

Waiting for God's Son

1 Thessalonians 1.

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Christian Friend Vol. 6, p. 225.

The doctrine of the Lord's coming is brought out in a remarkable way in these two epistles. These Christians were those who *"waited for the Son from heaven."* If we compare 1 Thess. 1: 1 with John 20: 17, we shall see in the former the Lord speaks of the assembly, in the latter individually, in the character of sons. I have been struck lately with the way the two are often confounded; and frequently the truth connected with those who form the assembly is overlooked. It is important to notice the distinction of the family from the assembly. In Ephesians we see it is the sons of God who make up the assembly. The thought of the Bride carries the mind to the display of His glory, as Eve was the companion of Adam, - sharing all with him. If we think of the family — sons — it is the Father's house comes before us. Two different spheres of glory, the glory of the palace New Jerusalem is the sphere of the Bride's glory, and the Father's house that of the children; but the assembly is made up of sons and daughters. They know Christ in the Father in John 14: 20, and the assembly as the Bride is in God the Father likewise. I am brought apart by God to wait for the Son from heaven. God will judge according to what He separated me to. What induced me to wait for the Son from heaven? What inducement do we find? Why are we unable to be satisfied until we see Himself? In Thessalonians we do not get circumstantial glory, nothing beyond limit of the glory of Himself. I should be a most unspiritual person if I did not want to see Himself. What is the reason? He is hidden in the Father; I know Him there. I know myself in Him there, and the assembly in Him there. He would say to us, You cannot look at Me in the glory where I am, and separate yourself from me. There is a Person there on whom the Father pours out all His affection, and we hear the word dropping out, "I in My Father, ye in Me, I in you." He is thinking of me down here.

Many ask, Where is the Church? I might say to such (but it might not be gracious), You will never see it, because you are not looking unto the Father and the Son. Neither the Father nor the Lord Jesus have ever changed their minds about the Bride. We could not say that the saints in any given place are a fair presentation of the Bride, though they form a part of it. Is there not a motive for me to say, I cannot be satisfied till I see Him of whom this is true? Another thing there is that is touching to the soul; the Lord is not satisfied with our being down here, and by our gleaning by faith what is true of Him up there. He wants us to be with Himself. In the energy of His love He brings us into connection with His past, present, and future. In verse 3 we get three things. When the Lord Jesus shines down into the soul, when the light of Christ gets hold of the soul, it puts me into another position; faith has told its work upon us. When Israel went out of Egypt it was plain to all that they were gone; and when by faith people get hold of the Lord Jesus, it is plain enough, they find, that they have lost those who were their companions before. The early Christians passed from the company of the priests and Jews to the disciples. We have to do with Christ, who is alive from the dead, and the living Christ has to do with us; then, if we get our conscience soiled, if we have failed, then it is we find in times of weakness the value of a living Christ in heaven. We know Christ who was in humiliation (past) a present Christ in heaven serving the people for whom He gave Himself.

The early Christians might have been anxious for Him to come, but His eye was on us. We should not have been thus in an eternity of blessing had He come then. How resolute He has been! He will not sanction the least departure from Himself on the one hand, but how gentle on the other! Has He

not a claim on us? After speaking at Exeter the other night of His coming, an old woman came up to me and said, "I am so impatient for the Lord to come; He *won't come*." I said, "If He had come a hundred years ago you would have been shut out; you ought to go home and thank Him He still tarried. If He had foreclosed the thing, where would the many have been? Have you any children? Are they waiting? Then go home, and thank the Lord He has not yet come." Ah, how patiently He has waited for us, and are we to be in a hurry? It endears Him to us that He did wait so long, that He is waiting still for some dear to our own souls. His love to us, His service as alive from the dead challenges our hearts. If a servant had been in an office for thirty or forty years, and then had no care for his master, what should we think of him? Christ is in heaven, busy with poor, wretched beings down here, showing out the exceeding greatness of His love, and gentleness, and patience towards them in all their weakness and infirmity. Such is the nearness of our position in which we are placed, that we are the only people who know what the next movement of the Lord will be. We look to see the Son with joy; we are a peculiar people — peculiar honour is put upon us — to be those who are waiting for Him. When the Son comes down from the throne on high we shall be able to say, "This is our God, and we have waited for Him."

