

Three Addresses on the Lord's Return.

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Luke 12: 1-35.

THERE are two things I desire to say before proceeding with what is indicated to us in these verses. The first is, that the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is not a doctrine. Many people consider it to be such, and then regard it simply as a matter to be received or refused at their pleasure. It is not a doctrine! It is a part and parcel of Christianity, and I want you to understand that very distinctly; indeed, if you eliminate the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ from Christianity it is destroyed altogether in a certain way, because redemption is not completed until the Lord returns. You remember we have a scripture for that in Romans 8: 23. You will thus see that Christianity cannot be complete until the Lord returns, that is, as to the revelation and the truth of it. Moreover, if you leave out the truth of the coming of the Lord Jesus you miss a power for holiness that God has given to us (*see* 1 John 3: 3).

The second thing is that we cannot wait for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ unless we are in a right state of soul; and this chapter - a part of which I have read — reveals to us how the Lord would prepare His people to wait for His coming. You cannot wait because you believe the Lord is coming back, or because you try to wait, but you must be in that state of soul without which it is impossible to be found in the attitude of the expectation of His return.

There are some here tonight who will admit to me very readily, "Yes, we do believe the Lord Jesus Christ is coming; but we also find day by day that we are not waiting." Now, beloved, let me put you a simple question: How many of you have said today in your hearts, "The Lord Jesus Christ may be here before the day closes"? It just shows us how that our knowledge goes far beyond our state and condition, and thus it is that the Lord is concerned in this chapter to prepare us in our souls to wait for His return. I may say He goes right down to the bottom, and builds up from there to the top. Now the Lord Jesus does that in this chapter, as I hope to show you.

In the first place, He seeks to deliver us from the fear of man. And why does He do that? Because if you are not delivered from the fear of man you will never be able to confess Christ, and, if you do not confess Christ day by day as you pass through this world, you will never be waiting for Him. Then you get the principle, which is continually found in the Scriptures — warning and encouragement intermingled.

In the first place, He says, "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do"; but then He goes on to say, "I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear Him, which after He hath killed hath power to cast into hell." He gives us warning — don't forget, then, that God is able not only to kill, but to cast into hell. But, then, in connection with that warning, He turns to the other side and gives a very sweet encouragement. You do not need to be afraid of man, he cannot touch you except by divine permission. "Are not five sparrows

sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows" (vv. 6, 7). Man may rage against us, but he cannot touch us; it is impossible without God's permission. I have seen men out shooting, and I have seen them aim at birds, and I have said to myself, "You may be skilful shots, but you cannot hit one bird without divine permission." That is taught us here. "If that be so," says Christ, "remember that God is watching over you; you are dear to Him; the very hairs of your head are all numbered, and you are of more value than many sparrows."

Then He gives a further blessed encouragement. "If you confess me before men, I will confess you before the angels of God." I want to say a word or two about confessing Christ. Suppose you are going to town tomorrow, and some one in the carriage should take out a Bible and read. You might say, "I wouldn't make such a display in the presence of other people." Why not? Suppose I were in the carriage tomorrow, and that I had a thought about the state of the souls of the people there, and I were to say to myself, "I cannot speak to them, but I would like them to see that I am a Christian," so I take out my Bible. Would you condemn me for that? No, don't condemn me! On the other hand, remember, if I do it to make people think I am a very devout person, it would be wrong; but if the motive of my heart is to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ and to magnify Him, then it is a blessed thing.

Well now, beloved, I think there are many ways of confessing Christ. I once said to a young Christian, "Have you confessed Christ?" "Yes, I have," he said. "Are you confessing Christ now?" I got no answer. You see it is a daily thing; it does not mean confessing that you belong to Christ once when you connect yourself with the people of God. It is much more than that, it should be the habit of our lives. I will explain what I mean. I was in a certain town when one very dear to me was suddenly taken ill; I had to send for a doctor, and he was not in the house two minutes before he let me know that he was a Christian. He owned the Lord; he did not say, "I hope to be able to pull her through," but "the Lord will bring her through, I hope." What a difference! You see he owned the name of the Lord, and did it really, for I found afterwards that he was known as a real and devout Christian.

If you are not confessors of Christ, you won't want to see Him, and if you don't want to see Him, you won't be waiting for Him, and thus I attach the utmost importance to what the Lord teaches in the beginning of this chapter, namely, that we should be confessors of Him.

Then see the encouragement to do it. Here we are in all our weakness, and yet by the grace of God we are enabled to confess Christ. Well, if we confess Christ in that way, what is the encouragement? "Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him shall the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God." Now imagine for one minute the time has come when the Lord will recompense His people, and down here in this world there has been a humble Christian who has been in the habit of confessing the name of the Lord Jesus, delighting to speak His name, because "Thy name is as ointment poured forth," then the Lord Jesus Christ will speak his name before the angels of God. Now, I have been told, and I believe it is true, that there is nothing an officer in the army during a campaign so covets as to be mentioned in the dispatches concerning any battle that has been fought. If he is mentioned, it leads to his promotion. He longs for the distinction; but how much greater the joy to the simple Christian, wherever he may be, or in whatever circumstances, or in a small circle unnoticed day by day, whose delight it is to

mention the name of Christ. The Lord says if you do that, He will confess your name before the angels of God. What an immense honour to have one's name told out by the lips of the Lord Himself in the presence of all the angels!

I want you, dear young people, especially to remember this, because there are many temptations to conceal that you are Christians. We all know the temptations, but the Lord brings in the blessed encouragement. Don't conceal that you belong to Him, let your heart be so full of Him that you will delight to speak of Him, and then He will by and by confess your name before the angels of God.

Now He turns to the other side, and it is very solemn. It does not apply to a Christian because the statement is absolute: "He that denieth Me before men shall be denied before the angels of God"; but there may be many a professing Christian who does that. It is a very solemn thing if a Christian does even once deny the Lord, but the Lord Jesus is not speaking of Christians in this verse. If you are not confessors of Christ you cannot love Him; love has waxed feeble when you don't confess His name; and if you are not confessors you will not be in a state to wait for His return.

