

Loving and Living for the 2nd Coming of Christ (Jas. 5:7-9)

Preached by Pastor Phil Layton at Gold Country Baptist Church on February 14, 2010

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News Release emailed to me this week: Watch for Terrorist Groups in American Churches

Latest news reports are that five terrorist cell groups have been operating in many of our churches [unrelated to Al Qaida or bin Ladin]. They have been identified as: Bin Sleepin, Bin Arguin, Bin Fightin, Bin Complainin, and Bin Missin. The enemy's plan is to work within the church to discourage, disrupt, and destroy.

However, there have been reports of a sixth group. A tiny cell which is actually the only effective counter force in the church. Bin Prayin does whatever is needed to uplift and encourage the Body of Christ. We have noticed that the Bin Prayin cell group has different characteristics than the others. They have Bin Watchin, Bin Waitin, Bin Lovin and Bin Longin for their Master, Jesus Christ to return.

I modified the wording on that a little and am not sure who wrote those, but you don't have to modify it much at all to fit exactly what James was addressing in the early church in James 5:7-9.

The most dangerous enemies of the 1st century church weren't ungodly government or ungodly society but ungodly influences within the church, people who look and talk and dress like the rest of the church, but in ungodly speech and attitudes un-checked they're actually destroyers from within of a church's unity and harmony. It's not that the NT is unconcerned with ungodliness in the world, but the emphasis of the NT:

- is not external or political
- not trying to moralize an immoral society
- not taking matters into our own hands
- not complaining about how bad things are to each other
- not grumbling against even each other or taking out our frustrations on each other
- not thinking that we can right all wrongs ourselves
- not being angry, anxious, anticipating things getting better on earth.

⁷ *Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains.* ⁸ *You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.* ⁹ *Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door.*

The context has to do with patience (notice it 2x in v. 7, again in v. 8 as well as v. 10 which specifies that he's speaking of patience *in suffering*). Verse 11 goes on to speak of endurance / perseverance, a different word but a related concept we'll look at more next week, Lord-willing. We should also note the prior context, because v. 7 has the word "therefore" which is there for the purpose of referring to what is in the text there before v. 7 (oppression, persecution esp. by rich in v. 1-6, last week's study).

James 2:6 tells us the ungodly rich were oppressing the Jewish Christians, personally dragging them into court. 2:7 says they were also blaspheming them (apparently religious persecution, not just economically or ethnically driven oppression, though that may be involved as well for many of them). But in James 5, for those in an ungodly society with ungodly people in charge (sound familiar?), the NT remedy is not focused on legislative reform, the Scriptures focus on the Lord's Return ... and so must we. The NT emphasis is not political change...it's *personal change*, one heart at a time. It's through the transformation of the gospel, which not only delivers sinners from hell to heaven, but it also delivers Christians from their focus on the things of earth to a focus on eternity and heaven.

The gospel (good news) doesn't end with Jesus on the cross or in the grave. Christians look to an empty cross, an empty tomb, a resurrected Lord who ascended to heaven and right now intercedes for us and who may very soon come back to earth to gather His elect and bring wrath upon His enemies. We look to a glorified Lord who will come in exactly the same way He left: personally, powerfully, physically, visibly, victoriously, and gloriously. At His 2nd coming He won't be seen in a manger or riding on a lowly donkey with palm branches around Him, it will be with majesty and with the armies of heaven all around Him, and the prayer He taught us to pray will finally fully be answered "*Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven ... For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.*"

Acts 1:1 *The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach, ²until the day when He was taken up to heaven, after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen. ³To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, **appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God ...** ⁶So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "**Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?**"*

Note the context: Jesus has been teaching them about the kingdom for 40 days, they're hanging on every word, and now they want to know *when* the kingdom He's been teaching them about will be restored to Israel. They understood Jesus wasn't done and had a kingdom still to come and so they wanted to know the time, when He'll set it all up. It seems they hope now's the time. Not a bad desire necessarily ... but the secret things belong to the Lord our God. By Divine design we are not to know the times God has set.

