

# **Faith Under Fire, Part 2**

## **“Preparing for the Pains of Birth”**

**Thomas C. Trinka**

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I'd like to begin today, by reading some of the opening verses of Matthew 24, beginning in verse 3.

- 3 Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?”
- 4 And Jesus answered and said to them: “Take heed that no one deceives you.
- 5 For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many.
- 6 And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.
- 7 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places.

The word translated nation, here in verse 7, is ethnos, from which is derived the English word ethnic, relating to national and cultural origins, or decent.

This might be described today, as racial conflicts, and or religious conflict, of which the world is currently embroiled. A clear example would be ISIS beheading Kurds and Christians.

This ethnic clash, in a broader perspective, could be framed as Israelite verse Gentile, with an example being the nation of Israel again fighting the Palestinians.

Another would be the Wests incursion into the Ukraine, in which Israelite nations are involved in a proxy war with Russia.

And in a spiritual sense, true Christians, the Israel of God, will be persecuted by the spirit of this age, manifested in the form of Babylon the Great. We see increasing signs of this developing, through our government’s crackdown on Christianity of all forms, especially in the military.

Verse 7 also describes kingdoms or sovereign states at war with each other as well. Also mentioned are famines, earthquakes, and pestilences all of which seem to be on the increase at this time.

Ebola being a prime example, and also increased volcanic activity which in many cases is tied together with earthquakes.

I think you will agree, that there seems to be a ratcheting up of all these things, around the world, at this time. Jesus predicted this increasing global unease, in the next verse.

- 8 All these are the beginning of sorrows.

The word sorrows could be much better translated, and understood as birth pains. In so much as a woman experiencing increased pain and frequency of pain, as the birth of her child draws near.

That is the comparison that our Savior was making, which unfortunately is lost in the translation time of sorrows. And what birth was Jesus referring to, in answering the disciples question regarding the end of the age? It is the spiritual birth of the Kingdom of God.

Let's look at this a bit more closely, turn please to Isaiah 66.7-9

7 "Before she was in labor, she gave birth; Before her pain came, She delivered a male child.

This is referring to Jesus Himself, as the firstborn of all creation, as is stated in Colossians 1:15.

8 Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall the earth be made to give birth in one day? Or shall a nation be born at once? For as soon as Zion was in labor, She gave birth to her children.

9 Shall I bring to the time of birth, and not cause delivery?" says the Lord. "Shall I who cause delivery shut up the womb?" says your God.

And of course the answer to these questions is no. God will deliver salvation to His children, at the end of this age. We read more about this in Romans 8, beginning in verse 18.

18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

19 For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.

20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope;

21 because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

22 For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.

So we find here, that the entire physical creation, is symbolically waiting for the spiritual birth of the Kingdom of God on earth.

Which will in turn produce a restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. Acts 3.21

In which, various prophecies reveal to be a complete renewing of the entire planet, back to how it was when God first created mankind, in the Garden of Eden. So we see from these verses in Romans, that our spiritual birth, and the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth, will be reflected in the physical creation as well.

God's Holy Spirit flowing over the earth as pure water will flow over the sea. This will be further reflected by the fact, that there will no longer be carnivorous animals. For the

lion will eat straw like the ox, spiritually reflecting the removal of satans influence over carnal human nature, and so forth.

“They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord As the waters cover the sea” As we read in Isaiah 11.9.

The carnal mind of humanity will be converted, a process in which we are all currently engaged. For it is through our patient endurance and perseverance in overcoming, that will qualify you and I and all the saints, to guide and to teach, our spiritual children, in the world to come.

Continuing in Romans 8:

23 Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.

24 For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees?

25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.

Friends, this is what we must be doing, Having our minds firmly fixed on the goal, of our spiritual birth into the family of God. We must be persistent in our continued pursuit of the kingdom of God and His righteousness, regardless of the events that may impact our current lifestyle in the near future.

Let's turn to Acts chapter 8, and review some of what the first century church had to endure.

