

Grace and Glory

Declaring unto you the
whole Counsel of GOD

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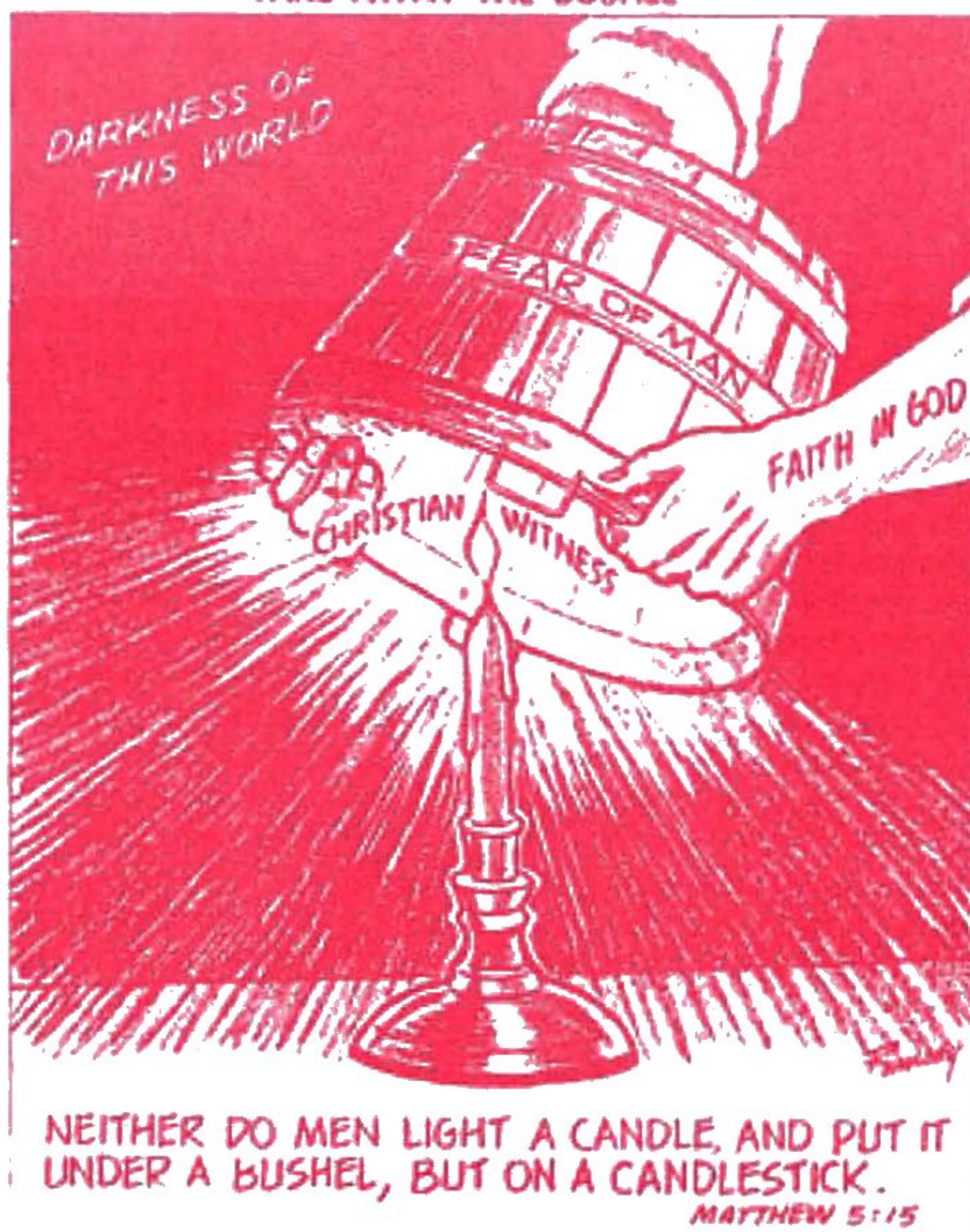


Great is the
Lord,
and greatly to be
praised in the
city of our God,
in the mountain
of his holiness.
PSALM 48:1

Table Of Contents

Article	Author	Page
Definite Sign Posts of the End.....	Gene Hawkins.....	3
Wonder Of Wonders.....	T.B. Lennon.....	10
God's Timing and Purposes.....	Dr. Vicky Moots.....	13
Our Waiting.....	Ray Quintana.....	20
Warnings.....	Cara Hawkins.....	26
Book Section (Hosea).....	Gene Hawkins.....	30