⁷*He said to them, "**It is not for you to know times or epochs** [or "seasons"] **which the Father has fixed by His own authority** ...*

The Father intentionally didn't let even the apostles know when the Son would return and restore the kingdom to Israel and fulfill any prophecy left unfulfilled from His first coming. Not even angels in heaven know the times or seasons, it says, or the NIV has "*times or dates.*" There weren't any prophecy charts in their Hebrew Bible that were color-coded and illustrated and that broke down every detail with dates. But Jesus doesn't rebuke them or chastise them for asking such a question or for looking forward to His coming or kingdom. He doesn't tell them "I'm done with Israel now. They're permanently replaced in my plan by the church. It's all spiritual now; there is no future earthly Messianic kingdom to come" ... but *He does seem to say* here that His future plan has far more than Israel in mind.

⁸but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both **in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.**” [an expansion from Israel to nations] ⁹And after He had said these things, **He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.** ¹⁰And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. ¹¹They 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.**” ... ¹⁴These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, **and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.**

James the brother of Jesus, the writer of the book of James, was a part of these disciples. He saw the Lord on the mount, he looked as Jesus went up before his very eyes, and he looked up often for the return of Jesus. He and they lived in light of the 2nd coming. And the same key truths about the Lord’s return from this passage are the same key truths that James 5:7-9 intends us to grasp as well.

OUTLINE: The 2nd Coming Should Make Us More ...

- 1. Submitted to God’s sovereignty over the future (Acts 1:7)**
- 2. Encouraged and Empowered for the future (v. 8)**
- 3. Transformed in our speech and life in the present (v. 8)**

If we truly believe Jesus is coming back, and it can be at any time, this not only *can* affect how we live, it *must* affect how we live. Do we really believe this? Do we ever live like we really believe this: that the 2nd coming is near? He’s right at the door (Jas 5:9)? 3x in 3 verses, James speaks of the 2nd coming like this:

- v. 7b ... *be patient until the coming of the Lord ...*
- v. 8b ... *the coming of the Lord is near.*
- v. 9b ... *behold, the Judge is standing **right at the door.***

John Blanchard counts 300 references to the 2nd coming in the NT, averaging 1 of every 13 verses from Matthew to Revelation. This is the unmistakable emphasis of the NT and today’s text, but it’s not the emphasis of modern American Christianity. In some circles there is over-emphasis on some speculative details of prophecy, to be sure, some weird teaching and imbalanced focus on the more questionable aspects of the details of the end times that can take away from the main and plain teaching of the Lord’s return and the effect it should have on life that James and other NT books intend.

- focus on who antichrist is rather to neglect of who Christ is
- obsessed with subjective “signs,” newspaper headlines but the NT alone is sufficient to know Christ can come soon
- building theology from fiction novels instead of facts of NT
- losing sight of the forest in the trees and missing life impact
[see website notes dated 12/31/07 for further study]

But in a lot of cases and other circles, there is *under-emphasis* on this teaching, and I fear we may unnecessarily shy away from what God’s Word doesn’t and we unfortunately miss the blessing God’s Word does have for us (Revelation begins with “*blessed are those who read and heed the words of this book*”). To my shame I don’t think I’ve emphasized the Lord’s return anywhere near enough and I don’t *think of it* enough. I suspect I’m not alone in this. But the early church not only lived for Christ’s coming, they loved it.

2 Timothy 4:8 ... *in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing* [NIV “who have **longed for** his appearing”]

Title: Loving and Living for the Lord’s Return

1. Submitted to God’s sovereignty over the future

The word for the Lord’s “coming” in v. 7 is the Greek *parousia*, which in ancient times was used of a Sovereign King showing up. It ‘means sometimes the presence of persons or things; sometimes arrival, coming, visit. In the Hellenistic period, it refers ... either to a divine manifestation—often very close to *epiphaneia* [appearing, like the verse we just read] (1 Tim 6:14; Titus 2:13; 2 Tim 4:1, 8) and *phanerōsis*, and even *apokalypsis*—or the formal visit of a sovereign, his “joyous entry” into a city that honors him as ... god ... sometimes as marking the beginning of a new age ... In line with these usages, the NT uses *Parousia* for the glorious coming of the Lord Jesus at the end of [this age], his Second Coming. This return of Christ must somehow be filled out with the pomp and magnificence that characterized royal and imperial “visits.” There were great feasts ... praise, gifts ... buildings were erected ... sentences were [carried out in judgment while to the faithful rewards of] crowns were given ... honors were multiplied. Glory and joy on the part of the people were in response to the prince’s active and beneficent presence. All of this pales in comparison to the coming of the [Almighty Lord and Ruler of all and His very presence], but it explains why the NT uses the term *parousia*.’¹

The people in an ancient town or city may not have known exactly when the sovereign king was coming, but if they knew he was coming, you better believe it affected the way they lived. They wanted to be ready, and this is one of the main and plain truths about the 2nd Coming of our Sovereign King in the NT – we don’t know the timing because we’re not sovereign, but Jesus said often that we need to be ready always, precisely because of this fact.

