

32. The greatest secret ever told

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In the military or in the government or the defense companies that are contracted by the government, getting a clearance for classified information or top secret is a big privilege and it also comes with a big responsibility.

In the last portion of chapter 15 in this Book, the apostle Paul shares the greatest secret ever told. No just any secret, I mean the TOP SECRET of the universe! Even the smartest angelic being, who was known as "Lucifer" and now he is known as satan or the devil was kept in the dark when it came in the way of salvation for mankind. He knew that God the Father was going to use His Son Jesus to save His people according to Genesis 3. But he didn't know how.

So to stop God's salvation for mankind, satan had Jesus killed by the very people He wanted to save. I am sure that satan thought, "How brilliant I am! I outsmarted God Almighty!" But little did he know that he was the one who was outsmarted by crucifying Jesus through his human subjects.

A. THE SECRET REVEALED

In 1 Corinthians 15:50-58, Paul cups his hands to his mouth and, into the ears of the believers at Corinth, reveals a mystery, a family secret that was whispered to him by the very mouth of God.

1 Corinthians 15:50-51 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-

"Flesh and blood" was a common figure of speech for mortals, even in our days. We find several comparisons here in this portion of the study:

Flesh and blood vs. spirit

Corruption vs. incorruption in v53

Mortality vs. immortality in v54

In v51 "Sleep" was a common euphemism for death of a Christian believer during that time. It also is a great motto to put in a church nursery.

However, the Lord never uses the words "sleep" or "asleep" to refer to the death of the unbelievers, but instead He uses words such as "perished, lost, without hope, condemned, and under wrath." Only when born-again believers have died is it described as "asleep."

B. THE RAPTURE

In the next few verses the apostle systematically explains about the rapture to us:

1) The Rapture's Suddenness

1 Corinthians 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 incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

It will occur "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" in v52a. Derived from the Greek word "atomos", the word "moment" conveys the idea of something that cannot be divided, separated, or added on to. The other example he gives a flash of light reflected in someone's eye, also expresses the extreme suddenness of the Rapture.

No dramatic slow motion process whatsoever.

2) The Rapture's Order

1 Corinthians 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 incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

In Bible times, trumpets were used to assemble people, signal God's presence, or declare that the end is near (cross referencing verses: Exodus 19:16-19, Isaiah 27:13, Joel 2:1, Matthew 24:29-31). Each of these purposes is in view in this passage.

Heralded by the great sound of the last trumpet, dead believers' bodies will be raised first, and then the living believers will be changed from corruptible current bodies to incorruptible heavenly bodies. But whether living or dead, we who believe will "meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord."

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 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.

3) Rapture's Necessities

1 Corinthians 15:53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

Paul now gives us two events that must happen before we can enjoy the presence of the Lord in heaven. Like trying to mix oil with water, combining heaven with our physical death and decay just won't work. Not only will we all be changed, but also we must.

4) Rapture's Victory

1 Corinthians 15:54-57 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.

Paul goes on to explain what will happen after the transformation. Ever since the days of Adam and Eve, death has strutted around like a proud victor. It has played no favorites; given no warning, known no season of the year.

But after the Rapture, never again will any born-again Christian grieve the loss of a loved one who is also a born-again believer. Never again, because all of us will be in heaven where there is no death, but eternal life in Christ, because death's sting will be permanently gone. Paul begins to explain the reason in v56.

Through sin, death gains its authority over man. And by the Law, sin is strengthened. God's Law – the prohibitions, the "thou-shalt-nots" actually gives sin power. This doesn't mean that the Law is sinful, as Paul clarifies in Romans 7:7.

Romans 7:7 What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, "You shall not covet."

Jewish interpreters often linked different texts together on the basis of a common key word: "death" and "victory" occur in Isaiah 25:8 and also in Hosea 13:14, which Paul may apply to the resurrection as well.

Isaiah 25:8a He will swallow up death forever, And the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces.

Hosea 13:14 "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O Death, I will be your plagues! O Grave, I will be your destruction! Pity is hidden from My eyes."

It is at the Rapture that our victory over sin and death will become more than a taste. It will be completely ours!

Jesus' death on the cross and His resurrection on the third day is the cornerstone of the Christian faith. It is what sets our faith as Christians apart from the faith of all others. Yet many view Christ's crucifixion as a rude interruption of what was an otherwise successful ministry. But the cross was at the forefront of the mind of Jesus Christ from the very beginning. This is where He knew He was headed, that's why He spoke of it often. The Bible even tells us that before He even came to this earth, a decision was made that He would ultimately go to the cross.

