

## Longing for the kingdom

Reading: Psalm 105

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Now as we come once more around these emblems' brethren and sisters, we are confronted with the stark reality of the imminent return of our Lord Jesus Christ. For as we read in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians eleven "*for as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death **till he come***". Thus our Master will soon return and life, as we know it is only temporary. Something we all intellectually give assent to, but do we really live in the light of this reality?

Therefore we are to be a people watching and waiting for our Master's return. More than this brethren and sisters we are to be a people earnestly desiring or longing for that day. In Psalm 110 it speaks of "*thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power*" and for this to be true, we need to be willing now, prepared at any moment to welcome our Lord with gladness and joy.

Do we each yearn for the millennium for the fulfilment of the next stage in our Heavenly Fathers purpose? Are our minds focused as often as possible on the return of the bridegroom or do our minds fall into thinking only of the approaching judge and the spectre of the judgement to come?

Is our desire for the glorious age to come **growing** brethren and sisters, as we see the day approaching? Or is our desire being clouded over by the rising spirit of fear in our day? Indeed is this desire for the millennium only the privilege of the elderly members of the ecclesia, who have lived long enough to have fully experienced the harshness of life? As Jacob remarked to Pharaoh "*the days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been*".

Indeed such a longing should not brethren and sisters be just the feelings and emotions of those that have been in the truth a long time. Now it must be noted that it is true that such experience of life ought to develop such a longing and that desire ought to grow in intensity with age and experience of life. But it must not be solely the experience of who have walked for a number of years in the way of life.

We have then an exhortation for those who are elderly and who feel the intensity of such a longing due to their experience of life with all its evils and trials. To convey this yearning for the Master's return to those that are younger. Who have not yet had the breadth of life's experiences and who may be still filled with all of life's hopes, joys and dreams?

For the great danger here is for us to be overtaken brethren and sisters with the cares of this life. Those cares, which may increasingly become much more pressing, as we approach the time of the end and the increasing instability of these last days. Such instability, as we are now currently beginning to experience with the credit crunch and the global economic downturn ought the rather to invigorate our faith.

We should be sitting on the edge of our seats elated that the day is approaching. Accepting with gladness and joy the possible short term hardships, which we may experience, both individually and ecclesially, before we are delivered from this evil and dark-age.

#### **Luke Chapter 21 and verses 24 – 28**

*“Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh”.*

For our **redemption draweth nigh** we read, as our lives are not based in the here and now. But rather are “*hid with Christ in God and when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory*”. Now in that quotation from Luke twenty-one, we have a powerful contrast, between those not in Christ. Whose hearts are failing them for fear, because of the distress and the perplexity affecting all nations, whose hope is lost such as, we see increasingly today. Interestingly as is indicated in the Greek this fainting in fear is a daily occurrence of those without hope.

Then we have our selves brethren and sisters those who have not been given “*the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind*”. Who in contrast are called upon to “*look up and lift up their heads*”?

Now interestingly in the Greek “*look up & lift up*” are both ongoing daily imperative commands that the Eternal Spirit urgently exhorts us to perform in order that we too might not become paralysed by the spirit of fear in our age. One only has to think of the Apostle Peter who when he walked upon the water. He took his eyes off the author and finisher of our faith and began to sink, being overcome with his temporal circumstances.

Thus in the first picture we see those overcome by the troubles of our times, their heads hanging down undoubtedly unable to see a way out of what is before them either individually or collectively. Yet in the second picture we have our selves, who are living through and experiencing the very same set of circumstances, but they are not bowed down by those events. Rather as verse twenty-eight indicates, this second group are on they’re feet with expectation, elated that the fulfilment of all their hope is at hand.

#### **2nd Corinthians Chapter 4 and verses 17 & 18**

*“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; 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”.*

There is a great need amongst us brethren and sisters to keep an eternal or a vertical focus, especially if we are to go through a harsh time of economic testing, as a

number of our brethren and sisters endured in the 1930s. Our society is now very different to the 1930s, for there is not the sense of community there once was and sadly this is also true of the brotherhood at large. Yet we need to keep our focus upon our hope brethren and sisters and we need to do everything in our power to strengthen not only that, but also the bonds of fellowship between us practically, as we are able.

That we might support one another through possible difficult times ahead. One brother I was listening too recently suggested that things may get so bad, that we will have to pool our monetary resources in a similar fashion to the first century to care for those in need.

Such times of distress brethren and sisters are also a means that our Heavenly Father uses positively to develop our love and our hope, even our yearning for the age to come. In our middle reading for the day this is one of the lessons of the psalm.

