

WAITING FOR AND HASTENING THE COMING OF THE LORD

Stephen Kaung

A transcription of spoken ministry given August 24, 2003 in Roanoke Rapids, NC

II Peter 3:12a—Waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God.

Shall we pray:

Dear heavenly Father, we want to thank Thee again for Thy amazing love for us in giving Thy beloved Son, our Lord Jesus, to us. Dear Lord, we thank Thee that Thou wast smitten on our behalf that we may be redeemed. We thank Thee that we have the privilege of remembering Thee at Thy table. Lord, we are grateful, and we do desire to give Thee all the glory. As we continue in Thy presence, Lord, we pray that Thy Spirit will breathe upon Thy written word and make it living and operative today even in our hearts. Draw us that we may run after Thee. Prepare us for Thy return. Glorify Thy name even in us. We commit this time into Thy hands, trusting Thy Holy Spirit to reveal Christ once again to us. And we want to give Thee all the glory. In the name of our dear Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen

I believe we are all very conscious that the coming of the Lord is near. Everything seems to indicate that the time is almost upon us. What should we be doing at this time? Of course, we must wait for His coming, but it is more than waiting. The Scripture says, "Hastening the day of God.

What is upon my heart is this matter: How do we wait? In what way can we hasten the coming of

our dear Lord? We know He is coming. We know that His coming is near. But do we just wait passively? Or is there something that we need to do?

When Daniel read the book of Jeremiah, he found God's promise that the captivity of the children of Israel in Babylon would be only seventy years. And when Daniel read the book, he realized it was just two more years and the captivity would be over. What was his attitude? Certainly he waited for the two years to pass so the captivity would be over. But how did he wait?

He did not wait passively, saying that since God had promised the captivity would be over in two more years, he would just be patient, wait for two more years, and it would all be over. That was not Daniel's attitude. When he discovered that the captivity would be only two more years, he gave himself to pray. In other words, he was not just waiting passively for God's promise to be fulfilled, but he understood God's way. He knew that God reveals His mind to us that we may take up the burden and pray until God's will is fulfilled.

So Daniel gave himself to prayer. And in praying he found that God would fulfill His promise that the seventy years of captivity would be over, a remnant of the children of Israel would return to Jerusalem, the temple would be

rebuilt, the wall would be rebuilt, and Jerusalem would be rebuilt. But even more, God revealed to Daniel His whole plan concerning the full recovery of the children of Israel.

In view of the imminent coming of our Lord Jesus, how should we wait for His coming? When God created the universe, He did it all by Himself. He did not ask for any help. As a matter of fact, there was no one there to help. But in the new creation God does something very different. In the new creation God does not work alone. He wants His own people to work together with Him. That is the difference.

TAKING UP THE BURDEN IN PRAYER

As we think of the coming of the Lord, there is something that God wants His people to cooperate with Him and work with Him in. His promise is always true. He will come no matter what, but before His return He will share His mind and His heart with those who are close to Him. The secret of the Lord is with those that fear Him. So He will reveal His mind to His own people, expecting that His people will actively take up that burden and pray through until He comes. That should be our attitude.

Immediately after the fall of man God promised that the seed of the woman would come and crush the serpent's head. And that

promise was made in the garden of Eden before Adam and Eve were driven out of the garden. Centuries passed, and God was working towards that promise. He raised up Abraham and through Abraham a nation was raised up, and out of that nation the seed of the woman would come.

The children of Israel were taken into captivity because of their unfaithfulness. They were under oppression. Out of their tribulation they realized their only hope was in the Messiah. So this nation began to take up that burden, praying for the Messiah to come.

Four thousand years had passed. The remnant had returned to Jerusalem. The temple was rebuilt. The sacrifices were offered. The priests were functioning. Every day during those days the priests would gather together in the temple before the day dawned and cast lots as to what each one would do that day in the temple service. The greatest, the highest service that the priest could ever have in his lifetime was to offer incense at the golden altar of incense which was closest to the holiest of all, closest to the ark, and closest to the mercy seat. That was the highest privilege of a priest.

When the priest drew the lot for offering incense at the golden altar of incense, he would pray. It was a prayer time. While he was in the temple nobody was there; everybody was in the court. He was there alone, but he represented the whole nation. As he burned the incense he offered a prayer: "Oh, that the Messiah would come." That was their hope. They were hoping for the Messiah.

At that time, even though the whole nation was under Roman control, they were expecting and

looking for the coming of the Messiah. They even prayed that prayer as a nation. Unfortunately, their spiritual condition seemed to contradict their prayer. In other words, their spiritual condition was contrary to the coming of the Messiah. They served God with their lips but not with their heart. How could the Messiah come? How could the promise be fulfilled? You find as you read the first few chapters of the book of Luke that God raised up a few among the whole nation. With these few He brought in the Messiah.

