

Waiting for Christ.

ALL Christ's allusions to the circumstances of his second coming presuppose a time of indefinite waiting on the part of those servants whom he finds alive in the earth. They discern the signs of their time, yet they know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of Man cometh. They recognise the time of the end, but have to wait longer than they supposed they would when they girded their loins and set their lights burning. This unexpected delay caused some to relax their vigilance, and to say, "*My Lord delayeth His coming.*" On others, though hope deferred maketh the heart sick, it produces not this effect; they endure to the end. They are the class contemplated in the words of Christ when he says, "*Blessed are those servants whom their Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching.*" Their existence is distinctly recognised under the three-frog and Euphratean signs of the sixth vial, in the words, "*Behold I come as a thief; blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments.*"

The present time answers to all these peculiarities. The leading events of the age all tell us that the Lord is at the door. The three and-a-half times of the Papal Horn are expired. We had expected the Lord's re-appearing at the exact close of that period. We have seen the mark of its close in the altered position of the Papacy, but the Lord yet tarries; and we assemble this morning, still watching and waiting. The delay tries us, but destroys us not. It is no delay in the true sense. That is, there is no delay or slackness from the Lord's point of view. With him the time is fixed to a day, and his coming will not be a day after the time appointed. The idea of "delay" relates to our expectations. The neighbourhood of the day has been revealed, but not the day itself. We had expected the arrival of that day as soon as its neighbourhood was reached. Time has shown us that the end, and *the time of the end* are two different things, though belonging one to the other. The latter we have reached: the former we yet wait to see. This delay in relation to expectation is one of the foreseen characteristics of the end; how otherwise does the Lord, at his appearing, find some who say, "*My Lord **delayeth** his coming?*" It is a delay for which some of us—yea, all of us—may be thankful. If the Lord had come as soon as some of us were expecting, many who are now rejoicing in the light would have been overtaken in darkness. He would have been here before the invitation to the marriage supper had reached them. And to none of us would the day have come so acceptably as it will after a prolonged season of works and faith, and patience. Not that our poor works can commend us to the grace of God; for Christ has instructed us to say, after we have done all we can, "*Behold, we are unprofitable servants; we have done that which it was our duty to do*" (Luke xvii. 10). But there is a satisfaction in the answer of a good conscience towards God, and this satisfaction will be greater after years of toil and waiting than if

we had been ushered into the presence of the glorified Jesus immediately we had begun the race.

The waiting will seem long or short, according as we furnish the inner man or otherwise. Time is long to the vacant-minded, and is pretty much in the ratio of the vacancy. To a child, a day is of great length, and a year an incalculable period. With men and women of uncultivated mind, the weeks hang heavy. Time flies quickly with those who are wisely busy. To God, the fountain of all strength and wisdom, a thousand years in His sight are as yesterday when it is past.

If we store our mind by reading and reflection, we shall be enabled to realise how short are the years as they fly, and how brief would be the delay of even a whole life-time. The man who neglects the food of wisdom becomes impoverished and lean in his spiritual man, and too weak to bear the load of present deprivation or to endure the weariness of waiting. God's plans are on a great scale, and of slow growth. If we make ourselves familiar with what is past, we shall understand what is present, and be able to patiently wait what is future. But if we restrict ourselves to what is now present, our minds will be dwarfed and overpowered. The things of the passing moment and the things on the surface destroy, if our impressions and motives are drawn from them only. Wisdom lies deep. You have to dig for it: sweet when found, but hard to reach. God has arranged it so; and wisdom, when found, tells you that it is wise to have it so. A fool and a wise man will look on the same objects, but be very differently impressed. A Hottentot looks up to the sky at night and sees a roof with lamps fixed to it in a planless way; the philosopher beholds the fathomless expanse and worlds in accurate array. So the surface reader looks back and sees BIBLE HISTORY as a scholastic abstraction, and the names of Abraham, David, and others, as the chance celebrities of capricious fortune; while the daily attendant at the gates of wisdom discerns the living perspective of the Divine work in the earth, covering even the present hour, and sweeping forward into a future bright with glory. To such, the past is real and the future a fact, and the present, with its troubles, patiently and willingly borne. To them the waiting for Christ is no empty phrase, but words expressive of a palpable and daily-felt reality. To such as live in the present, you talk cant if you speak of the present life of the saints as a pilgrimage, just as thanksgiving to God and the recognition of His will is cant to those with whom God is only a name. But wisdom is justified of all her children, and will clothe them with honour at last.