Now just to connect this part of the chapter with what follows — and the connection is very beautiful — you will notice in verse 13 that one of the company said to the Lord, "Speak to my brother, that he may divide the inheritance with me." But the Lord said to him, "Man, who made Me a judge or a divider over you?" He had not then come for that purpose; and then He draws the lesson, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness." Then He brings in a parable in verse 16, and thus the foundation is laid on which the second lesson is built up. The man in the parable has his abundant crops, but he has not sufficient room to garner them. He says, "What shall I do? I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." That is, all his thoughts were confined to the present moment. He wanted, as many of us have often wanted, not only abundance in this world, but also enough to last as long as we continue in this life. And that was all he cared for. I am sure many of us have known that temptation. If you set your hearts upon things in this life, you are shutting out your responsibility; and so in the parable God says, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee"; and then the question is put, "Whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" And now comes the lesson: "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich towards God." I will not dwell upon that, but I want to call attention to one point in the next verse (22) which shows the connection. The Lord says to His disciples, "Therefore I say unto you, take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat," etc. "*Therefore*," the whole thing turns upon that word; it is the deduction which the Lord draws from the example He has given in the parable.

Now we come to the second lesson. The first is deliverance from the fear of man, the second is deliverance. from anxiety, from carking care, which oftentimes robs us of our peace. In the parable of the sower in the Gospel you get this, the seed that fell among thorns is choked by what? Cares, and the pleasures of this life. The cares are in the same category with the pleasures of this life. The Lord thus proceeds to deliver His disciples from care, that they may be able in their hearts to maintain the attitude of waiting for Him. If my thoughts are down in the dust, how can I be found waiting for Christ? He therefore comes in, and would deliver us from the cares of

this world, from anxiety concerning what we may put on, or our daily food. "No," He says, "there is no need for that and He gives an example, firstly, of the ravens, and, secondly, of the lilies of the field. They are not anxious about things, but the ravens are fed, and the lilies are clothed, and clothed in such a way, that not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed like one of them. If we take that home, we shall understand how foolish it is to be anxious. The truth is, beloved, we are dependent upon God.

He next gives the way of deliverance from anxiety. He says in verse 29, "Seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after; *and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.*" If we did but live in the sense of that! "I am in want," you say; well, the Father knoweth. There is not a single thing that can affect one of His people that does not affect the heart of God. A sentence which I read many years ago, and which has never passed from me is this: "Whatever might be a care to you produces a care *for* you in the heart of God." And so it does; do we not read in the Epistle of Peter, "Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you"? "Your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things." He watches over us even to the smallest and most minute things that might trouble us. Will He forsake us? No, beloved! If you remember the Apostle Paul brings it out in the Epistle to the Hebrews; he says, "Be content with such things as are present, for He has said I will never leave you nor forsake you," so that, as the apostle goes on to say, "We may boldly say the Lord is my helper, and I shall not fear what man will do unto me." So the Lord casts us upon the Father's knowledge and the Father's heart. Then, beloved, He gives the reason why it is we don't enter into the comfort of this: it comes out in the next verse, "But rather seek ye the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you" (v. 31). Now let me point out one beautiful thing. In verse 30 He says, "All these things" (eating and drinking and clothing) "do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things"; then, "But rather seek ye the kingdom of God, and all these things" (about which He has been speaking) "shall be added unto you." But there is a condition annexed, and I will just call attention to it for one moment. It is all summed up in two lines of an old hymn

Make you *His* service your delight,

Your wants shall be His care.

Seek ye the kingdom of God, that is, God's interests, and all these things shall be added unto you. So, beloved, there is no need that one of us in this meeting here tonight should be troubled by a single care; and we shall not be troubled if we only get into our hearts that God loves us, and cares for us, and is watching over us because He cares for us, and thus He will not allow one of His children to want if he seeks first the kingdom of God. The condition is put in this way because God needs to chasten us sometimes, and He does when we need drawing to Him and to His interests. If we make His objects our supreme end, then we shall want nothing as we pass through this world.

Thus the first two lessons of the chapter are deliverance from the fear of man, and deliverance from anxiety. The Lord would have us free from the fear of man and from anxiety. "How happy we should then be!" you say; yes, you would be very happy. The poorest Christian in the world would be able to say, "I am poor, and I have nothing I can call my own, and yet I know I shall never want, because the Father knoweth that I need all these things." How the Lord encourages our hearts; and He seeks to do this in order that we may be in a state of soul to wait for His return.

There is another thing. I will suppose for a moment that all fear of man is gone, and that you can rest upon the heart of God and say, "Yes, I don't know what is going to happen tomorrow, or where tomorrow's food is to come from, yet I know that God cares for me." Now the other thing is that the Lord seeks to establish us in grace now. and we must be, if we are to wait for the Lord's return; and so you get, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (v. 32). There is an exhortation to seek in the previous verse, now it is all grace. He wants to establish the hearts of His people in the grace of the Father. I want to point out two things. It is the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom; that brings in relationship. It is His delight as the Father to do it. It connects itself with the passage in Matthew 13: "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (v. 43). It goes on to the display of the kingdom by and by, when all God's people will be seen in the same glory as the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. It is then that He will come forth as the Sun of Righteousness, and it is then that, in connection with His people, He will take the kingdom and reign from the river to the ends of the earth, and all His people of this present period, and past periods too, will be displayed in the same glory with Him. I have alluded to the passage more than once: "When He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." Then just see the contrast! Look at the conditions now; most of us know what bad health is, and to be weak in body in passing through this world. Now just raise your thoughts to that day when all the saints will come out with Christ and be displayed in the same glory as Himself. "It is your Father's good pleasure to *give* you the kingdom." The whole force of the scripture lies in that word "GIVE"; it is the grace of the Father, and what the Lord wants to do is to establish us in the sense of this grace of which He is speaking.

There are, in the next place, two other things. The first is this, until I am established in grace I will never grow. I wonder if you understand that? A legal soul may be very pious, but it won't grow, and hence Peter says at the end of his first epistle, "Grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ." If you want to grow you must be established in grace. When a saint falls into temptation we sometimes have an idea that we shall help him best if we go and bring a little bit of law to bear upon him. We feel we ought to be hard and find fault. No, beloved, you will never restore a soul in that way; you must go in the truth of grace if you would touch his heart. I knew a lad once who had a father and mother. The father was a good father, but he was very severe to his boy, and when the boy fell into any mistakes, or was guilty of any disobedience, the father chastised him severely. The mother, on the other hand, tenderly looked, though pained. It was a look of *love*, but she had far more influence than the father. She acted in grace, he acted in a legal way. so it is with ourselves. We will never grow unless we are established in the grace of God. You get illustrations of it in Scripture. In 2 Timothy 2: 1, where everything has gone to the bad, the apostle writes to Timothy, "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus." It is that only which will give us power to deal with souls

in days of difficulty, and so here I need to be established in grace, and when I am so established, then it is I shall grow, because then I shall be in the holy atmosphere in which God would have me be, and my heart is melted by the revelation of His grace to me in His beloved Son.

