

An Expected End

*"I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord,
thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end."
– Jeremiah 29:11*

Summary:

God assures his people that he thinks upon them with thoughts of peace and is leading them toward an expected end. As Israel's captivity ended in restoration to Zion, the believer's pilgrimage, warfare, and trials will end in salvation and everlasting life. Christian expectation is not presumption: it arises through grace, rests on Christ and God's sure promise, and survives every storm because its foundation is a rock. Kept alive, this hope loosens the heart from the world, brings contentment, cheers suffering, strengthens obedience, and reconciles the believer to death.

Outline:

- 1. God's thoughts toward his people are peaceful**
 - He knows and declares his purposes, and every one of them is directed toward their true and final good.
- 2. The believer is moving toward an expected end**
 - The voyage, journey, and warfare will finish in the desired haven, the Father's house, and the crown of glory.
- 3. Christian life is marked by expectation**
 - The believer looks for Christ and the promised inheritance, whose reality will exceed even Scripture-shaped hopes.
- 4. Good hope differs from presumption**
 - Presumption ignores guilt and evidence, while hope through grace turns from self to Christ and rests on God's sworn promise.
- 5. Living hope transforms the present**
 - The expected end loosens worldly attachments, creates contentment, cheers trials, animates obedience, and brings peace in death.

Text

What more could God's people desire? They are assured that he thinks of them and that his thoughts are kind—thoughts of peace, not evil—and lead to the expected end.

He designed and procured the Jews' good in Babylon, but the Lord's ransomed were to return to Zion. "After seventy years be accomplished at Babylon, I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place." This reveals their expected end. What did it prefigure but "the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls"—"the end, everlasting life"?

The Christian is at sea, facing winds and fears, but the voyage will end in the desired haven. He is journeying, often discouraged by the way, but it will lead to a better country and his Father's house. He is also engaged in a good but painful warfare; soon the struggle will end, and he will exchange the helmet for the "crown of glory that fadeth not away."

What characterises the believer's mind regarding this end? Expectation. He awaits that blessed hope—the Saviour from heaven—for he is saved by hope. Everything now moves him forward: creatures, ordinances, connections, experience, and both painful and pleasing feelings. All say, "Arise, and depart hence, for this is not your rest."

Human expectation is rarely fulfilled by events. Even when a seeker achieves his aim, he may be disappointed, and his heart may sigh amid success. But however great a Christian's scriptural expectation, the blessing will be greater still; its fulfilment will prompt the confession, "The half was not told me."

Yet this expectation differs sharply from the presumptuous person's confidence. Natural men find hope easy because they lack a proper sense of their unworthiness and guilt; they hope without examination, evidence, information, or authorisation.

One of the Spirit of God's first works is to break this state of mind, enabling the man to say with Paul, "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." Yet, by closing this door of hope, he opens another: turning the man from the Law to the Gospel, from self to the Saviour, and from establishing his own righteousness to embracing the righteousness of God.

Hence arises what the Apostle calls "a good hope through grace." Its goodness lies less in the confidence's strength than in the foundation's solidity and the warrant's clarity and fullness. Our

Lord speaks of two builders: one a fool, the other wise. Their difference lay not chiefly in the edifices but in their groundwork.

Both structures seemed sound to the passer-by; but the former stood on sand, so the storm swept it away, while the latter endured every assault because it rested on rock. How many hopes rest on sand! How surely and easily they fall—the sinner's, worldling's, hypocrite's, and Pharisee's expectations!

But the Christian's hope does not bring shame. It rests on the foundation laid in Zion, and its possessor cannot be confounded unless God could lie and commit perjury. For He has not only promised but sworn: "because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself."

Keep this expectation alive. Let nothing shake its confidence or obscure its purpose or basis. It can work wonders and yield countless benefits as it is realised.

I turn to the believer who fully exemplifies it and find him dead to the world and "all that earth calls good and great." Why? "An expected end." He has looked beyond the veil and seen the surpassing glory. The sun has eclipsed the glowworms—and the stars.

I find him content with an inferior station, though denied the indulgences enjoyed by today's children. Why? "An expected end." They are at home, he says, but I am not. I am a stranger and pilgrim, staying at an inn that offers few entertainments or comforts—so much the better. Otherwise, it might tempt and delay me; now, it urges me onward.

What makes him cheerful in his trials? "An expected end." This hope, he says, is "an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast"; and "I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed."

This expected end, he says, sustains me through the difficulties of obedience. If hope drives the learned, famous, and wealthy to such effort, hardship, and sacrifice, should I be cold or discouraged when an eternity of infinite good awaits me?

This, he says, steadies me for death and reconciles me to its approach. Though unpleasant in itself, it leads to our heavenly home—a departure to be with Christ, which is far better. He can also make the exit as gentle as its outcome is glorious.

However, this may be:

*"Tis there forever I shall dwell,
With Jesus in the realms of day;
When I shall bid these fears farewell,*

And he will wipe my tears away.

*Jesus, on thee our hope depends,
To lead us on to thine abode;
Assured our home will make amends
For all our toil upon the road."*

This sermon is taken from William Jay's devotional, *Morning and Evening Exercises*
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