How would you live differently if someone extremely important was coming to your house? You would be getting the place ready! One time at our house Jaime was telling our little girls they needed to clean up, and one of them asked “who’s coming?” No one was that day, but even kids recognize the impact of someone coming. What if the person was right at the door? That’s the image at the end of v. 9, but the first illustration James gives in v. 7 is not an anxious host but a patient farmer preparing for the next season just around the corner. He doesn’t know exactly when it will occur but he knows it’s coming in the future, and that affects how he lives each day in the present. I believe the point of v. 7 has to do not only with the sovereignty of the coming king, but also human responsibility: the farmer can’t control the rain, but he must be ready for it to come or it will be disaster for his unprepared crop.

v. 7 says "... *the farmer waits*" but "wait" in this text isn't sitting around doing nothing. A farmer must work hard, and be motivated not by what he sees in the present or how he feels about working right now. He must work *and* wait with long-suffering patience and future-oriented vision, and as Christians we must do the same.

v. 7 mentions "*early and latter rain*" a phrase the OT uses several times, speaking of God sending them and God being in sovereign control of them. They were a standard OT image of God's promised faithfulness (Jer 5:24, Joel 2:23, and Deut 11:14, which would have been especially familiar as part of the *Shema* that the Jews recited daily). The Lord's past covenant faithfulness to His people Israel guarantees the Lord's future coming for all His saints

One writer said it this way: 'keep hoping when the delay seems interminable, keep trusting when God's timing seems questionable, and keep working for righteousness when results seem meager.'²

Another writer explains to us city folk: 'If a man is impatient, then he had better not become a farmer. No crop appears overnight (except perhaps a crop of weeds), and no farmer has control over the weather. Too much rain can cause the crop to rot, and too much sun can burn it up. An early frost can kill the crop. How long-suffering the farmer must be with the weather! He must also have patience with the seed and the crop, for it takes time for plants to grow. Jewish farmers would plow and sow in what to us are the autumn months. The "early rain" would soften the soil [Oct-Nov]. The "latter rain" would come in the early spring (our February-March) and help to mature the harvest. The farmer had to wait many weeks for his seed to produce fruit [some farming takes years to produce]. Why did he willingly wait so long? Because the fruit is "precious" (James 5:7). The harvest is worth waiting for. "In due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Gal. 6:9).'³

I like that word "precious" in v. 7 in relation to his produce / crop. The patience and perseverance of the farmer makes the end result all the more precious. *Precious* is a word rarely used for anything of this earth except precious stones or metals, but it's a word often used in end-times passages (5x in Rev.) and of things of the Lord:

- Ps 19:10 (NIV) God's Word is "*more precious than gold*"
- Job 29:24 (NIV) God's "*face was precious to them*"
- 1 Peter says of Jesus "*to you who believe He is precious*" (2:7 NKJV, others have "precious value") and calls Jesus "*the precious cornerstone*" (v.6) who redeemed us not with precious gold or silver, but His "*precious blood*" (1:19)

If Jesus is truly precious to us, we should look for His coming, we should long for it. We should love it and live for the 2nd coming.

I need Thee, precious Jesus, And **hope to see Thee soon,**
Encircled with the rainbow And seated on Thy throne.
There, with Thy blood bought children, My joy shall ever be,
To sing Thy praises, Jesus, **To gaze, O Lord, on Thee.**⁴

2. Be Encouraged and Empowered for the future

⁸ *You too be patient; strengthen your hearts for the coming of the Lord is near.*

Again we see that the patience commanded here is not the waiting of inactivity or weak resignation since we don't know the future, it's an active trusting and strengthening of our hearts in the Lord who is in control of the future. God's sovereignty, rightly seen, doesn't prevent human action, it mobilizes human efforts in a way that the Lord's return also does. Because God is sovereign and has written the end from the beginning and everything in-between in His heavenly counsels, and the last chapter He has written down in God's Word, telling us how He will win in the end so we know it... what a great incentive to be a part of the victorious winning team!