May I add one thing to that, and say, we never get established in grace until we get to God's side of things, and view ourselves from God's side? Why were you born into this world? Only for one reason if you are Christians, namely, to be connected with the purpose of God. It is all of grace. It was God who brought me into the world, who revealed Christ to me, who sustains me every day, and will take me all through the wilderness, and preserve me unto that moment when I shall see the blessed Lord face to face. It is all grace, and I need to be established in grace to understand the heart of God, and to be able to wait for the Lord's return.

Now I pass to another thing, and it is this. If I am established in grace, then I have to become a representative of grace to those about me, and thus the Lord says — for it is the connection in the thought of the scripture — "Sell that ye have, and give alms, provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (vv. 33, 34). I think you will see plainly that unless I am in the truth of grace I cannot express grace. Now it is a principle in Scripture that the believer in any dispensation is to reveal God as known in that dispensation; that is, the Jew was to express a righteous Jehovah, but now He is revealed as the God of all grace, the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the God of our salvation. He is a giving God; "giving" characterizes the day of grace, and we are to be givers too, and so express the heart of God in our contact with men as we pass through this world.

The Lord now goes back to the principle He laid down at the end of the parable. "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich towards God." Now, consequently, you get treasure in heaven — "a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth." I was exceedingly struck in meditating upon this today with a scripture that came across my mind in connection with it: "Whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in My name, because ye belong to Christ, verily, I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward." How marvellous! You meet a child of God, who is weary and thirsty; you give him simply a cup of cold water in Christ's name. This act becomes a treasure in heaven, and by and by it will be acknowledged, for "he shall in no wise lose his reward." The Lord points out the same truth here, and there will be a treasure laid up for you in heaven. That is the principle which the Lord teaches us here, and then He adds, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." If somebody is very dear to you, you are always thinking about that person, your thoughts follow your treasure; and so the only way to have your minds set upon things above is simply to have your treasure in heaven. We may consent to that, and say Christ is our treasure. If Christ is my treasure my thoughts will be with Him. That is the last point in the condition of soul needful for waiting for the Lord Jesus Christ.

When a brother gets up and commences to read at, "Let your loins be girded about," I have always said to myself, "How?" My loins never will be girded about unless Christ is my treasure; if not, I have not the motive or the power for it. Every one will admit that where your treasure is there will your heart be, but that shows the importance of having Christ as our treasure in the heavens.

I am conscious of it myself, and I am sure many of us are while I am speaking, how our thoughts are so often upon things of earth, and yet God is beckoning us on to be occupied with things which are where Christ is at the right hand of God. If you want to be heavenly-minded, the only way is to have your mind upon the things of heaven.

I have given you tonight a kind of preliminary address to show the necessity of a right state of soul to wait for the Lord's return.

I trust the Lord will lay it upon our hearts to consider what has been advanced this evening, that we may all seek to be in this condition, so that day by day it may be a constant thing for us to be waiting for the Lord's return — a real expectation. Where there is a real expectation there will be power in the soul, because the Spirit of God will lead to it, and there will be a holy walk and conversation, for "every man that hath this hope in Him (that is, Christ) purifieth himself, even as He is pure."

LUKE 12: 32-40.

THE subject of this chapter is simply, as pointed out last week, the state of soul suitable to meet the Lord on His return; and we see in detail, I think, how the Lord sought to prepare His disciples, and to impart to them the state of soul which He requires.

I might just, perhaps, go back, and state the points of the chapter, in order to connect them with what I have before me tonight.

We saw, in the first place, that the Lord Jesus sought to deliver His disciples from the fear of man, in order that there might be a bold confession of His name while they were passing through this scene. Then, in the second place, He sought to deliver them from anxiety as to the things of this life, that they might seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, that all needful things might be added to them. Then we saw that He sought to establish them in grace, as we read in verse 32: "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom"; and He sought, not only to establish them in grace, but also to make them the representatives of grace as they passed through this world. Thus He says to them, "Sell that ye have, and give alms." Then there is another point to which I call attention, as it connects itself with what is before me this evening. It is this. If we represent God in grace in this world, we lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven. It is a wonderful thing, but you cannot get away from it; if we are givers in this world, and thus represent God as a giver, we lay up treasure in heaven for ourselves. But then remember, when we speak of treasure in heaven, that everything is centred in Christ, and, therefore, where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. I understand, therefore, that Christ is our treasure, and so, beloved, the way to be heavenly-minded is to have our hearts set upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now I am sure every one here tonight realizes this, that the dearest object we have upon earth is the one that commands our attention, our thoughts, and our affections. It is always true that where our treasure is our hearts will be also, and the Lord applies the figure, I think, without doubt to Himself, and so He tells us that if we have Him as our treasure, then our thoughts will

be with Him. "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (v. 34). There is a distinct connection between that statement and what follows, which is the subject of this evening. The Lord immediately says, consequent upon that statement, "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning" (v. 35). I may say at once that if you have your treasure upon earth you will not have your loins girded, or your lights burning; it is impossible. There is the absolute necessity of having your treasure in heaven if you would be found waiting for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What I feel myself in regard to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is that, as we pointed out last week, it is too much of a doctrine, and too little practical as affecting us in our daily lives. We shall never wait for the Lord unless He possesses our hearts; He *must* possess our hearts if we are to be found waiting for Him. "But," you will say to me, "every one of us has the Lord Jesus Christ in his heart." Are you sure of that? Are you sure that the Lord Jesus Christ dwells in the hearts of all His people? If He does, nothing but Christ will come out from them. No, if He is in our hearts He must be expressed, and the only way to express Christ in passing through this world is to have Him enshrined in our affections. If He is not, He will never be expressed; and this, let me say, illustrates a principle of great importance: that is, we only express as much of Christ as we are like Him; we could not express more if we tried. It is only in the proportion as He is formed within us that He can be expressed by us. If we have only a little of Christ, we cannot express much of Him, and thus you will see the importance of pressing this, that the Lord Jesus can only come out of us in our daily walk and conduct in proportion as we are like Him. A little of Christ — alas, how little some of us possess! We all know it; but then, beloved, we can only present Christ in proportion as we are like Him, and that is why He presses this scripture, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. "