### **Psalm 105 and verses 17 – 19 & 23 – 25**

*“He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant: Whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron: Until the time that his word came: the word of Yahweh tried him. Israel also came into Egypt; and Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham. And he increased his people greatly; and made them stronger than their enemies. He turned their heart to hate his people, to deal subtilly with his servants”.*

Firstly we have an individual; Joseph who was sold into Egypt by his brothers and so experienced the harshness of life. That our Heavenly Father might both prepare him and also try or smelted him (*as the Hebrew is here*), as silver is refined, so that the dross might be removed in order to make Joseph pure. That took some thirteen years brethren and sisters and it has been suggested that the phrase “*he was laid in iron*” in verse eighteen, may alternatively read “*into iron entered his soul*”. Speaking of the development of his character through severe trial to fulfil the role Yahweh had for him.

So the trials of his life made Joseph fit for the Father’s purpose and more than this it purified him. Do we not read elsewhere “*every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as Christ is pure*”? Thus Joseph’s faith did not collapse through this trial his hope increased and he would undoubtedly be sustained by focusing upon the eternal. Even those visions, which the Father had earlier given to him, just as the completed word has been given to us brethren.

Thus the very trials, which destroy those not in the truth are actually a means of generating our hope for the age to come, for that new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Let us think for a moment of the trial of Lot. That dwelt in Sodom, our Heavenly Father used the mistakes of this righteous man to fulfil this same purification process in his life:

### **For we read in 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter Chapter 2 and verses 7 - 9**

*“And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;) The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished”.*

Interestingly those two occasions of the word “*vexed*” here are different words. The first means to be bowed down with the toil or the effect of the culture he lived in. Thus the wickedness of Sodom wore him down and afflicted him daily, as the Greek implies, because of the blatant wickedness of Sodom. Now this ought and needs to be true today of us brethren and sisters. Here again I think the older generation can help the young to appreciate this exhortation.

In that the younger members of the ecclesia have grown up at this time and not really known society that different, whereas those who have been in the truth many years can more readily appreciate the decline of our society.

When we consider the second word “*vexed*” in verse eight it is speaking of the testing of metals, especially of silver and gold to ascertain its purity. We see then how even our bad choices in life the Father can turn around and teach us lessons through those experiences to develop our faith, our love and hope for the age to come.

**Again back in psalm 105 and in verses 14 & 15 we read**

*“He suffered no man to do them wrong: yea, he reproveth kings for their sakes; Saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm”.*

Both in the lives of Abraham and Isaac we find this situation taking place. Where again the weakness of the individual servants of God, through their lack of belief, in their inability not to connect all the dots with regards to the one who had promised to them. Led them to make foolish mistakes borne out of only focusing upon the temporal situation at the time. Yet our Heavenly Father in his providential care not only protected them, but also blessed them through those experiences, even though Abraham and Isaac, were themselves both reproveth by kings for their folly.

In this we ought to take great comfort brethren and sisters from the examples of these faithful men of old that even in their failures and apparent weaknesses of the flesh our Heavenly Father turned those events to work together for their eternal good.

Now within psalm 105 we see this same principle within the life of Joseph worked out collectively in the life of the whole nation of Israel in the persecution of the people after Joseph.

**Note carefully** brethren and sisters the record states that, He (*Yahweh*) turned the hearts of the Egyptians to hate his people, to deal subtilly with his servants.

So in this psalm then we have our Heavenly Father trying to develop faith, hope and love in his promises in both the individual Israelite and collectively in the nation. Now since our God does not change brethren and sisters, is it any different today?

This is a psalm recognising the initial and partial fulfilment of the promise of the land to Abraham’s seed – the nation of Israel. Thus it shows to us the very faithfulness of our Heavenly Father that what He has promised He is able to deliver. We brethren and sisters, likewise see in the emblems upon the table the faithfulness of the Father in providing the necessary sacrifice for sin and the kingdom to follow.

Now this psalm powerfully highlights for us the providential care of our Heavenly Father in the life and development of the nation; **take note** of the number of times it states “*He*” did something to move forward his purpose. Thus our Heavenly Father initiated with Abraham and brought to fruition the redemption of the nation of Israel at the time of the exodus. Caring for them through their wanderings until, He brought them into the land of promise.

The same is equally true concerning our redemption in the Lord Jesus Christ, as is witnessed too with the bread and wine upon the table. That all of the purpose and its process is of him and to the Father must the glory be given. Thus when we read a psalm, such as this, which takes us too and through the redemption of the nation. We are being told brethren and sisters that the same God who performed the exodus. Is equally at work in each of our lives and collectively in the life of our ecclesia’s through his Son to bring us unto his rest.