THE PERSEVERING PRAYER OF FAITH

First of all, there was an elderly couple, Zacharias and Elizabeth. The Bible says that they were both just before God, walking in the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless. This elderly couple served the Lord their whole lives. They were just and blameless, yet the Bible says that they had no child. This was very unusual under the law. According to the law in the Old Testament time those who feared the Lord would be blessed with many sons and many daughters. That was God's promise. That was the indication that they were pious, godly, and blessed by God. And it was always true. But in this case that elderly couple was godly, yet they had no child. I believe they must have prayed very earnestly, not only to remove their shame, but for the glory of God. If they did not have a child they would be misunderstood by all the people and God's name would be under reproach. So they must have prayed very earnestly to have a child, but there was no answer. And I believe at that time they must have given up that prayer.

But one day when Zacharias was serving God as a priest in the temple, the lot fell on him to burn the incense. It was a rare privilege for a priest. According to the custom of that time, if once you offered incense at the golden altar of incense it could not be repeated. You could only do it once and many priests never got the chance in their whole life.

Zacharias was already old; he was almost ready to retire. And yet at the last moment the lot fell on him. He was privileged to enter into the holy place and offer incense, praying on behalf of the whole nation. No wonder his prayer was: "Oh, that Messiah may come." That was the prayer of the nation. But here was a man whose prayer was real. He was not just praying with His lips like the rest of the nation. They expected a political Messiah to overthrow the Roman Empire and make Israel the first of the nations, however that was not God's mind. But this elderly man prayed from his heart: "Oh, that Messiah may come."

You remember the story of how an angel appeared to Zacharias. He was frightened, and the angel said, "Your supplication has been heard and you shall get a son." He was not praying for a son. He must have stopped praying for a son many, many years before, but the angel said, "Your supplication has been heard." What does it mean? He was not praying for a son for himself. He was praying for the Messiah. He had already lost hope of praying for his own son, but he still had the faith to pray for the coming of the Messiah. And because of the prayer of faith, God said, "Your prayer is answered." How was it answered? It was answered through a son being given to him because his son, John,

was to be the forerunner of the Messiah. He was to prepare a people ready for the coming of the Messiah.

Zacharias did not believe he could have a son and he said, "I am old. My wife is old. We are past the age. How can we have a son?" And because of his unbelief the angel said, "I am Gabriel who stands before the Lord, and because you do not believe you will be dumb." He was disciplined because of his unbelief. He did not believe he could have a son, and yet he believed that the Messiah would come. That is the difference. He had full faith in God that the Messiah would come. He believed that. Unfortunately he did not understand God's way. How would God bring His promise of the Messiah to come? So here in the case of this elderly couple you will find a principle.

In Luke 18:8 our Lord Jesus used a parable to teach His disciples to pray, that they should always pray and not give up. Our Lord mentioned a widow who was being oppressed. She came to a judge asking for justice but that judge was an unjust judge. He did not fear God. He did not honor any man. He was a selfish person, and he did not do what the widow asked, but that widow persisted. She continued on. She believed that eventually the judge would judge rightly. Finally, that judge was bothered by her so much that he said, "Okay, I will settle it so you will not bother me anymore." So our Lord Jesus said, "When the Son of Man shall come, shall He find faith on earth?"

As we look at the world today, it is not getting better; it is getting worse. Evil seems to have the upper hand. Where is the righteousness of God? Where is God? Probably many of God's children give up hope. There is no

hope. They give up faith. Our Lord Jesus said that He would come, but the church has waited for two thousand years and still the world is like the old world. It is getting worse, not better. Where is the promise of His coming? Will He come? Maybe many will give up hope, give up faith, and they will not pray anymore.

But the Lord said, "When He comes, shall He find faith on earth?" If we have faith we should give ourselves to prayer. We should pray with perseverance, persevere in prayer. And as the day is growing near our prayer should be more intensive, our prayer should be increased: "Lord, come and come quickly!" It is our prayer that prepares the way of the Lord. It is our prayer of faith that hastens His coming. So I hope that we do not give up faith; we do not give up prayer. We should engage ourselves even more than ever before, praying with faith for the second coming of our Lord Jesus.

What happened in the first coming of our Lord Jesus will happen at His second coming. In the first coming of our Lord Jesus God prepared a few—not many. They were not great people but common people, not the strong but the weak. God raised up a few, and these few really waited for and hastened the first coming of our Lord Jesus.

LOVE OPENS THE DOOR

In Luke 1, six months after Gabriel appeared to Zacharias, he was sent to Nazareth, a city out of the way, hidden in the hills. It was a place that was despised by the Jews at that time. "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" But the angel went to a virgin, Mary, who came from the tribe of Judah. She was betrothed to Joseph, a descendant of David. But that

royal seed was not in Jerusalem; it was in Nazareth, hidden, unknown. Mary was only a young woman but the angel appeared to her and said, "Blessed are you. You are the favored one of God because you shall conceive and bear a son, the Son of God, the promise of God."