Revelation 13:8 All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

It was at the cross that the righteous demands of God were satisfied. It was at the cross that God and humanity were reconciled once again. It was at the cross that a decisive blow was dealt against Satan and his demons. It was at the cross that our very salvation was purchased with the precious blood of Christ. Therefore, we can't talk about the cross too much — or thank the Lord for it too often.

C. OUR RESPONSE TO THE SECRET

1 Corinthians 15:58 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.

Now that we've heard the secret Paul whispered to the Corinthians centuries ago, what are we to do? Set dates for the Rapture? Quit our jobs, sell our possessions, get on a hilltop and flapping our arms in a chicken dance for practicing flying? No, Jesus told us that no one except the Father knows the season, day, or hour of His return according to Matthew 24:36. The answer is given in Paul's final thoughts that are meant to encourage and edify us.

What is the "work of the Lord" in this verse? It's the fulfillment of God's will for your life. But God's will is not always cut and dry. It is not necessarily becoming a pastor or a missionary. It is something designed to fit your own unique abilities and gifts. But whatever it is, He wants you to be committed — rocklike — to that will. In a nutshell, Paul is saying, "Live each day as if it were your last."

The Great Reformer Martin Luther said this: "If you preach the Gospel in all aspects with the exception of the issues which deal specifically with your time — you are not preaching the Gospel at all."

In other words, the Gospel isn't to be changed. But it is to cut into each generation, like a flashing sword sharpened on the stone of Scripture, piercing the darkness of reality, relevance, and need.

Lately it seems that killing a baby not only inside of the mother's womb, but also even outside of the mother's womb is very much "IN" for the liberals and Democrats. They

realized that the Supreme Court will most likely overturn the "Roe vs. Wade" that legalized abortions in America from 1973. Since then, 61 million babies have been killed.

In case you are asking yourself this question: "What about the case of rape or incest?" The percentage of the abortion due to rape or incest is 0.9% of the total abortions. In other words, the babies' lives are inconvenient to the parents in 99.1%.

The New York State governor and Virginia State governor signed the new bills that allow the abortion doctors to murder innocent babies at the late term. The new bill that became a law in VA allows a doctor to deliver a newborn baby to outside of the mother's womb. Then, the doctor and the parents can discuss whether they want to keep the baby or not. If the parents do not want the baby for whatever the reason is, the doctor can kill the baby whose umbilical cord was already cut, without the consequences of being charged as a murderer.

When I found this out from FoxNews, my heart was broken. I didn't know what to say. I just prayed to the Lord. By the way, NBC, CBS, ABC, CNN, and MSNBC didn't report it at all. They were keeping the viewers in a blind spot intentionally.

To make the matter worse, there are several liberal Christian church denominations made statements that they support these late term abortions. That boils my blood.

How did the America that was once a Christian nation become an utterly secular and to the point of demonic? I strongly believe that the fault squarely lands on the pulpit of the Christian churches. The pastors were too busy bickering among themselves, patting their own backs, measuring whose churches is bigger and wealthier, expanding their own kingdoms so that their names are known more than the name of Jesus. They didn't want to bother to tell their congregation that they should not separate their Sunday morning life from their everyday life, including how they vote.

Last year, at the AZ Calvary Chapel Men's Conference, one of the speakers said during his teaching, he doesn't teach his congregation about voting, because it is their individual choice. During the lunch time, I asked him, "Are you telling me that your congregation can vote for whomever they feel like, instead of what the Lord wants them to do? In other words, they can have two separate worldviews – Sunday morning worldview and their own political views?" That pastor told me, "I leave it up to their conscience." I quoted 1 Timothy 4 and told him, "Our conscience doesn't mean anything, because it can be seared very easily with our lame carnal desires."

1 Timothy 4:1-2 Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, 2 speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron

If any of you expect me not to teach this kind of political and social hot potatoes, here is my suggestion for you: You ask the Lord whether I am wrong or not. Also ask Him at which point of your life, you can stop carrying your cross and do whatever you want and then, come back to Him and start to carry your cross again until the next inconvenient time comes.

I like what George MacLeod, one of the most influential pastors in Scotland of the 20th century said, "Jesus was not crucified in a cathedral between two candles, but on a cross between two thieves."

D. APPLICATIONS

1) Depending on how you live for Christ, your heart will be encouraged when you hear the trumpet call of God for the Rapture; if you don't live for Him, your heart will turn to shame. But if you are not a born-again Christian, you will miss Rapture.

2) Live for Christ for the rest of your earthly life, instead of yourself. You will be glad that you did for the rest of your eternal life.