

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

by

Various Authors

Copyright © 1896

CHAPTER THREE

“OCCUPY TILL I COME”

J C. Ryle

The Parable of the Pounds—The Mistake of the Disciples Our Parallel Mistake—The Fulfillment of Prophecy—The Present Position of our Lord—What He will Do on His return—The Present Dispensation—The Present Duty of Christians—Warning—Question—Invitation—Exhortation

“And as they heard these things, He added and spake a parable, because He was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.

“And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, *Occupy till I come*” (Luke 19:11-13).

READER, the words before your eyes form an introduction to the parable, which is commonly called the “*Parable of the Pounds.*” They contain matter which deserves the prayerful consideration of every true Christian.

There are some parables of which Matthew Henry says, with equal quaintness and truth, “The key hangs beside the door.” The Holy Ghost Himself interprets them. There is no room left for doubt as to the purpose for which they were spoken. Of such parables the parable of the Pounds is an example.

Luke tells us that our Lord Jesus Christ **“added and spake a parable, because He was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.”**

These words reveal to us the secret thoughts of our Lord’s disciples at this period of His ministry. They were drawing nigh to Jerusalem. They gathered from many of their Master’s sayings that something remarkable was about to happen. They had a strong impression that one great end of His coming into the world was about to be accomplished. So far they were quite right. As to the precise nature of the event about to happen they were quite wrong.

Reader, there are three subjects opened up in this passage of Scripture which appear to me to be of the deepest importance.

Upon each of these I wish to offer a few thoughts for your private meditation. I purposely abstain from touching any part of the parable except the beginning. I want to direct your attention to the three following points:

- I. I will speak of the mistake of the disciples, referred to in the verses before us.
- II. I will speak of the present position of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- III. I will speak of the present duty of all who profess to be Jesus Christ's disciples.

May God bless the reading to everyone into whose hands this may fall. May every reader be taught to pray that the Spirit will guide him into all truth.

I. THE MISTAKE INTO WHICH THE DISCIPLES HAD FALLEN

What was this mistake? Let us try to understand this point clearly.

Our Lord's disciples seem to have thought that the Old Testament promises of Messiah's visible kingdom and glory were about to be immediately fulfilled. They believed rightly that He was indeed the Messiah, the Christ of God; but they blindly supposed that He was going at once to take to Himself His great power, and to reign gloriously over the earth. This was the sum and substance of their error. They appear to have concluded that now was the day and now the hour when the Redeemer would build up Zion, and appear in His glory,

- When He would smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips slay the wicked,
- When He would assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather the dispersed of Judah,
- When He would take the heathen for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession,
- When He would break His enemies with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel,
- When He would reign in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously,
- When the kingdom and dominion and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven would be given to the saints of the Most High.

Such appears to have been the mistake, into which our Lord's disciples had fallen at the time when He spoke the parable of the Pounds. It was a great mistake unquestionably. They did not realize that before all these prophecies could be fulfilled, "**it behooved Christ to suffer.**" Their sanguine expectations overleaped the crucifixion and the long parenthesis of time to follow, and bounded onward to the final glory.

- They did not see that there was to be a first advent of Messiah "**to be cut off,**" before the second advent of Messiah to reign.
- They did not perceive that the sacrifices and ceremonies of the law of Moses were first to receive their fulfillment in a better sacrifice and a better High Priest, and a shedding of blood more precious than that of bulls and goats.

- They did not comprehend that before the glory Christ must be crucified, and an elect people gathered out from among the Gentiles by the preaching of the Gospel.

All these were dark things to them. They grasped part of the prophetic word, but not all.

- They saw that Christ was to have a kingdom, but they did not see that He was to be wounded and bruised, and be an offering for sin.

- They understood the dispensation of the crown and the glory, but not the dispensation of the cross and the shame. Such was their mistake.

I believe we have fallen into an error parallel with that of our Jewish brethren,—an error less fatal in its consequences than theirs, but an error far more inexcusable because we have had more light.

