippians 3:18 -- For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ**). **They serve gods of their own making**. They have no citizenship in Christ's kingdom. As a matter of fact, we're told that their **end is destruction and their glory is in their shame – Philippians 3:19**. Think about that for a moment. Worldly people destined for judgment are actually proud of their shameful conduct. They boast in it! In 2015, Hollywood produced a movie (called ***Grandma***) about a lesbian grandmother who tried to raise funds to help her granddaughter get an abortion. **Lilly Tomlin**, according to critics, gave an Oscar worthy performance in the role of the foul-mouthed grandmother in this pro-abortion film. That's hard for us as Christians to imagine. Why? We are different. **We have the life of God within us by the Holy Spirit and are under the rule of King Jesus**. Our names are recorded in heaven, our Savior is there, as are fellow believers who have died before us, and even our rewards and treasures are stored for us in heaven. What we're to be doing now is functioning as **a colony of heaven while living in the world**.

Our Future Expectation **(Verse 20 ...and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ...)**. Jesus is currently in heaven, but we know that at some point in time, He is planning to come again to our world to bring the church home before the great tribulation. Until He does, the Bible says that we believers **groan inwardly (*to sigh -- as in grief or longing*) as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies -- Romans 8:23**. Perhaps you've heard some of your children or grandchildren give a similar sigh when they realized that Christmas is still a week away. **They desperately want it to be here now and the thought that they have to wait sometimes puts a frown on their faces**. This is akin to what believers feel as we anticipate our Lord's return. We groan because we want it to happen now! This longing to see Jesus provides Christians with the **MOTIVATION** to be found faithful when He appears, **ACCOUNTABILITY** for living in a way that produces eternal rewards and **SECURITY** in knowing that our salvation is sure and certain because Jesus promises to raise us up on the last day (**John 6:40 -- For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day**). That's when our Savior will have completed His saving work for us...when we are raptured to be with Him and our souls are reunited with our new resurrected bodies.

This might be the time to address a question I'm asked several times a year, "***Pastor, since there's going to be a resurrection of the body when Jesus returns, is it right or wrong to be cremated when we die***?" And here's my answer: **At the resurrection it will not make any difference whether a person's body has been buried or cremated. Throughout human history,**

people have died in all kinds of ways that have destroyed their bodies, including being burned, eaten by wild animals, incinerated and even vaporized. God will not be stumped by any of these situations. He knows how to raise the body, either in the resurrection of life or the resurrection of condemnation. What we need to remember is that Jesus, our Savior is coming again to finish the work He started.

Our Glorious Transformation **(Verse 21 ...who will transform our lowly body to be like His glorious body, by the power that enables him to subject all things to Himself)**. We will be transformed in our lowly (humbled) bodies to be like His glorious body. All believers have to undergo change for eternal life. In fact, this is the last act in the drama of redemption. What will this look like? **1 Corinthians 15:42-43** tells us what we can expect -- **So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; 43 it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; 44 it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body**. Here are four characteristics of our resurrected bodies.

- **Our new bodies will be imperishable**. It means they will not wear out, grow old, or be subject to sickness or disease. They will be healthy and strong for all eternity. Our new bodies will not age either, since aging is the gradual process whereby our bodies decay (**2 Corinthians 4:16 -- we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day**). **They will have the characteristics of youthful but mature manhood or womanhood forever**. They will display the perfect wisdom of God in creating human beings as the pinnacle of His creation, image-bearers of God Himself. In these resurrection bodies we will see humanity as God intended it to be.
- **Our new bodies will be raised in glory**. This suggests that our bodies will have a kind of natural beauty or attractiveness. They will no longer be dishonorable or unattractive. In addition, because the word "**glory**" is frequently used in the Bible of the bright shining radiance that surrounds the very presence of God Himself, we can expect the same thing surrounding our bodies. This will be outward evidence of the exalted position God will give to us to reign with Christ. Jesus alluded to this in **Matthew 13:43** when He said, "**the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father**." Jesus shone with the glory of God during the Transfiguration (**His face shone like the sun -- Matthew 17:2**) and the Bible says **we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is -- 1 John 3:2**.
- **Our bodies will be raised in power**. This is in contrast to the weak bodies that we currently possess. We will not be all-powerful as God is, but we will have all the strength and power that God has intended for us and it will be sufficient for everything that He wants us to do in heaven.
- **Our bodies will be raised as spiritual bodies**. This does not imply that we will not have a physical presence. Of course, we will just as Jesus did after He rose from the grave. He ate food with two of His disciples and served a meal to others. Jesus also invited His disciples to touch Him in the upper room (**Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side -- John 20:27**). And in the same way that the disciples recognized Jesus in His resurrected body (*though at times it took them a moment of two*), so we will recognize

one another. **Our new bodies are called spiritual not because they are immaterial, but because they will be completely responsive to the leading of the Holy Spirit**. Is there anyone here who doesn't want a body like that -- **one that is imperishable and will never know corruption, that will display the beauty and creativity of God the way He always intended, that will have sufficient power to do whatever God desires and that will be in full submission to the Holy Spirit**? I didn't think so.

