In A Moment, In The Twinkling of An Eye

I Corinthians 15:50-58 (New King James Version)

Please turn with me to our scripture text in I Corinthians the fifteen chapter. And let’s read verses 50-58.

I Corinthians 15:50-58 (NKJV)

50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption.

51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—

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 incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

54 So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.”

55 “O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?”

56 The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.

57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

PRAYER

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Headlines about people who vanish rivet our attention.

- **Amelia Earhart** went missing **July 2, 1937** and eighty years later we are still fascinated by her mysterious disappearance.

- Seventy three years ago on December 15, 1944, jazz musician and band leader, Glenn Miller was enroute to play for the American troops in Paris when his airplane mysteriously vanished somewhere over the English Channel. Miller and all those aboard the aircraft have never been seen or heard from since. Although it was presumed that Miller and the other passengers died, he is still officially listed as “missing.”

**D. B. Cooper, Jimmy Hoffa, Natalie Holloway, and little three year old Madeleine McCann**, they were all here, then they simply vanished and have never been heard from since. Reason tells us such disappearances were likely the result of “foul play.” But until proof is given these “vanishings” remain a mystery.

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In our scripture text this morning the apostle Paul tells us about an event that is coming in which all of GOD’S CHILDREN are suddenly going to vanish from the face of the earth without a trace.

Let’s see what the apostle Paul teaches us about this.

First, Paul gives us………

I. A Word of Enlightenment (vs. 50-53)

1. In the verses immediately preceding our text this morning, verses 35-49, Paul has been describing the difference between the mortal bodies we have now and the immortal bodies we will all have in heaven.

2. In verse 50 Paul tells us we cannot go to heaven in these perishable earthly bodies that are made of flesh and blood. In other words, you and I cannot go to heaven like we are now. We cannot go to heaven in these physical bodies.

Well if we can’t go to heaven in these mortal bodies, how do we get into our immortal bodies?

3. Paul enlightens us on this in verse 51………

“Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—“

4. We all love mysteries don’t we? Well Paul is telling us a mystery! The word Paul uses for mystery refers to “the secret counsels or hidden things of God.”
5. Paul is revealing a wonderful promise here and that is some **Christians will never experience death**. If Jesus comes while you and I are still living, we will never die! Imagine that! Our obituary will never be written! Our funeral will never happen! Our death certificate will never be signed! Our grave will never be filled!

The LORD will simply “*change us out of these old weak, perishable earthly bodies, into our new, eternal, heavenly bodies.*”

6. Notice in **verse 52** how quickly this will happen. It will happen........

   **v. 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 incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*”

Paul gives us even more detail in **I Thessalonians 4:16-18**...

   16 For the LORD HIMSELF will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in CHRIST will rise first.

   17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be “caught up” together with them in the clouds to meet the LORD in the air. And thus we shall always be with the LORD.

   18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.
7. Paul is referring to the event many have come to know as “the Rapture.” While the term “rapture” is not used in the New Testament, the term from which it comes is used.

It is the Greek word “harpazo,” which means: “to snatch up”, or “to draw up or catch up.”

Brothers and sisters, it is critically important that you and I understand that this is the very next event on God’s prophetic calendar! Not one single event has to happen before the LORD comes to get His Church. This event could occur before we leave here this morning! It could occur before this day is over! It could occur before Labor Day or before Christmas! The return of Christ is imminent! It can happen “just like that!” (snap of the fingers!)

Illustration: We actually see a foreshadow of this glorious event in the lives of two Old Testament characters.

In Genesis 5:24 we read where “Enoch walked with God then was no more.” Enoch simply “vanished” from the earth without a trace.”

Then in II Kings 2:11 we read where the prophets Elijah and Elisha were walking along one day when Elijah was suddenly carried away from the earth by a whirlwind. Both ENOCH and ELIJAH left this world “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.”
8. Paul reveals four things about this glorious event.

(A) The Lord's return will be a **SUDDEN** event. (v.52)

The word Paul uses for “moment” in verse 52 is the same as our English word **atom**. It refers to a unit of measure that is indivisible. It speaks of the smallest amount of time imaginable.

On the count of three I want all of you to quickly “blink your eyes.” One….two….three! That is how suddenly JESUS will return!

“The twinkling of an eye” happens so fast it can’t even be measured like one flap of a humming bird’s wing,

In other words, when Jesus comes He will instantaneously raise the dead and change the living. It will not be a process. It will all happen so fast it will all be over before any of us even realize it has begun.

**THE LORD’S RETURN WILL BE A SUDDEN EVENT!**

(B) The Lord's return will be a **SELECTIVE** event. (v.50)

Notice the words “**brethren**” in verse 50, and the words “**we**” and “**all**” in verse 51. To whom is Paul referring? He is referring to all **Christians**.
When Jesus comes He is not coming for **everyone**. He is not coming for “**all good people**” or “**all moral people**” or “**all nice people**” or even “**all religious people**.”

**CHRIST IS COMING FOR HIS PEOPLE!** He is coming for those who know Him as their LORD and SAVIOR!

The Lord’s return will be a very **SELECTIVE** event!

