

The Second Coming 03 Church at Thessalonica

by Stan Ford

The sermon emphasizes the importance of the coming of the Lord in the light of conversion, continuance, consecration, and comfort, and calls believers to live a life of sanctification and sacrifice.

Duration: 48:51

Scripture: Acts 3:1

Topics: "Second Coming", "Sanctification"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the coming of the Lord and its significance in the lives of believers. He emphasizes that the good news of the gospel is not just words, but a transformative message that leads to conversion. The preacher also highlights the comforting aspect of the Lord's coming, encouraging believers to find solace in the hope of His return. Lastly, he mentions that the coming of the Lord should inspire believers to live sanctified lives, fully dedicated to Him. The sermon references passages from the Bible, including 1 Thessalonians 1:5 and 1 Thessalonians 4:18.

Transcript

And what I'd like to do in my day, I would like to just read a wonderful word of God, and then do you think we could manage that little forum we had on Saturday night, sir? And it'll give the people an opportunity just to see whether this view might work, or whether it doesn't. And you'll be able to tell me. So, first of all, I want to read, if I may, a few verses in the first chapter of Paul's first letter to the church at Thessalonica.

1 Thessalonians, chapter 1. We read from chapter 4 last evening. I'm going to read from chapter 1 this evening. I would like to commence reading towards the end of this very wonderful chapter.

Verse 9 says, For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we have unto you, and how ye turn to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait on him for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the rock to come. And now may the Lord just hand his blessing to the reading of his word. Now, I'm going to stand by the side here, see whether this thing works or not.

If it doesn't, put your hand up. Now, please. Now, I'm going to stand by the side here, see whether this thing works or not.

If it doesn't, put your hand up. Now, I'm going to stand by the side here, see whether this thing works or not. If it doesn't, put your hand up.

Nope. Well, we have a plan. Just you listen then.

It goes something like this. Yep. If you're blind for it, you're one for it.

Oh, Lord. If you're poor. Oh, dear.

Oh, the Bible tells us. You know, I did think you did your plan. I said it.

Now, how is it you are not afraid to keep your husband's place? How do you manage it as well? You're a man of pride. That's it. Come on up.

Have a go. Now, this. I can tell you.

In case you were planning spontaneously. I am wrong sometimes. Here we go then.

If you're black. Or if you're what? Or if you're black. Or leave.

Oh, lovely. Now, you know, there's a lot of boys and girls here. But I want to hear you boys and girls say, Who do you think you're for? Who are you for? Really, why? Are you ready? If you're black or if you're what? Here we go.

If you're black or if you're what? Or if you're black. Or leave. Oh, come on.

You know that, okay? You're a man of pride. Let's have a go. Oh, let's go.

How do you manage it? Drop the button. That's who I am. Oh, he's great.

Everybody, put your hands up. Here we go. If you're black or if you're what? Or if you're black.

Or leave. Oh, come on. You're wrong.

You don't have a lot of hands here. I was just going to say, who? Come on now. Everyone for the last time.

The white team coordinator. He's everyone in the back. Now, it's time to help these people.

Is it all right? All right, white team, let's see. You're ready. Oh, if you're black or if you're what? Why? You touched the man's face.

You know what it is, right? You never told me. You're ready. Everyone's ready.

Here we go. If you're black or if you're what? Or if you're black. Oh, come on.

Leave it. Go. You know I feel like giving you a pat.

That was very good. Thank you. And thank you for your help.

They sorted it all out now. And at least I trust they have. I trust they have.

Just a word of prayer, please. Oh, God and Father, we thank you together tonight that we've been able to sing and smile. And now as we come to thy word, we pray thee that will enable us to be solemn together.

That we might hear thee speak to us. That we might, as individuals, say, Speak, Lord, for thy servant here. For Jesus' sake.

Amen. The letter from which we have read this evening is, as you know, one of the earlier letters that the Apostle Paul, led of the Spirit of God, wrote. The commencement of the church at Bethlehem, I fear, is one of the interesting, thrilling stories in the Bible.

Its record is in the 17th of Acts. When Paul, on his second missionary journey, left Philippi and eventually arrived at Thessalonica, wonderful things were done. Over a period of what we call in England a fortnight, over a period of two weeks, the Apostle Paul preached in Thessalonica and many, many souls were saved.