J. Hudson Taylor founded the China Inland Mission in the 1860s. He believed fervently in the impending return of Christ. His belief influenced him to make the evangelism of unreached areas of China his primary aim. His beliefs about Christ's return gave him direction and urgency in the establishment of the mission.⁵

This seems to be what Christ intended when He first left in Acts 1: don't stand around, get busy witnessing, make disciples, all nations. I certainly hope this sermon helps strengthen your hearts, but if you look at v. 8 again, notice this is your responsibility: *strengthen your hearts for the coming of the Lord is near*. You are responsible to strengthen your own heart by refocusing your thinking on the Lord and His coming instead of wallowing in self-pity, bringing others into your pity party and complaining (which v. 9 forbids).

One pastor has shared how he was talking with a woman enduring terrible hardship. She said one friend 'encouraged her significantly, and I was...interested to know what the friend had done to minister to her. "What helped me the most," she recalled, "was that he reminded me with assurance that these circumstances will come to an end. It looks so dark and unending now; I needed to be told that it would not last forever." In the same way James has encouraged his persecuted readers with the hope of Christ's return ...'⁶

The heart of the matter is what matters most to our heart. What we choose to dwell on and think on in our innermost being is a choice we're responsible for biblically and that makes all the difference in our life (Phil. 4:8). The key to enduring through excruciating pain or oppressive trials is not changed circumstances, but changed thinking. This was how the book of James began (1:2) to its original readers going through various trials just as we do, in many cases worse than what we go through today. The key is:

- how they consider the trial (1:2a)
- who they consider (themselves or the God they can find joy in no matter what trial)
- what they know and think about (1:3 – the process God is doing in them, not the pain man or circumstances may be doing to them)
- who they look to and talk to (1:5 – God for wisdom or human beings to whine to?).

Until you realize the cause of your turmoil and conflict is what's inside you (4:1-2) not what's outside you, you won't be able to strengthen your heart in 5:8 because you won't realize your heart is your weakness. You won't get to the heart of your problems until you realize *your heart is your problem* more than your secondary problem ("heart" in Bible includes thinking, feelings, desires, etc.).

James 4:1-2 has good news when it reminds me that the real cause or source of my outer conflicts are my inner conflicts, my desires or cravings that need to be controlled and submitted to God (v. 7). Why is that good news? I can't control other people, circumstances and any external secondary problem, but by grace I can control my heart desires and my thinking before, during, and after (response). As long as you look to and focus on what life deals you, you will remain weak, but as you look to the Lord and focus on the next life and live in light of the day He will come, you strengthen your heart

The 2nd Coming of Christ has comforted suffering saints through church history, and perhaps one reason American Christians tend not to do as well in suffering is because we don't love and live in light of this doctrine because we're way too much into the here and now. A missionary who spent many years with a persecuted church in Romania and later lived in Australia and America commented on how rarely he hears us speak of Christ's return and how often he heard Romanian believers speak of Christ's return in everyday conversation. It was their encouragement and what strengthened their hearts daily. I've heard similar things of communist Russia. But among the affluent, James 5:5 says their heart is fattened.

The solution: James 4:8 says "***purify your hearts, you double-minded.***"
5:8 says *strengthen your hearts for the coming of the Lord is near.*

In Acts 14:22, the early church was '***strengthening the souls*** of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God."

The way you strengthen your heart/soul to face the present isn't by believing there won't be tribulation in your future, it's by looking to the kingdom to come and God's will to be done in meanwhile...

1 Thess. 3:12 ***and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all people, just as we also do for you;***¹³ ***so that He may establish your hearts*** ["strengthen" in NIV, same Grk root] ***without blame in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints ...***

4:15 *For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord [same exact phrase as Jas. 5; only other place], will not precede those who have fallen asleep.*¹⁶ *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.***

3. Be Transformed in our speech and life in the present

⁹ *Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged ...*

John Piper connects the idea of v. 9 with the patience of v. 7-8 in his book *Future Grace* with these words: 'Patience is the capacity to "wait and to endure" without murmuring and disillusionment—to wait in the unplanned place, and endure the unplanned pace.