TAKE AWAY THE BUSHEL



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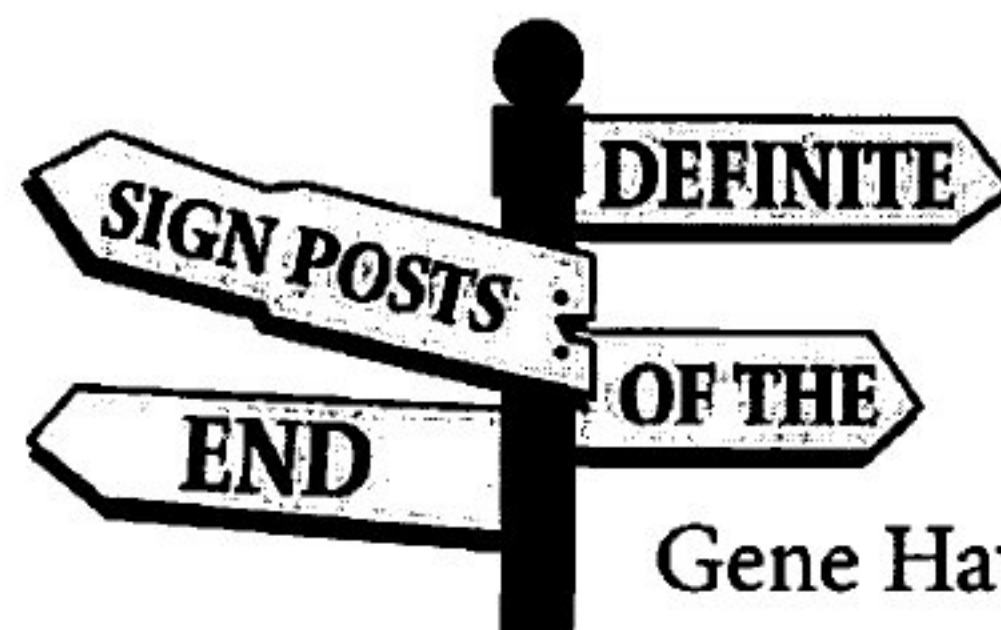
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Editor: Gene Hawkins



Gene Hawkins

“**T**his know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.” II Tim. 3:1

This text has been used multiple times in days gone by as writers of these Sign Posts endeavored to enlighten their readers on the many signs announcing the second coming of Jesus. It is not hard to imagine how some those in former days might easily conclude that Hitler could very well have been the antichrist. He was most assuredly driven by that same spirit along with his contemporaries, Mussolini and Stalin. Hitler was also obsessed with an intense hatred of the Jews. History proves that these wicked men were not the antichrist, but they most assuredly had many of the same characteristics which will be manifest in this man of sin who will shortly be revealed. The above quotation from II Timothy 3 asserts that the end times will be “...perilous...” or “fierce, hard to deal with, hard to bear, furious.” Paul then lists no less than a 20 point definition of such peril, beginning with “...lovers of their own selves...” and ending with “...Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof:...” He then adds two more: “Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.” All these characteristics describe the furious or fierce attitudes of people and they are very much in evidence among all nations of the world at this very hour. 3

But what is different from the 30’s and 40’s of yesteryear when compared with present day world conditions? Many of that day did most assuredly have the second coming of Jesus uppermost in their minds. They, too, saw many of the signs which Paul used to describe the “...perilous times...” of these “...last days...” They, too, were aware of Jesus’ message to His disciples defining conditions of the last days in Matt. 24, such as deception and great conflicts among the nations. However, The Master also included other signs which are completely beyond the control of men, such as “...famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes,

in divers places.” Matt. 24:7 Jesus also added these comments taken from Luke’s gospel, as He described things which are far beyond the control of natural man, declaring that “...great signs shall there be from heaven.” Lk. 21:11

Many writings from the days of yore mentioned above especially address the end time atmosphere of the nations as described by God’s Word. Consider the following excerpts from a 1937 issue of Grace and Glory just prior to WW2, which began in 1939, wherein Mary M. Bodie primarily enlarges on the Jews of the Hitler era. This account bears strong resemblance to the current Russian invasion of Ukraine, and some have likened Putin’s treatment of the Ukrainians to that of Hitler’s victims.

