

## Serving and Waiting

1 Thessalonians 1: 9, 10.

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These words were written to young Christians — first century converts — by the Apostle Paul, the greatest evangelist of all time. We, who are assembled here, are mainly young Christians — twentieth century converts — but what was true for them then is true for us today. The Apostle went back to the beginning of things, when they turned to God from idols. At the end of the verse he went on to the glorious finish, when God's Son will be revealed from heaven. But between he indicated what is intended to fill the interim for each and all of us. In the past we were converted; in the future we are to meet the Son of God from heaven; between we are to serve the living and true God and wait with expectancy. There is the serving and there is the waiting; and if we close our meetings on this note it may be profitable for us.

"Ye turned to God from idols," this is what really constitutes conversion. Again, you see, first the positive, then the negative. If we turn to God, we must of necessity turn from the idols that once charmed and enslaved us. Why did these people turn to God? Some of them undoubtedly were Jews, whose forefathers had been frightened and turned away **from** Him at Sinai. They turned to Him because He had been made known to them in Jesus Christ our Lord, rather than in the earthquake and thunders of Sinai. We have turned to him for just the same reason.

We know that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself," and all was so perfect that Jesus Himself could say, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." God has become delightful in our eyes — everything that is beautiful. Some people mistakenly think that Jesus is the embodiment of all that is gracious and kind, but that God is so awesome that they cannot think of Him with any peace of mind. The truth is, in seeing Jesus we are seeing God manifested. We see His heart — His love and His holiness.

In turning to God, we turn from idols. These Thessalonians turned from the idols of the heathen world with all its unclean practices and evils. How do we turn from idols? Well, what is an idol? It is anything that usurps in the heart of man the supreme place that belongs alone to the Creator. Idolize nothing, for God alone must be sanctified in your heart and mine. The danger with us is that we may grow cold, and then things that we idolized before our conversion begin to reassert their power over us. Many of us have seen with sorrow a young believer, who made so bright a start a few years before, grow cold; love for the Saviour wanes and the old idols reassert themselves with enslaving power. Let us see to it that conversion is a reality with us, and that the things that once inspired our devotion — not necessarily evil things - have no place in our hearts and minds.

Our journey terminates at the coming of God's Son from heaven. He is our Deliverer from the wrath, that will be ushered in when He is revealed. **Wrath is coming.** Many would say, "You don't believe in that, do you?" I should have to reply that looking on the earth as it is today, I could believe in nothing else. Such shocking evils fill the earth that sinful men are moved to wrath and punishment against them. I could understand any right-minded man, who knows nothing of Scripture, saying, "If there is not a Power in the universe to intervene and break the evil, there ought to be!" We know there is a God of everlasting righteousness and truth, and the Lord Jesus Christ is the appointed Executor of the wrath of God, and at the same time the Deliverer of His people. Knowing the blessedness of

conversion to God from idols, you have the assurance that Jesus is your Deliverer from the wrath to come.

But my point more particularly is that which is to fill up the interim. Our life is to be one of serving and waiting. The serving of something or somebody characterizes everybody. The men of the world mainly serve their own lusts and passions, and in so doing they are really serving the great adversary himself. We are called to serve the living and true God, and there are ways in great variety in which we may do so. If we are devoted to God, and His will is supreme with us, we shall be led by Him into the service that he pleases, while we tread our way to glory. The world and its lust pass away, and it is he that does the will of God who abides forever. We serve the **living** God, who notes every item of service rendered to Him, and will ultimately reward it.

Then, we wait for the advent of the Deliverer. For thousands of years men have been scheming to produce an ideal state of things in the world; and they are scheming still. They never have reached it, and they never will. We know that, and so we do not join in the scheming, and the contention and strife that it brings. Instead of that we wait for the coming of the Lord Jesus. He only has the power that can subdue the devil himself, the originator of sin in God's fair creation. He did it in one way at His first advent by His death and resurrection; He will do it in another way at His second advent, when He will bind the devil and deliver the groaning earth. He will deliver His church by removing it to heaven.

Some of you may be thinking that this talk about the Advent sprang to life during the first great war, that it resulted in "Advent Testimony," and other movements, but that it has not come to very much. Well, I can go back much further and remember extravagant notions of more than fifty years ago, and extravagant guesses as to the mystic number 666 in the Revelation, just as many of us remember with sorrow extravagant advertisements in the daily papers, not so many years ago, making predictions as to a near date for the Advent, all of which came to nothing. It is a sad fact that earnest Christians may become unbalanced, and forget that the pendulum of God's great clock of the universe swings with majestic slowness. God marches across the ages, and is never in a hurry.

Yet, that Christ is coming is a certain fact of revelation. The attempt to fix a date is a forbidden, and therefore a fruitless thing, but I venture to believe that His coming is drawing very near. We are asked sometimes whether we can produce any evidence from Scripture to support such a belief. So I will give very briefly three Scriptural reasons for my belief that such is the case.

Glance first at the Lord's own words in Luke 21: 27-31. His allusion to the fig tree is said to be a parable. Now parabolically the fig tree alludes to Israel. "All the trees," would indicate the many other nations surrounding that people. A revival of nationality in Israel and the peoples is a sign that the summer of His visible presence is near. We do undoubtedly see just that revival of nationality today. Racial feelings have been roused to the utmost, and the Jew is stirring as never before.

Then there is 2 Timothy 3: 1-5. The people described here are not atheists nor agnostics, for they have a form of godliness. They are folk with Christian profession, yet really lovers of their own selves, of money and of pleasures. The state of Christendom today could not be more accurately described than by these words. It is a case of, "We're all doing it." Everybody out for themselves or their class, for money and pleasure. Let us all see to it that we are not entangled, and much less engulfed by these things. But notice, this is to be in "the last days." The inference surely is that **we are in the last days.**

Thirdly, there is 2 Peter 3: 3, 4. Here we have the prediction that a time will come when men will scoff at the idea of a second Advent on the ground that nothing catastrophic has ever happened, or ever will, since everything proceeds by evolutionary changes so small as to be imperceptible — I am just trying to state this prediction in the language of today. They are willingly ignorant that there has been

in the past the catastrophic intervention of God by means of the flood. Once admit that, and the theory of evolution, by such imperceptible stages that it can neither be proved or disproved, would collapse. The second Advent has provoked the scoffers for many a day, but only during the last half-century or so have the scoffers scoffed because of their theory of evolution. And the time when they will so scoff is stated to be "the last days." Again the inference is — **we are now in the last days.**

Young people, go from these meetings with serious thoughts of the coming again of the Lord Jesus, and don't fritter away the years that may remain to you. Many things point to the fact that we draw near to the moment when He will again intervene in the affairs of this earth. His coming means glory to us, but it also means the closing of the day of grace. God give us to be filled with zeal to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, who will deliver us from the wrath by calling us into His presence for ever.