

To wait for his Son from heaven. 1 Thess. 1 : 10

Oh blessed hope! Is it not wonderful that each of the chapters of this Epistle brims over with the glad anticipation of the Master's quick return!

We should never lose this spirit of eager longing and waiting. It hath the promise of the life that now is, as of that which is to come. It lifts above the darkness of the present age; links the present with the great future; comforts us amid bereavement with the hope of speedy reunion; quickens us to watchfulness and consecration by the thought of the shortening of our opportunities; leads us to purify ourselves as He is pure, to gird our loins and trim our lamps.

Notice how closely the apostle combines the service of the living and true God, herein distinguishing Him from the dumb, dead stones of heathen idolatries, with this waiting for his Son from heaven. It has been alleged that the hope of the Second Advent is a dreamy, mystical sentiment, which disqualifies one for the active fulfilment of the duties of life. Nothing could be further from the truth. Those who cherish that anticipation, who awake in the morning, saying, "Perhaps it will be to-day"; who go to their sleep whispering to their hearts, "Perchance I shall be changed into his likeness in a moment as I sleep and wake in my resurrection body"--these are among the most devoted, strenuous, and successful workers of the Church. They are not recognized in the daily or religious Press; but God knows and honours them.

*Oh, blessed Hope! With this elate,
Let not our hearts be desolate;
But strong in faith and patience, wait
Until He come.*

等候他兒子從天降臨。 帖前一10

哦，有福的盼望！這卷書信的每一章都滿了歡喜盼望主快快回來，這不是很美妙嗎！

我們絕不可失去熱切的盼望和等候的心。這樣的心給我們今生以及來生的應許。這樣的心提升我們超越今世的黑暗；將今日與偉大的未來連接起來；在喪失親人時，用很快團聚的希望安慰我們；促使我們日夜儆醒，分別為聖，因為想到我們的機會日漸減少；引領我們潔淨自己，因祂是潔淨的，使我們束腰並收拾我們的燈(太廿五7)。

請注意使徒將服事又真又活的神(在這裡使徒區分神與外邦啞巴石頭偶像)，與等候祂兒子從天降臨緊緊地結合起來。有人以為主第二次降臨的盼望，是一種幻想般的神祕情感，使人無法積極地完成人生的責任。其實離開主再臨的這個真理，人就無法往前。那些對主再來心懷著盼望的人，他們早上醒來說：「可能就在今天了」，他們就寢時心中低語，「或許我在睡夢中，就會一霎時改變成祂的樣式，在我復活的身體裡醒來。」 — 這些人是教會中最熱心、最積極和最有成就的教會工人。他們雖然沒有受到報刊或宗教新聞的稱讚，但神認識並尊重他們。

有福的盼望啊！懷著這樣歡欣的心情，
我們的心就不孤單，
信心剛強，忍耐等候，
直到祂來。

What is our hope, or joy, or crown of glorying? Are not even ye? 1 Thess. 2: 19

The tender heart of the apostle suffered keenly in his enforced absence from these beloved converts. He had cherished them as a nurse her children; he would have gladly imparted to them his own soul. Not once nor twice he had sought to see them again, but had been hindered by malign spiritual forces that were very real to him. He found comfort, however, in the thought that, at the Lord's coming, they and he would be reunited, and that they would be his joy, as now they were his hope. Now they lit his hope to an intenser passion; then they would intensify his joy to a more exquisite fulness.

But there is a further thought. The souls whom he had won for Jesus were to constitute his crown. It was as though they would be woven into a wreath like that given to the ancient athlete, and placed on his brow as he emerged from the terrific conflict of his life--not to be worn there, but cast forthwith at the feet of his Lord. What an incentive was this! Each soul plucked from the enemy would be another jewel for the Master's crown, and herein a fresh source of heavenly blessedness to himself.

I remember Mr. Spurgeon telling of an old Christian woman in his almshouses, who persisted in saying loving thoughts about her beloved pastor to his face, at which he greatly demurred. He feared that she was making more of him than of Christ. But she said sweetly, "It is written in the Song, 'Thou, O Solomon, must have a thousand, and those that keep the fruit two hundred'; so, dear pastor, you must have your two hundred." Yes, it will be so; we shall partake with Jesus of the fish that we have caught; we shall have fellowship in his exceeding joy over the saved.

我們的盼望和喜樂，並所誇的冠冕是什麼呢？豈不是 ... 你們 ... 嗎？ 帖前二19

使徒仁慈的心，因被迫與這些心愛的信徒分離，而深感痛苦。他疼愛他們，如同奶媽乳養自己的孩子。他甚至願意將自己的性命給他們(8節)。他不只一次兩次曾設法去見他們，但都被靈界的惡勢力所阻擋，這惡勢力對他來說非常真實。但當他想到他們要在主再來的時候團聚，他就感到安慰。那時他們將是他的喜樂，正如現在是他的盼望一樣。現在他們點燃他的盼望，成為更強烈的愛，到那時他們將使他的喜樂加強到更美妙的完全。

