

Present Effects of the 'Blessed Hope'

by H.J. Vine

The blessed hope of the Lord's return should affect all our ways both powerfully and practically, leading to love to all saints, suitable behavior, assembling together, and personal purity.

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 3:18, Colossians 1:4, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, Hebrews 10:25, 1 John 3:3

Topics: "Second Coming", "Personal Purity"

Description

H.J. Vine preaches on the practical results of embracing the truth of the Lord's Second Coming, likening it to the anticipation of a loved one's return. The sermon emphasizes the transformative power of this hope, leading to love for all saints, personal purity, and a sense of unity and encouragement among believers as they await Christ's return.

Transcript

Notes of an Address

There is no truth in Scripture that produces greater practical results when properly received than the truth of the Lord's Second Coming. An illustration will help us to understand this. Look at that home; the young mother and all the children are affected by a bright hope. The husband and father is coming back from the Palestine front. His absence has seemed long, but now he is coming home. What a practical effect this has upon them. The loved one is coming home!

The children cease their fault-finding, quarrelling, and tale-bearing; and their differences, so big to them before, now grow small and disappear, and all are bound together in love to a common object, and peace and harmony reigns in that little home, and all become energetic in their own way to have things right for father. Everything puts on a brighter and cleaner aspect in that home in view of that blessed hope.

Each one has his or her own individual matter to think of in view of the home-coming. Nellie knows that father will be glad that she has got the first prize at school. Mary works hard at her lessons so that he will not be disappointed in her; little Jack looks after his rabbits with greater care, and mother, who has spent many a weary hour and shed many a tear as she laboured to keep the home fires burning, eagerly prepares for the longed-for hour. Not a thing or person in that little home remains unaffected by the hope that has brought a new light into it. So the Word of God shows us that the blessed hope of our Lord's return should affect all our ways both powerfully and practically.

1. Love to all Saints

Paul, writing to the Colossians, says, "Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints, for the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel" (Col. 1:4-5). It was "for" or "on account of" the hope that love to all the saints characterized them. The hope that they would all be together with the Lord Jesus Christ and like Him, sharing with Him the coming glory, that hope was laid up for them in heaven, not on earth as is Israel's hope, therefore they loved all the saints.

The closing verses of the Bible speak much of the Lord's coming again, and the very last words of Scripture are "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with all the saints" (N.Tr.). This is very significant, coming at the close of the Book which shows in startling colour the failure of the assemblies. Love to all saints is one important effect of the blessed hope. Take another illustration. A letter comes from His Majesty the King telling you that he wants your company at Windsor and that eleven other of your fellow townsmen are to join you on a certain day in a month's time. You are all to spend a few days together with the King. A list of the names of the others who are called out from your town to this high honour is given in a letter to each of them, and His Majesty desires that all twelve should get to know each other well beforehand; therefore you visit each other, and converse together in view of what is before you, so that, when you all sit in the saloon of the express for Windsor, you are just like one happy united family. The King of kings, the Lord of lords, has called out His own from this world to spend, not a few days, but eternity with Him; to share the coming glory in the company of Christ as His own bride, His assembly, for ever. The church, or assembly is the out-called, the Ek-klesia. We are out-called from the world, and are not of the world even as Christ is not of the world (John 17).

2. Spirit, Soul, and Body, Preserved Blameless

"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5:23).

Both the Epistles to the Thessalonians are full of Christ's return. The manner of it was specially revealed to Paul and is recorded in chapter 4:15-18. And we are exhorted to behave ourselves in a suitable way in view of it. There are those who labour in the work of the Lord, and we are to esteem them highly. They serve in connection with God's house. We are told not to lightly regard the ministry of the word; we are not to render evil to any man, but to be marked by goodness, patience and prayer. The very appearance of evil must be avoided. We are to edify one another, love and practical holiness are to gladden and brighten the house of God, and in this way we shall be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The house of God is built up of true believers--"living stones," those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, and have come to Him. In such the Spirit of God dwells. They are called in 1 Peter 2 "A spiritual house, a holy priesthood." Don't tell me that the house of God is made up of cold, dead stones! "God dwelleth not in temples made by hands" (Acts 17:24). True believers are the house of God.

With the fact of the Lord's coming bright and shining before us, we shall be greatly affected as to the condition of the house. Some like to leave those telltale cobwebs, spun from old wranglings, hanging about the house, and believe that they must be left there untouched until the Lord comes, instead of getting them cleared out. Such say, or think, "We are right, and they are wrong," instead of being humbled before God as to the dishonour done to the Lord by these things and the lack of grace and diligence

needed to clear away these things which must be displeasing to Him. It can be done by getting into the sense of the love of Christ shown for all His own at Calvary, and also that the Lord may come at any moment. Someone may say, "It cannot be done at present: it must be put off till the judgment seat." I beg your pardon, dear brother; if the Lord came tonight every question of this kind would actually be settled in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. We should all be gathered together to Him at once. Where would be the mysterious difference then?