- If the Jew thought too exclusively of Christ reigning, has not the Gentile thought too exclusively of Christ suffering?

- If the Jew could see nothing in Old Testament prophecy but Christ's exaltation and final power, has not the Gentile often seen nothing but Christ's humiliation and the preaching of the Gospel?

- If the Jew dwelt too much on Christ's second advent, has not the Gentile dwelt too exclusively on the first?

- If the Jew ignored the cross, has not the Gentile ignored the crown?

I believe there can be but one answer to these questions. I believe that we Gentiles have been very guilty concerning a large portion of God's truth. I believe that we have cherished an arbitrary, reckless habit of interpreting first advent texts literally, and second advent texts spiritually. I believe we have not rightly understood "all that the Prophets have spoken" about the second personal advent of Christ, any more than the Jews did about the first.

Reader, I earnestly invite your special attention to the point on which I am now dwelling. I know not what your opinions may be about the fulfillment of the prophetic parts of Scripture, but I ask you in all affection to examine your views. I entreat you to consider calmly whether your opinions about Christ's second advent and kingdom are as sound and scriptural as those of His first disciples. I entreat you to take heed, lest insensibly you commit as great error about Christ's second coming and glory, as they did about Christ's first coming and cross.

Throw aside all prejudice, and view the subject with calm and dispassionate thought.

Take up anew the prophetic Scriptures, and pray that you may not err in interpreting their meaning. Read them in the light of those two great polestars, the first and second advents of Jesus Christ. Bind up with the first advent the rejection of the Jews, the calling of the Gentiles, the preaching of the Gospel as a witness to the world, and the gathering out of the election of grace. Bind up with the Second Advent the restoration of the Jews, the pouring out of judgments on unbelieving Gentiles, the conversion of the world, and the establishment of Christ's kingdom upon earth. Do this, and you will see a meaning and fullness in prophecy which perhaps you have never discovered.

It is time for Christians to interpret unfulfilled prophecy by the light of prophecies already fulfilled.

- The curses on the Jews were brought to pass literally:—so also will be the blessings.
- The scattering was literal: so also will be the gathering.
- The pulling down of Zion was literal:—so also will be the building up.
- The rejection of Israel was literal:—so also will be the restoration.

It is high time to interpret the events that shall accompany Christ's Second Advent by the light of those accompanying His first advent.

- The first advent was literal, visible, personal:—so also will be His second.
- His first advent was with a literal body:—so also will be His second.
- At His first advent the least predictions were fulfilled to the very letter:—so also will they be at His second.
- The shame was literal and visible:—so also will be the glory.

It is high time to cease from explaining Old Testament prophecies in a way not warranted by the New Testament. What right have we to say that the words Judah, Zion, Israel, and Jerusalem, ever mean anything but literal Judah, literal Zion, literal Israel and literal Jerusalem? What precedent shall we find in the New Testament? Hardly any, if indeed any at all. Well says an admirable writer on this subject:—"There are really only two or three places in the whole New Testament—Gospels, Epistles, and Revelation—where such names are used decidedly in what may be called a spiritual or figurative state. —The word 'Jerusalem' occurs eighty times, and all of them unquestionably literal, save when the opposite is expressly pointed out by the epithets 'heavenly,' or 'new,' or 'holy.' 'Jew' occurs an hundred times, and only four are even ambiguous. 'Israel' and 'Israelite' occur forty times, and all literal. 'Judah' and 'Judea' above twenty times, and all literal."

II. WHAT IS THE PRESENT POSITION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST?

The parable appears to me to answer that question distinctly in the twelfth verse. "**A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.**"

This nobleman represents the Lord Jesus Christ, and that in two respects.

Like the nobleman, the Lord Jesus is gone into a far country to receive for Himself a kingdom. He has not received it yet in possession, though He has it in promise. He has a spiritual kingdom unquestionably. He is king over the hearts of His believing people, and they are all His faithful subjects. He has a controlling power over the world. He is King of kings and Lord of lords. "**By Him all things consist,**" and nothing can happen without His permission. But His real, literal, visible, complete kingdom the Lord Jesus has not yet received.

