

Dear listeners,

Our theme this month is **JESUS WILL RETURN! # 1 The Longing for His Return**

Perhaps, you'll recall that this month's Voice of the Church is looking at the topic:

The **Glorious Return of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.**

Today we want to speak about **The Longing for His Return.**

This longing for our Saviour's return was expressed in no uncertain terms immediately following our Saviour's return to heaven. Especially after Pentecost, after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the apostles, inspired by this Spirit, began to speak at great length of the promise of our Saviour's return. They presented his coming return to the believers, to us, Christians, as the central theme of all our hope and expectation. Paul speaks about it in Romans 8 in connection with that eager expectation of all of creation for the liberation from its bondage to decay (vs21), just as we, who believe and trust in God, in Jesus Christ, *wait eagerly for our adoption of sons, the redemption of our bodies* (vs23). In his letter to the Thessalonians Paul speaks of this hope and expectation in connection with those who have died, *those who fallen asleep in him* (1Thess.4:14.) To those who wonder what will become of them he gives this inspired confession: *We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus* (at his return from heaven!) *those who have fallen asleep in him.* And he furthermore informs them that *the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air* (vs16,17). Lastly, we think of the last chapter of the last book of the Bible, where the Lord Jesus himself speaks – this time from heaven, in a vision – about his promised return: *Behold, I am coming soon! Yes, I am coming soon* (vs 12,20).

So, what greater expectation is there than to wait for our Saviour to come from heaven? And still, the question is whether **we** do; whether **we** do indeed long for Him to come back, not to mention of longing for his return **eagerly**. Is it not true that we are so occupied with earthly things that we hardly take time out to think of those heavenly things, things of the future, things that express that Christian hope and expectation, our hope for an eternity to come, our life with the Lord Jesus, our life in the midst of all the saints in his presence, our life with Him and them on the new earth?

When you speak of that future life, either with old or young people, it is surprising how little thought is given to that Christian hope, to that life of the future, not only with a view to that so-called intermediate state, the state of our soul, our spirit between our death and resurrection, but also with a view to that perfect and complete state, the future state of our soul **and** body,

which will come about, which will be realized at our Saviour's return. How strong is then that longing with us: to be where the Lord Jesus is, to see Him return rather today than tomorrow?

It's true, we are called to live here on earth, and still have an important task to carry out here on earth, something that the apostle had to emphasize to the Thessalonians: do not stop, he says, with what your hand finds to do; do not stop your work until your Saviour is actually here. But still, how alive was their future expectation! And so I ask you, is it then only to be at special moments that we are to lift our hearts on high in heaven, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God, the One who governs the whole earth as Head of His Christian Church? Should we not at all times eagerly await his second coming, truly long for His return here and now? Is not that waiting, longing, what should characterize our Christian hope and expectation each and every day, in terms of: O I wish that I would be where He is . . . O I wish that He would return, now today already!

Well, we know from Romans 8 that there is such an eager expectation, such a constant longing expressed, manifested, among true Christians. It is mentioned in one breath with the adversities Christians may have to suffer, first of all, for the sake of the Lord, for the sake of his Name, for the sake of the gospel of Christ, and then, secondly, may have to suffer because of the curse to which the whole of creation has become subject ever since man's great fall into sin, back in Paradise, soon after the creation of all things, soon after the creation of mankind, male and female, soon after the creation of our first parents, Adam and Eve.

We read in Romans 8 that the whole of creation, the creation in all its parts, is waiting with eager expectation for the end, that is, for the Lord Jesus to return, in order to liberate this present world from the curse of sin, to liberate it from its bondage to decay, to liberate it, to have it regain its former freedom by inaugurating, by bringing about a new heaven and a new earth, yes, by revealing the total number of the elect of God, that multitude of believers of every age, all the sons and daughters of his one and age-old covenant, that holy alliance, which the almighty and faithful God had maintained with a sinful mankind throughout history, thanks to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world.

Well, I don't have to prove to you how the whole of creation is groaning as in the pains of childbirth. We are all too familiar with the disasters, the calamities, the catastrophes, the earthquakes, the floods, the illnesses and diseases, to which this one-time perfect creation has become subject. Yes, has become subject, not because **it** asked for it, but because of man, the crown of all creation, the God-given steward of all creation, because he broke the bond with God, so that God, because of man, because of us, had to make the whole of creation subject to the divine curse that man with his deliberate disobedience to God had called upon himself, and as a result, upon all of creation.

Well, then, as a result, the whole of creation is now waiting with eager expectation, with great longing for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, because it is only at his return that an end will be brought to its present frustration, its futility or its “fruitlessness” And what we are expected to do, Paul makes clear, is to join in with all of creation, we, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, we, who have come to believe in Jesus Christ as the only Saviour, we too then will wait with eager expectation for the redemption of our bodies, for we know that it is only at our Lord’s return that an end will come to all those illnesses and diseases, to all that pain and suffering, to that widespread death and destruction, so very familiar to us all.

No wonder, then, that when we are lax in expressing that eager expectation, that strong longing for the Lord Jesus to return, that God, in His Fatherly love (see Heb.12), brings those terrible adversities also upon us . . . upon us as his adopted sons and daughters, so that we would bring, bring more and more, our thoughts and desires, our words and deeds, in harmony with all of creation, that creation that because of us cries out as in the pains of child birth, cries out loud and clear for the liberation from its bondage to decay, cries out for that glorious freedom we children of God will receive in perfect measure at the return of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Therefore, let the Lord use our pain, our sufferings to make us aware of our call to wait with good hope and eager expectation, with eager longing, yes *the blessed hope — the glorious appearance of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13)*.

Listeners, these passages of the Bible call for an urgent return to the Gospel: it urges all of us to a life of obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ, by grace through faith. Yes, without Him in our daily lives we have no hope, no comfort! Without this there will be no eternal life awaiting us after Jesus returns for the last time. It is our mandate to broadcast this truth to our listeners far and near. Our father in heaven will hear the prayers of those who truly seek Him. Only then will you have peace in your lives and only then will you have a future after this world and all its glory has passed away. An eternal future awaits all those who have placed their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. To Him be all honour and glory - now and forever... thank you for listening.