**(C)** Thirdly, the Lord’s return will be a **SATISFYING** event for those who are **saved**. (v.52b)

**v. 52 b**  *For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*

God is promising us there is coming a day when all who died as Christians will be raised with an incorruptible body. Now what does that mean?

To be “raised incorruptible” means to be raised with a body that is eternally immune to sickness, disease, injury, or death.

- All those who died with cancer will be raised with a cancer-proof body.

- All those who died with heart disease will be raised with a body that is heart disease free.

- All those who died of old age will be raised with a body that will never age.
-All those who died with bodies badly broken in accidents or burned up in fires, or mangled in military combat, will be raised with bodies that are without deformity or scars.

If we happen to be alive at the time of Christ's coming, His return means we will never be taken from this world by cancer....or heart disease....or a stroke.....or by old age....or by an accident....or by a terrible tragedy.

As Paul says, "Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is your sting? O Hades (grave) where is your victory?" (vs. 54b, 55)

The Lord's Return Will Be A SUDDEN Event!
The Lord's Return Will Be A SELECTIVE Event!
The Lord's Return Will Be A SATISFYING Event (for those who are saved)

(D) And fourthly, the Lord's return will be a SAD event for those who are LOST.

If you have read "Left Behind" books or watched the "Left Behind" movies you may have been led to believe that those who reject Jesus now will be given a "second chance" after the LORD takes His Church out of this world.

There is not one verse of scripture that supports this teaching, in fact, just the opposite.
I want you to listen very carefully to the apostle Paul’s warning in **II Thessalonians 2:9-12**.

The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. (II Thessalonians 2:9-12 NKJV)

Dr. David Jeremiah comments: “Just as death terminates the day of possible salvation for those who reject Christ, so does the Rapture of the Church. Those who have heard the Gospel message and have rejected it will be given a “strong delusion” during the Tribulation. **The day of grace will be over for them**. There is **NO SECOND CHANCE**.

Be warned: You had better not wait to become a Christian. The Bible says **“Behold, now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation.” (II Corinthians 6:2 NKJV)**

If you are here this (morning/evening) and you have not accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you need to listen up! If Christ comes back this very hour or this very day, you will be eternally lost! You will go to hell and be eternally separated from God and from your Christian loved ones!

It won't matter how many times you were in Church! It won't matter how many times you thought about going forward at the invitation! It won't matter how good your intentions were! It will be too late! You will not have a second chance!
Well now that Paul has given us **A WORD OF ENLIGHTENMENT**, he now leaves us with....... 

**II. A Word of Encouragement (vs. 58)**

58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. 

1. As Christians you and I need to live each and every day with a constant awareness that “this could be the day Christ returns!”

2. And until He does return, Paul encourages us to do three things: 

   **(A) BE STEADFAST**

   That word “steadfast” carries with it the idea of being firm and resolute in our beliefs. This is NOT the time to be “wishy-washy” in our faith! This is not the time to be “half-hearted” in our commitment to Jesus Christ. This is not the time to be “sitting on the fence” in our spiritual life.

   Brothers and sisters, if Christ comes back soon, don’t you want to be among those who are completely sold out to Jesus? Don’t you want to be among those who are “all-in” for Christ?

   **LET US BE STEADFAST!**
The scriptures warn us that as the time of Christ's return approaches the world will be crawling with “false teachers” and “false prophets” who will peddle their “false teachings and lies.”

When Paul admonishes us to “be immovable” he is telling us, “Don’t allow false teachers move you away from the gospel.....or move you away from your heavenly goal....or move you away from your eternal hope.

He charges us “to always abound in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”

What Paul is admonishing us to do is to let our lives over-flow with the good works the Lord has called us to do. This is not the time to be spiritually lazy; this is the time to diligently be about our Father's business.

One Puritan writer put it this way: “As the sailor sees the shore approaching he rows even harder!” Let us continue to “row hard” as the Lord's return draws near!
Illustration: I’m sure you have heard the story about the old man who fell asleep in his easy chair one night long after his wife had gone to bed. At the stroke of midnight the old grandfather clock began to chime awakening the old man from his sleep.

But when the clock chimed the twelfth time it didn’t stop. It chimed thirteen.....then fourteen.....then fifteen! And the startled old man hopped up out of his chair and shuffled down to his bedroom and he started shaking his sleeping wife.

He said, “Honey, wake up....wake up.....its later than its ever been!”

Brothers and sisters, its time for all of us to “wake up” and realize its later than it has ever been! JESUS CHRIST IS COMING BACK and it could happen “in a moment in the twinkling of an eye!”

It’s time to GET READY and STAY READY so when Christ comes, WE’LL BE READY!

When He comes in the clouds descending,  
And they who loved Him here,  
From their graves shall awake and praise Him  
With joy and not with fear;

When the body and the soul are united,  
And clothed no more to die,  
What a shouting there will be  
When each other’s face we see,

Changed in the twinkling of an eye.  
Changed in the twinkling of an eye.  
Changed in the twinkling of an eye;  
The trumpet shall sound, the dead shall be raised,  
Changed in the twinkling of an eye.

(Fanny J. Crosby)