- "**We see not yet all things put under Him.**"
- "**He sits on the right hand of the Father till His enemies are made His footstool.**"

The devil is the prince of this world during the present dispensation. The vast majority of the inhabitants of the earth choose the things that please the devil far more than the things that please God.

Little as they may think it, they are doing the devil's will, behaving as the devil's subjects, and serving the devil far more than Christ. This is the actual condition of Christendom as well as of heathen countries. After 1900 years of Bibles and Gospel preaching, there is not a nation, or a country, or a parish, or a long-established congregation, where the devil has not more subjects than Christ. So fearfully true is it that the world is not yet the kingdom of Christ.

The Lord Jesus during the present dispensation is like David between the time of his anointing and Saul's death.

- He has the promise of the kingdom, but He has not yet received the crown and throne.
- He is followed by a few, and those often neither great nor wise; but they are a faithful people.
- He is persecuted by His enemies, and oftentimes driven into the wilderness; and yet His party is never quite destroyed.

But He has none of the visible signs of the kingdom at present,—no earthly glory, majesty, greatness, obedience.

- The vast majority of mankind see no beauty in Him.
- They will not have this Man to reign over them.
- His people are not honored for their Master's sake.
- They walk the earth like princes in disguise.

His kingdom is not yet come. His will is not yet done on earth excepting by a little flock. It is not the day of "**His power.**" The Lord Jesus is biding His time. But just as the Lord Jesus, like the nobleman, "**went to receive a kingdom**"; so, like the nobleman, the Lord Jesus intends one day "**to return.**"

The words of the angels shall have a complete fulfillment: "**This same Jesus which was taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.**"

- As His going away was a real literal going away, so His return shall be a real literal return.
- As He came personally the first time with a body, so He shall come personally the second time with a body.
- As He came visibly to this earth and visibly went away, so when He comes the second time He shall visibly return.

And then, and not till then, the complete kingdom of Christ shall begin. He left His servants as "**a nobleman**"; He returns to His servants as "**a king.**"

Then He intends to cast out that old usurper the devil, to bind him for a thousand years, and to strip him of his power.

Then He intends to make a restitution of the face of creation. It shall be the world's jubilee day. Our earth shall at last bring forth her increase. The King shall at length have His own again. At last the ninety-seventh Psalm shall be fulfilled, and men shall say, "**The Lord reigneth: let the earth rejoice!**"

Then He intends to fulfill the prophecies of Enoch, John the Baptist, and Paul, "**To execute judgment upon all the ungodly**" inhabitants of Christendom—"to burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire"—and "**in flaming fire to take vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel.**"

Then He intends to raise His dead saints and gather His living ones, to gather together the scattered tribes of Israel, and to set up an empire on earth in which every knee shall bow to Him, and "**every tongue confess that Christ is Lord.**"

When, how, where, in what manner, all these things shall be, we cannot say particularly. It is enough for us to know that they shall be. The Lord Jesus has undertaken to do them, and they shall be performed. The Lord Jesus waits for the time appointed by the Father, and then shall they all come to pass. As surely as He was born of a pure virgin, and lived on earth thirty-three years as a servant, so surely He shall come with clouds in glory, and reign on the earth as a King.

Reader, I charge you to establish in your mind, among the great verities of your religion, that Christ is one day to have a complete kingdom in this world, —that His kingdom is not yet set up,—but that it will be set up in the day of His return.

- Know clearly whose kingdom it is now: not Christ's, but the usurper Satan's.
- Know clearly whose kingdom it is to be one day: not Satan the usurper's, but Jesus Christ's.
- Know clearly when the kingdom is to change hands, and the usurper to be cast out: when the Lord Jesus returns in person, and not before.
- Know clearly what the Lord Jesus is doing now: He is sitting at the right hand of the Father.