Now He tells us to let our loins be girded about and our lights burning, and then He says, "And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding" (v. 36). Now let us look at this statement in detail. "Let your loins be girded about." Now I think it is only three times in Scripture that reference is made to the loins being girded. In Ephesians 6: 14, "Having your loins girt about with truth"; and in 1 Peter 1: 13, "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind." Now put these three together, and we get this, that it is inwardly we are to be girt; it is in the spiritual mind; and then our loins are to be girt about with the truth. What is the truth? The truth, beloved, is the revelation of God in Christ Jesus; and it is with this that we are to be girded. The Lord says plainly, "Let your loins be girded about"; that is, as I understand it, girt about with the truth in its application to us in the power of the Spirit, so that inwardly under the influence of the truth we may be girded about, so that we may be prepared for conflict or service, or whatever we are called to do. It is, therefore, of the utmost importance that we should understand this expression, "Let your loins be girt about with truth."

Then there is another thing — "And your lights burning." Now let me say one word about that. Does the light of every Christian shine out? Well now, the Apostle Paul speaks in Philippians in this wise, "Among whom you appear as lights in the world." The word "appear" here is really the same word as would apply to the rising of the luminaries in the heavens. For example, the moon shines tonight, for it is set there to shine. Every believer in like manner is set to shine, but then, alas! we don't often shine, and so the Lord Jesus says, "And your lights burning." In the first place, we have to ascertain what the light is. As far as I understand

Scripture, the light is always Christ in the New Testament. It is the only light in the midst of the darkness, and so He speaks in this scripture of the lights burning; it is the light coming out in the daily life, there is no other light for men: "The light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." That received into the heart should flow out of us in our walk, our ways, and our conduct.

I think every one of you will see the necessity of this in regard to the Christian life, that the light should be burning; but why don't our lights burn always, let me ask? Well, you will find in the tabernacle that Aaron had to use the snuffers. And why? In order that the light might be pure, that it might shine without obstruction. We all know what it is to see a candle with a long wick, and the light dim in consequence. It needs to be snuffed, in order that the light may shine clearly. Do you say, "How does that apply to you and me?" I will tell you. Some of us Christians may have bad habits — they will obscure the light. Suppose I were hasty in temper — that would obscure the light. If I were worldly - that would obscure the light; so would evil associations. Thus you will see you have to judge yourselves. There must be self-judgment, in order that everything that is inconsistent with Christ may have no place with us. How many of us have been the causes of stumbling to our fellow-Christians because our lights have not shone clearly! If we were living and walking in the power of the Holy Ghost there would be a manifest testimony to the Lord Jesus shining out of every one of us. The light cannot be hid: we read of the Lord Himself that He could not be hid. And why not? Because of the light that shone so perfectly from Him. You have this statement in John 1: "The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not." The darkness sought to put the light out, and so they crucified our blessed Lord and Saviour.

You will now say to me, "What is the condition for the outshining of the light?" I know of only one; the Apostle Paul gives it to us in the statement about himself: "Always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus " (2 Cor. 4: 10). Now what is the dying of Jesus? Simply, it is the application of the truth of the cross to what I am. What the apostle meant is this, always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that nothing of Paul might come out, only Christ in all he said and did. Let me give you a simple illustration. Suppose I am a witty man, and I meet you, and we have a conversation together. If not held by the power of the Spirit of God, I might be tempted to display my wit. That would not be Christ, but self; and hence it is, in order for the light to shine, there must be the application of death to all that I am, that only Christ may be displayed. This, I apprehend, is what the Lord means in this scripture, "Your lights burning."

Now, before I go further, let me just make one or two applications, because it is one thing to see the meaning of Scripture, but quite another thing to be in the power of it. May I ask you, and myself too, Are our loins girded? Are our lights burning? Do you say, you don't know? We do know! I am sure of this, if you will allow me to say it, that where the light shines out of a Christian distinctly and clearly, the man of the world will hate it. "Will it go as far as that?" you say. Yes! it was so in the case of the blessed Lord, and men could not bear the fierceness of the light, therefore they sought to quench it by crucifying Him upon the cross. Let us, then, bear in mind that if you and I would be ready to meet the Lord Jesus when He returns, there must be the girded loins and there must be the burning lights.

Now we come to the attitude that has to be maintained, and then we will speak of the blessed recompense which the Lord will give to those who are waiting for His return. You will see the attitude is this, "And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately" (v. 36). Now we are to understand that this figure which the Lord uses is given to indicate what the attitude is to be. We are to be like unto men that wait for their lord; he has gone to the wedding, and he is coming back. The figure, then, is this (to make a modern application). The servants are in the hall, they have their hands upon the door, waiting for the first sign of their lord's return, and, on his first knock, they throw the door open wide in order to receive him. There are two things: they are *wanting* their lord to return, and, consequently, they are *waiting* for him. The two things will go together. Now let me make an application of these two things. Do you and I desire the Lord to return? I know we sometimes sing a line of a verse -

Take Thy poor, waiting pilgrims home.

Do we mean it when we sing it? Because it means that while we are singing we are asking the Lord to take us home. Is that our desire? No, beloved, oftentimes it is not our desire. Hence what the Lord presses upon us here is that we are to be in the condition suited to His return, and in the attitude of always expecting Him.

If you remember, I asked last week how many of us really from day to day have thought of the Lord's return. How many have said from day to day the Lord may be here before the close of the day? Yet the attitude the Lord enjoins in this scripture amounts to that, always waiting, always expecting, and always longing that you may see Him face to face. I know how easy it is to swim down the stream of time, and to forget the possibility of a sudden change, that while we are passing along day by day, and while the course of business flows on, there may be a sudden catching away of the people of God, caught up to meet the Lord in the air, to be for ever with Him. The question, therefore, comes to each one of us, Are we ready to see the Lord face to face? Let me give an illustration. Let me suppose a true wife whose husband has gone to Australia or one of the distant dependencies of the British Empire. She does not know when he will return, and let me say, in order to complete the illustration, that during his absence she has not ceased to love him, but she has gathered about her some few things he would not like on his return. She receives a letter to say he is coming, and coming soon. What is her first thought? She looks round the house, and says, "My husband would not like to see that." She is a true wife, and so she puts it away, and not only does she do that, but she says, "He would like to see this and that," and so she collects everything that will please him when he returns home.

