

## 515 Different Drumbeats

As the season of Advent begins, the world's notions of Christmas are already in full spate: to have a wonderful time, just "keep spending, partying and laughing, along with everyone else!". Meanwhile this hurting world lurches on, and our one God-given Hope, "Emmanuel ... a Saviour, Christ the Lord", is widely ignored or ridiculed (from Matthew 1.23 / Luke 2.11). An understandable Advent-type reaction from the Lord's Christ-redeemed people to all that is going on is simply, "Please Lord, do hurry up! – and bring this sinful age of folly to its appointed end".

Such impatience with the Lord, and/or a straightforward desire to be "out of it", are often found in His Word: for instance, "Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down ... to make thy name known to thine adversaries, [that] the nations may tremble at thy presence!" (from Isaiah 64.1-2, KJV); or, from Psalm 55.4-6, "My heart is sore pained within me ... Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me. And I said, O that I had wings like a dove! [for then] would I fly away, and be at rest".

Supremely the Lord Jesus Himself in Gethsemane also longed to be "out of it" - "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will but thine be done" (from Luke 22.42). At times Paul too had had enough, as he writes to the Philippians, "For to me to live [is] Christ, and to die is gain ... (I have) a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better; nevertheless (for me) to abide in the flesh [is] more needful for you" (from Philippians 1.21,23). We read in Acts, during a tough time for Paul and his companions in Corinth, "Paul was pressed in spirit ... Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak and hold not thy peace: For I am with thee ..." (from Acts 18.5,9-10).

From these few examples drawn from among the many more, we are reminded that our walking in the Lord's paths is often plain tough, for we are marching to the drumbeat of the Lord rather than to the drumbeat of the world. We are clearly living in increasingly turbulent times, with many of "the old solidities" of our country being under strong attack – including the Christian Faith, the Bible, the churches, the Royal Family, the government, stable marriages, settled family life, along with basic courtesies, decency and respect in both public and private life. Truly the "rulers of the darkness of this world" with their "spiritual wickedness in high [places]" (from Ephesians 5.12) are making progress. Such attacks

are being allowed by the Lord, surely as part of His coming judgments, as well as to strengthen both our faith in Him and our practical reliance on Him, as we draw on the rich promises and ample provisions He has given us in His Word.

So we remember – “the Lord’s mercies ... [they are] new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him ... [It is] good that [a man] should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord” (from Lamentations 3.22-25). In the wonderful Psalm 37 similar practical instructions abound for us: “Fret not thyself because of evildoers ... trust in the Lord, and do good ... Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him ... Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself ... cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself ... those that wait on the Lord shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while, and the wicked [shall] not [be] ...” (from Psalm 37.1-10a, with three “Fret nots” (vv.1,7,8) in eight verses!). Faith; faithfulness; hope; patience; waiting; trusting; committing; resting; no fretting; no wrath – what a picture of the well-equipped, armour-of-God-clad Christian saint, steadily marching to the Lord’s drumbeat whatever comes his or her way!

“And shall not God avenge his own elect ... though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily” (from Luke 18.7-8). “For our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ ... / Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and Saviour Jesus Christ” (from Philippians 3.20 / Titus 2.13). “And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap if we faint not” (Galatians 6.9).

The Lord Jesus has promised, “Surely I come quickly”, to which we gratefully respond, “Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (from Revelation 22.20). Meanwhile in Christ’s Name we defy the devil’s attacks (Ephesians 6.10-18 / I Peter 5.8-9), while keeping in step with the Lord’s steady drumbeat.

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