He is interceding, as a High Priest in the holy of holies for His people,—adding to their number such as shall be saved by the preaching of the Gospel,—and waiting till the appointed "**day of His power,**" when He shall come forth to bless His people, and sit as "**a priest upon His throne.**"

Know these things clearly, and you will do well.

Know these things clearly, and then you will not cherish extravagant expectations from any church, minister, or religious machinery in this present dispensation.

- You will not marvel to see ministers and missionaries not converting all to whom they preach.
- You will not wonder to find that while some believe the Gospel, many believe not.
- You will not be depressed and cast down when you see the children of the world in every place many, and the children of God few.

You will remember that “**the days are evil,**” and that the time of general conversion has not yet arrived. You will thank God that any are converted at all, and that while the gospel is hid from the wise and prudent, it is yet revealed to babes. Alas for the man who expects a millennium before the Lord Jesus returns! How can this possibly be, if the world in the day of His coming is to be found as it was in the day of Noah and Lot?

Know these things clearly, and then you will not be confounded and surprised by the continuance of immense evils in the world. Wars, and tumults, and oppression, and dishonesty, and selfishness, and covetousness, and superstition, and bad government, and abounding heresies, will not appear to you unaccountable

- You will not sink down into a morbid, misanthropic condition of mind when you see laws and reforms and education not making mankind perfect.
- You will not relapse into a state of apathy and disgust when you see churches full of imperfections, and theologians making mistakes.

You will say to yourself, “The time of Christ’s power has not yet arrived—the devil is still working among his children, and sowing darkness and division broadcast among the saints—the true King is yet to come.”

Know these things clearly, and then you will see why God delays the final glory, and allows things to go on as they do in this world. It is not that He is not able to prevent evil, it is not that He is slack in the fulfilling of His promises,—but the Lord is taking out for Himself a people by the preaching of the Gospel. He is longsuffering to the unconverted.

“The Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”

Once let the number of the elect be gathered out of the world,—once let the last elect sinner be brought to repentance,—and then the kingdom of Christ shall be set up, and the throne of grace shall be exchanged for the throne of glory.

Know these things clearly, and then you will work diligently to do good to souls. The time is short. “**The night is far spent. The day is at hand.**” The signs of the times call loudly for watchfulness, and speak with no uncertain voice. The Turkish empire is drying up. The Jews are cared for as they never have been for hundreds of years. The Gospel is being preached as a witness in almost every corner of the world. Surely if we would pluck a few more brands from the burning before it is too late, we must work hard and lose no time. We must preach—we must warn—we must exhort—we must give money to religious societies—we must spend and be spent far more than we have ever done yet.

Know these things clearly, and then you will be often looking for the coming of the day of God. You will regard the Second Advent as a glorious and comfortable truth, around which your best hopes will all be clustered.

- You will not merely think of Christ crucified, but will think also of Christ’s coming again.
- You will long for the days of refreshing and the manifestation of the sons of God.

- You will find peace in looking back to the cross, and you will find joyful hope in looking forward to the kingdom.

Once more, I repeat, know clearly Christ's present position. He is like one who is "**gone into a far country to receive a kingdom, and then to return.**"

III. WHAT IS THE PRESENT DUTY OF ALL CHRIST'S PROFESSING DISCIPLES?

When I speak of present duty, I mean of course their duty between the period of Christ's first and second advents. And I find an answer in the words of the nobleman, in the parable, to his servants: "**He delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.**"

Reader, I know few words more searching and impressive than these four, "**Occupy till I come.**"

- They are spoken to all who profess and call themselves Christians.
- They address the conscience of everyone who has not formally turned his back on Christianity.
- They ought to stir up all hearers of the Gospel to examine themselves whether they are in the faith, and to prove themselves.

For your sake, remember, these words were written: "**Occupy till I come.**"

The Lord Jesus bids you "**occupy.**" By that He means that you are to be "**a doer**" in your Christianity, and not merely a hearer and professor.

