

## A LASTING FAITH FOR THE LAST DAYS

PRACTICAL MEDITATIONS ON ESCHATOLOGY FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD <sup>1</sup>  
Part 5 of 5

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### ESCHATOLOGY AND DIFFICULT DAILY LIVING IN CHRIST

Jesus taught his people that as disciples we must learn to put our hands to the plow and not look back (Luke 9:62), but to keep looking forward in our daily walk. What is implicit in this teaching is that when difficult times come into our lives, it will be easy to look back and reconsider our commitment to our Savior. Sometimes, the worries of this life “choke” the growth as in the parable of the Sower (Matt. 13:1-23). Yet throughout Scripture, we are reminded of the importance of ever looking forward as pilgrims, persevering by his grace, no matter how tough times get! Notice how the Luke records Jesus’ words to his disciples.

Likewise, just as it was in the days of Lot- they were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building, but on the day when Lot went out from Sodom, fire and sulfur rained from heaven and destroyed them all- so will it be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed. On that day, let the one who is on the housetop, with his goods in the house, not come down to take them away, and likewise let the one who is in the field not turn back. Remember Lot’s wife. Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will keep it (Luke 17:28-33).

We are reminded of Lot’s wife who looked back rather than forward, and the forward-looking-faith of her husband Lot who was depending on God’s promises of redemption (Gen. 19). We remember Israel in the wilderness and their subsequent history revealed in Samuel and Kings, as they forgot what they had “seen and heard”- -they forgot what God had done for them in their redemption because times got too tough (Deut. 4). These historical examples serve as reminders that in this world the people of God will experience pain, trials, and sufferings, but we are to ever rest in the grip of our Savior, while keeping our eyes fixed on Him.

As the people of the Living God, we must keep in mind that in this age we will have tribulation, but Christ has overcome the world (John 16:33). The Apostle

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<sup>1</sup> *A Lasting Faith for the Last Days* first appeared as an ongoing ‘Word of Encouragement’ series at [www.APlaceforTruth.org](http://www.APlaceforTruth.org) This is the last message in that five-part series.

Paul told Timothy in his final letter that those who want to live a godly life will suffer persecution (2 Tim. 3:12). 1 Peter 4:12-13 says:

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal which comes upon you to prove you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice in so far as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.

Remember that as aliens and strangers here in this world we are only guaranteed suffering. If God should see fit to give us joy and peace in our lives now and then, we should thank him because we are not of this world. Remember in the difficult, and oftentimes monotonous, day after day living in our jobs and our callings that we want to be faithful by his grace, and know that there is truly more than just this life. Remember God's promises when you go through trials or suffer, and when it does not seem that God is with you.

Remember the promises made to Adam and Eve concerning a Seed to crush the head of the serpent (Gen. 3:15); to Abraham and to his Seed (Gen. 17:7); to Moses (Ex. 6:7; Dt. 29:13); and to David (2 Sam. 7:24ff)— these promises have all been fulfilled according to Jer. 31:1,33; Ezek. 37:23, 36:28 (cf. Acts 2; 7). And because we live in the Last Days and have a down payment of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 1:20ff), we know that all of God's promises will be *fully fulfilled* when Christ returns for those awaiting his return.

All of God's promises are "yes" and "amen" in Christ Jesus *now* — we just await the full restoration of all things in Christ (2 Cor. 1:20). Do not worry about your life, because He who has promised is able to keep his promises and to keep you until the Day he returns (Matt. 6:24-34). You know who you have believed in and he is able...He has begun a new work in you and will complete it...Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever...faith is truly the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen...therefore we walk by faith and not by sight as we await his return. This is a true and living eschatology for the people of God living in the Last Days.

How many times in this life do we want to give up? How many times do we pray for perseverance to continue the race before us? Pray that we would be faithful and watchful as we await his appearing. God has called us to jobs, to work and be faithful, but to not be over-realized in our eschatology. To be over-realized in our eschatology means to expect all of the blessings of heaven now, forgetting that although the present age of sin, death and suffering is passing away, it will not be completely abolished until Christ returns again. Therefore, because there is an overlap of the present age and the Age to Come there is suffering, while at the same time peace in Jesus Christ!

We must avoid an over-realized eschatology and remember that we will suffer and be persecuted, and we must try to avoid expecting all the joy and the peace of paradise now (we will enjoy the peace and joy of the Spirit now, but even this is a foretaste of what is to come)! We see an unhealthy over-realized eschatology in our Christian friends who want riches and fame, healing, and no suffering — now! We should avoid such a non-Biblical attitude because it will lead to doubt, disbelief, and even more pain because we haven't accurately considered the cost of following Jesus. An over-realized eschatology is ultimately a misunderstanding of our life in the Kingdom. Yes, we have been given special blessings now like adoption, being made priests of God, we are a holy nation of kings (1 Pet. 2:5), but we want to remember that Jesus' Kingdom is not of this world (John 8:23; 18:36; Rom. 12:2), and therefore until he returns we are still a pilgrim people of kings and priests who presently live in tents until we receive our full inheritance in the New Heavens and New Earth in the Age to Come. Jesus encourages us concerning our inheritance when he says: "Blessed are the humble for they shall inherit the earth."

