
CHAPTER 9

PAULINE ESCHATOLOGY

The Apostle Paul has extensively taught on the subject of eschatology. He plainly establishes the imminent Second Coming and defended a pre-Tribulation Rapture of all believers in Christ. Since most of the epistles were written by or ascribed to him, we can draw much from his inspiration. Outside of Daniel and Revelation, and the direct teaching of Jesus, it is from Paul that the Church can gain prophetic insight most into this subject. Without his insight, the Christian Church would have little tools with which to contend for the faith. Chapters and literally volumes are dictated or penned from his eschatology. A few thoughts will, therefore, be gleaned from quotes from his epistles to throw some more light; since from outside Daniel and Revelation, and the direct teaching of Jesus, it is from Paul that the Church can gain prophetic insight most into this subject.

SOME QUOTES ON PAULINE ESCHATOLOGY

He emphasizes the certainty of the Resurrection

"Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up-- if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be

made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming" (1Cor. 15:12-23).

He emphasizes the type of glorified body at the Resurrection

"So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (1Cor. 15:43-49).

He makes us capture the hope and imminence of the Rapture

"But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words" (1Thess. 4:13-18).

He makes us capture the manner and mystery of the Rapture

"Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when

this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1Cor. 15:50-57).

He gives the courage to serve and work for the Lord

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." (1Cor. 15:58)

"Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (1Cor. 1:2-9).

"For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself" (Phil. 3:20-21).

He shows us how to conduct our lives

"And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof" (Rom. 13:11-14).

He emphasizes the pre-Tribulation Rapture by explaining the timing of the day of the Lord

"Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?" (2Thess. 2:1-5).

"But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief" (1Thess. 5:1-4).

He makes us know our real position as believers and our backing from the Godhead

"But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle. Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work" (2Thees. 2:13-17).

He teaches the need for covenantal commitment

"If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed. O Lord, come!" (1 Cor. 16:22).

"Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are

saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you-- unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures" (1Cor. 15:1-4).

He teaches the need for transparency in kingdom living and business, because of Judgment

"For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is" (1Cor. 3:11-13).

He further teaches the knowledge and privilege of reserved crowns for good and faithful believers

"For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing" (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

DEDUCTIONS FROM PAUL ON THE SPIRITUAL ATMOSPHERE OF THE LAST DAYS

Every human kind has the need to make the right decisions and choices regarding ones eternal destiny. That is the more reason for this book, so that people will be properly informed. In this, there will be those who believe, while others will choose not to believe the truth, but to accept only lies.

2Thess. 2:9-14 reads, "*The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the*

Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."

While warning and reasoning with unbelievers in his preaching, Paul spends a lot of time to teach Biblical truths of this subject. Paul makes it plain that our positive response to the gospel, is crucial to our own individual journey, towards the "glorious hope" that God has prepared for us who believe; and anybody can believe (Tit. 2:11-14). It becomes also critical because 2 Timothy 3:1 reminds us that "there will be terrible times in the last days." The implication is that we should not expect a cheap heaven going; for as we proceed on this journey, people may be tempted to give heed to teachings of demons and even accept to serve their bellies. Therefore, Paul warns time and again in his epistles.

"Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons" (1 Tim. 4:1).

"Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame-- who set their mind on earthly things" (Phil. 3:17-19).

PAUL ON BALANCED CHRISTIAN LIVING

It is important to look at the provisions for our salvation and hold on to the love of God. Our victory is pronounced in His resurrection. Our gospel is the message of hope. We must hold on to and live out the gospel. For all said and done, Paul was sold out to the preaching of the gospel, the gospel of hope for human kind. Being such a spirit-led believer, he also maintains and powerfully teaches a balance between the imminence of His coming with meaningful occupying, till He comes. Paul would not encourage busy bodying! He insists on holy living and hard work.

"For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat. For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. Now those

who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread" (2Thess. 3:10-12).

"Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life" (1 Tim. 6:17-19).

We, therefore, must not be trapped into losing sight of the imminent Second Coming of Christ, neither being wary of long waiting in responsible Christian living. It is possible to lose sight of effective planning, preparing and training for the future. Paul trained Timothy and many others to take up his ministry, but he at the same time penned Maranatha, literally meaning the Lord has started his journey to earth and would soon be here! This is biblical eschatology; where you exercise dominion as you live here on earth, and yet you taste of His Coming in your spirit daily, until you go home to glory. Part of Col. 1:27 reads; *".... what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."* Hallelujah!

