

“Waiting for Christ”
1 Thessalonians 1:10
(Preached at Trinity, April 14, 2019)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. We've been looking at the opening portion of Paul's letter to the Thessalonians where he expresses his great gratitude for the outward evidence of God's grace upon their lives which was evidence of God's election.
1 Thessalonians 1:3-4 NAU - "constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father, ⁴ knowing, brethren beloved by God, *His* choice of you"
2. The Gospel had worked powerfully in their lives and they had received the Word of God with great joy, even in the midst of great affliction. Their lives were an example of integrity and faithfulness, of how to live joyfully in spite of personal hardship.
1 Thessalonians 1:7 NAU - "so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia."
3. It wasn't the testimony of their lives alone that was impacting the world around them. The Thessalonians were also actively proclaiming the Gospel:
"For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you"
4. In **Verse 9** Paul adds how they had abandoned their idols in order to serve the living God. Now, in **Verse 10** Paul adds yet another characteristic of this young church. They were maintaining a Christian priority in this life. They were living in expectation of the return of Christ – "and to wait for His Son from heaven . . ."
5. The return of Christ was taught to the early church. It was their expectation. It was a certain hope. It was their great encouragement as they endured days of persecution. They spoke of it, teachers taught about it. It was a great source of encouragement and comfort.
1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 NAU - "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words."
6. As Paul considered the evidence of their salvation he considered their earnest expectation of the return of Christ an essential part.
William Hendriksen writes: "*As they saw it—and rightly so—a man is not truly converted unless he glories in this doctrine and shores its force in his life.*"¹
7. We need to rekindle this expectation today. We need to talk about it. We need to live in light of it.
Acts 1:11 NAU - "This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven."

¹ William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of I-II Thessalonians*, New Testament Commentary, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953–2001), 3:57.

John 14:2-3 NAU - "I go to prepare a place for you. ³ "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, *there* you may be also."

8 What exactly does it mean that they were "waiting?"

ἀναμένειν – To wait for one whose coming is expected (a hapax legomina)

Often, when we think of waiting we picture inactivity. Our minds turn to waiting rooms, or waiting in long lines, or waiting for the traffic light to change.

The Dictionary definition includes: "To remain inactive or in a state of repose"

9 The Biblical understanding of waiting is different. It implies an earnest expectation that is looked for with patience and perseverance.

10. We read about it often in the Old Testament

Isaiah 8:17 NAU - "And I will wait for the LORD who is hiding His face from the house of Jacob; I will even look eagerly for Him."

קָוָה (qavah) – to wait with expectation, to look for eagerly

Isaiah 25:9 NAU - "And it will be said in that day, "Behold, this is our God for whom we have waited that He might save us. This is the LORD for whom we have waited; Let us rejoice and be glad in His salvation."

Isaiah 40:31 NAU - "Yet those who wait for the LORD Will gain new strength; They will mount up *with* wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary."

Psalms 27:14 NAU - "Wait for the LORD; Be strong and let your heart take courage; Yes, wait for the LORD."

11. We need to understand several things about Christian waiting.

I. First of all, it is a focused waiting.

1 Thessalonians 1:10 NAU - "and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, *that is* Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come."

A. We have our eyes directed towards heaven and upon the risen Christ

1. The resurrection is an essential aspect of the Gospel. Jesus has been raised from the grave.

Acts 17:30-31 NAU - "God is now declaring to men that all *people* everywhere should repent, ³¹ because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."

2. The long hope of the church has been to see Jesus return in the same manner as He left – visibly and gloriously appearing through the clouds.
Acts 1:10-11 NAU - "And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. ¹¹ They also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven."

3. Meanwhile, Jesus is enthroned, seated at the right hand of majesty
Colossians 3:1-2 NAU - "Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth."

- B. We wait with expectation and confidence and joy because we have been forgiven.
1. We have been reconciled. We are awaiting Jesus who has rescued us from the wrath of God.
 2. Fear has been swallowed up in the certain work of Christ. We are joyously awaiting our Bridegroom.
Matthew 25:6 NAU - "But at midnight there was a shout, 'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet *him*.'"
- C. We wait with a heart prepared to receive Him
1. We are keeping ourselves chaste as we await the eminent return of our Bridegroom.
 2. We are anxious to see Him
- II. Eager Waiting Demands Watchfulness – Wakefulness
- A. The Christian must maintain a state of alertness
1. This is continually stressed in the New Testament
Matthew 24:42 NAU - "Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming."
1 Peter 5:8 NAU - "Be of sober *spirit*, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."
1 Thessalonians 5:2-6 NAU - "For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. ³ While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape. ⁴ But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief; ⁵ for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; ⁶ so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober."
 2. Paul says that most people live as though they were asleep in their beds, secure and careless. They live as if this life is of supreme importance and will endure indefinitely.
 3. Such an attitude for the Christian it is to indulge in spiritual sloth and idleness. They sleep away precious moments – time that will never be regained
Matthew Henry: "What! shall Christians, who have the light of the blessed gospel shining in their faces, be careless about their souls, and unmindful of another world?"²
- B. The Christian must be continually on guard against our spiritual enemies – Satan, the world, and our own flesh
1. Satan's attacks are relentless. We must not slumber or lower our guard.
 - a. The Bible tells us that if we resist the devil he will flee God is putting him under our feet.
Romans 16:20 NAU - "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you."

² Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*, (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2343.

