**THE LORD IS AT HAND**

***Live Fearless***

In C. S. Lewis’ classic children’s books *The Chronicles of Narnia*, in the third volume called *The Voyage Of The Dawn Treader,* there is a scene in which a conversation between Lucy and Aslan is taking place. Lucy has just learned that Aslan, the Christ-like lion, is going to have to go away. In fact, he is all but telling her he is going to have to die. Lucy becomes very despondent and is about to cry. Aslan seeks to cheer her up by saying, “Do not look so sad. We shall meet soon again.” Lucy grasps for any flicker of hope by then asking, “Please, Aslan, what do you call soon?” Aslan replies, “I call all times soon,” and then instantly vanishes away.

What Lucy learned from Aslan in that scene is what Mr. Lewis was trying to get all of us to learn. God does not reckon time as we do. A millennium is but a 24-hour day to the eternal “*I AM THAT I AM*” (2 Pet. 3:8). The entire history of man from Adam until now is but the passing of a week to Jehovah. God is not bothered by clocks and calendars for He is ever in the present tense. Not only that but He is always in the “present” tense, meaning what Paul said to the Athenians on Mars Hill, “*He is not far from every one of us*” (Ac. 17:27). Or, as we read repeatedly from scripture, He is always “***at hand***.”

Philippians 4:5 reads,
5 Let your gentleness be known to all men. ***The Lord is at hand***.

James 5:8 says,
8 You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for ***the coming of the Lord is at hand***.

I Peter 4:7 tells us,
7 But ***the end of all things is at hand***; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers.”

In James and Peter’s words we learn *the coming of the Lord* and *the end of all things* is “at hand,” causing us to feel a sense of security that all that we are enduring as Christians in this broken world will soon be over. Before we know it our life has past as a vapor. TODAY might very well be THE DAY when He comes for us. Live fearlessly.

But in Paul’s words, “*the Lord is at hand*,” he is not saying Christ is about to return, but instead is telling us He is “right here, right now.” To have something “at hand” means you can easily reach out and grab hold of it. A carpenter always keeps his hammer “at hand.” An accountant keeps his calculator “at hand.” A policeman or soldier keeps his weapon “at hand.” A mother potty-training her toddler keeps him always “at hand.” Just so, a Christian who is trying to walk worthy of his calling will keep Jesus “at hand.” He will be within arms reach whenever you need Him. He promised, “*I will never leave you or forsake you, so we may boldly say: ‘The Lord is my helper, I will not fear, what can man do to me*?’” (Heb. 13:5-6).

Fearless. I want to live fearless in my walk before men. I want to believe Jesus when He said, “*Do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do*” (Lk. 12:4). But how can I be strong and fearless? At least the partial answer to that question is found in our three texts above.

1. “*Let your* ***gentleness*** *be known to all men. The Lord is at hand*.”
Paul knew the inside of a prison cell like I know the inside of my 14 year old car. When listing his persecutions for Christ he spoke of “*stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often*” (2 Cor. 11:23). The Romans and Jews would look at his “rap sheet” and call him a jail-bird. He had every right to be bitter, for he was innocent of all crimes. And yet, from behind bars he now writes, “*let your gentleness be known to all men, the Lord is at hand*.” He did just that. One Christian in Philippi reading this letter is known to us as “the Philippian jailer.” He was converted because he heard Paul singing and praying as if “the Lord is at hand.” Paul’s fearless faith that the Lord was at hand led a soul to ask, “*What must I do to be saved*?” (Ac. 16:30).

2. “*You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.”*
Patient is from the Greek word MAKRO-THUMEO. If you look close and use your imagination you can see two words in that. Macro – that is big, or long. Thermos – that is, heat. The word carries the meaning of long-suffering, or persevering under pressure or stress that comes from trials or persecutions. When the heat is on, you bear it without quitting.

I “*establish*” my heart, that is, I set it fast, like pouring concrete and letting it harden. My faith doesn’t budge even when the storms of life strike hard. Why? Because Jesus is “at hand.” Just like in the Galilean Sea storm when the apostles were terrified in the boat, suddenly there was a calm cry of “Peace, be still.” Jesus was “at hand.” The lesson from that miraculous event is ever on the Christian’s mind when we face the tempests of this world. Jesus is always near. With that knowledge I can remain fearless.

3. “*But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers*.”
Jesus is at hand, and so is “*the end of all things*.” That instills confidence, therefore fearlessness. I can bear anything as long as I know it will be over shortly. That drives me to approach my life with a sober seriousness and watchfulness in prayer. Everyday is judgment day as far as I am concerned. I live this moment as if I will be called to account the next moment. If only Peter had realized the stormtroopers were coming to the Garden he would have done as asked, “*watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation*.” So it is with me. The enemy is at the gate. So I am in watchful prayer.

“NO FEAR” was a popular bumper sticker a few years back. We who wear the name of Christ can truly live by that motto if only we truly believe “*the Lord is at hand*,” and “*the coming of the Lord is at hand*,” and, “*the end of all things is at hand*.”

Jesus is right here, right now. Live fearless! - Rick