I apprehend this illustration will have its application to us here tonight. Is the Lord returning? If He is, I want to get rid of everything that will not please Him, and that is the meaning, I apprehend, of the passage in 1 John 3: "Every one that hath this hope in Him" (that is, in Christ) "purifies himself, even as He is pure." Now purifying oneself is this — getting rid of all that is unsuited to Christ, and the acquisition of everything that is suited to Him, and that is the only possible way of being ready to meet Him when He does return. Let us not pass by a scripture like this, but let it lay hold of our hearts in living power, when the Lord says, "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their

lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately."

I was reading a little book lately; it was not according to the truth in all its aspects, but still there was one thing in it which struck me very much. A rich merchant returned home to his family from his business in the evening. His wife noticed he was very depressed. "What is the matter, dear?" she said. He answered, "I have heard today that the Lord Jesus is likely to return very soon." "What of that?" "Oh!" he said, "I am not prepared to meet Him," and he began to mourn over the fact. "There will be an end to all my plans, all my gain and profit will pass away if the Lord does really come." And yet that man was a Christian! Well now, I want you to make the application to ourselves, so that we may not be occupied with anything whatsoever on which the Lord cannot smile when He returns. It shows us how practical the whole thing is, and that is the object of the whole chapter, to build us up in a state of suitability to meet the Lord. The Lord has that end in view through the whole chapter.

Well, now let me pass to the other side: the Lord's recompense for those who are found in this way, watching and waiting. He says, "Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching; verily I say unto you, that He shall gird Himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them" (v. 37). The first thing is, "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord shall find watching." Now you all know what watching is. If you had a dear friend returning from a distance to you, and suppose you could see the way from the window, you would be watching and waiting there expecting him. Well, the Lord pronounces blessing upon those who are so watching, and thus I ask myself, as I ask you here tonight, Are you really watching?

How many of us attend to the signs of the times, to political movements, and all that kind of thing, the confusion and agitations that go on around us, worldly schemes and plans. But of what value is all that? Why, it will all end for every child of God the moment the Lord comes. In that very day our thoughts and imaginations will all end, as we all know, just as they end when we come to die. The blessing is reserved for those who are found watching. And so, beloved, the conclusion I press upon you is this, Are we watching? We must be watching if we would please the Lord. I have sometimes said, and I quite believe it, that even domestic happiness is sometimes a great barrier for waiting for the Lord. You say, "Is it not a good thing?" It is, beloved; I was about to say it is one of the flowers of the Garden of Eden. But still, domestic happiness may come between the soul and Christ, and it does sometimes; and thus the Lord strips some of us, and we wait, and are solitary while waiting, because He cannot trust us with too much affection in this world. He loves us so much, that He is jealous over us, and wants us for Himself. Do you ever read that expression in the Canticles, "jealousy is cruel as the grave"? What is the meaning? I will tell you how it presents itself to me. When a body is committed to the ground the grave closes in over it and shuts out every other object; it possesses that body absolutely. Well, the Lord's jealousy is like that. Do you suppose the Lord could contemplate with indifference our hearts going after this thing, and that thing, and the other thing, which are contrary to Himself? No; if He loves us, and He *does* love us, He wants our whole hearts. Nothing less than our whole hearts will ever satisfy Him. "Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching."

Now see the wonderful recompense! "Verily I say unto you, that He shall gird Himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them." You will see there are two things. "He shall gird Himself" as the servant. The Lord was the servant down here; you remember He said to His disciples, "I am among you as He that serveth." The blessed Lord, entitled to everything, the One who created everything, and the One who died upon the cross, yet took the place of a servant amongst His disciples. Ah! what imperfect disciples they were. Christians sometimes say to me, "It is impossible to love So-and-so, their conduct is so strange." Well, was not the Lord surrounded by those whose conduct was very strange? Was there not a Judas, and Peter who denied Him? Did the Lord cease to love them? Nay! He says, "As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you." No; the only way to love the people of God is to see them as God sees them, accepted in Christ, and then you can love them. The Lord will gird Himself, He will take the lowest place amongst His people. This is in the glory itself after He has come. "He will gird Himself, and make them to sit down to meat." You will say, "What is the meaning of that?" Well, I will tell you the thought in the statement which satisfies my own heart. It is this. *He will cause us to feast on His own delights*; what delights His own heart will delight yours and mine. "He shall make them to sit down to meat." He will cause us, I repeat, to feast upon His own delights. Is not that wonderful? Sharing His own joys with His beloved people, and not only sharing His own joys with His people, but, coming forth to serve them, He will minister these delights to us Himself, beloved, and He will take the lowest place, the servant of His people, and He will make them rejoice in the sense of His presence and the enjoyment of His love; and so they will not have a single object that He has not. Then remember that we have often been taught that there is not a single future blessing which may not be enjoyed now — in measure, at any rate. If we are going to feast with the Lord on His own delights by and by, may we not do so now? There is a line of a verse — I always challenge my own heart when I sing it — which reads:

His joys our deepest joys afford.

How feebly it is true of us, and yet it may be so. Thus you see in the glory itself the Lord Jesus will come, and will cause His people to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them; and so it is that He holds out all this blessed prospect to encourage our hearts, and to keep them upon Himself in the place where He is.

Then the Lord says this: "And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through" (v. 39); and then He adds, "Be ye therefore ready also" (that is, on the watch): "for the Son of Man cometh at an hour when ye think not" (v. 40). I don't go tonight into the distinction between the public coming of Christ and His coming to receive His people. I speak tonight in a general way; next week I shall hope to take up the distinction. Here it is the Son of Man coming, and that always applies to the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ, in the prospect of which we live day by day, as the apostle says, "those who love His appearing." The point of this additional figure which the Lord uses is this, that we are always to be ready, "Be ye therefore ready also." Now you will say, "How can we be ready?" It is not state of soul only; it is mainly that, but there are many things to be settled. I was dining one day with a lady in London, and I said to her at the table, "Would you like the Lord Jesus to return today?" "No," she said, "I would not." "And why

not?" "Well," she said, "I have many things to settle up first, there are many things I would not like Him to see; I would rather He did not come today." Well, the Lord says, "Be ye ready," that is, everything settled up, and we as real pilgrims and strangers passing through this world with nothing to detain us. And why? Because our hearts are upon Him where He is now. It all resolves itself into that.