Karl Olsson ... said “We cannot understand a faith which is not nourished by the temporal hope that tomorrow things will be better.” I wonder if we can understand such patience. Surely we cannot, if “temporal” hope is the only kind we have. But if there is a hope beyond this temporal life—if future grace extends into eternity—then there may be a profound understanding of such patience in this life. In fact it is precisely the hope of future grace beyond this life that carries the saints patiently through their afflictions. Paul made this crystal clear in his own life:

“We do not lose heart [*that is, we don’t succumb to murmuring and impatience*], but, though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are *temporal*, but the things which are not seen are *eternal*” (2 Corinthians 4:16–18) ...

Patience is the evidence of an inner strength. Impatient people are weak, and therefore dependent on external support... schedules that go just right and circumstances that support their fragile hearts. Their outbursts... harsh criticisms of the culprits who crossed their plans do not *sound* weak. But that noise is all a camouflage of weakness. Patience demands tremendous inner strength.’⁷

This word for “complain” in the OT and NT typically was used as an expression of frustration from the people of God while suffering in some way (usually oppression). The Jewish readers of James would probably be reminded of the grumbling and murmuring and complaining of the Israelites in the wilderness under Moses as they tested God’s patience again and again, whined about their difficult circumstances, and murmured against their leaders and their life.

In James 5, since they couldn’t do anything about the oppressive and influential of their day (v. 1-6) they were reverting to this national pastime, complaining, venting, taking out their frustrations on each other in their own family or even their church family.

The sin of v. 9 has been described as primarily internally first: ‘the inner feeling of dissatisfaction and personal irritation at another ... a feeling of criticism and fault-finding directed against others. This personal feeling reflects itself in smoldering resentment that may display itself in an antagonistic expression ... Such a spirit threatens the inner unity of the brotherhood.’⁸

Reformed Expository Commentary: ‘it is our sad tendency to speak in anger and haste when under pressure. We speak harshly against family and friends when we are under pressure, sleepless, and oppressed. We grumble against each other when someone *else* wrongs us. If a great fool or a great foe ruins our day at work, we vent the tension on those we love. It is typical of James to point out that a disordered heart leads to a disorderly tongue.’⁹

v. 9b ... *behold, the Judge is standing right at the door.*

The Judge is already there, about to enter, and He can hear what you’re saying in the meanwhile (and this Judge can hear your thoughts as well). The image is a judge about to swing open the doors of a courtroom and enter and court will be in session. And the honorable Judge presiding in this scene will bring judgment on all who did not speak to Him as “your honor” and who did not honor Him in life and who were not thankful (Rom. 1:21). When this Judge comes out of His chambers, all will not rise in this case in His presence. All will bow their knees to this Judge.

And all the tongues that previously complained will now confess Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Those who have not bowed to and confessed His lordship in this life, however, will be sentenced by Him for the next life. They will be pronounced guilty at the bar of justice. Every mouth will be stopped, there will be no debate or deliberation or disagreement, the gavel of justice will descend, and the righteous Judge will condemn according to the full extent of His Law. And the sentence will be for eternal life with no parole.

For those in v. 3 who may think riches will protect them in court, in God's court, v. 3 says their riches "will be a witness against you" or "testify against you" or "will be evidence against you." They may think riches will protect them from destruction like their fire insurance in this life, but without Christ, *the rich* are destroyed by fire in the next life. All apart from Christ will burn eternally, and all they have even in this life is going to burn eventually. This reality should sober all of us, even believers, it should sanctify us.

In v. 6, the rich then and now can literally use their money to get away with murder, buying the best lawyers money can buy. But it won't be that way on judgment day for the rich and faithless. There won't be any slick defense attorneys at the Great White Throne Judgment, and God the Judge won't be swayed by any celebrity. It should comfort us that the truly guilty will be punished by the Righteous Judge, but we also need to ask ourselves: am I guilty?

Picture the courtroom scene: Exhibit A of guilt is James 2:10
Exhibit B of guilt is James 4:17

You have committed crimes not just against the Law, but against the Lawgiver and Judge Himself, offending Him (4:12). The *only* hope is not the merits of your case, but the merits of Another. The *only* hope you have is if you have a relationship with the One and Only Mediator, Jesus Christ, and that He has chosen to represent you as your Advocate, and that He has paid your penalty in full to God the Judge, a price you could never pay and can never pay back, but a penalty that the Just Judge allows to be transferred to a Substitute who replaces your rap sheet with His righteousness!