Even though we know that now we may suffer and be abused and cheated as disciples of Christ. Nevertheless, what a privilege that we have been called to live a life like Christ our LORD. This may be the "hard teaching" of eschatology, or of discipleship according to Jesus in the Last Days, but his promises still stand, His Word is sure, and He establishes us not by might, nor by power, but by His Spirit (Zech. 4:6). This helps us to have a faith that is forward looking when Christ himself will judge the wicked and those who have abused us and also those who abused him! Our Last Days declaration to sinners and fools in these last days is: "Beware you wicked! Repent for the Day of the LORD is near! Come to the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation!" The tension is real, we truly live in the Kingdom of God NOW, but we await for all the benefits of this eternal inheritance to be revealed in the Last Day.

### **AN ESCHATOLOGICAL PRAYER FOR HELP IN DIFFICULT DAILY LIVING**

The following is an anonymous prayer from a brother in Christ who lived in the 17th century. Pray this prayer in light of the last study on difficult daily living in Christ that we will all experience from time to time. Remember not to be "over-realized" in your eschatology, or to expect all of the Kingdom blessings now, without also experiencing the difficulties, dangers, and disrespect that may come your way because of your union with the Living Christ (Matt. 5:11-12; cf. 2 Tim. 2:12).

Neither be "under-realized" in your eschatology. That is, thinking too lowly of yourself, lacking confidence in your struggle against the world, the flesh, and the devil, because you have been seized, apprehended, gripped by God's grace, united to Jesus Christ, given a portion, or down payment of his Spirit, so that you do have the power to die to sin and the "old man" and live unto Christ (back in

the day, this was termed "mortification" and "vivification"; cf. Romans 6:3ff). Over-realized eschatology wants all of God's Kingdom blessings NOW, while under-realized eschatology communicates a "dirty sinner", kind of "worm theology", that often seems without any present hope in the Spirit! We pray for balanced living in these Last Days, or even better, we pray for an eschatological way of understanding our living, our pilgrim journey, as that which is focused back on the finished work of Christ on our behalf, our firm standing in Him as our righteous, sanctification and redemption, and our great and Living Hope Who will return for us when we least expect it! Let us remember that no matter the situation, He will never leave us, nor forsake us!

Thou Great Three-One,  
Author of all blessings I enjoy,  
of all I hope for,  
Thou hast taught me  
that neither the experience of present evils,  
nor the remembrances of former sins,  
nor the remonstrances of friends,  
will or can affect a sinner's heart,  
except you vouchsafe to reveal your grace  
and quicken the dead in sin  
by the effectual working of your Spirit's power.

You have shown me  
that the sensible effusions of divine love  
in the soul are superior to and distinct from  
bodily health,  
and that often times spiritual comforts are  
at their highest when physical well-being is  
at its lowest.

You have given me the ordinance of song  
as a means of grace;  
Fit me to bear my part in that music ever new,  
which elect angels and saints made perfect  
now sing before your throne and before the Lamb.

I bless you for tempering every distress with joy;  
too much of the former might weigh me down,  
too much of the latter might puff me up;  
You are wise to give me a taste of both.

I love you  
for giving me clusters of grapes  
in the wilderness,  
and drops of heavenly wine  
that set me longing to have my fill.

Apart from you I quickly die,  
bereft of you I starve,  
far from you I thirst and droop;

But you are all I need.  
Let me continually grasp the promise,  
'I will leave you nor forsake you!'"<sup>2</sup>

## **HOW SHOULD WE THEN LIVE IN THE LAST DAYS?**

According to the verses below from Hebrews 10:35-11:6, those united to Jesus Christ have a persevering faith that is ever looking back to the completed work of Christ, experiencing presently the power of the Holy Spirit daily in their lives, and are seeking the great reward that is to come when our King and Savior returns for us!

Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. For, "Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him." But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls. 11:1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the people of old received their commendation. By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible... And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him Hebrews 10:35-11:6 (ESV).

We want to remember from our previous study that Biblical eschatology is not so much about finding the future in the present (that is, seeking after a knowledge of when and where Jesus will return), but it's about having the future find us in the present (that is, informing and strengthening us in our faith, and helping us to persevere each day by his grace, looking forward to our eternal inheritance in his presence! In light of Hebrews 10 and 11, there are a few implications that we ought to consider to instruct us in these Last Days.