A church was established and something happened to God. Lives were changed. The impact was felt in the city.

Of the persecution that arose in Thessalonica, I have little to say. I just want to remind you of this, that it did arise and the Apostle Paul eventually arrived in the city of Corinth. He longed for that church at Thessalonica, and so one day, led by the Spirit of God, he sits down and writes to them.

It is a remarkable fact that in the chapters that are contained in the five chapters of this book, every chapter comes to its close by reminding those early Christians, those newborn days, that Jesus Christ is coming back again. You know, I meet men and women who come to me and say, when you talk of the coming of Jesus Christ, surely you're talking to men and women who know something of their Bible. Men and women that have been on the road for a long, long while.

But that's not true. Here was a church just for men. Here were men and women who loved the Lord Jesus and had not long been saved, and yet the Apostle comes to them with the most wonderful, with the most thrilling of truths, concerning the coming again of Jesus Christ.

You will remember that in the first chapter, we read these words as the last verse of the chapter, to wait for his Son from heaven. When I turn over to the second chapter, I read, And what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? Then when I turn to the third chapter, I read, To the end he may establish your hearts, unblameable in holiness, before God, even our Father, at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints. I look at chapter four, and I read the last verse, Wherefore, in the light of the coming of the Lord Jesus that I've just spoken about, Wherefore, comfort ye one another with these words.

Then I come to the last chapter, and my heart is stirred, as in verse twenty-three I read, And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly, and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. So, it's no good coming to me and saying, Oh sir, these are truths that are too deep for the average person to understand. When we speak of the coming of the Lord, we speak of a subject that's so near our hearts, that so affects our life, that we must know something about that subject.

And tonight, with your permission and with God's help, I want to talk about these five verses contained in these five chapters. I want us, first of all, to remember that when the apostle came to the city of Thessalonica, he came with a very poor back. He came with very poor feet, for on his ankles had been plate chains, and across his back he had felt, indeed, the beating of rocks.

But he came with a very warm heart, for his heart was near to God, and although physically exhausted, he wanted to share with the men and women of Thessalonica the wonders of the gospel story. I want, first of all, for us to look at the coming of the Lord, and as we look at it, I want us to see this truth that leads to conversion. May I repeat that? I want us to see this truth that leads to conversion.

When I look at the second chapter, I want to look at the coming of the Lord, not as the truth that leads to conversion, but I want us to look at this truth as it leads to continuance. That conversion is but the beginning of Christian life. There is a continuance in Christian life.

When I turn to chapter three, I want to see the truth, not in the light of conversion, and not in the light of continuance. I want to see it in the light of consecration. I want us to realize that here is a verse that demands our holiness.

It demands something in our life. When I turn to chapter four, we'll see this tremendous truth, not in the light of conversion, not in the light of continuance, not in the light of consecration, but we will see it in the light of comfort. Wherefore, comfort ye one another with these words, and then I will come to the last chapter eventually, and I will remind you that the coming of the Lord is seen here in the tremendous hope that it leads each one of us to this consuming fact that we should be, in the light of His coming, those that are sanctified in Christ Jesus.

First of all, then, let's think of the coming of the Lord in the light of conversion. I think it's a tremendous truth that these people at Castle Anika heard the gospel. Why, the very words that we read reminded us of this, that our gospel came not to you in word only.

Oh, isn't it grand that there is good news? Not necessary for me to remind you that the word gospel simply means good news. And isn't it wonderful in the midst of all the trial of this day, in the midst of all the problems of our age, there comes good news, the finest news in the world. Most of you have heard me tell the story of that man of God, the mighty Rabbi Duncan.

He was walking one day down Prince's Street in the city of Edinburgh. His white beard was glowing in the wind. His face was shining, and their parents had set with him from the university in Edinburgh an acquaintance.

And as they walked together down Prince's Street, suddenly the acquaintance, looking at Rabbi Duncan, said, Rabbi, have you had good news? The Rabbi stopped, looked at his friend, and said, Good news? Why, the best news in the world, the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses us from all sin. I say, do you know any better news than that? That's the finest news that ever could be given out. If I found myself tonight with the old Scottish hymn book, The Redemption Song, I would have given out tonight number 111.