Acts 8:1-3 Speaking of the death of Stephen, as is recorded in chapter 7, we read beginning in verse 1 of chapter 8.

- 1 Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.
- 2 And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.
- 3 As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.

Friends, I believe that many of us will experience this same type of persecution, as we get closer to the end of this age, and the pains of our spiritual birth increase.

In fact our government has already labeled believers of Christianity as potential terrorists along with the gun owners, the tea party and other constitutionalist groups.

And the precedent of the government forcibly intruding into homes, has already been set. Recall the events surrounding the Boston Marathon in which entire neighborhoods were locked down, with no one permitted to leave their homes, and in which house to house searches were conducted by heavily armed SWAT teams, under the pretense of looking for one suspect.

Back in the Book of Acts, in Acts 14 verse 22 we read that the Apostles were strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.”

Friends, we must be preparing now spiritually speaking for this coming time of persecution. For if we are not firmly grounded in faith, and have an unshakable conviction in our beliefs, and in the promises that God has given to us, we in all likelihood, will find the coming trials untenable.

So how do we prepare spiritually for the trials that most certainly lie ahead?

As Dave has mentioned several times in the past, one of the most important things, that we must do, is develop the hunger and thirst for Gods righteousness.

And the principle way we do this, is by developing the sound spiritual habits of reading scripture every day.

And this is something that does not come naturally; as I’m sure all of you are fully aware of. For the carnal mind, influenced by the spirit of this age fights against our spiritual endeavors.

And this need to develop sound spiritual habits, of daily bible study and earnest prayer, is something that I personally have fallen way short in doing. But as Jesus said, we do not live by bread alone, but also by every word of God. And the scriptures are replete with admonition to read Gods word daily.

One such admonition is found in Joshua chapter 1, verses 7-9. In which is written “be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go.

8 This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

And of course God has preserved this text for us, it was written for our admonition, “upon whom the ends of the ages have come” For by reading the God breathed words that have been preserved in the Bible, we over time, develop the very mind of Christ, Himself.

As we read in Ephesians 5, our minds are nourished and washed by the water of God’s word, being cleansed, of every spot and blemish.

Furthermore, God’s word says, that real living faith is only developed by hearing, or in our case reading God’s word. And without faith and the spiritual vision and fortitude that is developed by growing close to God, we will most certainly put our spiritual destiny at great risk.

For as I said before, scripture reveals that the trials that we will be encountering as the birth of God’s kingdom draws near, will be overwhelming to the carnal mind.

Luke 21:25 and 26 states

25 “And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring;

26 men’s hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.”

This passage informs us, that at some point in the not to distant future, life on earth will become so horrific, that people will be getting heart attacks from sheer fear.

But God gives us the living hope and promise, that He will never leave us, nor forsake us. As we just covered in Josh. 1.9, where God instructs and also promises “Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

And as we read in Philippians 1:6 “being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ”

Friends we should be forever cognizant of the fact, that God has called us for His special purpose. God did not just select us willy nilly. He did not just one day say oh I think I’ll call so and so. Kind of like being blindfolded and drawing a name out of a hat.

No my friends, the reality is God specifically created each and every one of us to be called. Let’s read a few verses from Ephesians 1, beginning in verse 3.

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,

4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love,

5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,

6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.

Friends, we are indeed very special to God, God having predetermined that He would create us to be called, at this specific time, at the end of the age.

Drop to verse 9, “having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself,

Verse 11, “In Him [Christ] we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of the Father who works all things according to the counsel of His will,

12 that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.

13 In Him we also trusted, after we heard the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation; in whom also, having believed, we were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,

14 which is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

Friends, what incredibly profound and comforting words. The question remains therefore, are our lives a true reflection of this reality? Are we fully engaged in helping God, to fulfill His purpose and desire for us?

Are we doing what the Apostle Paul was imploring us to do in Romans 12, where he wrote beginning in verse 1 ?