As to sins, we are told they will be "remembered no more." I know that the things done in the body are to be gone into by and by; but what I mean is this. These wretched cobwebs should be cleared away now. I heard of a believer praying in a meeting, "Lord, clear out the cobwebs." Another brother followed with a more practical prayer. "Lord, HELP US to clear out the spiders," said he. It is the thing that produces the other--the flesh, as well as carnal things that is to go. It has been judged at the cross, and now, in Christ, where all things are new, where all things are of God, we may walk together happily in freedom; and when the Lord comes, practical holiness and fellowship in divine things, as is pleasing to Him, will be found with us.

3. Not Forsaking Assembling Together

"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together; as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Heb. 10:25).

As Christ's return draws near, we are also to be marked by assembling together. There is often much said about the individual path today; but, my beloved brethren, the more you are right individually the more you will seek to gather together with the saints of God, with those who have redemption in Christ. If you are getting slack about assembling with those that love our Lord Jesus Christ now, let me say, you are not only disloyal to Christ to whom you belong, but you are in for trouble if you go on. Pull up, and say, "I am going that road no longer," and get into touch with those that love the Lord, and call on Him out of a pure heart; encouraging one another as they see the day of His coming draw near. There is a blessed word about our gracious God Himself. It says this "He is the God of all encouragement." He does not discourage anyone who seeks to do His will. This is cheering for those who desire to be God-like, who seek to encourage those who love our Lord Jesus Christ. If ever there was a day when encouragers were needed it is today. So many are discouraged; and we need to be in the spirit and power of that word. Our God is the God of all encouragement. As we see the day approaching, assembling together and encouraging one another are also present practical effects of the blessed hope.

4. Personal Purity

"And every man that has this hope in Him purifies himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:3).

This last scripture reminds us that now we are the sons of God, and it is not yet manifested what we shall be. "Sons" should read "children." Paul speaks of us as the "sons of God,"--sons through adoption; but the striking thing in John is, he sees us as begotten of God, and says, "Now we are the children of God." That relationship will be no more ours when we are in heaven than it is "now." What wonderful love the Father has bestowed upon us already; and when Christ shall appear "we shall be like him, for we shall see Him as He is." That is future, of course; but we could not see Him "as He is" if we were not like Him. He is so glorious, so bright, so beautiful, so pure, so holy, that if we were put into heaven with the eyes we have now, we could not gaze upon His glory, upon the Son of God in all the intense splendour of His majesty. It is said, the eagle can look at the sun shining in its strength. Even that is questionable; but when we are

like Christ, we shall be able to look upon Him, to "see Him as He is." The eyes of our bodies of glory will be able to rest upon Him with delight. They will feast upon His loveliness without being dazzled. We shall be able to contemplate His holy perfections. Our mortal bodies will have put on immortality, and the bodies of those saints now in the grave will have put on incorruptibility. Mortal now, immortal then; corruptible now, incorruptible then. In splendour, in glory, in power, in honour, in spiritual and heavenly bodies, we shall be able to look upon our beloved Lord and rejoice with exceeding joy as we "see Him as He is."

What is the present effect of this? He that has this hope in Him (not in himself, but in Christ)--He that has this hope in Christ Jesus, who Himself is our hope, "purifies himself even as He is pure." Present personal purity is the effect! We hear a great deal about personal purity. Let this hope be given its proper place in the life--that at any moment we might be transferred from this earth and go up to meet Christ in the air and be like Him, then this effect will surely follow. We are to be with Him in His glory, and in His likeness for ever, pure as He is pure. It is this hope in Him which results in our purifying ourselves now, until at last, in glory, we shall be perfect, altogether pure even as He is pure.

See that young man! he is studying the law; he hopes to be a judge one day. He reads the books and follows the pronouncements of the leading judge on His Majesty's Bench. His hope affects him in all his ways; and his friends remark, "He is getting more like a judge every day. How thoughtful he is. How grave and wise his countenance is becoming!" That is the effect of the hope he has before him. What is the effect of having Christ who is our hope before us? We shall become morally more and more like Him every day! It is not simply to have the blessed event of His return before us, but to have the One who is coming as the object of our hearts--to have Himself before us! Christ Jesus is our hope (1 Tim. 1:1) and our object now.

"Looking on the glory of the Lord" we are transformed now "according to the same image from glory to glory" (2 Cor. 3:18, N.Tr.). That blessed work of transforming us after the moral likeness of Christ will go on very rapidly when we have His glory before us, and at last we shall drop what is not like Him altogether, and Christ in His beauty shall fill our hearts for ever. We shall see Him as He is.

May the important effects of the blessed hope which we have spoken of mark us all: Love to all the saints; suitable and becoming behaviour as belonging to God's house; assembling together and encouraging one another as we see the day approaching--having our hope in Christ, purifying ourselves even as He is pure--for His Name's sake.

"Soon the redeeming Lord shall come,

And we whose sins He bore,

Shall gaze upon His glory bright,

And praise Him evermore.

Then endless song our lips shall move

And lay our spirits move;

The objects of His love divine,

Oh who that love can tell?"

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