What is the whole tomorrow of the Christian and of the children of God? We are not kept to be waiting to see the improvement in the arts and sciences, to see the place prepared for antichrist, but we are kept individually to wait for the Son from heaven. The individuality of it strikes me, to wait for Himself. (1 Thess. 2: 19.) The eye of the apostle passed over across Jordan. Who shall I meet there? My Master, the blessed Lord, whose divine fulness has won my heart; who, in the affection of His heart, has brought before me His present, past, and future, and wreathed them round my soul, and called me to wait for Himself. But there is another thing. All you Thessalonians will be there; I shall see you there, you among whom I have laboured. It will be joy to see those among whom he has laboured surrounding him. People sometimes ask, Shall we know one another? It is evident Paul had no question about it, that then he should know these loved Thessalonians. It was not inconsistent that Paul, who saw the Lord as his Light and his Hope, should think too of meeting those among whom he laboured. How this thought makes the scene a home scene. The Lord is there, the one great and distinctive object through whom and from whom all the joy flows of those who are there filled with joy. Ah! it will be no strange scene; human affections are renewed, and the heart too is occupied with those he walked and laboured among down here.

1 Thessalonians 3: 12, 13 tells us how we are to go through this wilderness and conflict of the way; it shows all the evil and enemies working, and shows, if people are to go on to the end, the need of abundance of love one to another. 1 Thess. 4: 13. We get here what enables us to say, "By the love wherewith He has loved me, made me partaker of all the benefits which flow from His death and resurrection, made me know I shall inherit all things with Him - by that love I wait, I long to be with Him. Nothing can satisfy me till I am at home with Himself; there we get the open display of His complete triumph. He is now up there in His solitude, but He is pouring forth the glory and virtue which makes His people triumph over every adverse circumstance. He left His divine glory once, as we read in Phil. 2, and He will leave it a second time. He will leave His Father's throne and the glory again, because His heart cannot brook separation. When all His purposes are accomplished He will come forth again, because His love, His heart, is set upon His people." Is there not something in this for the heart to lay hold upon, that there lives one human heart in heaven who so desires to have His people with Him that He will leave the throne to take a glory which He can share with them? (v. 18.)

Do you ever think of the hour when He will come forth? of the state of utter weakness and incompetency those will be in when He comes to take them to glory? Out of every thousand, nine

hundred and ninety-nine of their bodies, I suppose, will be in the grave, and those who are alive and remain will be in bodies in such a condition as to be impossible to mount up to Him. If we follow up the individuals who are to be in glory to the very last instant before He comes, they will be bearing the mark of death and Satan's work, and they have no power in themselves. It is not the Lord trying to hide what sin has done; He lets it go on. The Lord comes forth, and then victory! If He were to come now we could not but bound up to meet Him. He uses the condition of His people, their weakness and incompetency, to show forth the virtues of His person as the resurrection and the life. Some will be in the graves, others in their mortal, corrupt bodies; but He takes occasion of their state to show what sort of a person He is. He comes forth, He speaks the word, the dead in Christ rise first. What makes it so precious is the outshining of His person, of that which belongs to Him alone, of the man Christ Jesus, whom God delights to honour. How came the long list of those who have died — the stream of death that has rolled on? Ah! the resurrection morning will tell us. It is reserved for Him to display Himself as life and resurrection. Will it not be most precious to behold Him in that day when He comes in His faithfulness to claim His own? Not one will be forgotten; not one of those who have believed in Him will be passed by. What sort of power is it that can raise up the body of a Stephen or Paul — the bodies of the saints? It is not creation-power. Who is it that keeps the dust of His saints? Who knows where to find the dust of His saints? If we only think of it we can but say, it is a marvellous instance of His faithfulness. In the confusion and bustle of the night they went out of Egypt. Joseph's bones were not forgotten. The Lord remembers each *one*. He speaks the word, they rise. Do you find the circumstances of mortality press upon you? Do you know what Satan's fiery darts are? what conflict is? Is it no joy to you to know the One who has graven your names upon His bosom, who sees and watches you in your path of sorrow and rejection, is coming down to claim you and all that are His? Your soul alive already; so if He came now you would never see death, but He would fill up your body with immortality, and cause all that is mortal and corruptible to go out of it. What victory! I come out of my Father's presence as a *victor*, as the *resurrection*, as the *life*, to look for a people whose hearts are set upon me. What a victory! what an One to come and look for *me*, to claim *me* as His own, and to fill me with Himself, and nothing but Himself! He is showing out the divine perfection of life and incorruptibility, and so death is swallowed up in victory. Do you feel the pressure of circumstances? the cruel tyranny of Satan — man continually rushing in or pushing you aside to make room for himself? Do you not say, "I long for His coming? How blessed to see resurrection teeming forth! to see Him come forth as the fountain of eternal life! There will then be the springing up and triumphing over every thing. We are to be waiting for the person of our Lord . . ." I remark in this epistle how little is said of circumstantial glory. It is a question of the bride and Bridegroom of the children of the Father and of the only-begotten Son. Nothing ought to be before the soul but meeting Him. I would ask you whether you know what it is to set your soul in the position of waiting for Him? I am called to be one who is looking out for Him, reminding myself continually that He is coming, that my soul may be constantly kept in a waiting position. G. V. W.