

He said, I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course I have kept the faith, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord . . . shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing. He was looking forward to the coming of Christ.

We cannot expect to bring in the millennium by human effort. We can expect even by the preaching of the gospel to bring it in. I think Paul realized this fact in the previous chapter where he began with the words, This know also that in the last days perilous times shall come for men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy. A terrible picture he gives in vv.1-7. A picture which we may think describes conditions in the Roman Empire toward the end of Paul's life but a picture which would fit even better perhaps today. Paul said in vv.10-11 oc ch. 3, But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, patience, persecutions, afflictions which came to me at Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, what persecutions I endured, but out of them all the Lord delivered me.

God may give any one of us of leading a great movement that will bring great numbers of souls to the Lord. On the other hand it may be his will for us to struggle and strive and suffer, and perhaps die for the faith of Christ. The results come from God. He is interested we do our very utmost to serve Him effectively. In the early 20th century, in the first decade of this present century, and a little later than that too, there was a general feeling in the church that the millennium was just about on us. I remember hearing a man who said he was a member of a peace tribunal which then met in the Hague. He said there have been no great wars since 1870. He said we now have this wonderful arrangement among nations for settling disputes. Everything is brought before the Hague Tribunal and settled there. He said we are going there and discuss things and there will never again be another great war. He said that in 1914 and before he got to the Hague Tribunal the great armies of millions of men were rushing across Europe with the developed nations fighting one another, at one another's throats destroying one another and opening the way for chaos to spread across great parts of the world.

God does not expect us to look to the victories of human efforts, not even through the preaching of the Gospel. It is to come through our Lord Jesus Christ. He has repeatedly stress the fact we do not know when Christ would come. Paul speaks at times as though he thought he ~~xx~~ would come in his own lifetime, at other times he speaks as if a longer period was to intervene. He did not know. Our Lord said the time of His coming is kept in the counsels of God, that even the Son did not know. Christ may come tomorrow. How wonderful if he did. But He may not come for another 1000 years. In such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh. And if we all become convinced He will come next year, that's a pretty good sign it is not yet to be (Laughter). In such a time as ye think not the Son of Man cometh.

Paul says here in 3:12 Yea and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. What a statement. How much persecution have any of us suffered for the gospel? We don't know how much we may have to suffer.