

# Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

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## "Looking" Alters Living

*Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? (2 Peter 3:11-12, KJV 1900)*

All too often when preachers preach on the Second Coming, they focus on the "Sweet Bye and Bye" at the expense of the very challenging "Here and Now." This disjointed and "Dysfunctional" attitude appears among believers who hold to more Biblical ideas of eschatology (The doctrine of final things such as the Second Coming) as well as among believers of the popular Dispensational ideas. In my years of work in a profession, I had occasion to observe a significant number of believers in their secular career conduct. Many of them loudly professed their faith, but they showed little or no Christian ethic in their business dealings. Regardless of one's view of end times, Scripture is quite clear in its demand that every person who so much as names the name of Christ should "...depart from iniquity." (2 Timothy 2:19) When our daughters (Now in their forties) were in high school, they would occasionally mention students whom they called "Jezoids." These students vacillated regularly between being almost fanatic Christians and being drug addicts. They showed no consistency whatever in their attitudes and conduct. I have observed similarly disjointed conduct among adults in the business world regardless of their views of the Second Coming. Rather than blame the disconnect between conduct and eschatology, I suspect that the problem lies in a more intimate flaw in these people. Regardless their broad eschatological views, failure to maintain a vigilant eye of faith on the Lord and His return, the professed believers who fail to show their faith by their works fail to keep their faith's view fixed on Jesus.

Our study verses confront and reject this inconsistent and immoral lifestyle. If we believe in the Lord's return, the passage commands us to show our faith in our returning and victorious Lord by the way we live and the way we treat other people.

*But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; And shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with*

*the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matthew 24:48-51)*

This wicked servant depicts Jesus' description of the believer who does not maintain a fixed faith-view of Jesus and His return. What is this servant's first sinful act that follows his wrong-headed thinking, "My lord delayeth his coming"? His first sin is to beat his fellow-servants. Thankfully, very few professing believers choose to physically attack those with whom they disagree. However, it is sadly commonplace for many who profess faith in Christ to use their words as a club, abusively beating and attacking anyone who dares to disagree with their private ideas or interpretations of Scripture.

*...what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness.* In Scripture, the word "holy" does not imply sinless perfection. It rather identifies something or someone wholly devoted to God and God's use. (2 Timothy 2:20-22) This passage reminds us that God chooses the vessels that He uses in His "great house" with discretion and righteous judgment. He will not use a "Vessel," in the passage, a person, for His sacred use who has failed to purge himself from profane and vain babbling and endless wrangling that always increases to greater ungodliness and strife. (2 Timothy 2:16, 23) God chooses to use the believer who consciously and consistently avoids such spiritual "Profanity" in His "Great house." When a believer in a church compromises his faith by such ungodly conduct toward other believers, quietly observe this person for a time. Slowly but ever so surely the Lord will nudge this person to the sidelines and begin to use the peaceful and gracious believer for His glory in His church. Will we ever learn? I suggest that the consistent command in Scripture that links repentance with baptism includes repentance from far more ungodly conduct than black immoral sins. It also commands repentance from these destructive and self-serving spiritual attitudes and conduct toward other believers. When a professing believer refuses to repent of these unethical and unbiblical attitudes and behaviors, the Lord will turn away from him/her, and He will use those believers whom He describes in this passage as...

*...a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work. (2 Timothy 2:21)*

In our study passage, “*holy conversation*” implies our interaction with other believers. Often in the New Testament “conversation” in the King James Bible is translated from a Greek word that identifies one’s whole lifestyle, not just the words that he/she may choose in dialogue with other believers. The point of the two words commands a “Devoted to God lifestyle,” not just a devoted to God vocabulary. Our “holy conversation” convicts us to regard our brother and sister in Christ as being one of the Lord’s chosen vessels, so we should treat that brother or sister with the godly and respectful grace befitting a vessel wholly devoted to the Lord’s use. Regardless what a person believes about God and eternal issues, our humanity makes it frighteningly easy for any believer to rationalize attitudes and conduct that ignore or abuse other believers. A strong and Bible oriented belief in Biblical grace imposes an ethical obligation to practice similar grace toward other believers that the Lord has shown toward us.

*Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man. (Colossians 4:6)*

In Jesus’ words, cited above, how much grace did the unbelieving servant show to his fellow-servants whom he beat? It is immaterial whether someone beats you with his fist or with harsh words. The “Beating” is equally abusive and equally condemned by Scripture. Often words are used by such people to inflict far more lasting hurt than they could possibly inflict with their fist. Every believer in Christ who truly longs to live to and for the Lord’s honor needs to constantly keep grace in mind as the filter and controlling factor in their words, attitudes, and actions toward other believers. You are a “Grace believer.” Are you also a “Grace speaker,” a “Grace worker” toward your brothers and sisters in Christ? Did you ever think how dreadfully inconsistent and how dishonoring your life is to the Lord if you say that you believe strongly in God’s grace, but you constantly treat other believers as if they and you are under the Law and you are God’s appointed judge and jury of those other believers? “*holy conversation*” specifically deals with our interaction with other believers—and non-believers for that matter.

*...and godliness.* This word turns our focus from interaction with other believers inward to how we live in relation to the Lord and His commandments. In another passage, Paul uses two similar terms, “*...work of faith, and labor of love.*” (1 Thessalonians 1:3) Here “*work of faith*” addresses our God-ward conduct, and “*labor of love*” our interactions with other believers.

Why does one’s belief in the Second Coming impact how we live? Think. If you believe that you shall spend eternity praising God for your redemption alongside all His other redeemed children, you remind yourself that both you and that brother or sister whom you look down on or verbally abuse will be there side by side with you, both equally there by merciful grace and not by your works. If you know that you and that person will be so changed at the Second Coming that you will together rejoice beyond anything you can now imagine, the thought urges you to treat that person with more respect and grace now. Further, the awareness that Jesus died for your sins, including your sin of offense against even one of the least of the Lord’s little ones (Matthew 18:6-11), should convict you as powerfully to avoid such offense against His “little ones” as faithfully as you strive to avoid carnal sins of the flesh. If there is any significant difference, a sin against one of the Lord’s little ones may well be more heinous in the Lord’s nostrils than a sin of the flesh.

A steady fixed focus on the Second Coming and that glory to come is the strongest possible deterrent against personal sin, as well as relational sins. In 1 Corinthians 6:14, Paul injects a clear affirmation of both Jesus’ resurrection and ours into one of the most focused lessons in the New Testament against sexual sin. If we try to ignore the present moral power of a right belief in the Second Coming, we will gloss over this verse and miss Paul’s powerful point. If you believe that your physical body shall go to the grave and never be raised to praise God, you easily become careless about how you use your body. However, if you believe that the Lord shall literally raise and glorify your physical body to join your spirit and soul in praising Him for eternity to come, you will be more careful about how you use that body now. And that moral truth explains Paul’s injection of resurrection truth into his teaching against moral, sexual sin.

*Looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God.* The Biblically informed, faithful believer keeps the Lord’s return constantly fresh in his heart. The “day of God” is coming. We bear faithful witness to our belief in that day’s reality only to the extent that we impose its “Resurrection ethic” on every aspect of our conduct, especially how we treat our brothers and sisters in Christ.

*...hastening unto the coming of the day of God.* Nothing that we do can alter the date of the Lord’s return. However, by keeping that day fresh in our minds, we live and make every decision, govern every word, and frame our relationship with other believers in the mindset of eagerly awaiting that day. If the people who know you best were to judge your belief in the Second Coming only by your words (Both **what** and **how** you say it) and deeds, would they conclude that you truly do believe in that day, or would they see your behavior as a sad contradiction to your belief in that day? Do your words and deeds witness your belief in that day?

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Worship service each Sunday  
Joseph R. Holder

10:30 A. M.  
Pastor