- 1 "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.
- 2 Not being conformed to this world, but rather being transformed by the renewing of our mind, that we may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Let's turn back to Romans 8, and continue reading in verse 28:

- 28 "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.
- 29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.
- 30 Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

Again, here we find the truth of our preselection and elected calling being reemphasized.

And notice that the word glorified is in the past tense, meaning that in God's mind we have already made it, God is giving us the benefit of the doubt.

Our names are already in His book of life, for it is the Fathers good pleasure to give us the Kingdom.

But make no mistake. We cannot rest on our laurels, or our past good deeds and endeavors. For King Solomon is a perfect example, that it is not how we begin our journey to the Kingdom, but how we finish it that counts.

In 2 Timothy 2, the Apostle Paul gives insightful instruction to Timothy, regarding how to rightly pursue our Christian calling, and the mindset he must employ to achieve the goal.

Let's turn there and read a few verses. Beginning in verse 1, 2 Timothy 2.

- 1 You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.
- 2 And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.
- 3 You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.
- 4 No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.

Friends, the instruction we glean from this verse, is to be single minded in our focus, fully engaged in the task of overcoming. And not allowing the affairs of this life to undermine, ensnare or sidetrack us from completing the mission that God has given us.

I find this military metaphor quite notable, for it underscores the reality, that we are indeed engaged in a spiritual battle in which our eternal destiny is on the line. This truth often does not come to mind, as we pursue our daily activities of life. However, we are reminded here, how important it is to keep our calling in the proper perspective.

As Christ also admonishes us in Matthew 6:33, we are to seek first the Kingdom and Gods righteousness. We are to love the Lord with all our heart mind soul and being, to cleave to Him, for He is our life and our length of days.

Continuing in verse 5.

- 5 And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.

We must not only finish our personal race, but we must do so lawfully. We must play by the rules of the Kingdom, letting the love of God rule in our hearts and minds. Likewise in verse 6.

- 6 The hardworking farmer must be first to partake of the crops.

We must strive to overcome, being motivated by the knowledge, that we will reap what we sow, and thus we must sow the fruits of righteousness, in order to reap salvation in the Kingdom. Verse 7.

- 7 Consider what I say, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things.

And so therefore as the Apostle Paul writes in Hebrews 12, beginning in verse 1,

- 1 “let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,
- 2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Friends, please consider this important reality. It’s how we use our time, and conduct our lives, from this day until our physical death, or Christ’s return that will determine if we will be born into the Kingdom.

I have 2 quotes taped to the wall in my study, both of which I don’t read nor heed often enough.

The first is from Ralph Waldo Emerson in which he said “No one can cheat you out of your ultimate destiny but yourself”

And the other is from Benjamin Franklin, who stated simply “that lost time can never be found again”

These quotes bring several scriptures to my mind. The first, in reference to Emerson’s quote, of cheating yourself of your ultimate destiny is found in Revelation 3:10-11, which reads;

- 10 “Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.
- 11 Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.

No one can cheat us out of our special place in the Kingdom, as being apart of the very Bride of Jesus Christ, except ourselves, and our lack of vision, focus and pursuit of what God lovingly wants to give us.

As we read a little earlier in Ephesians 1, verses 9 and 11,

God has “made known to us the mystery of His will” and “In [Christ] we have been given an inheritance, being predestined by the Father Himself.

And paraphrasing what the Apostle Paul stated twice in his epistles, regarding the second quote about squandering precious time. Paul stated we should be walking in wisdom redeeming the time, because the culture in which we live is evil.

Let’s once again turn back to Rom 8, and continue in verse 31

31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

Verse 37 Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come,

39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Friends, again what encouraging words. In that nothing in the universe can separate us from God’s love and concern for us! And why is that? Because God has Created us for His special purpose! We are very special to Him!

Let’s turn to some more inspiring words in 1 John 3, beginning in verse 1.

1 Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

2 Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

And so because the reality of our lives is so incredibly special, what must we do?