4 "Jews Fear Exodus." The greatest persecution of all the ages threatens the Jewish people today. And for this reason—They are scattered in so many different parts of the world—and not really wanted in any place.... The Nazi drive against the Jews in Germany still continues; while the smaller countries also—Rumania, Lithuania, Austria, Hungary, Iraq and Syria, are also demanding that the Jews leave their countries. Palestine is their only hope—and we say, God is in this. It is their home.... The anti-Semitic wave is spreading everywhere. Some Christians even are doing their bit to put it over, which we say is a shame to them.... When Jews were massacred in Germany by the myriad because they were supposed to be responsible for the Black Plague, hundreds of thousands found refuge in Poland. We have had such an illustration just recently of them fleeing from the fierce persecution of Hitler to the more tranquil regions of France, Britain, America and Holland. The Red Sea has always opened its waters and made a way out of danger at the critical moment. So it will be at the present time.... Mussolini has shown the peoples of Europe what he will do to a defenseless, unprepared people. It will ever remain a disgrace to Italy and all Europe that they allowed the subjugation of Ethiopia.... All is Far From Well in the Soviet Regime, is a news item. The Five Year Plan shows signs of utter collapse. Stalin and those associated with him are striving for absolute despotism and are preparing to execute, or exile all those ruthless associates who might stand in their way. The lust for power grows in every avenue of life;... What of the United States, If Europe Goes to War? Yes, that is the question that is bothering this peace-loving people, because, though there is an apparent lull now, there is no doubt that war will come.... Hitler is said to have stored

up in secret reservoirs and munitions dumps a far greater supply of war materials than the Kaiser ever had. And observers of European developments no longer discuss whether the next war will come, but rather WHEN and WHERE.... And the big question for the United States is—Would it involve us? Would another 1914 for Europe bring another 1917 for the United States? Will we, Can we keep out? We say, NO. We did not keep out before, and more, we will not attend to our own business as men put it, in the future. All the world will be in WAR. It is a safe guess because IT IS WRITTEN IN THE SCRIPTURES. God has said that all the WORLD SHALL BE IN WAR. When? We cannot say; but we have the answer to the question, where? Palestine will be the battle ground of the great battle of the ages, though as we have intimated, there may be a lesser war before the last and terrible one comes. Anyway whatever men do, or say, Conflict lies ahead. There is no escape, not even by prayer, or repentance. In due time war will be at the gates of the world. Rebellion against God and apostasy from all divine revelation will be the state of the people....”

The world now knows that war did indeed transpire, but as the author here noted, it would be “...a lesser war before the last and terrible one comes.” That last war is a reference to Armageddon, which will not be fought until the end of the 7 year week of tribulation prophesied in Dan. 9:27. That final week will begin only after King Jesus takes His throne in heaven. 5

There are many voices currently proclaiming that the world is on the threshold of WW III. The following headline appeared in the Free Press Journal: **'World War III has begun', says Kremlin state media after sinking of Russian warship Moskva.**” Then follows these comments from Olga Skabeyeva, one of Putin's top media figures in the tightly controlled state-run Russian media, in regard to the current war in Ukraine. "What it's escalated into can safely be called World War Three. That's entirely for sure. Now we are definitely fighting against NATO infrastructure, if not NATO itself. We need to recognize that."

While there are once again quite a number of similarities between world conditions now and those of 1937, it is also quite clear that evil and ungodliness has most assuredly escalated between then and now. Sister Bodie does mention the social rebellion of that day, writing that, “The World Grows Worse and Worse Every Day in Every Way, as any honest person will admit. Crime,

in its most unnatural aspects, increases more and more. Nudism, vulgarity, wickedness and wantonness in every form is overflowing our land as well as all lands." This godly woman, along with a multitude of her contemporaries, would be appalled at the increase of unrestrained violence and despicable social behavior manifest at this present time. Easter weekend boasted three major mass shootings in three different cities and such things occur in some cities like Chicago on a daily basis. Many politicians clamor for "gun control," but more and more of them are finally recognizing that the real problem is a failure to prosecute known and blatant law-breakers. Many present day crimes are committed by teenagers and one element defining the aforementioned perilous times is children being "...disobedient to parents..." When respect for authority is not learned at home, such rebellion will automatically be leveled against society as is seen in our present world.