First of all, we must learn to lose our rights in this world, because our "Kingdom rights" are no good in this fallen world. Our great "abiding possession" and our citizenship are in heaven (Heb.10:34; cf. Phil. 3:20-21). We should not presume to think we have any rights at all here in this present age, when we consider that

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<sup>2</sup> Bennett Arthur, ed. *The Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers and Devotions*. Banner of Truth Trust, 1975.

our LORD himself, the Great King and LORD over heaven and earth did not try to assert his rights over others.

Our Lord Jesus taught us to turn the other cheek as well and to forgive those who mistreat us and abuse us — it is God's to avenge us (cf. Hebrews 10:30-34; Romans 12:17-21)! Knowing that now we may suffer and be abused and cheated, but what a privilege that we have been called to live a life like Christ our LORD. As the people of God, we truly have an abiding possession and are citizens in the Kingdom of God now, but we await for all the benefits of this eternal inheritance to be revealed on the Last Day.

Secondly, we should remind ourselves that waiting on Christ's return does not mean packing a bag and sitting at the side of the road awaiting his return (like some poor souls have done in the past who have had someone predict Jesus' return, and some of the misguided folk literally sold all that they owned, all that the Lord has provided for them during their journey here. Some in the past have dishonestly charged up credit cards, thinking that they would never get the billing statement from their creditors because Armageddon would burn them up. This sadness has happened in America as recently as 1994).

“Wait upon the LORD,” the Psalmist says. This does not mean that to wait means to do nothing but “Christian activity” or “Christian ministry.” He calls as many to secular tasks as he does “full-time service” in the church. Both are vocations, or callings to be accomplished under Christ our head. Neither is greater than the other in significance to the LORD. Waiting upon the LORD means being faithful and ready to do Christ's work in whatever area he has called you no matter how boring, how monotonous, or how tiring it may seem to you. Christ's parable of the faithful steward in Matthew 24 is a steward, or servant who is faithful in doing the job Christ has called him to do while he perseveres in this present age by an eschatological faith.

Waiting on the LORD by faith in the Book of Hebrews is describing a resting in the peace we have with our Creator and God, but it does not mean just doing nothing. It means being *faithful by faith* no matter how much we do not feel like it, and how difficult the circumstances may be. It means getting up another Monday morning to go into our jobs which can sometimes feel meaningless; it means loving our brothers and our wives, as Christ loved the Church; it means loving our enemies and those who use and despise us just one more day; it means being faithful whether we ever receive recognition or praise of men ever in our lives! Whether or not anyone ever recognizes our faith, the LORD is watching, his eyes are on all people and he will reward you for your faithfulness. In fact, he will give you the grace and perseverance to make it another day. Whatever your pain or your suffering, hang in there, the LORD is faithful! This is the teaching of Biblical eschatology!

## **WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR?**

We are ultimately waiting to be brought back into the Garden, into Paradise, in the Presence of God, released eternally from our sins and from death, hell, and the Devil, and into the wide-open and inviting arms of our Lord Jesus. Where we were formerly kept out of the presence of God and from eating of the Tree of Life by two cherubim who held swords of fire and judgment, soon we shall be greeted by a heavenly host of angels. On the Last Day when Jesus stands upon the earth, the angels will greet us with good news in the same way as the Apostles were greeted at the tomb of the resurrection! Rather than hearing "He is not here," as the apostles heard at the tomb, we will hear "He is here— Blessed are all those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life." And our Lord will say, "Well done my good and faithful servants!"

In Gen. 3:23,24, the LORD drove Adam and Eve from the Garden of God. In Revelation 21:3 we hear the wonderful news of "Behold, the dwelling of God is with man!" Revelation 22:14 says, "Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates." "Come, Lord Jesus," that is a true eschatology for living the Christian life in the Last Days.

We can enter God's presence through the blood of Christ taught to us in the Book of Hebrews (Heb. 10:19-23ff), so let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. Let us also consider how to stir up one another to love and good works- - not neglecting to meet together (as some are in the habit of doing), but encouraging one another- - all the more as you see the Day drawing near. Remember what the Apostle Paul said in 1 Cor. 15:58—

**Stand firm; let nothing move you. Always give yourselves to the work of the Lord for you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.**

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## **FOR FURTHER READING ON "LIVING IN LIGHT OF BIBLICAL ESCHATOLOGY"**

**John Calvin, Book III- *Institutes of the Christian Religion***

**Herman Bavinck- *The Last Things***

**Anthony Hoekema- *The Bible and the Future***

**Herman Ridderbos- *Paul: An Outline of his Theology; The Coming of the Kingdom***