He wants His servants not only to receive His wages, and eat His bread, and dwell in His house, and belong to His family,—but also to do His work. You are to "**let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works.**"

- Have you faith? It must not be a dead faith; it must "**work by love.**"
- Are you elect? You are elect unto "**obedience.**"
- Are you redeemed? You are redeemed that you may be "**a peculiar people, zealous of good works.**"
- Do you love Christ? Prove the reality of your love by keeping Christ's commandments.

Oh! Reader, do not forget this charge to "**occupy.**" Beware of an idle, talking, gossiping, sentimental, do-nothing religion. Think not because your doings cannot justify you, or put away one single sin, that therefore it matters not whether you do anything at all. Away with such a delusion! Cast it behind you as an invention of the devil. Think of the house built upon the sand, and its miserable end. As ever you would "**make your calling and election sure,**" be a doing Christian.

But the Lord Jesus also bids you "**occupy your pound.**"

By this He means that He has given each one of His people some opportunity of glorifying Him.

He would have you understand that everyone has got his own sphere,—the poorest as well as the richest,—that everyone has an open door before him, and may, if he will, show forth his Master's praise.

- Your bodily health and strength,
- Your mental gifts and capacities,
- Your money and your earthly possessions,
- Your rank and position in life,
- Your example and influence with others
- Your liberty to read the Bible, and hear the Gospel,
- Your plentiful supply of means of grace.

All these are your “**pounds**.” All these are to be used and employed with a continual reference to the glory of Christ. All these are His gifts.

But the Lord Jesus bids you also to occupy till He comes. By that He means that you are to do His work on earth like one who continually looks for His return.

You are to be like the faithful servant, who knows not what hour his master may come home, but keeps all things in readiness, and is always prepared. You are to be like one who knows that Christ's coming is the great reckoning day, and to be ready to render up your account at any moment. You are not to suppose that you have any freehold in this world, not even a lease.

The greatest and the richest of mankind is only God's tenant-at-will.

- You are not to neglect any social duty or relation of life because of the uncertainty of the Lord's return.
- You are to fill the station to which God has called you in a godly and Christian way;
- You are to be ready to go from the place of business to meet Christ in the air, if the Lord shall think fit.
- You are to be like a man who never knows what a day might bring forth, and, therefore, you are to put off nothing till a “**convenient season**.”
- You are to rise and go forth in the morning ready, if need be, to meet Christ at noon.
- You are to lie down in bed at night ready, if need be, to be awakened by the midnight cry, “**Behold the Bridegroom cometh**.”
- You are to keep your spiritual accounts in a state of constant preparation, like one who never knows how soon they may be called for.
- You are to measure all your ways by the measure of Christ's appearing, and to do nothing in which you would not like Jesus to find you engaged.

This is to “occupy” till Jesus comes.

Think, reader, how condemning are these words to thousands of professing Christians! What an utter absence of preparation appears in their daily walk and conversation! How thoroughly unfit they are to meet Christ!

- They know nothing of occupying the gifts of God as loans for which they must give account.
- They show not the slightest desire to glorify Him with **“body and spirit, which are His.”**
- They give no sign of readiness for the second advent.

Well says old Gurnall, “It may be written on the grave of every unconverted man. Here lies one who never did for God an hour’s work.”

Think again how arousing these words ought to be to all who are rich in this world, but do not know how to spend their money rightly. Alas! There are many who live on as if Christ had never said anything about the difficulty of rich men being saved.

- They are rich toward their own pleasures, or their own tastes, or their own families, but not rich toward God!
- They live as if they would not have to give an account of their use of money.
- They live as if there was no reckoning day before the bar of Christ.
- They live as if Christ had never said, **“It is more blessed to give than to receive.”**

“Sell that ye have, and give alms. Provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not.”

Oh! If this book should by chance fall into the hands of such an one, I do beseech you, consider your ways and be wise. Cease to be content with giving God’s cause a little.

