

# Wherefore Comfort One Another With These Words

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## Introduction

Recently, the woman who started this Sunday evening church service went home to be with the Lord! I am missing Juanita McCarty, as I'm sure you are, also. A wonderful truth exists, however, that we will miss her for a short time and then we will be with her and the Lord forever; never to be separated again. That is true for all who believe on Jesus and His death, burial, and resurrection as the one act that has saved us from the wrath of God which will come on the rest of the world. The Apostle Paul shared the following with the believers in Corinth the following, found in 1 Corinthians 15:51,

### 1 Corinthians 15:51 (KJV)

<sup>51</sup> Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

The word sleep here speaks of us being dead. Is Paul for real, here? He is, and the mystery he is speaking of relates exactly with the title of this message, "wherefore comfort one another with these words."

Tonight, we will take a brief look at what Paul is speaking about here, and I pray that it will be a comfort to all those who have believed on Jesus. I pray, also, that if you have not believed on Jesus and the atonement for our sins that he provided, that you will be moved to do so!

## The Mystery

As we just saw, Paul spoke of showing a mystery. He states that we shall not all die, but we will be changed. It is necessary for us to be changed in order that we can be with God in Heaven. Paul tells us this a couple of verses later in 1 Corinthians 15:53,

### 1 Corinthians 15:53 (KJV)

<sup>53</sup> For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality.

You see, even though we are saved, we live in a body of flesh that is still corrupted. Paul does a great job of explaining all of this in his letter to the Romans, and I would suggest you read this book again. But suffice it to say, even though we are saved, we still sin at times. We are not set free from ever sinning again, but we are saved from the condemnation that sin brings on us. We who are alive are corruptible and mortal. But this is not the part that brings the comfort! In spite of our physical condition, our spirit has been born again when we believe on Jesus. As Paul tells us in Romans, it is no longer I that sin, but the flesh that I dwell in. Since sin and God cannot be in the same place, because God is holy, we must put on incorruption and immortality.

So, the mystery is, how is it that we shall not all sleep and yet be changed? The answer to this is given to us in a couple of places in Scripture.

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## The Mystery Solved

One of those places is right here in 1 Corinthians 15. 1 Corinthians 15:52 records it this way,

### 1 Corinthians 15:52 (KJV)

<sup>52</sup> In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

Martin Luther said he only had two days on his calendar—today and “that day.”

What this describes is a thing we Christians call The Rapture. You will not find the word Rapture in the King James Bible, however, but you will find the words, “caught up.” The word Rapture actually comes from the Latin word, Rapturo, which is used in several places where the words “caught up” are used. But, in this verse you do not see “caught up” either. What we see here is a description of what is going on when we are caught up. Notice it says here, the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. So, whether we are alive or dead, there is a change going on.

The story is told of a generation ago when an old farmer brought his family to the big city for the very first time. They had never seen buildings so tall or sights so impressive. The farmer dropped his wife off at a department store and took his son with him to the bank—the tallest of all the buildings. As they walked into the lobby, they saw something else they had never seen before. Two steel doors opened. A rather large and elderly woman walked in, and the big doors closed behind her. The dial over the door swept to the right and then back to the left. The doors opened and a beautiful young lady came walking out. The farmer was amazed. He turned to his son and said, “You wait right here. I’m going to get your mother and run her through that thing.”

At the Rapture, we will be taken up, and we will be transformed returning with resurrection bodies.

There were a group of believers in a city called Thessalonica. These Christians were overcoming their previously held pagan beliefs because of their belief of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. One of the things that had bothered them, however, was how this whole resurrection of believers worked. They could not quite believe that those who had died believing on Jesus could be resurrected if there were other believers still alive. Paul addressed this issue in 1 Thessalonians 4:13 – 17,

### 1 Thessalonians 4:13–17 (KJV)

<sup>13</sup> But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

<sup>14</sup> For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

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<sup>15</sup> For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive *and* remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

<sup>16</sup> For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

<sup>17</sup> Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Paul was explaining this mystery to those in Thessalonica that he had previously explained to those in Corinth. He did not want them to be ignorant of the state of those who had already died, and did not want them to be sorrowful because of this ignorance. You see, when you find out the truth of what happens, you will no longer be sorrowful for those who have already fallen asleep in Christ.

He told them, if you believe that Jesus died and rose again, then even those which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. Those that have died already, are with the Lord already. There is nothing we can do to prevent them from returning with the Lord to claim their incorruptible, immortal body! Just as we saw in Paul's letter to those in Corinth, Jesus himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, who is Michael, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Those who had died already, had their soul and spirit go to be with the Lord, but the body remained behind. This part says that body will raise up. It will raise up before we who remain will meet the Lord in the air.

