

## Effects of Eschatological Thinking – Philippians 4:4-9

### I. Introduction:

- A. I'm going to come very close to breaking one of my personal, homiletical rules.
1. "*Homiletics*," by the way, is a fancy word for sermon preparation and preaching.
  2. I really dislike it when I hear preachers read a scripture to begin a sermon and then never return to it.
  3. I have made it a rule in my ministry not to do that, but as I say, I am coming very close to breaking that rule.
- B. In closing his letter to the brethren in *Philippi*, Paul says, "*Think on THESE things.*" What things Paul?
1. Speaking generally, he says, "*Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.*"
  2. Beyond these general things, the context reminds us to think about things in which to **rejoice**.
  3. Think about the **peace** of God which passeth all understanding. It is to our benefit to think happy thoughts.
  4. Then Paul adds, **remember**, and think about, those things I have taught you.
  5. And consider the fact, **verse 5**, that "*the Lord is at hand.*" Christ Jesus is coming back; He is near.
- C. The recent events in and around Israel, have many people thinking about the return of the Saviour – or for the orthodox – thinking about the coming of the Messiah.
1. This is a subject with **virtue**; it is something **praiseworthy**. It is worth consideration, thought, meditation.
  2. But thinking about the second coming, shouldn't come up just once in a while – when the possibility of disaster looms, or when the stench of societal rot is beginning to overwhelm us.
  3. Christians should consider the return of the Lord even in the very best of times.
- D. I was going through my sermon idea notebooks & found that I have the same theme in two of those notebooks.
1. One had suggestions for an eight point outline and the other had six points.
  2. In other words, this afternoon's message may be one which has been preached a thousand times by hundreds of men over the years.
  3. In the atmosphere of current events in the Middle East, I'd like to share with you several scriptures under the title: "*Effects of Eschatological Thinking.*"
  4. Brethren, it is good to think about these true, honest and praise-worthy things.
- E. And let me say at the outset, that it really doesn't matter in regard to this message whether or not you agree with my understanding of the timing of the Lord's return.
1. I am not going to demand that you believe in the **ABSOLUTELY imminent** return of Christ, or a more **RELATIVELY imminent** return, or that we must wait three and half years – whatever.
  2. At this point I am not concerned with what things must transpire before the rapture or before the revelation.
  3. But I do insist that you agree with Paul that "*the Lord is at hand*" – that Christ's coming is near.
  4. That fact underlays all that I have to share with you this afternoon.
  5. It is a part of all the scriptures to which we will look.
- F. In this particular scripture, Paul tells us to think about godly, virtuous, pure and well-reported things.
1. Including that – "*the Lord is at hand.*"
  2. Then in other scriptures he tells us about some of the **effects** such thinking will have upon us.
  3. In no particular order, and rather lightly because there are so many, let's consider what thinking about the return of the Saviour should produce in us.

## II. Amid the fear which is falling on many due to Israel's war with Hamas, the Christian may have **COMFORT**.

- A. Please turn to **I Thessalonians 4:13** – *“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.*
1. *For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.*
  2. *For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:*
  3. *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. Wherefore **COMFORT** one another with these words.”*
- B. One of the great blessings of being a Christian is that we have been made children of *“the God of all comfort.”*
1. I.e., we should have peace and comfort in regard to our **eternal souls**, because we are safe in Christ.
  2. We can have comfort in the midst of our **trials** and even in our **failures** in those trials, because every sin we ever commit is under the blood of the Saviour.
  3. We should experience peace & comfort when a Christian **loved one dies**, because we know they are safe
  4. The list goes on and on.
  5. And in regard to the **return of the Lord**, Paul tells us to share that particular comfort with one another.
    - a. It doesn't matter how wicked the world is becoming – the Lord will soon be here.
    - b. It doesn't matter how near to us the bombs are falling.
    - c. It doesn't matter whether we run out of gasoline or beef or beefsteak tomatoes...
  6. We should be **comforted** in the knowledge that Jesus is coming again.
- C. Staying in the context look at **I Thessalonians 5:1-6**.

## III. Here, some effects of the Second Coming of Christ are **SERIOUSNESS** and **WATCHFULNESS**.

- A. *“But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you.*
1. *For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.*
  2. *For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.*
  3. **But YE**, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.
  4. *Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.*
  5. *Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us **WATCH** and be **SOBER**.”*
- B. Perhaps I suffer from an overly strong negative reaction to the Christian doom-dayers.
1. Perhaps I should pay more attention to the reported details of war talks and peace talks.
  2. But one of my problems is that I'm not sure what I can believe in all that is being said either in the secular news or by popular Christian commentators.
  3. I would much rather focus my attention on preaching the gospel, while keeping an eye toward heaven, than to add my poorly-reasoned-out comments on what global events might portend.
  4. I would rather listen for the trump and the shout than to listen to Trump, Fox News, CNN or even the BBC.
- C. Nevertheless, **I do hear** what **Paul** says here.
1. No matter what is going on in the world, we should be **seriously** watching for the Lord's return.
  2. **Verse 9** – *“For God hath **NOT** appointed us to **wrath**, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.”*
  3. And two verses further down Paul once again says, *“wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another...”*

- D. By the way, **Peter** says much the same thing in **I Peter 1:13** – *“Wherefore gird up the lions of your mind, be **SOBER**, and hope to the end of the grace that is to be brought unto you at the **revelation** of Jesus Christ.”*
1. *“Revelation” is “apokalupsis.”* It refers to the appearance, reappearance or coming of the Saviour.
  2. And there is **I Peter 4:7** – *“The **END** of all things is at hand: be ye therefore **sober**, & **watch** unto prayer.”*
  3. There is always room for Christian joy, and we should delight in Christian fellowship, but I’m not sure that the Bible condones today’s professional Christian comedians.
  4. These last days should be days of seriousness and godliness. There is work to be done. Let’s do it.
  5. Related to this is **Philippians 4:5** – *“Let your **moderation** be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.”*