Verse 3, tells us what we must be actively doing.

3 Therefore everyone who has this hope in Christ, [in the hope of eternity in the Kingdom] purifies himself, just as He, Christ is pure.

Friends we are all a product of our environment. We are a sum total of lives experiences and how we were, molded, shaped and impacted by them. Many of us carry mental and emotional scars from past experiences.

The point being, that physical life has formed us in a certain way. These traits are reflected in our thought process, often guided by the carnal mind.

The only way to purify ourselves, as we read in verse 3, to remove these spots and blemishes, as Paul states in Ephesians 5, is by renewing our minds day by day, through interaction with God, through prayer and study.

We must fully wrap our minds around this fact, and also be mindful of the fact, that all of our effort, all of our patient endurance in overcoming will indeed be worth in in the end.

As we read in 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.

17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,

18 while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Friends, scripture tells us that without vision, we shall surely perish. So it is absolutely imperative that we keep these scriptures in our minds eye. Resting our hope fully on them, as the living words of God.

Let's turn to one more passage just to solidify this most important reality of our lives.

1 Peter 2:9-10

9 [We are] a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, [we are] His own special people, that [we should] proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

10 who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now [ we] have obtained mercy.

This clear perception of our spiritual reality is spoken of in Hebrews chapter 6. Let's turn their please, beginning in verse 13.

13 For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself,

14 saying, "Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you."

15 And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

16 For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute.

17 Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath,

18 that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.

19 This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast.

OK my friends, so hopefully I have helped to firmly fix in our minds, the incredible and almost unimaginable promise of eternal inheritance, as the spirit born sons and daughters of God.

For having this vision of reality deeply embedded within our minds, as an anchor for our souls, both sure and steadfast- is imperative if we are to endure the trials and tribulation that stand between us and the Kingdom. Between now and the end of this age.

So in closing I want to look at what our mindset must be, if we are to endure what is to come.

Turn with me to 2 Thessalonians 2.1

- 1 Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you,
- 2 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.
- 3 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,
- 4 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.

Verse 6 And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time.

Drop to verse 8.

- 8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.
- 9 The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders,
- 10 and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.
- 11 And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie,
- 12 that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

God will give the world strong delusion, with powerful signs and false wonders. and we read more about this in Revelations 13:11.

- 11 Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon.
- 12 And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.
- 13 He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men.
- 14 And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived.
- 15 He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.

Friends, when these things take place, the entire world will fall under the deception of Satan. The world will believe that the man of sin, is really God in the flesh. And what I find most interesting is the statue of the image of the beast that will be set up by Babylon the Great.

Notice that in verse 15, it states that anyone that does not worship the image of the beast will be put to death.

The question I will pose is this. The Gospels tell us that some Christians will be brought before kings and rulers to testify as a witness. Might it be that some Christians, maybe even some of us, will be arrested and brought before this image of Babylon the Great?

Recall that a very similar event happened during the time when the first kingdom of Babylon reigned on the earth. Let's look at that, and of the scriptural example that has been left for us, on whom the end of the age has come.

Daniel 3:1

- 1 Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its width six cubits. He set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.
- 2 And King Nebuchadnezzar sent word to gather together all the officials of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.
- 3 So the all the officials of the provinces gathered together for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.
- 4 Then a herald cried aloud: "To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages,
- 5 that at the time you hear the sound of all kinds of music, you shall fall down and worship the gold image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up;
- 6 and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace."

Friends notice verse 4 says this was directed to all the peoples, nations and languages, this is similar to what we read in Revelation 13. I believe what we read in Revelation 13, is a fulfillment of a duality. The worship of the image of the King of Babylon.

Continuing in verse 8

- 8 Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and accused the Jews.
- 9 They spoke and said to King Nebuchadnezzar, "O king, live forever!
- 10 You, O king, have made a decree that everyone shall fall down and worship the gold image;
- 11 and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.

12 There are certain Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego; these men, O king, have not paid due regard to you. They do not serve your gods or worship the gold image which you have set up.”