### **Philippians Chapter 1 and verse 6**

*“Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ”.*

This is exactly why Psalm 105 stops at the point that the fledging nation enters the land of promise and inherits. We are to see in it a type and the surety of our redemption in the Lord Jesus Christ and that it is our Father’s good pleasure to give us the kingdom.

Our Heavenly is not just concerned with his people at the national or ecclesial level, as we have already seen within this psalm. There are six individual brethren mentioned within this psalm Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses and Aaron and when we consider their lives we see them, as types of ourselves men of like passions, as we are. They are within the record to manifest to us that our God is intimately involved in the personal lives of his people.

Yet more than this these six brethren also show that our Heavenly Father in furthering his plan of redemption in relation to the fulfilment of his promises works through individuals. Indeed he raises them up at key points. Now since this is true in the case of the nation. It is also equally true in relation to both the ecclesia and in our own individual lives’ brethren and sisters. All of us can think of key individuals who have had a marked impact for good on our lives in the truth, whether that has been at a personal or ecclesial level.

What I am trying to emphasize as we briefly consider some of the lessons from this psalm is this, that Yahweh our God is not remote in our lives and experience. He is intimately involved in our lives, but as this psalm clearly intimates not to our time scale, but to his. This final point is an important, but hard lesson we all must learn. Again all this is brought home to us brethren and sisters by the repeated use of the personal pronoun “*he*” and the possessive pronoun “*his*” throughout the psalm.

So just as our Heavenly Father orchestrated events in the patriarchs lives to develop the nation and lead to the exodus and their inheritance in the land of promise. So too is the Father working through his Son in our daily and ecclesial lives in the Master’s ongoing work “*in bringing many sons unto glory*”.

**Hebrews Chapter 10 and verse 23 & 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians Chapter 1 and verses 8 - 9**

*“Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is **faithful** that promised). Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ? God is **faithful**, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord”.*

Now just as the darkness of our age and the increasing instability of our times with its attendant wickedness are all tools our Heavenly Father uses to develop our yearning for Him, his Son and the age to come.

Then so too must our own weaknesses and failures due to sin and even the frailty of our nature increase our longing for that time when we shall in his mercy be no more encumbered by these bodies of death.

**In Philippians Chapter 3 and verses 20 – 21**

*“For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself”.*

This passage points us into the immediate future of our Lord’s return. It provides us with a point of focus for what we shall shortly partake in that we do show the Lord’s death until he come. The blessing of having our bodies of humiliation transformed, to be conformed like unto his majestic body. Is the final act in the process of saving each one of us to the uttermost, as Hebrews declares?

We find here that although this change of nature is expressed as a future event in the Greek, yet the final section of **verse 21**, “*according to the working whereby **he is able** even to subdue all things unto himself*”. Is actually expressed in the present, indicating that our Master already has the **ability**, the **power**, the **authority** and the **desire** to perform this final blessing. Our Lord upon whom we wait brethren and sisters is himself merely awaiting the command of our Heavenly Father to make this promise a reality in our lives.

Now since the subjection of all things is mainly the work of the Millennium. Nevertheless the Father through our Master is presently engaged now in to subduing ourselves (*his bride*) unto him? For that word “*subdue*” is a military term meaning to arrange men into troops under their commander, to bring them into rank and line. We have once again the current work of the Master as our High Priest making compassionate intercession in our lives that we might be subdued unto him.

**Thus we see the truth in Romans Chapter 8 and verses 22 – 23**

*“For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body”.*

Are we even sighing, as this word **groan** indicates, are we like vexed, Lot who we considered earlier brethren and sisters?

So as we now consider these emblems of bread and wine before us. Let each one of us clearly see **the bread**, which speaks here of the love of our Heavenly Father in Christ, expressed in his word. That word, which is able to transform and renew our minds and characters to be, like his.

That word, which is able to give us a yearning for the glories of the age to come brethren and sister that we might have a holy dissatisfaction with the here and now.

Likewise with the cup, for **the wine** speaks to each one of us, of the outworking of that word in a life poured out. **Firstly** in the Master's sacrifice and **secondly** in his ongoing High Priestly intercession on our behalf to our eternal wellbeing in the Father's mercy and ultimately to our Heavenly Father's glory.

In the wine then we see the example of how we are to live out our faith our hope and our love. In sacrificial service in stirring up one another unto love and good works, exhorting one another concerning the kingdom and so much the more as we see the day approaching.

Brethren and sisters knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent; the day is at hand. Let us eat this feast with our loins girded, our shoes on our feet, and our lamp in your hand. Ready, willing and longing to go out and meet him, when the cry comes.

**As verses 4 & 3 of Psalm 105 declare:**

*“Seek Yahweh, and his strength: seek his face evermore. Glory ye in his holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek Yahweh”.*