I will just press these few last words upon you. Does the Lord Jesus possess your hearts? If He does, then your hearts will be in the place where He is, and that will be the means of the readiness for His return of which He speaks. What I gather is this, that all depends upon the state of soul, our state, so that I cannot conceive of anything tending to greater edification than to sit down quietly in the presence of the Lord, and to put this question to oneself, "Am I ready to meet Him? Would He find in me and round about me all that would delight His own heart?" If I can say, "Yes, He would," then I am in the state which He desires.

Let me just recapitulate the chapter. In the first place, He would deliver us from the fear of man. This is a snare to many of us. I have known many young Christians who have made shipwreck as to their profession because of the fear of man round about them.

Then He would deliver us from anxiety. Many of us have carking cares. "No," the Lord says, "you need not have a single care, God will take care of you." So leave yourselves in His hands; He points to the birds and flowers in order to convince us that God does care for us. "Ye are of more value than many sparrows." God's care may always be trusted in. "I have been young, and now am old," says the Psalmist, "yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor His seed begging bread" (Ps. 37: 25).

Then He wants to establish our hearts in grace. It is a wonderful thing! "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." You can't earn it, He will give it to you. So if our hearts are established in grace now, we can go out in grace, and we can give because God is a giver. Then, as I pointed out at the outset, when we represent God in grace we will lay up for ourselves treasure in heaven, and then our hearts will be there, and that will lead to preparedness to meet the Lord — the loins will be girded, and the lights burning.

Well, I believe it is of all importance to have the Lord continually before our hearts. May He grant that our meditation tonight may lead many of us to judge ourselves as to anything that is not suitable to Him, and lead us at the same time to acquire everything that would please His eye and delight His heart. May He grant it to us for His name's sake.

1 THESSALONIANS 4: 13-18; 1 THESSALONIANS 5: 1-11.

As every one here will see, we have the subject of the rapture of the saints brought before us in this scripture, and it is brought before us in relation to the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ; but before I commence to explain the subject, I want to call attention to the mode of the presentation of the coming of Christ in the previous chapters of this epistle.

You will find in the first chapter that the characteristic of every believer is that he is waiting for God's Son from heaven. Let me just read it (1 Thess. 1: 9, 10): "Ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." Thus the characteristic of every one of us is this, that we are waiting for God's Son from heaven, and not only is that true of the believer, but of every professor (for every professor takes the same ground as the believer), so that every believer and every professor are really on the ground of waiting for God's Son from heaven. Now, whether we accept this or not, it is true, because, as you will see, these converts were converted to this expectation; they had turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven. It is a solemn thing, for if you and I are found waiting for God's Son from heaven, it must affect us practically very much in our daily lives. As I said a fortnight ago, we so often forget the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let me put the question again to you: "In how many hearts has it been present today — the Lord may return before the evening?" And yet you will see — as it is stated in this scripture to which I have called attention — that it is the characteristic of every believer and every professor to expect Christ, whether we understand it or not. Again let me remind you it must affect us, and will affect us, if we are brought under the power of that truth. It is not a doctrine, as I have often reminded you; it is a part and parcel of Christianity, and, consequently, if I am not waiting for God's Son from heaven, I am not on Christian ground. It is therefore, beloved, of the utmost importance that we should understand the truth as stated in this first chapter.

You may say to me, perhaps, "It is all very well for mature Christians to understand it." No, beloved, these converts in this epistle were not more than six months old when the apostle wrote this letter. They were young believers, what we call babes, and it is to them the apostle writes that they were waiting for God's Son from heaven. It applies, therefore, to every believer, and we must not lose sight of it, because if we do, we lose the power of the expectation of the coming of Christ.

There are two other things in the next two chapters. The first is the bearing of this teaching upon service. Let me read two verses at the end of the second chapter. "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For ye are our glory and joy" (vv. 19, 20). You will thus see in the apostle's activity that he always had the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ before him; and may I not say, therefore, that we never labour in the Lord's service, as He would have us to labour, without this motive power, if I may so describe it? I remember reading some time ago a statement in a periodical that if you hold the doctrine of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ it enervates you, and that nobody would be anxious about service, missions, and things of that kind. What could be more untrue? Here I find the apostle full of energy, and he desires the conversion of those to whom he was sent, and he labours indefatigably in the prospect of the coming of Christ. This was his one desire, that he might present his converts before the Lord, and he says, "Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?" Then he adds, "Ye are our glory and joy." You will see, therefore, the effect on service. How wonderful it is! And I may say again, I don't think I can undertake any activity properly unless this blessed truth is dominating my soul, and then in the prospect of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ I labour devotedly; and why do I thus labour? Because I want His approval, beloved. Because it is at the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ the responsibility of the saints will be dealt with. Earth is the scene of our responsibility, and the

coming of Christ is the goal to which we look, as we read in the First Epistle of Timothy, "That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Tim. 6: 14). Earth is the scene of the responsibility, and when the Lord appears in glory He will display the recompense. That is what I understand by the apostle's statement — "Ye are our glory and joy."

Not to enlarge upon that, I want to call attention to two verses in the third chapter. There we see the bearing of the coming of Christ upon the spiritual life. "The Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: to the end He may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints" (1 Thess. 3: 12, 13). There are two things here. There is holiness at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints before God and our Father, and there is love one toward another. That is the wonderful secret! Loving one another is the way of holiness. You may talk to me about holiness from morning to night, but you will never grow in it if there is a lack of love, because love is the nature of God, and God's love is a holy love; hence it comes to pass, as the apostle teaches us here, that if we love one another, and the more we love one another, the more we shall grow in conformity to the image of Christ, the more holy we shall become. I use those last two terms interchangeably for this reason — because the idea of holiness is conformity to the image of Christ, nothing short of that, and hence if any one tells you they are holy, you have to say, "As holy as Christ is?" because nothing short of that is accepted by God. Well then, if that be so, you will see from this scripture that the more we love one another (because that is the expression of the nature of God) the more we shall grow in holiness, and that will be brought out into display at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.