13 Then Nebuchadnezzar, in rage and fury, gave the command to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. So they brought these men before the king.

14 Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying to them, “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the gold image which I have set up?”

And then the king, gives them a second chance to spare their lives, verse 15.

15 Now if you are ready at the time you hear the sound of all kinds of music, and you fall down and worship the image which I have made, good! But if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?”

16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter.

17 If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king.

18 But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.”

Friends, I believe it would be a good spiritual exercise, too in our minds eye, place ourselves in the position of these 3 faithful men. For in the presence of the most powerful person in the world, and in the face of certain death, these men stood steadfast. We should be mentally preparing ourselves to do likewise.

For we should all embed there example of living faith deeply within us. In that looking into the face of what seemed like certain death, they said “our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace” “But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.”

Friends, what a powerful example of living faith. These men chose obedience to God, regardless of the circumstances, in the face of what seemed to be certain death.

And of course we know the story, that God chose to save them, but they did not know that at the time.

Let’s just refresh our minds, by reading the closing verses of Daniel 3:

28 Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying, “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him, and they have frustrated the king’s word, and yielded their bodies, that they should not serve nor worship any god except their own God!

29 Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation, or language which speaks anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made an ash heap; because there is no other God who can deliver like this.”

30 Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego in the province of Babylon.

And to this we can tie in the scripture that states, all things work together for good, to those that are called according to His special purpose. And so likewise, if we successfully endure the birth pains at the end of this age, we also will be promoted like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, by the King of Kings Jesus, Christ to rule over cities on earth, in the age to come.

Friends, scripture informs us that if we live on until the time of the tribulation, that we will all face equally scary situations. Therefore it behooves us to be developing this same rock solid faith, that will most certainly be needed to endure such a time.

The bottom line, is we must have a similar mindset, which all the saints down through time have had to develop, in order to be counted worthy of salvation.

Hebrews 11:

- 32 And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and also of David and Samuel and the prophets:
- 33 who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,
- 34 quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.
- 35 Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection
- 36 Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment.
- 37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, or were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented—
- 38 of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth.
- 39 And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise,
- 40 God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

In closing I'd like to look at the scriptural example left for us by the Apostle Paul.

2 Corinthians 5:

- 1 For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.
- 2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven,
- 3 if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked.
- 4 For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life.
- 5 Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

- 6 So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord.
- 7 For we walk by faith, not by sight.
- 8 We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.
- 9 Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him.
- 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

In this passage Paul demonstrates a mature Christian mindset, regarding the reality of a Christians physical life.

As he further states in Philippians 1:21

- 21 For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.
- 22 But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell.
- 23 For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.

Friends, as we know, it's not as if Paul had a death wish. Rather he fully understood the reality of his calling. In that this physical life, is only a means to the end.

We are all spiritual sojourners living within a physical tabernacle. and in due time we will indeed relinquish our physical tent, which is our bodies, and be given an eternal spiritual body, which as Paul states is fair better.

In verse 21, he says to live is Christ, and to die is gain. This statement underscores the thought process of the Apostle Paul. For he was indeed a person that was fully committed in very way, to his calling. Putting all of his energy and effort into developing God's righteousness within himself.

We should all mediate deeply on these profound words, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. And seek to develop this same level of dedication and love, for God the Father and Jesus Christ, and the plan they are working out within us.

My friends, soon the fall Holy Days will be upon us, which for us represent, having attained the goal of eternal life, as first born members of God's family.

And just as the Feast is getting close, so is the end of this age. So let us make every effort, to make our calling and election sure.

It is my hope, that the scriptures we have covered today, will help all of you, to stay focused and committed to God and to your calling.

Let us all make the very best use of the time we have remaining, in preparation for our spiritual birth. So that on that faithful day, God may say to each and every one of us. "Well done good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of the Lord"

Thank you for your time today.

Thomas C. Trinka

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