6 Sis. Bodie mentions "...Nudism, vulgarity, wickedness..." in general terms, but the societal wickedness of that day came nowhere near that which has developed around the entire world in recent years. Gay marriage would have been unheard of at that time but it is common practice today and godly men are required by law to acknowledge the "rights" of those who are involved in this ungodly and rebellious practice, which God has denounced as "...the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor (maltreat:--despise, dishonour, suffer shame,) their own bodies between themselves:" Rom. 1:24 God is even more emphatic in condemning this practice in the Old Testament. "If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination:..." Lev. 20:13 Verses 15-16 of this same chapter put this practice on the same level as "... if a man lie with a beast,... And if a woman approach unto any beast, and lie down thereto,..." There are a number of things that Paul listed in II Tim. 3, defining "perilous times," which easily apply here, such as "...boasters, proud... unholy... Without natural affection... despisers of those that are good...lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God..."

Neither had the term "transgender" been coined at that time, but that assertion has become rampant in recent months and is a direct act of rebellion against God, for it means that the Great

Creator has made a mistake, as some openly cry “God made me this way.” No, He did not! Scripture is very clear that it is impossible for God to fail or make anything close to an error! It is men who make wrong choices.

This same record from 1937 also includes a reference to weather and earthquakes of which Jesus warned in these last days. However, it surely does seem that the intensity and frequency of those signs has also increased according to modern day reports. It is also quite clear from the account of 1937 that there is no hint of the idea that man had caused these catastrophes. However, the bombardment from men claiming that “man made climate change,” is responsible for all these “end time signs,” which only God can control, has become a steady diet for all peoples around the entire planet Earth. It may also be concluded that the restrictions imposed due to “global warming” are deliberately used to exert control over all mankind. That should come as no surprise, for the spirit of antichrist is becoming more and more evident in every passing day and his agenda can be summed up in one word: “CONTROL!” Therefore, it is not hard to ascertain 7 that quite a number of world leaders today have great ambition and intention to occupy the head position of the looming “one world government.”

Russian President Putin and President Xi Jinping of China have not made any attempt to hide their intention of presiding over that government. Right now, Putin is at the forefront and is using the threat of nuclear war as a tactic trying to force a great number of nations to bow before his demands. It has been stated previously in these pages that the fullness of the nuclear war of which he warns will not occur until well into the tribulation period. Though he may indeed use both nuclear and chemical weapons on a limited basis, they will not produce the destruction of planet earth. Only God will open that door, and only He will be able to stop the destruction as Jesus prophesied: “And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved:...” Matt. 24:22

Some experts and critics believe that Pres. Putin is “bluffing” as he threatens the nuclear war mentioned above, the

reason being that the Russian military is reported to be weak and in disarray. His rhetoric then would be a reaction to fear, panic, and uncertainty. This man can certainly be identified by a number of elements in Paul's list describing "perilous times," such as "... covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers,...trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, (out of control) fierce,..." He would not be a candidate for being the antichrist with credentials such as these, for no one trusts him, and the nations are desperately trying to find a way to curtail his intentions. It seems that no one is of the opinion that he will stop his advances if he gains any success in Ukraine.

8 There is also the possibility that the pressure put on the nations by these events might force them to find some semblance of peace. David prophesied, "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?" Psa. 2:1 The heathen or Gentile Nations are surely raging today, and the "...vain thing," especially refers to Israel and their longings for peace. Paul likewise wrote this warning to the Thessalonians. "For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape." I Thess. 5:3 Since Paul addressed these words to those who will be taken out of this world before the start of tribulation, does it signify that there just might be some peaceful co-existence among the nations and Israel just prior to the day of destruction? Will rebellious men such as Putin realize the need for some kind of peaceful resolution to the current chaos prevailing at this present time? Some also wonder if China is simply watching this controversy in Ukraine unfold, waiting to make their own decision in regard to Taiwan. More questions than answers, to be sure, but such a possibility is something to look for and would be a cause for rejoicing because a tranquil world atmosphere would signal the return of Jesus before the destruction of great tribulation arrives.