Whenever you speak, you always say, what's the news? What's the news? Say, what's the order of the day? What's the news? I have got good news to tell. My Saviour has done all things well, and triumphed over death and hell. That's the news, that's the news.

And the Apostle Paul came to Bethlehem later, as I have come to the city of Augusta with good news. The Gospel says that Jesus Christ is willing to forgive our sins. Oh, the wonder of it all.

But, you know, when we change from that news, we remember this, that the outcome of the preaching of that news told the people that Jesus Christ had died for their sins. Why He died, because of them we read,

the glory of fact, that He was raised from the dead. The dead, the dead.

Or did Jesus Christ die? Praise God He died, and He died for you and me. He gave His life for us. He suffered for you and me.

My Bible tells me that God proved His love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Oh, the wonder of it all. But not only did He die, but He rose again.

But death could not hold its prey, Jesus my Savior. He tore the bars away, Jesus my Lord. For though, as I often say, they placed Him in a tomb, and rolled a stone in front of it, and set a seal on it, and stood a soldier by it, no stone or seal or soldier could keep that blessed Christ in the grave.

But God raised Him again from the dead. Oh, this is the message that Paul preached. This is the gospel that Christ joined for our sins.

According to the Scripture, that He was buried, and the third day He rose again to pay for our sins. There's something more. Not only that Christ rose from the dead, but that He has delivered us from the lot to come.

Oh, blessed be His name. But not only did He die for our sins, but He has delivered us from the punishment of sin. But hell can never claim us all, but it's trusted the Lord Jesus.

For glory to His name, Christ holds the key of hell. He'll never allow one to go into that place who trusted Him. Ah, but what was the outcome? This was the outcome.

But when they heard of the death of Christ, and the resurrection of Christ, and the wonder that they had if they trusted Him, being delivered from wrath to come, they turned to God from idols, to serve the true and living God, and to wait for His Son from heaven. Oh, the wonder. They turned to God from idols.

You know, as one has traveled in many countries in this old world of ours, one has seen many of the idols that men have made. And there is one thing that always strikes me about an idol that men will bow down to. Whether indeed I've been in the heart of Africa, in Angola, or way in Mozambique, or in Botswana, when one has seen what one normally hears of as witchcraft, and one sees the idols that men bow down to, the thing that strikes me is this.

What they bow down to is the theft of their own labor. Oh, some of those idols may be very primitive, but the people that made them were primitive. And it is the best that they can do.

My friends, is it not a fact that in this country of yours, there are millions of men and women that are bowing down to idols? They're bowing down to the best that they can do. It seems to me, does it seem to you, does it seem to you, that while they may not be idols that one can see naturally, with the natural eye they're idols indeed, I meet men and women who just would give their life for a piece. May I repeat that? For a piece.

All they look around and they say, what I want in life is things. I'm going to get things. They thrive and they savor and they work, but all the difficulty is this, that when they've got things, when they've given all their time for things, they find those things can't help them.

When it comes to the matter of the conquering of death, when it comes to the matter of the conquering of sin, when it comes to the matter of deliverance from the wrath of God, things don't help. Did I meet men

and women who don't bow down to things? I meet men and women who say, it's not things I want, it's theories. Oh, that's what I want.

Why? God gave me a brain with which to speak, and the theories of men, the philosophies of men, those are the things that I'm going to band together. I meet many a man and many a young woman who spend their time after the theories of this world, and when they've got them, I know no theory in this world that will bring the forgiveness of sin. I know no theory in this world that will deliver a man from the grave.

I know no theory in this world that will bring a man away from the wrath of God and bring him into the joy of God. The Gospels are, Jesus Christ are, but if I find men and women who crave after things, and men and women who crave after theories, I meet so many young people, and they crave after thrill. Oh, that's what they want in life.

Thrill! Put me behind the wheel of a fast car. That's the thing. I pray, put me on the back of a horse.

That's the thing. Thrill! Oh, my friend remembers me. There is nothing wrong with thrill.

I wouldn't like life without thrill. There's nothing wrong with theory. It's important that we shall follow man's thinking.