- Give far more liberally than you have done yet.
- Give hundreds where you now give tens.
- Give thousands where you now give hundreds.

Then, and not till then, I shall believe you are “occupying” as one who looks for Christ’s return.

Alas! For the covetousness and narrow-mindedness of the Church of these days! May the Lord open the eyes of rich Christians.

Think again, how instructive are these words to all who are troubled by doubts about mingling with the world, and taking part in its vain amusements. It is useless to tell us that races, balls, and theaters, and operas, and cards, are not forbidden by name in Scripture.

The question we should ask ourselves is simply this,—“Am I occupying as one who looks for Christ’s return, when I take part in these things?”

- Should I desire Jesus to return suddenly and find me at the race course, or in the ballroom, or at the theater, or at the card table?
- Should I think I was in my right place, and where my Lord would have me to be?”

Oh, dear reader, this is the true test by which to try all our daily occupations and employments of time.

- That thing which we would not do if we thought Jesus was coming tonight, that thing we ought not to do at all.
- That place to which we would not go if we thought Jesus was coming this day, that place we ought to avoid.
- That company in which we would not like Jesus to find us, in that company we ought never to sit down.

Oh, that men would live as in the sight of Christ! Not in the sight of man, or of the Church, or of ministers, —but as in the sight of Christ! This would be “**occupying till He comes.**”

But think how encouraging are these words to all who seek first the kingdom of God, and love the Lord Christ in sincerity. What though the children of the world regard them as “righteous overmuch?” What though mistaken friends and relations tell them they pay too much attention to religion, and go too far! Those words, “**Occupy till I come,**” are words which justify their conduct.

Let me conclude this address by a few words of general application.

1. WARNING

First let me draw from the whole subject a word of solemn warning for every one into whose hands this may fall. That warning is—that there is a great change yet to come on this world, and a change we ought to keep constantly before our mind’s eye.

That change is a change of masters. That old rebel, the devil, and all his adherents, shall be cast down. The Lord Jesus and all His saints shall be exalted and raised to honor. “**The kingdoms of this world**” shall “**become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ.**”

That change is a change of manners. Sin shall no longer be made light of and palliated. Wickedness shall no longer go unpunished and unreprieved. Holiness shall become the general character of the inhabitants of the earth. “**The new heaven and the new earth**” shall be the dwelling place of “**righteousness.**”

That change is a change of opinion. There shall be no more deism, or skepticism, or infidelity. All nations shall do honor to the crucified Lamb of God. All men shall know Him, from the least to the greatest. “**The earth shall be full of the knowledge of Him, as the waters cover the sea.**”

I say nothing as to the time when these things shall take place. I object, on principle, to all dogmatism about dates. All I insist upon is this—that there is a great change before us all; a change for the earth, a change for man, and, above all, a change for the saints. I accept the prediction that “There is a great improvement and development of human nature yet to take place.” I accept it with all my heart. But how and when shall it be brought about? Not by any system of education. Not by any legislation of politicians. Not by anything short of the appearing of the kingdom of Christ. Then, and then only, shall there be universal justice, universal knowledge and universal peace.

I accept the common phrase of many, "There is a good time coming." I accept it with all my heart. I do verily believe there shall one day be no more poverty,—no more oppression,—no more ignorance, —no more grinding competition,—no more covetousness. But when shall that good time come? Never, never till the return of Jesus Christ at His second advent. And for whom shall that time be good? For none but those who know and love the Lord.

I accept the common phrase, "There is a man coming who will set all right, that is now wrong. We wait for the coming man." I accept it with all my heart. I do look for One who shall unravel the tangled skein of this world's affairs, and put everything in its right place. But who is the great physician for an old, diseased, worn-out world? It is the man Christ Jesus, who it yet to return.

Oh! Reader, let us realize this point. There is before us all a great change. Surely, when a man has notice to quit his present dwelling place, he ought to make sure that he has before him another home.