Paul, however, does mention a tremendous word of caution if such a time of peace and safety should arrive in our day. "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others;..." The little word "therefore" means because of this time of peace and safety, men might be deceived into letting down their guard, not realizing that such peace will

be very short lived. He is speaking here to Christians for only believers sleep. Sinners are dead in trespasses and sins. He then exhorts those who would be alert, to "...watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night." Though there may be a short lull in the trouble and difficulty prevailing in the world at that time, the world is still on the very threshold to the door of tribulation which will shortly envelop it. The apostle then endeavors to arm all those who will listen against all the elements outlined for the "perilous times" outlined above. "But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation." There is no substitute for knowing the light, faith, and hope of God's Word. Finally Paul declares that "... God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ," I Thess. 5:6-9 The salvation of which he speaks is not deliverance from hell, for these Thessalonians were mature saints who had been walking in the truth of God's Word for some time. Rather, this is a reference to the wrath of the tribulation wherein God's people were never appointed to be, but because the Church as a whole has not heeded the warnings of Scripture, the bulk of it will be found in the innumerable company of Rev. 7 where they are identified as "...they which came out of great tribulation,..." Rev. 7:14

9

So today our eyes must be directed constantly heavenward, "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;" Titus 2:13

The End Is Near

Our redemptions draweth nigh.
Flash the news o'er earth and sky.
Soon we'll lay our armour by
At His call, and upward fly.

Soon we'll hear the angels sing.
Join their song; make heaven ring,
As we greet our Bridegroom, King,
Joy cometh in the morning.

Wonder Of Wonders

T. B. Lennon

“**T**he eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.” Deut. 33:27

To some, this is just a piece of exalted English prose; but to a believer, it is the wonder of wonders. That the eternal God should forget my sins and remember me is of all wonders the greatest. Marvelous! How can it be? He has forgotten my sins, but remembers me. I think it is well for us to cultivate more the spirit of wonder. Wonder is one of the doors into the temple of praise, adoration, thanksgiving and worship. The trouble with many of us is, that we have ceased wondering. Ruskin says, "I would rather live in a cottage and wonder at everything than live in Warwick Castle and wonder at nothing."

10 It is so easy to drift into apathy and dullness, and lose our enthusiasm, our freshness. Little sympathy have I with the man who never wonders. Someone has said, "We are exposed to a great danger today — the dying out of the sense of surprise. The best way to rescue life from littleness is to associate oneself with something large." As did Isaiah when he said in Isaiah 40, "Lift up your eyes on high and see who hath created these that bring out their host by number. He calleth them all by name, by the greatness of His might; and for that He is strong in power, not one is lacking. Why sayest thou, O Jacob and speakest, O Israel, my way is hid from Jehovah? and the justice due to me is passed away from my God? Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard? The Everlasting God, Jehovah, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary. It is He that sitteth on the circle of the earth. All nations are as nothing before Him; they are a mere drop in the bucket. He taketh up the Isles as a little thing. He weigheth the mountains and holds the ocean in His hand and metes out heaven with a span." Such is our God.

Do we want a revival? Here is the power. Are you weak, friend? Here is the power. Are your sins like scarlet, friend? Here is all power. He can save to the uttermost. He saved the dying thief. He saved Paul. He saved the jailer at Philippi. He saved John Bunyan. He saved Hadley. He saved me. He can save you.

To God be eternal praise and glory.

"He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might, He increaseth strength." Can we not trust Him? Can you not cast your care on Him, yea, all of it? For He careth for you. Just think of the millions of whirling swirling worlds He engineers from day to day, without a hitch, and has everyone to come in on the tick. Our old world is doing a million and a half miles every day going sometimes slower, sometimes faster, and coming in on the dot. We have travelled more than fifty thousand miles since coming into Church an hour ago, and not one of you felt a jar. Not anyone felt the slightest shake, and all these million worlds moving! Nothing still! Countless, colossal, orbs rushing at lightning rate, yet no collision, no confusion! "Not one of them faileth,..." says the prophet. Not one of them comes in a moment tardy. Frederick the Great did all in his power to make a few clocks swing their pendulums together but he gave it up. Yet here are all lengths, breadths, longer, shorter, swinging — this way, that way, every way — and not one ever misses its function. My God is the Creator and Mover of them all, yet He remembers you, **11**
He remembers me.

