



GREAT EXPECTATIONS

A Temcat study

"My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him." Psalm 62:5

We all know what 'expectations' are. You are waiting for an important call; perhaps a job offer; news on a family member's health condition; or word on an important business deal. The phone rings; eagerly you jump and pick up the receiver only to find it is just a neighbour, calling to chat. What do you say? You explain, "I'm sorry, I can't talk right now, I am expecting a very important phone call." You have Great Expectations.

When something very important comes into our lives, we all know how the lesser things tend to get shelved and laid aside so that the current crisis or joyful event can have centre stage. Great Expectations rearrange our lives.

The problem with us human beings is that our priorities are seldom turned on right. What we give centre stage to, is usually not as important as the things we shove to one side. Our family habits show this all too frequently.

Charles Dickens wrote a book called 'Great Expectations'; you may know the story. In it a poor boy had a very terrifying experience when he is confronted by a savage and dangerous criminal on the run from the law. It was no doubt the most dramatic encounter of his life.

Later as he matures, he finds he is being supplied a living and means for real advancement in the world. He believes his fortune is from the graces of a lady he knows and visits. He is told that upon reaching a certain age, he will have a fortune allocated to him. He has Great Expectations!

Then one day he is again confronted in his well-to-do home by a shabby and fearful form, and finds it the convict that has haunted his nightmares. Almost ready to call for the law to remove the intruder, he waits, drawn by something in the demeanour of the man. And in a few moments—he learns that his whole view of his life situation has been

entirely false! All his Great Expectations are based on this shabby form in front of him—he almost collapses from shock and is humbled to the dust.

Friends, too many of us think our Great Expectations are all tied up in a 'lady' that we know and visit. That 'lady' is the man-made organization of the church. We sometimes give her priorities that maybe she just does not merit. We are glad for the Great Expectations but we mistake where they are coming from. We mistake who has our future in Their hands.

All of us have a memory somewhere in our past experience that was terrifying; a time when through the mists of our daily routine, the form of a fearful thought hit home—'There is a hell to shun, a heaven to win and God will not be trifled with. In ourselves there is no hope to escape that spectre of eternal death—only perfect obedience to the Law of God is acceptable to Him. And we don't have it to give!'

And there is that embarrassing shabby man. The One who died as a criminal to give us our Great Expectations—how do we treat Him? Are we not inclined to put him on hold while we go the way of our friends, social group, and follow the 'norms' of our society.

At this point we have two choices, we can fall on our face and turn our Lives over to the unpopular 'shabby Man', and be identified with Him, in his unpopularity, in His path of sorrows. We can become that 'peculiar' person that down inside we know is right. We can throw aside the world, stoop and pick up that ugly cross and trudge the blood-stained path after our Lord, the ONLY source of any Great Expectation.

OR—and I weep to say it; too often we decide that the 'rich lady' is our benefactor. We think the church organization, or society, or our social group, or our work situation is where our Great Expectations are going to come from. We seek our answers by calling on Pastors, Doctors, Therapists; attending workshops, therapy groups; all of whom comfort us by speaking smooth and similar things to our minds and telling us not to worry about the 'shabby Man'. We shove the shabby Man, with the wounded hands, to one side and feel real good in ourselves for having done it.

But we are wrong—none of these things have the power to confer any Great Expectations on their followers! Earthly glory can sooth and hypnotize us for the moment, we can loose ourselves by keeping busy, and having soothing words preached to us by those who benefit from our deception. But the specter is still there—He pops out when we are alone and have a moment to reflect. He keeps telling us, we are wrong; we have no Great Expectations—except from Him. And unless we humbly surrender all to him, the terror of eternal night looms before us.

Friends, Christ's 'church' is His body, you may belong to the man-made church and if you still follow the 'shabby Man with the cross', be part of His body; but all too often people are being deceived, thinking that by joining the man-made structure they automatically are in His body and have the Great Expectations. This is not so—the lady we visit is not the one who will provide for our future hope.

Take a look at the text above; Wait thou ONLY upon God—If God's word tells you to do something, obey it! If it tells you not to do something, give it up! If man comes along and says—"No, don't go that way, it isn't the popular way, it is inconvenient, it is down-right uncomfortable", Remember, your Great Expectations are ONLY from Him—from the shabby Man who died for you!

It is time to return to the spectre that haunts the recesses of your mind. Notice that 'something' in His demeanor—that 'something' is self-sacrificing love: surrender to it, fall at His feet and He will lift you up. It is your only hope—all other Great Expectations will come to nothing!

Please, Please don't be fooled, the lady can't save you! Education or worldly advantage can't save you! It is surrendering totally to that shabby Man who paid for your sins that is your only hope, and if we are not totally His, we are not His at all.

Put the distractions on hold; turn from those who tell you it doesn't matter; hang up the phone and listen to Him—only He is your Great Expectation!

"My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him. He only is my rock and my salvation: he is my defence; I shall not be moved. In God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God. Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us. Selah." Psalm 62:5-8