2. QUESTION

Next, let me draw from the whole subject a solemn question for all into whose hands this may fall. That question is simply this,

ARE YOU READY FOR THE GREAT CHANGE?

Are you ready for the coming and kingdom of Christ?

Remember, I do not ask what you think about controversial points on the subject of prophecy. About all these points you and I may err, and yet be saved. The one point to which I want to hold you is this, "Are you ready for the kingdom of Christ?"

It is useless to tell me that in asking this, I put before you too high a standard. It is vain to tell me that a man may be a very good man, and yet not be ready for the kingdom of Christ. I deny it altogether. Every justified and converted man is ready, and if you are not ready, you are not a justified man. The standard I put before you is nothing more than the New Testament standard, and the Apostles would have doubted the truth of your religion if you were not looking and longing for the coming of the Lord. Above all, the grand end of the Gospel is to prepare men to meet God. What has your Christianity done for you if it has not made you meet for the kingdom of Christ? Nothing! nothing, nothing at all! Oh, that you may think on this matter, and never rest till you are ready to meet Christ.

3. INVITATION

In the next place let me offer an invitation to all readers who do not feel ready for Christ's return.

That invitation shall be short and simple. I beseech you to know your danger, and come to Christ without delay, that you may be pardoned, justified, and made ready for things to come.

I entreat you this day to “**flee from the wrath to come,**” to the hope set before you in the Gospel. I pray you in Christ’s stead, to lay down enmity and unbelief, and at once “**to be reconciled to God.**”

Lay aside everything that stands between you and Christ. Cast away everything that draws you back, and prevents your feeling ready for the Lord’s appearing. Find out the besetting sin that weighs you down, and tear it from your heart, however dear it may be. Cry mightily to the Lord Jesus to reveal Himself to your soul. Rest not till you have got a real, firm and reasonable hope, and know that your feet are on the Rock of Ages.

4. EXHORTATION

Last of all, let me draw from the subject an exhortation to all who know Christ indeed, and love His appearing. That exhortation is simply this,—that you strive more and more to be a “doing” Christian. Labor more and more to show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into marvelous light. Improve every talent which the Lord Jesus has committed to your charge to the setting forth of His glory.

- Let your walk declare plainly that you seek a country yet to come.
- Let your conformity to the mind of Christ be unquestionable and unmistakable.
- Let your holiness be a clear plain fact, which even the worst enemies of the Gospel cannot deny.

Above all, if you are a student of prophecy, I entreat you never to let it be said that prophetic study prevents practical diligence.

- If you do believe that the day is really approaching, then labor actively to provoke others unto love and good works.
- If you do believe that the night is far spent, be doubly diligent to cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.

Never was there a greater mistake than to fancy the doctrine of the personal return of Christ is calculated to paralyze Christian diligence. Surely there can be no greater spur to the servant’s activity than the expectation of his master’s speedy return.

This is the way to obtain a healthy state of soul. There is nothing like the exercises of our graces for promoting our spiritual vigor. Alas! there are not a few of God’s saints who complain that they want spiritual comfort in their religion, while the fault is altogether in themselves.

“OCCUPY,” “OCCUPY,”

I would say to such persons. Lay yourselves out more heartily for the glory of God, and these uncomfortable feelings will soon vanish away.

This is the way to do good to the children of the world.

Nothing, under God, has such an effect on unconverted people as the sight of a real, thorough going, live Christian. There are thousands who will not come to hear the Gospel, and do not know the meaning of justification by faith, who yet can understand an uncompromising, holy, consistent walk with God.

“OCCUPY,” “OCCUPY,”

I say again, if you want to do good.

So living we shall find great joy in our work

- Great comfort in our trials
- Great doors of usefulness in the world
- Great consolation in our sickness
- Great hope in our death
- Leave great evidences behind us when we are buried
- Have great confidence in Christ's return
- Receive a great crown in the day of reward.

~ end of chapter 3 ~

<http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/>