"The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork." What is the glory of God? What is the glory of anything? The glory of a thing is that quality, or attribute which secures unanimity of praise. And the glory of God is His praise-worthiness, His infinite excellence. "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts. The whole earth is full of His glory." "And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Now this is it that constitutes the glory of God — His holiness, His sovereignty, His grace, His salvation. His salvation includes you and me. "Do you suppose," said Tommy, as his little sister laid away her largest apple for a sick girl; "do you suppose that God cares for us little folks? Is He not too busy caring for the big folks to notice us much?" Mary shook her head and pointed to Mama holding the baby. "Do you think that Mama would forget the baby? She thinks of the baby first, 'cause he's the littlest." Mary was right. Let the child teach us. God's first concern is for the little ones, the feeble ones.

"He giveth power to the faint and to them that have no might He increaseth strength; even the youths may faint and be weary and the young men may utterly fall; but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint." "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him; for He knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are dust." He marks the sparrow's fall.

Wonder of wonders, marvel of marvels, "The very hairs of your head are all numbered" — not counted, but numbered. "He telleth the number of the stars." He does not count them. He does not need to count them. He knows without counting. "He calleth them all by name." Look up at them tonight and see them shining. How plain those stars are, you say! How clearly you can see them, one by one. He can see your life just as plainly, yea, more clearly, looking down. Nothing is too small for God. "He feedeth His flock like a shepherd. He will gather the lambs in His arm and carry them in His bosom, and will gently lead those that give suck;" i.e. that have their young. It is most unbelievable; but it is the immortal message of the Lord and Master, the value of one human soul is such, as to cause the shedding of the precious heart's blood of the holy, sinless Son of God. No teacher ever worked on so minute a scale as the Lord Jesus. The crowds followed Him; but He gave His deepest secrets to the few. "Many are called; but few are chosen." Wonder of wonders, that we are found amongst the chosen, washed in His blood and sealed with the Holy Spirit.

How many of you are lonely? How many of you are sick? How many of you are sad this morning? How many of you are saying, There is no one living who cares for me if I were to die tomorrow? No one would shed a tear for me. I'm alone in this wide, wide world — all alone. It is not so, Listen! "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end." He is with us in darkness as well as in light; in sickness as well as in health; in poverty as well as in wealth; in crooked places as well as in straight places. He never leaves us, nor forsakes us.

(Reprint 1937)

God's Timing and Purposes

(Eccl. 3 Cont'd)

Dr. Vicky Moots

“**A** time to keep silence, and a time to speak.” Ecc. 3:7c

Perhaps you have heard it said that the tongue is the strongest muscle in the human body, but that is not actually true. It was mistakenly considered to be very strong because of its endurance. It never tires out no matter how much work it does.

Spiritually, however, it is extremely powerful and has more strength than a wild animal, as we discover in James 3:7-8: “For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.”

Man cannot tame the tongue, but God can. We see an example of this in Luke chapter one where the angel Gabriel announced to Zacharias the priest that he and his elderly wife, who were childless, were going to have a son, and that his name was to be called “John” (John the Baptist).

Zacharias doubted this and asked for a sign, to which the angel replied in Luke 1:20, “...behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed...” So, Zacharias’ “time to keep silence” lasted 9 months, until the baby was born, and he wrote, “His name is John.” Verse 64 exclaims, “And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spake, and praised God.” It was now his “time to speak...” If only we all were as eager to speak God’s praises as he was!

The first time that keeping silence was mentioned in the Bible is recorded in the book of Job, which is considered to be the oldest of all the books in the Bible. Job 2:11 tells us that three of Job’s friends came to mourn with him and to comfort him after the sudden loss of all that he owned, the loss of his health and the loss of his entire family, except for his wife. Verse 13 states, “So they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great.” Their time of silence contained more wisdom than all of the eloquent words that they spoke to Job after those first

seven days contained in the next 34 chapters. We can learn a lesson from Job's comforters and that is to refrain from using a lot of words to comfort those who are grieving. Sometimes the best thing to say is nothing.

James gives us some good advice in his epistle, in James 1:19, concerning our tongue that will keep us out of trouble if we will heed it: "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath." However, we find that keeping silent is extremely difficult to do. Children must be taught how to keep quiet, which is equally true for adults. Paul recognized the difficulty of this task and gave us some homework to do regarding keeping silent, in I Thess. 4:11: "...study to be quiet, and to do your own business." I think we all need to work a little harder on that assignment!

