

Great Expectations

Joe Slater

Someone said that if you aim at nothing, you'll certainly hit it! Could that be why we're not growing as we should, both as a congregation and as individuals? If I may borrow the title of a famous book, we ought to have Great Expectations! Let's consider that statement from three angles:

First, what are your expectations of God? Because He doesn't give you miraculous gifts as he gave to some Christians in the first century, does that mean you should not expect much (or anything) from Him? Hardly!

Paul wrote that God is "*able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us*" (Ephesians 3:20). That power is not confined to the age of miracles! In context, Paul deals with enduring trials, living by faith, practicing love, and understanding and appreciating what God did for us through Jesus and His church. Those things have little or nothing to do with speaking in tongues or miraculously healing the sick.

Can God, through His word, save people who have wrecked their lives through sin? Intellectually, we know the answer is a resounding "Yes!" (Romans 1:16). But do we expect Him to do so? Actions speak more loudly than words. With how many people are you sharing the good news of salvation? How often and how fervently do you pray for the lost? That brings up our second angle: what are your expectations of yourself?

Most people have reasonable expectations of themselves in day-to-day life. One expects to finish school successfully, advance up the employment ladder, make close friends, and be a productive member of society. But what about your relationship with God and

service to Him? Many think that "coming to church" fulfills that dimension. We really don't expect to accomplish much in true service to others (and thus to God).

Rare, indeed, is the person with "great expectations" of accomplishment for the Lord. Instead comes the incessant refrain: "I can't . . ." Why can't you? Are you confined to your house with just enough provisions to survive day-to-day? That was Paul's condition when he wrote, "*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me*" (Philippians 4:13).

Finally, what are your expectations of your children? You expect them to go to school and perhaps to college afterward, working and learning all the way. You expect them to find gainful employment. What about Bible class? What about the worship assembly? What about works of service to other people? Too often we excuse our children. "They're too busy with . . ." (fill in the blank). We ought to be challenging them with Great Expectations. If you don't expect them to do great things for God, guess what? They probably won't!

Let's have Great Expectations of God, of ourselves, and of our children!

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"When you were born, you cried and everybody else was happy. The only question that matters is this: When you die, will YOU be happy when everybody else is crying?"

--Tony Campolo

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"The worst thing anyone could do would be to make the prodigal son more comfortable in the pig pen. Sin is a terrible place to live. It is supposed to be terrible so that it encourages us to turn from it."

Jason Sparks, via Facebook

Ways I Deepen My Faith (when I read Revelation)

I long for Christ's return more deeply (chapters 19-22).

John wants to teach us to pray, "Come, Lord Jesus." We are to have the attitude of Paul who said he longed for Christ's appearing (2 Timothy 4). Mark Buchanan writes, "Our hearts are to have an inner tilt upward, the grain of our souls is to lean heavenward. We are to be heaven-bent. . . . Like the tug and heft of a huge unseen planet hovering near, the hope of heaven is meant to exert a gravitational pull on our lives that we cannot escape." But there was a time in my life when I prayed, "Come Lord Jesus . . . just not yet." I was young and had so much left I wanted to do—foods to taste, mountains to climb, books to read. I wanted to get married, have kids, enjoy life, and *then* see Jesus return. I was still attached to this world. "Come Lord Jesus . . . just not yet."

But I'm older now. I've seen the world for what it really is—a place marred by sin. I'm tired of famine, abortion, murder, deceit, natural disaster, cancer, death, sin, and Satan running loose through this world. Jesus is tired of it too! The day is coming when he will come crashing through the clouds, the angelic host behind him. Time will screech to a halt. In an *instant* (not some drawn-out Armageddon battle), Satan and sin and death will be defeated. They will be thrown into the lake of fire, and a new world will be ours!

When I read Revelation, my heart is captured by a new Heaven and a new earth, a wedding banquet, a beautiful city, and a whole new kind of life. We will live in a city with no prisons, hospitals, cemeteries, or police stations. There will be no more sickness, no more death, no more pain, no more crying, no more night. We will live in a world with mountains and rivers and birds and trees so beautiful our souls will ache within us. We will see our loved ones who have died in Christ. We will work and play and laugh and dance. We will explore and learn and talk and worship together for eternity. And best of all, we'll see our Lord face-to-face. What a glorious day that will be!

That's what our hearts long for. "Heaven is the ache in our bones. Heaven is the splinter in our heart. Heaven is our deepest instinct." When I read Revelation, I pray, "Come, Lord Jesus. Come quickly."

--Matt Proctor (via *Christian Standard*)