Your *only* hope is if you've settled out of court with God by the plea arrangement and terms of peace accomplished by Christ, that He's served your sentence, He's taken your punishment. If you have confessed with your mouth Jesus is Lord and you believe in your heart and trust in His resurrection and all that represents as your only hope of being saved, God's Word says you will be saved. And that will affect how you live and love and look to the Lord and how you should long to see the Lord soon. It will impact how you sing "I need no other argument, I need no other plea, It is enough that Jesus died, and that He died for me!" Even though I did the crimes, Jesus has done the time on the cross, and fulfilled the demands of justice in my place, and because of mercy not my merit, I can be declared righteous in Christ because I am *in Christ* by grace through faith, no longer "in Adam" (sinful humanity)!

And if that reality doesn't make you want to sing to this Lord, and see this Lord come again soon, what will, beloved? If your heart can hear these things and not want to love more and live more for the Lord's return, has your heart ever truly known this Lord?! If you by grace through faith are truly in Christ, but your thoughts are not enough on Christ and His coming (as I would confess w/ you), this text can help us live more holy, more hoping for 2nd coming.

There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. The judgment for believers has to do with reward and faithfulness, so His nearness and the imminent nature of His coming should affect how we live more in light of this book as we look for His return.

In Revelation 22 (ESV), the Lord says in v. 6 that the vision was “... *to show his servants what must soon take place.*”⁷ “*And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book ...*”¹⁰ And he said to me, “*Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near ...*”¹² “*Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me ...*”²⁰ He who testifies to these things says, “*Surely I am coming soon.*” ***Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!***

Personal example: John (greeter at GCC) who would often say things like:

“Come worship the King of Kings! He is worthy to be praised!

“The King is coming, Phil! What a glorious day that will be!

One day we will see Him as He is in His glory! It will be great!”

The first time I ever met him and heard him speak like that, I was a young 22-year-old guy whose perspective was not really on those things, and I remember thinking he was a little weird. And he wasn't completely there mentally because of an accident he had experienced ... but as you read the Bible more, what the Psalms command us to do, how the NT writers spoke of and looked forward to the Lord's return, maybe we should think it's weird for us to *not* speak more like this guy John. We're the ones who are weird, in the sense of abnormal, if we compare ourselves to what we see written in Scripture. To really believe the things we think and sing and for them not to come out more in our life and on our lips is not the way it should be, according to God's Word, beloved.

The more I grew in my love for the Lord, the more I grew in my love for this brother, that even though he had suffered much in this life and now had a mental disability that prevented him from working, even though he had a lot more to complain about than most of the people I hear complain, *it wasn't going to prevent him from serving and encouraging others as long as the Lord gave him life and breath and a voice.* And he had a perspective in his hard life on the Lord's return – he really lived in light of the Lord's return, and I know that because I could see it on his face and I could also hear it come out in his everyday conversation ... he was looking forward to this greatly. He knew it was going to be great!

He couldn't work a regular job but he hung around the campus and the seminary break room and he told me several times that he saw his ministry as the ministry of encouragement. He would go around to the men preparing for ministry, which he didn't have the mental capacities to be able to study as they did or know the things we were learning intellectually in the classroom, but he knew the truths of God's Word in a deeper way than many of us, I suspect, and I know that he loved and lived in light of the Lord's return.

May we as well! May we strengthen our hearts and sanctify our lives as we focus less on our life and more on our Lord's Return. Maranatha! Come Lord Jesus!

¹ Ceslas Spicq and James D. Ernest, vol. 3, *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament* (Peabody, MA.: Hendrickson, 1994), 53–55.

² Hubbard, *The Book of James*, 119-20.

³ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1996).

⁴ “I Need Thee, Precious Jesus,” hymn by Frederick Whitfield, 1855.

⁵ Thomas D. Lea, vol. 10, *Hebrews, James*, Holman New Testament Commentary; Holman Reference (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 344.

⁶ George M. Stulac, *James*, The IVP New Testament commentary series (Downers Grove, Ill. USA: InterVarsity Press, 1993).

⁷ John Piper, *Future Grace* (Sisters, Or.: Multnomah Publishers, 1995), 172–173.

⁸ Hiebert, 273.

⁹ Daniel Doriani, *James*, Reformed Expository Commentary, p. 181.