Believe it or not, we already have record of something like this happening. I believe it just impresses on us that we can believe the Word of God concerning this. Scripture tells us that Jesus would have to rise from the dead first. He is the Firstfruit. This is what is recorded in 1 Corinthians 15:20 – 23,

### **1 Corinthians 15:20–23 (KJV)**

<sup>20</sup> But now is Christ risen from the dead, *and* become the firstfruits of them that slept.

<sup>21</sup> For since by man *came* death, by man *came* also the resurrection of the dead.

<sup>22</sup> For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

<sup>23</sup> But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

Everything that God does is orderly. We see here, Christ the firstfruits, and afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Who are they that are Christ's? It is we who have believed on Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. Verse 22 said, though, that "even so in Christ shall all be made alive." What happened to those who died before Jesus' resurrection? They died after Adam, but also died before having the chance to believe on Jesus. What happened to them? Well, this is exactly the part I was talking about when I said

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we have a record of a type of Rapture occurring already! Let's take a close look at what is recorded of the event of Christ's death on the Cross. We need to look specifically at Matthew 27:50 – 53,

### **Matthew 27:50–53 (KJV)**

<sup>50</sup> Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.

<sup>51</sup> And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;

<sup>52</sup> And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose,

<sup>53</sup> And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.

Notice what it said in verses 52 and 53? It said the graves were opened and many bodies of the saints which slept arose and came out of the graves AFTER his resurrection! They were actually seen by those in Jerusalem at the time! Can you imagine what it would have been like if we had been there at the time and saw Juanita walking around after we knew she had died and was buried? Scary back then, but know that we know what happens to those who are asleep in Christ, it would be confirmation that what God said is so! These people, who had their faith in God, as it is said in Hebrews, accounted to them for righteousness, were resurrected from the dead and were seen in Jerusalem. Some of these folks would have been dead long enough to have their bodies decomposed, but yet, they were still seen in Jerusalem! If you find it hard to believe something like this can happen from just a faith point of view, believe it from a historical point of view.

This is why Paul was able to write what he did to those in the church at Thessalonica. We which are alive will in no way hinder those who are asleep in the Jesus from being resurrected. We shall all be changed in the twinkling of an eye.

### **Be Comforted**

Jesus has risen from the dead and was made the firstfruits of those who had died and will yet die before his return. He already took care of those who had died before his resurrection as we have seen. God's word promises us that He will return and that we will all be changed. All of us who have believed on Jesus that is. It is because of this, Paul was able to share with those at Corinth the following in 1 Corinthians 15:54 – 57,

### **1 Corinthians 15:54–57 (KJV)**

<sup>54</sup> So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

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<sup>55</sup> O death, where *is* thy sting? O grave, where *is* thy victory?

<sup>56</sup> The sting of death *is* sin; and the strength of sin *is* the law.

<sup>57</sup> But thanks *be* to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

We, as Christians have the infallible Word of God promising us victory over sin and death and the grave! We have it all because of Jesus and because we have believed on Jesus. This knowledge gives us comfort. We are not ignorant of what is to come. Paul told those in the church at Thessalonica the following as recorded in 1 Thessalonians 4:18,

### **1 Thessalonians 4:18 (KJV)**

<sup>18</sup> Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

We go a step further, also. At the end of 1 Corinthians 15, Paul exhorts the believers in Corinth with the following words in verse 58, which still applies to us in this day,

### **1 Corinthians 15:58 (KJV)**

<sup>58</sup> Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

Merrill Womach, a brilliant Christian singer, was in a plane that struck a tree after takeoff in the winter of 1961. The plane caught fire and Womach tumbled out of the plane engulfed in flames. Some people found him and drove him to a hospital. On the way, to their amazement—from a body squealing with pain—came these words:

I've found the dear Savior and I'm made whole,

I'm pardoned and have my release.

His spirit abiding and blessing my soul,

Praise God in my heart there is peace.

Wonderful peace, wonderful peace.

When I think how he brought me from darkness to light,

There's a wonderful, wonderful peace.

Be comforted in the Lord. Love Jesus and show that love by keeping his commandments. The times can be hard now, but we have the promise of eternal life with God for those who believe on the only begotten Son of God named Jesus. Paul, who had learned to be content in all things, had the right perspective on

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death, as he has explained to us here. He also showed the proper balance in what he wrote to the church at Corinth in 2 Corinthians 5:6 – 9,

### **2 Corinthians 5:6–9 (KJV)**

<sup>6</sup> Therefore *we are* always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord:

<sup>7</sup> (For we walk by faith, not by sight:)

<sup>8</sup> We are confident, / *say*, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

<sup>9</sup> Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.

Wherefore comfort one another with these words.