There's nothing wrong with faith. If I'm talking to a young man here, who's seeking to ask a girl to be his partner for life, let me tell you something. The Bible says if you care not for your own, you're worth an anvil.

I hope you'll get paid. But what's wrong with things, and what's wrong with theories, and what's wrong with thrill, is when you make them your God. When your whole life circles around them.

There were people in Bethlehem, Icarus, who had idols. The best they could make, they bowed down before them. Though they bowed down before them, there was no deliverance from sin, and no deliverance from death, and no deliverance from the wrath that comes.

But hallelujah in Jesus there was. Blessed God by his death and his resurrection, he has taught to the sons of men, salvation, conversion. May I ask you, oh please I trust it is not at the expense of courtesy, but may I ask you, are you converted? Are you saved? Have you trusted Jesus Christ? Has he delivered you from the wrath to come? Well he's willing to tonight.

And when they were converted, they waited for God's come from heaven. Oh the wonder of it. I thank God for the opportunity of saying to you tonight, Jesus Christ is coming back again.

And are you converted in the light of his coming back again? Because if you're not, death has not been taken away from thee, sin has not been taken away from thee, and neither has the wrath of God been taken away from thee. But if you've trusted Christ, oh the wonder of it. But then I want us to see, not only the coming of the Lord in the light of conversion, but I want us to notice the coming of the Lord in the light of our continuance.

You see, I would not give that much, not that much, for a man or a woman that tells me they're a Christian and doesn't show it by their living. Please, I'm not over-concerned about you putting your hand up and saying, I want to be saved. I'm not over-concerned about you coming to the front and saying, I want to be saved.

Oh I'd love for you to do it, but I'm not over-concerned. But what I am concerned in is this, that you'll go back to your home, back to your school, back to your college, back to your work, to show by your living whose you are and whom you serve. For this is the faith that the world needs to see, not the faith of a man who says, I believe in God, but the faith of a man who says, I believe in God, and I will make that blessed Saviour not just Jesus, but the Christ my Lord.

My Lord. As I say these glorious words, I remember this, that they not only waited for His Son from Heaven, but He said, what is our hope for joy or crown of rejoicing are not even ye. Oh this is it, that you continue in the Kingdom of God.

How necessary it is for us to continue. You know my friend, the Apostle Paul at the end of his journey would say, I fought a good fight. I finished the course.

I kept the faith. There was continuity. And what more justice needs it's men and women who will continue to live for Jesus Christ having taken Him as their Saviour.

And in the light of the faith that one day we shall see Him. One day we shall stand before Him. Let us continue in our faith.

But not only is the coming of the Lord seen in the light of our conversion, but the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. How essential it is that all of us here tonight who know the Lord Jesus as Saviour shall not only continue, but shall conficcate our all to Him. And we'll say of the truth, Lord, what I have is Thine.

It has been my privilege over a number of years to lead the Bible readings in the month of March in the university in the city of Cambridge. Every year over many years now, I always start the first Bible reading reading the same chapter. We open our Bible in the Acts of the Apostles and we read the story of a peeper and a job who wended their way to the beautiful gates of the temple where they saw a man who was lame.

And as we discuss together that tremendous story, and I've done it for years with these young men and women, as we do it, what I try to emphasize is this. The peeper and job used everything they had for the blessing of that man. They used their feet.

They walked towards the temple. I say, they used their eyes. They looked and saw a man in need.

They used their voice. They spake to him. They used their ears.

They listened to him. They used their hands. They stretched out and caught him by the hand.

Best of all, they used their hearts as they ministered to him of his great need. I look into the faces of these young men who in that great university will one day come out to lead maybe the world in their particular sphere. And I emphasize this, that what you have in your hands, in your eyes, in your lips, in your feet, in your heart, in your mind, God wants it all.

He wants it all. And here the apostle dares to remind us of that great truth. To the end you may be established in holiness by the coming of the Lord Jesus.

And we may find ourselves having given our all to him. Our all to him. But when I turn the page again, I come not only to the fact that conversion is seen in the light indeed of his coming.

I realize that continuance is seen in the light of his coming. I realize that consecration is seen in the light of his coming. And I remember that comfort is seen in the light of his coming.