然而還有更深一層的思想。使徒為耶穌贏得的靈魂將構成他的冠冕。當他脫離今生激烈的戰鬥時，他們將被編織成一個類似古代運動員得到的花冠，被放在他的頭上 — 不是為了在那裡戴著這冠冕，而是為了將冠冕獻在主的腳前。這是多大的激勵啊！每個從敵人手中奪來的人，都要成為主冠冕上另一顆寶石，並且在這裡成為使徒屬天福分一個新鮮的來源。

我記得司布真先生[1834-1892,英國著名牧師]所講述，一個基督徒老婦人的故事。她在救濟院裡，堅持對她所親愛的牧師當面講述她深情的想念，卻遭到牧師強烈的反對。他擔心她將他抬得高過基督。但她親切地說：「雅歌中說『所羅門哪，一千舍客勒歸你，二百舍客勒歸看守果子的人。(歌八12)』 所以，親愛的牧師，你應該接受歸你的二百舍客勒。」是的，將來就是這樣；我們將與耶穌分享我們捕到的魚，同享領人得救的極大喜樂。

No man should be moved by these afflictions; for . . . we are appointed thereunto. 1 Thess. 3 : 3

We all love the sunshine, but the Arabs have a proverb that "all sunshine makes the desert"; and it is a matter for common observation that the graces of Christian living are more often apparent in the case of those who have passed through great tribulation. God desires to get as rich crops as possible from the soil of our natures. There are certain plants of the Christian life, such as meekness, gentleness, kindness, humility, which cannot come to perfection if the sun of prosperity always shines.

We often shrank from the lessons set us at school, and looked out of the windows, longing for the hour of release. But now how thankful we are for the tutors and governors, appointed by our parents, who kept us steadily at our tasks. We feel almost kindly to the school-master or mistress that we dreaded. And, similarly, one day we shall be glad for those hard lessons acquired from the horn-book of pain. "We have had fathers of our flesh to chasten us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, who chastens for our profit, and live?"

The tears of those who suffer according to the will of God are spiritual lenses and windows of agate. As the weights of the clock or the ballast in the vessel are necessary for their right ordering, so is trouble in the soul-life. The sweetest scents are only obtained by tremendous pressure; the fairest flowers grow amid Alpine snow-solitudes; the rarest gems have suffered longest from the lapidary's wheel; the noblest statues have borne most blows of the chisel. All, however, is under law. Nothing happens that has not been appointed with consummate care and foresight.

免得有人被諸般患難搖動，因為 ... 我們受患難原是命定的。 帖前三3

我們都喜歡陽光，然而阿拉伯人有句諺語說：「全都是陽光就形成沙漠」；一般的觀察告訴我們，基督徒生命中的恩典，常在經過大患難的人身上更加顯明。神希望能從我們本性的土壤裡，盡可能得到豐富的收穫。基督徒生命中有些農作物，比如溫柔、和善、仁慈、謙卑，如果「通達」的陽光一直照耀，就無法達到完美。

從前我們經常逃避學校指定的課程，望著窗外，期待下課的時間來到。但現在我們是多麼感激父母所任命，來督促我們穩定作功課的家庭教師。我們對曾經懼怕過的學校老師們，現在也差不多對他們感到親切。同樣的，將來我們必為自己從「苦痛」這本入門書中，學到的艱難功課感到高興。「我們曾有生身的父管教我們，我們尚且敬重他，何況萬靈的父，我們豈不更當順服祂得生嗎？（來十二9）」

凡按神旨意受苦之人所流的眼淚，是屬靈的透鏡和瑪瑙的窗子。就如時鐘的鐘錘和船隻的壓艙物，是正常安排所需要的，同樣，困難對於人的生命也是需要的。巨大的壓力下才得到最甜美的芳香；最美麗的花朵生長在阿爾卑斯山雪深的荒野；最稀有的寶石承受磨輪最長時間的打磨；最宏偉的雕像經歷過鑿子最多的錘打。一切都在這個定律之下。沒有一件事情的發生沒有神用祂的完全看顧和遠見來安排。

Sorrow not, even as the rest, which have no hope. 1 Thess. 4:13 (R.V.)

Nature will have her due. Tears will fall, and hearts seem near to breaking. Nowhere does God chide the tears of natural affection; how could He, since it is written that "Jesus wept"? But He sets Himself to extract their bitterness. Sorrow you may, and must; but not as without hope.

THOSE WHO DIE IN CHRIST ARE WITH HIM. They are said to sleep, not because they are unconscious, but because their decease was as devoid of terror as an infant's slumbers. Believers have all died once in Christ, and it was necessary to find a word which, whilst significant of death, was not death, in order to describe the moment of our farewell to this world and birth into the next. This word was furnished by Death's twin-sister Sleep. The catacombs are covered with the brief significant sentence, Obdormivit in Christo (He slept in Christ). But just as in sleep the spirit is conscious, of which dreams bear witness, so in the last sleep. Absent from the body, we shall be present with the Lord.

THOSE WHO DIE IN CHRIST WILL COME WITH HIM. They are now waiting around Him till He give the final order for the whole heavenly cortège, which has been collecting for ages, to move. The holy angels will accompany; but the beloved saints shall ride in the chariots of God as the bride beside the bridegroom.