When I was a kid, I used to watch ***the Six Million Dollar Man***. Don't laugh ... in the 1970s that was still a lot of money. TODAY, ONE ESTIMATE STATES IT WOULD COST $26,000,000 TO DO THE SAME TO SOMEONE. Anyways ... the premise of the story was that the government was able to take a NASA astronaut who had been horribly injured while testing an experimental aircraft and rebuild him using special "bionic" parts that gave him **great strength** (the power of a bulldozer), **speed** (up to 60 mph) **and vision** (equipped with a 20:1 zoom lens and infrared capability). Most of us who were in our early teens at the time wondered what it would be like to be **Steve Austin -- the Six Million Dollar Man**! Steve, however, was still in a body that was decaying, dying as evidenced by the fact that he could still be seriously injured by others. It might be fun to have a body that could do those things (although some people think I possess that already) but it will be far better to have a resurrected body that will be all God ever planned it to be … **a spiritual body that will be raised imperishable, in glory and power**.

Here are three summary statements that might help to pull this lesson together.

- **As Christians, we're not WHAT we were**. Today we're citizens of heaven who are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. We're no longer a part of this earthly kingdom that is controlled by the Evil One (**Ephesians 2:2-3 -- And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind**).** Our values and beliefs are not determined by Satan but by Jesus, the One who rules and reigns over us. WE'RE NEW CREATURES IN CHRIST.
- **As Christians, we're not yet WHERE we want to be**. Look ... if you're a Christian then you want to be with Jesus in heaven! You agree with Paul that to be away from the body at home with the Lord is the best possible scenario for us (**2 Corinthians 5:8**). Too many believers today are terrified of death as if it's the worst thing that could happen to us. Listen ... I get the pain of being separated from loved ones ... but isn't the notion of going to heaven a good thing for us to focus on? Early in his career, the **great American playwright, Eugene O'Neill**, wrote the imaginative play ***Lazarus Laughed***. It's about Lazarus's life after Jesus raised him from the dead. Near the beginning of the play, guests from Bethany are gathering for a banquet in Lazarus's honor. They are all desperate to hear what Lazarus has to say about his experience. As they take their seats, one guest says, "***The whole look of his face has changed. He is like a stranger from a far (away) land. There is no longer any sorrow in his eyes. They must have forgotten sorrow in the grave***." Another guest, one who had helped roll the

tombstone aside, recalls the scene after Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead in even more beautiful terms: ***And then Lazarus knelt and kissed Jesus' feet, and both of them smiled, and Jesus blessed him and called him "My Brother" and went away. And Lazarus, looking after him, began to laugh softly like a man in love with God. Such a laugh I never heard! It made my ears drunk! It was like wine! And though I was half-dead with fright, I found myself laughing, too***." Doesn't sound too bad, does it?

- **As Christians, we're not yet WHAT we're going to be**. We're going to have new bodies that are as perfect as heaven itself. No longer will we have to watch our bodies decay; we will not suffer any more physical ailments; we'll be able to do some things that we can't even imagine right now. What is coming is so good that we should long for it. Finally, we'll be physically and spiritually whole. The transformation process that started when we first met Christ in this life will be complete. What a day that will be!!

Conclusion: In heaven, we're going to share in the glory of Christ when our lowly bodies are transformed to be like His glorious body. What a wonder that we will share a small part of the glory of the Lord of the Universe! What will that be like? **John Ortberg** shares in his sermon, "**For the Glory of God Alone**" this story: When we lived in Chicago, a friend of ours regularly gave us Bulls tickets. Every year I would take **my son, Johnny**, to a game. The seats were located alongside the tunnel at **the United Center**, so when the Bulls ran out onto the floor, when **Michael Jordan** would run through the tunnel, everybody nearby wanted to give him a high five. **They wanted to share his glory. We all want to touch glory**. We wanted to connect with it. We wanted to be a part of it, even though we know we are not worthy. The Bulls had a reserve player named **Stacey King**. During the **1990 season** King only started six games and averaged 15 minutes per game. **But one night, during an overtime game against Cleveland, he contributed to an important victory**. He said it would always be the greatest memory of his life: **the night he and Michael Jordan scored a combined total of 70 points in an NBA playoff game**. Michael Jordan scored his career-high 69 points, but King shared in the glory. When Christ returns to rapture us, He will transform our lowly bodies to be like His glorious body by the power of the God of the Universe. **The victory over sin and death will be complete**! And what will we have contributed? Nothing really ... but we'll share in His glory nonetheless because our perfection will be complete and we'll have glorified bodies just like our Lord.

NOW JOIN ME AND LET'S DECLARE WHAT WE BELIEVE BY SINGING TOGETHER A SONG BASED ON THE APOSTLES' CREED, "*I BELIEVE*."

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I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth: And in Jesus Christ His only Son, Our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into Hades; The third day He rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, **the resurrection of the body** and the life everlasting. Amen.