Mary, being a virgin, asked the question: "How can it be? I know no man. How can it be?" And the angel said, "The Holy Spirit shall overshadow you and the Child that is born will be a holy Child, the Son of God." Of course it caused Mary a problem. How could a virgin conceive? In the mind of the world it could not be except by fornication. And Mary, a pure virgin, was puzzled by it. She had to weigh the consequences.

Joseph, her future husband, was a just man. And according to the law, any unmarried woman who bore a child must be an adulteress. The law demanded that she be stoned to death, and her betrothed one should be the first one to throw the stone. When Joseph learned about it, he did consider what he should do. He was a just man, a righteous man; he was thinking of secretly divorcing her.

So Mary had to think of her life. Her life would be in danger. She would be rejected by her future husband. She would be misunderstood by the whole world. She could be stoned to death. Her very life was an issue, but Mary knew God. She loved God. She loved God to the degree that she was willing to give herself up completely. She said, "I am the handmaid of the Lord. May Thy will be done."

What is that? That is love. Love opens the way for the coming of the Messiah. So what God is waiting for is that there might be love among His people, that His people would love Him to such a

degree that they are willing to give up even their lives for Him. That is what the Lord is looking for today. *Love draws the Lover back.* So here you find a young woman whom God used to prepare and hasten the coming of the Lord.

UNWAVERING HOPE

In Luke 2 there were two elderly people. One was Simeon, and he was a godly man. He hoped for the consolation of Israel. In other words, he was hoping that the consolation of Israel would soon come. Because he had such hope before God, God revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would see the consolation of Israel before he died. That hope kept him living. He lived for that hope. And one day the Holy Spirit urged him to go to the temple. When he entered the temple, it was the time when Mary and Joseph came with their first born Baby to consecrate Him to God. According to the law of Moses, the first born must be consecrated to God. When they came in to consecrate the little Baby, Simeon took the Baby in his arms and prayed, "Lord, now let your servant go for I have seen Thy salvation." Here was a man whose whole life was one hope: to see the Messiah. Because of that intense hope God answered his desire that he should see the salvation of the Lord before he died. When he saw the Lord, he said, "I am ready to go; it is enough."

There was a woman named Anna. She had been a widow for eighty-four years. She lived in the temple, fasting and praying, living for God, waiting for the hope of Israel. By the Holy Spirit, at that moment, she also entered into the temple and spoke to the people of the hope of Israel. These are the

people who brought in the Savior at His first coming—people of hope, unwavering hope.

So you find three things—faith, hope, and love. These three things are not just teachings. These three things are life. When God sees unfaltering faith, absolute love, and unwavering hope among His people, that is the way to hasten the coming of the Lord.

PURE IN HEART

Furthermore, there was a group of shepherds who were shepherding the sheep in the field of Bethlehem. We are told that these were not just ordinary shepherds. They were shepherds of the sheep, which were to be sacrificed to God. They were temple shepherds, simple but pious people who had a pure heart towards God. Their livelihood was to tend and prepare those sheep that would be sacrificed to God. They were very simple people. And the angel appeared to them the night the Savior was born and said, "A Child will be born in Bethlehem in a manger and He shall be called the Son of God." These shepherds, with simplicity, believed what the angel said. They went to Bethlehem, found the Baby in the manger, and they worshiped Him. Do you know that they were the first evangelists? They were the first people who spread the good news because they had a pure heart.

In Matthew 5:8 it says, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." Today, the Lord is looking for pure hearts, undivided hearts, hearts that are all towards the Lord, simple but pure.

In I John it says, "See what love the Father has given to us, that we should be called the children of God. For this reason,

the world knows us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we children of God, and what we shall be has not yet been manifested; we know that if it is manifested we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And every one that has this hope in him purifies himself, even as he is pure" (I John 3:1-3).

May this hope purify us. May the Lord cleanse us from anything that will make us ashamed in the presence of the Lord, that when we see Him we shall not be put to shame. Such purity of heart is the way to wait for and hasten the Lord's return.

I have just this simple burden. The Lord is coming but He is waiting for us. He has already given us this burden, this sense within us, but how are we going to deal with it? Are we just waiting passively, unprepared, unready? Or do we rise up and wait in a positive manner, having faith, hope, love, and a pure heart towards Him? This is the power that will attract our Lord to come back and come back soon. May the Lord help us.

Let us pray:

Dear Lord, we just commit these simple words into Thy hands. We ask Thee, Lord, that Thou wilt put upon our hearts a burden to pray, knowing that Thou art coming. Lord, we pray that Thou wilt enable us to pray with hope, with love, and with faith. We want to give our hearts completely to Thee and ask Thee, Lord, that Thou wilt fill us with Thyself. Oh Lord, may our hearts' love towards Thee draw Thee quickly back. Come quickly, Lord Jesus, come. In Thy precious name we ask. Amen.