Wherefore, comfort ye one another with these words. Wherefore, comfort ye one another Isn't it wonderful to know, as we saw last night, that the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. We which are alive and remain shall be brought up together to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Wherefore, comfort ye one another, exalt ye one another with these words, O my friends, I know nothing that will bring comfort to God's people like the realization that one day death is to be conquered, that Christ is coming and we'll be with Him and see Him. All that was said in the first chapter is true, that the Christ who died to deliver us from sin, who rose to deliver us from death, who's coming again to deliver us from the wrath to come, O blessed be His name! He can be our Savior. What comfort to know this? Do you know this? Or have I tonight to look into your faces and say, O my fellow traveller to eternity, with a bang! With a bang! But I come to the last chapter, and the apostle is not finished with the truth of the coming of the Lord, for he dares to remind us that this truth is to be an altogether consuming truth.

The very God of peace will sanctify you wholly, spirit, soul and body. Oh, by the way, by the way, we are living in a day when there's thousands of people travelling from door to door, speaking to men and women, leaving literature behind, and they say, man is not a tri-part being, God is not triune. Hearken to this.

Don't you tell me man is not spirit, soul and body. This is the word of God. I never wrote it.

Not guilty. Nothing to do with me. God says, the God of peace shall sanctify you wholly, spirit, soul, body.

Oh, the wonder of it. I may be petrified, full of glory, for that's the meaning of the word sanctified, to be petrified, wholly and absolutely consumed with this fact that we belong to Christ, that we trust it in, and we do it blessed be his name. Therefore, comfort ye one another, says chapter 4, but chapter 5, that we may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

My friends, I wonder if I may ask you, as you have been thinking with me of the coming again of Jesus Christ, how has it affected you? Do you find yourself seated here tonight saying, praise God I'm converted. Do you find yourself in this service tonight saying, praise God I'm going to continue in the Christian faith. Do you find yourself knowing that Jesus Christ may come back at any moment, consecrating your all to him, your hands, your feet, your heart, your eyes, your lips, your all to him.

Do you find yourself saying, oh God, oh God of peace. I like that, don't you? We started off, remember, we started off by reminding ourselves that that is the God who died to deliver us from sin, who rose to deliver us from death, and who lives and is coming to deliver us from the lost to come. Thank God there's peace, if you know that.

One of my favorite verses is found in the opening verses of the epistle to Timothy, where the apostle says, Timothy, Timothy, grace, mercy, and peace. Isn't that hallelujah? Grace, mercy, and peace. You know what grace is, don't you? Grace is getting what you don't deserve.

That's great. Mercy, mercy is not getting what you do deserve. And when you get what you don't deserve, and you don't get what you do deserve, then hallelujah the peace.

Have you got that peace in your heart? Have you found that saving? Oh, if not, oh why not? Why not trust that Savior and trust Him enough? Could I help you do that? You see, I want you to sing a few verses of a tremendous hymn. I shudder almost to give it out. Not shudder to ask you to sing it, but shudder to sing it myself.

I want you to sing a few verses of number 199. Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to Thee. Take my hands and let them move at the impulse of Thy love.

Take my feet, take my all. May we sing the first two and the last verse, 199. Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to Thee.

Take my hands and let them move at the impulse of Thy love. Take my feet, take my all. I wonder as we come to the second verse, if I may ask my good friend, Brother Jim, to come up and sing this hymn.

This is not the tune that we normally sing throughout in my country. As far as I know, I've never heard that tune before. So I'll ask him to lead it, and I'd like you to sing it, and I'd like you to mean it.

I'd like to learn it, the tune. Oh, friend, will you learn the meaning of it, my trusting Christ? Take my life and take my feet. Take my feet and let them be swift and beautiful for Thee.

Take my voice and let me sing of Thee, O my King. Take my lips and let them be filled with melody. Take my love, my God, I pour as I did in the day of my birth.

Take my life and let me sing of Thee, O my King. Take my lips and let them be filled with melody. Take my life and let me sing of Thee, O my King.

Take my love, my God, I pour as I did in the day of my birth. Take my life and let me sing of Thee, O my King. Take my lips and let me sing of Thee, O my King.

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