Now I dare say there are some here who have sometimes said, "We have not so much energy in the Spirit as we would like to have," and others will say, "We are really doing nothing for the Lord." Ah! beloved, the reason of that is you haven't the coming of Christ before your souls; if you are living in the prospect of the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ you will be devoted. As the apostle puts it in another place, "The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again" (2 Cor. 5: 14, 15). All that we are as children of Adam has gone in the death of Christ, and now Christ only fills the eye of God, and Christ only can fill the affections of the souls of God's people; and then when the divine nature is in activity in the power of the Spirit, there is an immense growth in holiness, and the prospect of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is a great incentive to it. It has an immense bearing upon the spiritual life; indeed, I may say what I said about service, no one is living properly as a Christian, no one can do so, unless he has the prospect of seeing the Lord face to face. But you will say to me, "That is a very strong statement." Well, let me give a scripture to sustain it. The Apostle John says, "It is not yet manifested what we shall be" (there is now no outward display of what we are as the children of God), "but we know that when He is manifested we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is"; and then he adds, "Every one that hath this hope in Him" (that is, Christ) "purifies himself, even as He is pure." Yes, the prospect of seeing Him and of being like Him will be a constant power acting upon the soul, so that you will get rid of everything that is unsuited to

Him, and you will also desire to acquire everything that is suited to Him, that you may rejoice in the day of His appearing. Well, you see the immense bearing of this truth upon the spiritual life.

Now I come to our chapter. It bears upon bereavement, for that leads to what we get in this chapter. I will tell you how it works out. Some of these saints had died, and these believers had not the truth of the rapture, that is, the saints being caught up in the cloud to meet the Lord in the air; and they thought the saints who had died had lost something because they had died. They began to mourn, they thought that those who had died would not be here for the glory of the kingdom when the Lord Jesus Christ returns, and in order to meet that difficulty the Lord Jesus makes a special revelation to the heart of the apostle.

Let me read verses 13 and 14 again. Now I want you to attend to these two verses. Where the apostle says, "Them also which sleep in Jesus shall God bring with Him," it means at the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ. How can that come about if they had died and departed to be with Christ? How is it possible that they will be brought back with the Lord Jesus when He returns? Now it is we get the special revelation in order to make that plain, and so the apostle proceeds, "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord" (that is, a special revelation from the Lord had been made to him), "that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep" ("prevent" is an obsolete word now, it means "shall not go before" or "get any advantage over" those asleep.) "For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 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" (vv. 15-17).

Now before I speak of the manner of the coming, I want to call attention to the two classes which the apostle indicates. There are many saints who may die before the coming of the Lord; many have died, they have departed to be with Christ, and it is one of the most remarkable things in Scripture that we have no unfolding of the state of those who have departed to be with Christ. We only know that they are with Him. Blessedness enough, surely! We have no description, and no details given about their condition. We *are* told "Absent from the body, present with the Lord": "To depart and be with Christ, which is very much better." The only thing we know, therefore, about the millions of saints who have passed away is that they are with Christ, which is very much better. Ah, it is *very much* better! We have no description of their state of blessedness, and the only thing, I repeat, we know is that they are now with the Lord. Now, beloved, many of us may die, we don't know; we are here tonight looking into one another's faces. Before another week it may be that some of us may pass away to be with the Lord, but if we die we pass away to be with Him. It is not death at all, death is ours. I suppose some of you have watched a dying saint. I have often done so, and the most wonderful thing that has presented itself to me as I have so watched is that when the last pulse beats that soul is with the Lord. It shows not only the Lord's triumph over death, but His triumph over death in the saints, so that you stand by the bedsides and say, "They are gone." Ah! it is better to say, "They are with the Lord." There is no possible interval, for, I repeat, death is gone for the believer. "He died," we may say; no, he sleeps. Some one once wrote to Mr. Wigram when he lived in London, "You will be grieved to hear that our dear sister So-and-so has died." He wrote back, "Died! No, she has gone to a fuller life. I can't conceive of our sister having died, she is living as she has never

lived before." So, beloved, if we are called upon to die, it is only closing our eyes upon this scene and opening them, I was about to say, in the presence of the Lord.

Well, there is another class — those who will not die. The apostle speaks of those who are alive and remain at the coming of the Lord. Now if the Lord were to put it to you as to which you would choose, I wonder what you would say. Of course, the right thing to say would be, "Lord, as Thou wilt." Having had to do with the papers of dear Mr. Wigram, I came across one in which he says, "If I knew the Lord were coming today at 3.30 I would like to die at 2.30, for," he goes on to explain, "I would like to pass through death because the Lord Himself passed through it. I would like to have every experience which the Lord had, although, of course, no one can taste death as the Lord Jesus did." Be that as it may, there are some of us who will remain unto the coming of the Lord, and you and I may. We don't know, and blessed it is for us that it is so. Still, there are some of us who may remain until the coming of the Lord, because, as far as Scripture teaches, there is nothing between the present moment and the return of the Lord Jesus. There is thus a possibility of His coming at any moment, and we should never forget the imminence of the Lord's return, so that we might be living daily in the expectation of it.

Now I will say a word about the manner of the Lord's coming. "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout." That is, an assembling shout; you get the same word in the classics, "to assemble soldiers"; it is a shout to assemble those whom He is coming to fetch. Then we have the voice of the archangel; that is, the expression of His power; and, thirdly, the trump of God. In 1 Corinthians 15 we get the last trump, but here it simply says "the trump of God." It is the signal to march — to be caught up by divine power to meet the Lord in the air. That is how the Lord may come at any moment; but remember this, that when we speak of this coming here it is not Christ's public coming; the world will know nothing about it, they will not hear the shout of Christ, neither will the saints who are alive hear it. The shout is for those who are dead, to assemble them prior to their being caught up with the living saints. That is the first thing when the Lord returns, all the saints who have died are brought out of their graves. Now mark what follows. "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" (v. 17).

Now there is another thing not given in this scripture. In 1 Corinthians 15 we read (I refer to it that you may have the whole truth), "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed . . . for this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 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." What a moment that will be! We which are alive and remain shall be changed, a wave of resurrection life and power will pass over us, all that is mortal will pass out of us, with all the corruption, and every one of us will be like the Lord. That may take place at any moment. If the Lord were to return while I am speaking of Him here tonight, that wave of resurrection life would pass over every saint, and leave us with bodies like the Lord. It is thus a wonderful statement we get here. Then mark one word, it shows the force of the passage, "shall be caught up *together* with them" (v. 16). The dead are raised and the living changed, and they are caught up *together* in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. What a marvellous thing it is! But here it is as plainly as possible, and then will take place what we spoke of at the commencement. The apostle says, "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him."

