

A Special Class of Christians



Longing for His Appearing (Part 1)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again at the beginning of a new week sharing with you Keys to Successful Living which God has placed in my hand through many years of personal experience and Christian ministry. The theme of my talks this week is "Longing for His Appearing." It focuses on one of the great themes of the Bible, the appearing of Christ. That is, his return in glory.

But first, let me say thank you to those of you who have been writing to me. Before I finish this talk we'll be giving you a mailing address to which you may write. It means a great deal to me to hear how this radio ministry of mine has been helping you and blessing you. So please take time to write, even if it's only a brief personal note.

Now, back to our theme, "Longing for His Appearing." I'm going to deal with this in a way that is not abstract or theoretical but extremely practical. I'm going to show how it affects us personally and the way we live. It is not simply something in the unknown future but it is a vital factor in our lives today. I'll begin by quoting some of the last words that were written by the apostle Paul. At this time he was in jail and he was expecting trial and probable execution at the hands of the emperor Nero. These words are taken from 2 Timothy 4:6-8:

> "For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store 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 longed for his appearing." (NIV)

Paul was near the end of his earthly life and he was looking both backward and forward. First of all, he looked back over a victorious life and he penned some of the most victorious words a person could ever write: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." Total success. But let me point out to you not success by this world's standards. He was alone, in jail, it was cold, he didn't have sufficient clothing for the winter, most of his close

associates had forsaken him. By the world's standards he was a failure but he knew that wasn't the ultimate standard. Also, he was going to appear before an unjust judge who was probably going to give him an unjust sentence but none of that changed the note of total victory which is in these words.

Not only did he look backward but he looked forward to eternity. And he spoke about what lay ahead of him and I want to read those words once more because they contain the key words for these messages. He says:

> "Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge..."

Notice, Nero was an unrighteous judge but his was not the final verdict. There was another judge who would pronounce another verdict.

> "...the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing."

Paul was looking forward to another judgment when he would receive a reward. The reward he spoke about was the crown of righteousness. The word crown is also or literally a wreath, a laurel wreath, that was awarded to the victors in the Olympic Games, just like a gold medal is awarded today. So, he was looking forward to this award for victory. He said it was awaiting him when he appeared before the judgment seat of the Lord. But he went on to say that this award was not only for him. "Not only to me," he says, "but also to all who have longed for his appearing."

This is a very remarkable statement. As I have meditated on it, and I've spent much time meditating on it, I've come to see two facts. First of all, these words reveal a special class of Christians, those who have longed for Christ's appearing. And then they reveal that for these Christians God has a special reward. The distinguishing mark is longing for Christ's appearing, the reward is the crown (or the wreath) of righteousness. And as I read those words and pondered on them I said to myself, "Do I qualify? Do I have this mark?" And then I thought about the many, many Christians I regularly meet and I said to myself, "How many of them qualify?" And I came to this conclusion that I didn't really know many that had that distinguishing mark. I asked myself, "Am I one of them?" And I ask you today, "Are you one of them?" And with what follows I'm going to give you material on which you can answer that question: Why is Christ's appearing in glory so important?

So, we have a glory awaiting us which will never be manifested, we'll never experience it, until Christ is revealed in his glory. Meanwhile, our life is hidden with God in Christ. That's a tremendous motivation for longing for his appearing when we understand it and see what it implies for us.

The whole of the New Testament places a continuing emphasis on an attitude of expectation for Christ's appearing, for his return. I would like to read Titus 2:11-13:

> "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus." (NIV)

Notice that grace teaches us or instructs us. Grace is received free, we cannot earn it. But once we've earned it, it places obligation upon us. It instructs how we ought to live in the light of the grace we have received. And Paul says we ought to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age because of what we're expecting. And then he goes on to say, "looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus." Notice please that Paul calls Jesus not merely Savior but also God. "Our great God and Savior." I question whether anybody has a right to call him Savior who is not prepared to call him God because God is our salvation. Nothing less than God can provide salvation. But look at that motivation there for living sensibly, righteously, and godly in the present age. We are looking for something that lies ahead, the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus. We should always have that in the forefront of our thinking. It should be our main perspective on life.

And then again some words from Hebrews 9:27-28:

> "And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once, and after this comes judgment; so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time, not to bear sin, to those who eagerly await him, for salvation." (NAS)

There are two appointments that all of us are going to keep whether we wish to or not. They are mentioned here. The first is death, and after death, judgment. We all are going to face an eternal judgment. But if we have received Christ as Savior and our sins are forgiven and we've served him faithfully, it is a judgment we do not need to fear, we can look forward to it because we will receive our reward, not

condemnation.

But notice that when Jesus comes back to bring full and final and complete salvation He's going to appear "to those who eagerly await him." That's a tremendously important statement. It raises again this question: Do I qualify? Am I one of them? It sets apart a certain class. Paul spoke about those who long for his appearing. The writer of Hebrews speaks about those who eagerly await him. Obviously, the two writers are talking about the same kind of person. This is a vitally important question that every one of us has to face. I ask myself, "Do I qualify? Am I truly longing for his appearing? Am I eagerly awaiting him?"

And then I ask you, Do you qualify? I have to tell you, I meet thousands of Christians but there are not many that I meet that seem to me to have this distinguishing mark. They're not qualifying for that victor's wreath, for that gold medal. So, let me leave that question with you as I close my talk today. Are you one of those who are longing for his appearing, who are eagerly waiting for his coming?

Our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this same time. In my following talks this week I'll be giving you four biblical reasons why all Christians should be longing for Christ's appearing.

Radio Program

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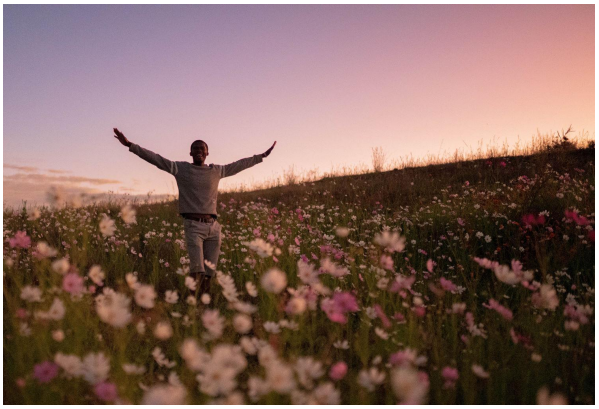

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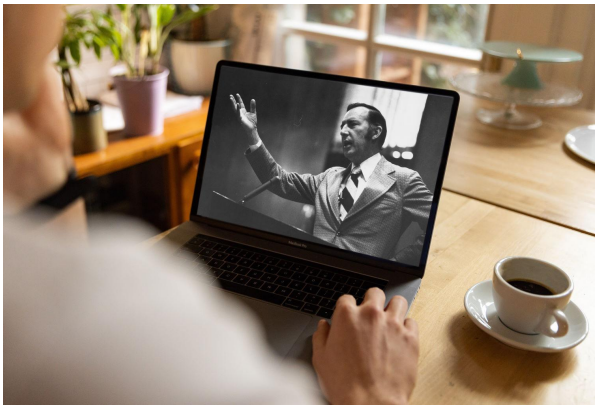

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