THOSE WHO DIE IN CHRIST SHALL BE FOR EVER REUNITED WITH US WHO WAIT FOR HIM AND THEM. They shall come with Him. "God will bring them." We, on the other hand, if we are living at that supreme moment, shall be changed and caught up to meet Him and them; and then, all one in Christ, we shall be for ever with Him, to go no more out.

恐怕你們憂傷，像那些沒有指望的人一樣。 帖前四13

人死是不可避免的。眼淚要落下，心近乎破碎。神並不責備天然感情的眼淚；祂怎麼會責備呢？聖經也記載「耶穌哭了。(約十一35)」但神竭力除去他們的苦楚。你可以憂傷，也必憂傷，但不像沒有指望的憂傷。

那在基督裡死了的人，是與主同在。說他們「睡了」，不是因為他們沒有知覺，而是因為他們的死就如同嬰兒打盹一樣不可怕。基督徒都在基督裡死過一次了(西三3)。有必要尋找一個詞，有死亡的意義，但不是死亡這個詞，為要描述我們告別這個世界，而出生在另一個世界的時刻。這個詞便是「死亡」的孿生姐妹「睡了」。地下墓穴上有一句簡要卻意義重大的話：「在基督裡睡了」。就像在睡眠中，靈魂仍然是有意識的一樣(夢就是證明)，在最後的長眠中，靈也是有意識的。離開身體，我們將與主同在。

那在基督裡死了的人，必與主一同再來。他們正在祂身邊等候，直到祂發出最後命令，來調動天上歷代匯聚來跟隨的隊伍。聖潔的天使必陪同；親愛的眾聖徒要坐在神的車裡，如同新郎身旁的新娘。

那在基督裡死了的人，必與我們這等候主和他們的人，永遠團聚。他們必與主一同來。「神必將他們帶回來。(14節)」如果我們在那個最後的時刻還活著，我們要被改變，被提與主及他們見面；然後，我們將在基督裡合一，永遠與主同在，不再分離。

The God of Peace Himself sanctify you wholly. 1 Thess. 5: 23, 24 (R.V.)

Our God has set Himself the work of our sanctification. As the Greek indicates, He looks upon us as his inheritance, and He will not rest until He has brought every acre of territory under cultivation. It is not enough that briars and thistles should be exterminated; they must be replaced by the rare growth of Christian virtue, which is Christ.

THE WORK OF SANCTIFICATION IS QUIET AND SILENT. It is wrought by the God of Peace. The mightiest forces of nature are stilled; and when God comes with power into the human spirit there is often no hurricane, tempest, fire, or earthquake, but the thrilling whisper of the still, small voice. Do not be afraid, as though God would treat you roughly. So long as peaceful, gentle methods will effect his purpose, He will gladly employ them.

THE WORK IS ALSO GRADUAL. We are not made faultless, but preserved blameless; i.e., we are kept from known sin, preserved from incurring perpetual self-reproach. "There is no condemnation." I saw the other day the love-letter of a little boy to his father. It was anything but faultless; but the father, at least, did not count it worthy of blame, since he carried it next his heart. So we are not to be faultless, as judged by God's perfect standard, till we are presented before the presence of his glory; but we may be blameless up to our acquaintance with the divine will.

THE WORK IS FROM WITHIN OUTWARDS. Notice the order--spirit, soul, body. The Shechinah of his presence shines in the holy of holies, and thence pours over into the holy place, and so into the outer court, until the very curtains of the body are irradiated with its light. He will do it.

願賜平安的神，親自使你們全然成聖。 帖前五23

我們的神已指定自己作工使我們成聖。祂認為我們是祂的產業。在每一英畝的土地被耕種之前，祂就不休息。只除去荊棘和薊草還不夠，還要以生長稀有的基督徒美德作替換，美德就是基督。

成聖的工作是安靜無聲的。這工作是賜平安之神作的。自然界最強大的力量是安靜無聲的；當神帶著權能進入人的靈，是沒有颶風、暴雨、烈火或地震，而是令人激動的平靜微聲。不要害怕，好像神會粗暴地對待你。只要安寧溫和的方法能達到祂的目的，祂必樂於採取這些方法。

成聖的工作是漸進的。我們並非被作成無瑕疵，而是蒙保守得以無可指摘；也就是說，我們蒙保守遠離已知的罪，不致遭受一再的自我責備。「不再定罪了」(羅八1)。前幾天我看到一個小男孩寫給他父親的信，信中並不是沒有錯誤；但這位父親至少並沒有覺得有什麼可指摘的，因為他甚是珍惜這封信。所以，我們並不是要做到完美無瑕，如同按神完全的標準判定的，直到我們顯在祂榮耀面前；但我們可以照著我們所知的神的旨意，做到無可指摘。

成聖的工作是由內而外的。請注意這個順序：靈、魂、身體。神同在榮耀的光輝，照耀在至聖所，從那裡照到聖所，隨後照到外院，直到身體的幔子因這光而發亮。祂必完成這工。