#### IV. Still within the context, another outcome of second-coming thinking should be **GODLINESS**.

- A. As Paul concludes his first letter to the **Thessalonians**, he shares several pithy exhortations:
1. *“Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing.*
    - a. *In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.*
    - b. *Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings.*
    - c. *Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil – I Thess. 5:16-22.*
  2. And then it is as though **these things culminate** in one **point**.
  3. He says, *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.**”*
  4. In deliberately thinking about and putting into practice these Christian attributes, we should be growing more and more holy – more and more like Christ – as the day of the Lord’s return ticks closer and closer.
- B. Earlier in **I Thessalonians 3** Paul reminds us that at the coming of the Saviour **holiness** will be **highlighted**.
1. **I Thessalonians 3:12-13** – *“And 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.”*
  2. If holiness is one of the conclusions of all things, then it should also be a part of lives moving toward that conclusion.
  3. He doesn’t say here that holiness is a result of thinking about Christ’s return, but he does say that in the light of the Second Coming we should become more holy – more Christ-like.
  4. And isn’t this what Paul tells Timothy in **I Timothy 6:13?** –
    - a. *“I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession;*
    - b. *That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, **until the appearing** of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*
- C. Paul is not the only one – that is essentially what **Titus** tells us in **chapter 2**:
1. *“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,*
  2. *Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;*
  3. **Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;**
  4. *Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”*
- D. Thinking about the soon coming of the Lord should comfort us and lead us to seriousness, watchfulness and holiness.

## V. In another way, such thinking should encourage us to greater **FAITHFULNESS**.

- A. That is one of the lessons of Christ's **Parable** of the **Talents** – **Matthew 25:1-31**.
1. Summarizing it all by looking at the first half of the parable we read:
  2. *“For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.*
    - a. *And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.*
    - b. *Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two.*
    - c. *But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.*
    - d. *After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.”*
  3. Our Lord is currently in a far country, but He is coming again, and when He comes He will reckon with His servants – with you and me.
  4. If there is any lesson here it is that we are to be faithful to our responsibilities and gifts.
  5. And there will be a day of reckoning – a day of judgment which will take place at His return – and the Lord is at hand.
- B. In regard to another parable in **Luke 12:41...** *“Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all?”*
1. *And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season?*
  2. *Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.”*
- C. That is the same lesson in the **Parable** of the **Pounds** – **Luke 19:12-27**.
1. *“He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.*
  2. *And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, **Occupy till I come.***
  3. *But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us.*
  4. *And it came to pass, that **when he was returned**, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.”*
- D. I am not going to try to guess about the moment, the day, or even the month, when the Lord will return.
1. But I would **prefer** it to be in the next few minutes.
  2. I'd like it to be before this hour is finished, because I'm reasonably sure I will be in the midst of His service.
  3. But even if it is tomorrow or next Thursday, or next year, I want to be found faithfully serving my Saviour.
  4. The second coming is part of what motivates me and helps me to stay on track.
  5. It should do that for all of us, whether we be full time in the ministry or simply full time Christians.
- E. **Peter** deals with this subject, thinking primarily of the work of the gospel preacher and pastor.
1. **1 Peter 5:1-4** – *“The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:*
    - a. *Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;*
    - b. *Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.*
    - c. *And when the **chief Shepherd shall appear**, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.”*
  2. The owner of the company is coming all the way from headquarters. We can't be sure when He will arrive.
  3. When He gets here, there will be an inspection, not only of the product, but of the actual work being done.
  4. Our work – our day – should be spent in the light of the imminent coming of the King.

## VI. The coming of the Lord encourages us in our **PERSEVERANCE** and **PATIENCE** in the midst of trials.

- A. Hebrews 10:10:32-37** – *“But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions;*
1. *Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used.*
    - a. *For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.*
    - b. *Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward.*
    - c. *For ye have need of **PATIENCE**, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.*
    - d. ***For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.***”
  2. Christ has promised to return after a little while. He is coming again. He is nigh.
  3. Can’t we endure until that time? Can’t we be patient in the light of His promises?
- B. James 5:7-8** – *“Be **PATIENT** therefore, brethren, unto the **coming** of the **Lord**. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also **patient; stablish** your **hearts**: for the **coming** of the **Lord DRAWETH NIGH.**”*

## VII. One more point: thinking about the Saviour’s return should give us a godly outlook on life generally.

- A. II Peter 3:10-14** – *“But the **day** of **the Lord** will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.*
1. *Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness,*
    - a. ***Looking for and hasting*** unto the **coming of the day of God**, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?
    - b. *Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.*
    - c. *Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.”*
  2. I know that I’ve blended together several aspects of the Day of the Lord in this message, not trying to separate and define our translation or the final revelation of Christ.
  3. But I think we should all be able to say, they are related, and they are connected with the words **“the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.”**
  4. *“Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.”*

## VIII. I close with one more related scripture – **I John 3:**

- A. Verse 1** – *“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.*
1. *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*
  2. *And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.”*
  3. The Apostle John was convinced that the Lord will soon appear, and we shall see Him as He is.
  4. Thinking about that return. Praying for Christ’s return. Living in expectation of the Second Coming, should make us better people, better Christians, better servants of God.
  5. *“And every man that hath this hope in him **purifieth** himself, even as he is pure.”*
- B. Is the Second Coming producing in you what the Holy Spirit intended?**
1. Are you comforted? Are you patient. Are you holy and faithful?
  2. *“Whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.”*