

20:20 Vision Ministries – Devotions by Roger Browning

Week 17 (April 19-25, 2015)

We will continue our study of the rapture of the Church by using the material in 1 Corinthians 15. I hope you find hope and assurance in this chapter.

Sunday, April 19 (read 1 Corinthians 15:42-44)

If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. (1 Corinthians 15:44b)

Today's text should be comforting to you, especially if you are noticing a sharp decline in the health of your body. Wouldn't you hate to think that this existence on earth is all there is? Does it thrill you to know that an imperishable body will replace one that is perishable (v. 42)? When you are facing hip or knee replacements or when your back is aching constantly, are you encouraged to know that your weak, dishonored body will become a glorious, powerful body (v. 43)? Are you looking forward to your new **spiritual** body (v. 44)? Maybe you, like me, will admit that you are not doing enough to improve the health of your current body, but someday, by His own power, God will create a new body, one that is fit to live forever with Him. Praise His holy Name!

Monday, April 20 (read 1 Corinthians 15:45-49)

And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the Man from heaven. (1 Corinthians 15:49)

The first man, Adam, introduced sin into God's perfect world (see Genesis 3:1-13). Since that day, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23a), so man's state would have been helpless except for the fact that God sent His Son as "the second Adam from above" to offer us new **spiritual life** simply by accepting His death and resurrection as full payment for our sins. I have taken the salvation message of today's text and rewritten it using the more familiar Roman verses so that you won't miss the meaning of this powerful passage. Read it over several times until you fully understand that "God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21). Someday, we will be like Him (v. 49)!

Tuesday, April 21 (read 1 Corinthians 15:50-52)

I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. (1 Corinthians 15:50)

If you are over 50 years old, you are well aware that your current body was not created to last forever (v. 50). The good news is this: "Now we know that if the earthly **tent** we live in is destroyed, we have a **building** from God, an eternal house in Heaven, not built by human hands" (2 Corinthians 5:1, emphasis mine). No matter how hard we try, our human hands cannot work hard enough to earn a new body or maintain our old one. Like everything else, our new bodies come as a gift from the Lord Jesus Christ (not built by human hands). In other words, our flesh and blood must perish so that we can enter our new bodies purchased by His blood! The Bible constantly reminds us that salvation is a gift (ref. Romans 6:23, Ephesians 2:8-9, etc.). Our current body is called a "tent" because it is fragile, but our new body is referred to as a "building" and an "eternal house." How does this transformation take place? That's the topic of tomorrow's devotion.

Wednesday, April 22 (reread 1 Corinthians 15:50-52)

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. (1 Corinthians 15:51-52a)

This may be the clearest teaching about the rapture in God's Word! Paul acknowledges that not all of earth's citizens will face physical death (sleep), but they must be transformed from their perishable earthly bodies into their glorified heavenly bodies (v. 51). This takes place in "the twinkling of an eye," the time it takes light traveling at 186,282 miles per second to proceed from the outside of an eye to the inside. This means that millions of living believers will just vanish! It means that no one will actually **see** the dead in Christ rise from their graves (1 Thessalonians 4:16). What a great mystery this will be for those poor souls who remain on earth to face the Great Tribulation. Can you see how the antichrist will come into political power to "calm" the terrified world by his false promises? Politically, everything is in place for the Lord to call His Church home. The only question that remains is this: Are you ready?

Thursday, April 23 (reread 1 Corinthians 15:50-52)

For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. (1 Corinthians 15 52b)

I am slowly working my way through this material, because I realize this teaching may be new to some of you. Notice that Paul's letter to the church in Corinth closely parallels his letter to the church in Thessalonica from last week's study. In both texts, he references the trumpet call, the rising of dead bodies and the changing of living bodies (v. 52 & 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). I cannot understand how so many ministers fail to see this marvelous truth of the rapture. It is God's greatest promise to those believers who are living among daily persecutions. We are already citizens of Heaven (Philippians 3:20-21). Won't it be great when we receive new bodies that will last forever in His presence? I set out last week to **encourage** you with these words. Are you encouraged yet? If so, share with others your excitement about the events that are about to take place!

Friday, April 24 (read 1 Corinthians 15:53-58)

When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." (1 Corinthians 15:54)

Satan has used the fear of death to hold us captive for a long time (see Hebrews 2:14-15). Jesus has "destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Timothy 1:10). Don't you love the phrase printed above: "Death has been swallowed up in victory"? The law that condemned everyone no longer has power over us, because "Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes" (Romans 10:4). Death and the grave no longer bring fear (v. 55) because "He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 57b). Take a moment to digest this wonderful text. Then fall on your knees (if you are physically able) and worship the One who died to bring about the final victory!

Saturday, April 25 (read 1 Corinthians 15:58-16:2)

Therefore, my dear brothers, 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. (v. 58)

Since Jesus has provided for your eternal salvation by His own death and resurrection, you are set free to serve Him with great joy. Let nothing distract you from witnessing to others about your salvation as well as God's plan to call the Church home in the rapture. God will reward your feeble efforts to glorify Him (v. 58). After finishing one of the most powerful chapters ever written, Paul begins chapter 16 with these words: "Now about the collection" (v. 1a). The people who understand what Jesus has purchased for us on Calvary as well as His future plans for all who receive Him will never gripe again about the church offering! Simply set aside a predetermined amount and give it each week, not out of obligation, but out of tremendous love for the One who paid a debt He did not owe because you owed a debt you could not pay (v. 2). You'll soon consider it a great joy to give to His work on earth!