Meanwhile, their lot is one of deprivation and sorrow. It has always been so: "*come out of great tribulation*," is the description of them all in their glorified state. This helps us to endure the tribulation while it lasts, not that we have much to bear compared with some, but what we do have to bear, is what

every member of the family has suffered before us, more or less. The apparent indifference of God, for instance, to what is going on—the prosperity of the scorner and the casting down of the righteous—the absence of God's visible operation and the triumph of those who regard Him not—are features of our affliction which distressed the beloved of God in ancient times no less than ourselves now. Thus we find Jeremiah lamenting: *"Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? Wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously? Thou hast planted them; yea, they have taken root; they grow; yea, they bring forth fruit; Thou art near in their mouth and far from their hearts."* Thus also, Malachi: *"And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered."* Thus also in the Psalm read this morning, wherein, by the Spirit, David and David's Lord and Son speak together: *"Why standest Thou afar off, O Lord? Why hidest Thou Thyself in times of trouble? The wicked, in his pride, doth persecute the poor; let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined."* We are apt to think of David, and especially of the Son of David, as unsubject to the weariness which we experience from the absence of the visible working of God. We are liable to imagine them as having lived in a continual joy of God, undepressed by, the triumph of ungodliness in the earth. A careful consideration of their words will disabuse us of this idea, and help us to feel them our brethren in tribulation who have drunk of the same cup of bitterness, and exercised themselves in the same weariness of waiting and seeking after God. They felt as if God stood afar off: as if God hid Himself in time of trouble. This was to them a sorrow; a continual burden, as the similar experience is to us. The anguish of their hearts sought vent as ours will. They spent much time in prayer. They asked their Rock "why" He apparently forsook them. The breathings of their sorrow are recorded that all the children of God may understand and be comforted. In all their generations, they feel alike oftentimes desolate from the same cause; but by these they are taught to forbear to think that some strange thing has happened unto them. They become enlightened to perceive that so is the will of God that they should have a season of solitariness, in which they wait for God and seek Him with their whole heart, under the sweet power of the hope which God has linked with the sorrow. God has not said "Seek ye My face in vain." On the contrary, He has said, *"Ye shall seek Me and find Me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart."* And this finding of Him is the finding of all that the soul can desire, for every good and perfect gift comes from Him, but to everything there is *"a season and a time," "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart;"* but the reaping is in the day of harvest. For this they have to "wait."

The righteous SHALL be glad in the Lord. Now they are sorrowful, though *"always rejoicing"* in the midst of their sorrow. Everything is against them at present; but, like David, they "encourage themselves in the Lord their

God"; for He is their Rock and the source of all the good for which they hope in Him. He asks them to be comforted: *"Hearken unto Me, ye that know righteousness; the people in whose heart is My law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings. For the moth shall eat them up as a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool; but My righteousness shall be for ever, and My salvation from generation to generation. . . . I, even I, am He that comforteth you: who art thou that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass?"*

The prophet was commanded: *"Comfort ye My people."* So Jesus said: *"Blessed are ye that mourn, for ye shall be comforted."* There is a comfort now in prospect of the substantial comfort that God will bestow in the blessing and exaltation of His chosen in the day of Christ. All the groanings of the saints that the Spirit has preserved in the word are mingled with this comfort; and by the same comfort may we comfort our hearts in the present time of waiting and patience. God is observant of all our ways; and God never forgets. Christ's eye is over all the ecclesias, *"trying the reins and hearts,"* that every man may receive according to his ways. Therefore, our tears and our sighs, at the present desolation, are not lost, though unseen of men. Our troubles, in this respect, are pleasing to Him. In due time He will wipe away the tears and fill our mouth with laughter. In this respect we learn to rejoice even in tribulation. Those who live in pleasure at such a time as this are dead while they live. Those who for peace have great bitterness in the righteous ways of God, will yet have cause to sing, *"Thou hast, in love to my soul, delivered it from the pit of corruption: Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back."* Therefore may they even now obey the commands addressed by Jesus to those who suffer in the way of righteousness: *"Rejoice, and be exceeding glad."*

Especially in our day may we cultivate this gladness. The signs of the times tell us that we are rapidly nearing the time of the dead when God shall give reward to His servants the prophets: when all who fear His name, small and great, shall awake together to the joyful celebration of His praise, and the execution of His judgment upon the nations. The frog sign has been the notable fact of the diplomatic world for 25 years; the Euphrates is drying at an advancing speed that no human contrivance can arrest; the Papal Horn lies powerless in the dust; the Jews are everywhere rising from the down-treading of centuries. The ear that can hearken hears the voice ringing through the world, *"Behold, I come as a thief."* A little more waiting for God; a little more patience; a little more endurance of evil and continuance in well-doing; and the hour will arrive. The moment will be here when we shall suddenly be confronted by the great fact that the Lord is in the earth. Great will be the joy of the saints at the announcement, though they mingle trembling with their fear.

(Taken from “Seasons of Comfort” Volume 1, pages 88-91 by Bro. Roberts.)