- b. The warrior on watch never removes his armor
Matthew Henry again: "To be well armed as well as watchful: to put on the whole armour of God. This is necessary in order to such sobriety as becomes us and will be a preparation for the day of the Lord, because our spiritual enemies are many, and mighty, and malicious. They draw many to their interest, and keep them in it, by making them careless, secure, and presumptuous."³
2. Few see the world around them as a vicious enemy seeking to draw us away from Christ. We must never cease to be on guard.
2 Timothy 4:10 NAU - "for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me"
3. Even fewer are afraid of themselves. One of our greatest enemies stare back at us as we gaze in the mirror. We must keep our appetites and desires in check
 We must understand that our greatest enemy is inward
1 Peter 2:11 NAU - "Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul."
- C. What are some signs of slumbering
1. When a Christian cannot hear the voice of God's Word as it is preached – He is spiritually dull. He leaves unchanged, unaffected
 2. When a Christian believes or imagines that he is in a better condition than he is – The words of our Lord to the Church of Laodicea: "you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked"
 3. When a Christian forgets the business of the day - when he grows slothful to duty
 4. The warning to us! We are prone to slumber let us continue earnestly watching, earnestly waiting
- III. Eager Waiting Demands Discipline
- A. The disciple who is eagerly waiting for Christ gives himself to a life of strict discipline that he might live in holiness—it's a matter of priority
1. As an athlete in training, the Christian must continually strive towards conforming to God's demand for us to be holy
 2. He maintains a strict standard for his life
1 Corinthians 9:27 NAU - "I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified."
- B. What are some particular areas of discipline?
1. He maintains a steady intake of God's Word
 Preaching, reading, studying, memorizing, meditating
 2. He stays continually in prayer
J.C. Ryle - "What is the reason that some believers are so much brighter and holier than others? I believe that those who are not eminently holy pray little, and those who are eminently holy pray much."⁴

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ryle, J.C., *Practical Religion*, (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2013), 68.

3. Along with prayer, he includes times of fasting. Christians are no longer familiar with fasting.
Luke 5:35 NAU - "But *the* days will come; and when the bridegroom is taken away from them, then they will fast in those days."
Calvin - "As it concerns the discipline which we are now discussing, whenever men are to pray to God concerning any great matter, it would be expedient to appoint fasting along with prayer."⁵
4. He is careful about his worship
 We must desire to meet with God, to adore Him, to praise Him, to be transformed by Him. As we wait upon Christ we give ourselves earnestly to worship.
5. He is careful to maintain a proper reverence for the Sabbath
R.L. Dabney - "It is historically true that the vitality and holiness of the church are usually in proportion to its reverence for the Sabbath. The Sabbath-keeping churches and generations have been the holy and zealous ones."⁶
6. He is careful in his duty as a soul-winner – The Thessalonians were mindful of the effect their lives upon others.
 - a. We must continually remind ourselves what is at stake
 Heaven or hell is at stake
 - b. We must be diligent to live righteously before the lost and mindful for opportunities to share with them the words of life.
7. He maintains the discipline of service – keeps an eye to duty.
 - a. We must remember the nature of our calling – we are called to serve
 - b. We are naturally given to sloth. And we are prone to excuse our lack of service.

IV. Eager Waiting Demands Patience or longsuffering

- A. The Christian patiently waits even when God seems to delay
2 Peter 3:3-4 NAU - "Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with *their* mocking, following after their own lusts, ⁴ and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation."
 1. This demands confidence in God—we trust Him and wait for Him.
 2. What if He delays in the answer of your prayers?
 You must continue in prayer
Psalm 27:14 NAU - "Wait for the LORD; Be strong and let your heart take courage; Yes, wait for the LORD."
 3. We are always in danger of seeking to make God our Servant to make Him conform to our will and our timing.
 Calvin rightly wrote: "For to wish God to conform to our rule is extremely preposterous and unreasonable: and there is no place for faith, if we expect God to fulfil immediately what he promises. It is hence the trial of faith to

⁵ Calvin, John, *Institutes of the Christian Religion, Vol.2*, Edited by John T. McNeill, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 1243.

⁶ Dabney, Robert L., *Discussions, Vol.1*, (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1982), 541.

acquiesce to God's word, when its accomplishment does in no way appear."⁷

- B. The Christian patiently waits even during adversity
1 Thessalonians 1:6 NAU - "You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit,"
1. While others faint the Christian presses on
 Christ is our reward – heaven is our rest in Christ and is to be waited for
Genesis 49:18 NAU - "For Your salvation I wait, O LORD."
 2. We shall not be distracted by earthly situations. We keep our eyes upon eternity and the earnest expectation of our Lord.
 3. Patient waiting is not anxious waiting, fearful waiting
 Patient waiting is a firm faith in God

Conclusion:

The Christian is in a state of waiting – on constant expectancy.

This period of waiting must be driven by the triune Faith, Hope, and Love

1. By faith we mean that confidence in the Savior that keeps us watchful. If we believe that the eye of God us upon us we will continue faithfully waiting and working steadfastly in spite of adversity. If we believe that the Living Christ is with us we will do everything for His glory.
2. By hope we mean a sure expectation. The Christian makes salvation his hope. He is patiently waiting for the end of his faith – to see Christ face to face. He doesn't indulge himself in the pleasures of sin – which are but for a season.
Titus 2:11-13 NAU - "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, ¹² instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, ¹³ looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus,"
3. By love we mean the passion of the heart. The Christian continues with a heart enflamed with love – a true and fervent love for God and the things of God. A sincere and sacrificial love for the brethren. A compassionate love for the lost which drives him to bring the gospel to all.

May we continue watching and eagerly waiting until the end when we see our Savior face to face.

⁷ Calvin, John, *Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets, Vol. IV*, (Grand Rapids, Baker Books, 2003), 68.