The saints have been caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; they are with Him, and at the due time He will return with all who have been caught up to be with Him.

I have one word to say regarding the foundation on which this all rests. It rests on the simple statement in verse 14, "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again." It was through death He destroyed him that had the power of death, "and delivered them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Christ has gained a complete victory over all the power of the enemy in His death; He is the triumphant One as risen out of death, and not for Himself only, because He died for His people, and so He is the Victor over death and the grave for you and for me. So everything is based upon the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that is the great foundation on which our souls rest. We know, therefore, that if Christ has died and has risen again, we, if we die, shall be raised out of our graves. The resurrection of the saints follows upon the resurrection of Christ, as the apostle says, "Christ the firstfruits, afterwards they that are Christ's at His coming." He has rescued us from the power of the enemy, and He holds us in His hands, so that if we die His hand will reach us in the grave, we shall be raised out of it, our bodies will be changed, and we shall be like Him.

Now I cannot conceive a more wonderful thing to influence us than this. We need some such influence. We go about, and work, and get under the power of the cares of this scene, and forget the wonderful prospect we have before us; we become worldly. How can we if we are expecting the coming of Christ? We go in for worldly amusements. How can we if we are waiting for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ? No! we should say, the Lord might come in the midst of it. And what then? As Peter says, "Be diligent, that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless."

Now I want to say a word in regard to the relation of this to the appearing. We are caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and we go in with Him. The first act of Christ when we are caught up is to introduce us into the Father's house, and then if we go in with Him it is in order to come out with Him, and, beloved, if I love the appearing of Christ, I shall rejoice at this prospect of His coming out, and I will tell you why. If I think of the rapture of the saints, of necessity I begin to think of what I get, but when I think of the appearing, I begin to think of what *He* will get. Is it no joy for us to remember that in this very scene where He was crucified, rejected, and cast out, He will triumph, that He will have His rights in the very scene where he was rejected? He said, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me," and that will never be fulfilled until He has come back; every one then will bow to Him, and every tongue confess that He is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Further, if I confine my thoughts to the rapture, I don't get the scope of Scripture, and I don't enter into communion with the heart of God. Remember this, the whole universe is to be flooded with the glory of God, it is to be a universe of bliss. How is that to be brought about? Only by Christ coming out with His saints, and then the whole universe will be in accord with the mind of God. It is then everything will resound to the praise of Him whose counsel it was that everything in heaven and in earth should be headed up under Christ. This wonderful prospect of everything in heaven and in earth being headed up under Christ should rejoice our hearts; He, the Supreme One; and He will retain that supremacy until the end of the kingdom, and then, as we get in 1 Corinthians 15, He will deliver up the kingdom. He will have reduced everything to submission to Himself, everything will have been put under

His feet, and when that consummation is reached, then it is He will deliver up the kingdom He has won, and over which He has reigned, and the object will be that God may be all in all.

Another remarkable thing I will say before I conclude is that you have no account in Scripture of Christ in eternity. No; we know He is in eternity, but this is the last act of His that we get in the Scriptures, He hands up the kingdom to God and the Father, that God may be all in all; only remember when I say this, that when we get the term "God" absolutely in Scripture it includes Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. And why is Christ not mentioned? Why have we no description of Him in eternity? The only detailed account we have of eternity is in Revelation 21: 1-8. There it is God, there is no mention of the Lord Jesus Christ. I will tell you why it is. He is the firstborn among many brethren. When He came into this scene He became a man, and He remains a man for ever; and thus He will move amongst His redeemed as the firstborn of all who are conformed to His image, so that in eternity He will always be with us and we shall always delight in His presence. God will be the joy of His heart, as of our hearts; and then, as He surveys the multitudes of the redeemed of all ages, He will see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied.

I cannot go into the next chapter, but I will point out the connection of it that you may understand it. The first five verses refer to the appearing of Christ — the day of the Lord. The day of the Lord is this, it introduces the reign of Christ. It always has the aspect of judgment, because when it is introduced Christ will put down all things that are opposed to God. That is the first part of the reign of Christ, He comes in judgment. If you read Isaiah 2 you will see that the day of the Lord is against everything that lifts itself up against the supremacy of God. Everything opposed to God will be dealt with in judgment, and then it is we get the day of Christ, when everything will be in subjection to Him; and so the apostle reminds us here that while the day of the Lord will come as a thief upon those who are not watching, that is, upon the unconverted here, still, as he goes on to say, "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness" (vv. 4, 5). Since we are the children of the day now, we are to live according to the day to which we belong, for the moral characteristics of that day have to be displayed in and through the saints of God, and you get exhortations consequent upon that. You see it in verse 6: "Therefore, let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ" (that is, at His coming, a complete and final salvation), "who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him" (vv. 6-10).

Now one word upon the double exhortation that we get in verse 11: "Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another." Well, beloved, as I said to you, many of the saints have passed away, and if we are tempted to mourn over them, the apostle gives us these words at the direction of the Lord for our comfort, as he says in the last verse of the fourth chapter, "Wherefore comfort one another with these words." Are they lost because they have died? God forbid. No; as I have explained to you, their spirits are with Christ, their bodies are crumbling in the grave, but we know that when the Lord comes He will call them out of their graves, and will give them bodies like His own; and that will be the complete and final triumph of Christ in

redemption. In the meantime it is "comfort one another"; and we are to edify one another, that is, I apprehend, build up one another in the truth the apostle has brought before us. What a hope it is to have this wonderful prospect, and yet I am afraid that it has faded away somewhat from our hearts and minds. I know, alas! in my own heart how easy it is to lose it, to be satisfied with things here; but God has some better thing in store for us — we must not forget it — and we shall be introduced into it when the moment comes.

Oh, that God would so work as to revive in all our hearts the expectation of the coming of Christ! I believe it would revive us in a wonderful way if you and I and all the saints of God were in the power of it. It would deliver us from the tyranny of present things, and our hearts would be drawn up to the place where Christ is, and we should find that to be our true circle — where He is - and then we should realise the truth of that passage we had last week, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

May God speak to us tonight, beloved, and awaken us for His Name's sake.