David must have struggled somewhat with the difficulty of keeping silent, for he stated in his prayer in Psa. 141:3, "Set a watch [guard], O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips." He was actually asking the Lord to stand guard in front of the door of his mouth and to not let any words escape that should
14 be held prisoner.

The Lord knew that we also would need someone to stand guard before our mouth and has sent us the Holy Spirit to be our "Paraclete" (one called alongside to help).

In I Samuel chapter one we read of Hannah's time of silence. She was barren for many years and yearned to have a son. In desperation, one day when praying in the temple, v. 10 states, "And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the Lord and wept sore." In vv. 12-13 we read, "And it came to pass as she continued praying before the Lord...she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard." Eli, the priest, who was watching her lips, thought she was drunk, but the Lord heard her heart, for her spirit communed with God, and she became the mother of Samuel, the prophet.

When we are so burdened that we are unable to put our prayer into words, the Holy Spirit, who guards our lips, is also able to intercede and to speak for us according to God's will, as Paul declares in Rom. 8:26-27: "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself [Himself] maketh intercession...for the saints according to the will of God."

In conclusion, Jesus also experienced “a time to keep silence.” He spoke many words during His ministry, but He did not speak in His own self-defense to refute the false accusations against Him. His time of silence was so important that it was prophesied in Isa. 53:7: “...he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, an as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.”

This was fulfilled at the time of His trial when he was brought before Caiaphas, the high priest, who asked Jesus, saying, “Answerest thou nothing? But he held his peace, and answered nothing...” Mk. 14:60-61 Then Jesus was brought before Pilate for judgment, and we read, “And the chief priests accused him of many things: but he answered nothing. And Pilate asked him again, saying, Answerest thou nothing? Behold how many things they witness against thee. But Jesus yet answered nothing...” Mk. 15:3-5

Jesus remained silent and willingly suffered defamation in order to accomplish God’s will. He allowed Himself, by His silence, to become condemned to death so that He could bear our sins upon the cross and we could be set free.

“...a time to keep silence, and a time to speak.” Ecc. 3:7c:

Jesus remained silent at the time of His trial, but He did not remain silent on the cross. Even though it was physically difficult for Him to speak while enduring the suffering of the crucifixion, it is recorded in the Gospels that He spoke seven specific things before He died. It was now His time to speak.

First, He asked His Father to forgive those who crucified Him (Luke 23:34); second, He assured the repentant thief who was hanging next to Him that he would be with Him in Paradise (Luke 23:43); third, He committed the care of His mother to the beloved disciple, John (John 19:26-27); fourth, He cried out in despair, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matt. 27:46); fifth, He stated, “I thirst” (John 19:28); sixth, He cried out, “It is finished” (John 19:30); and His seventh and final cry was to dismiss His spirit into His Father’s hands (Luke 23:46).

Each of these things which Jesus spoke were important, but I would like to specifically discuss the sixth one: “It is finished”, for it is the victor’s cry. Because of Jesus’ “time to keep silence”, He was condemned to die. But because of His death on the cross, the work of redemption was accomplished. It

was finished, completed, once for all. The Lamb of God that was able to take away the sin of the world had to be slain, but that was not defeat. It was victory because He rose triumphant from the grave: the Victor over death itself.

It is now our “time to speak”. The angel at the empty tomb told the women, “He is not here: for he is risen, as he said... go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead...”
Matt. 28:6-7

Just prior to ascending into heaven, Jesus commanded his disciples, and the other believers with them, to preach the Gospel, and He promised to send the Holy Spirit to empower them, and us, to be witnesses of His resurrection, not only in Jerusalem but unto the uttermost parts of the earth (Acts 1:8). Ten days later, the Holy Spirit was poured out on the Day of Pentecost, and 3,000 people were saved. The good news began to spread even farther after the lame man at the temple gate was healed through the ministry of Peter and John.

16 But then the persecution began. The religious leaders were “grieved that they (Peter and John) taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead” (Acts 4:2), so they arrested and questioned them. At this point they tried to silence them by threatening them: “and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:18-20). Isn’t that what witnesses are supposed to do: to speak what they have seen and heard? We are to do the same, as we are empowered by the Holy Spirit to be His witnesses, and not to keep silent.

We read of further attempts to silence the early apostles in Acts 5:18-21, which states that they “laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison. But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said, Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life. And when they heard that, they entered into the temple early in the morning, and taught.”

They could not be silent, for it was their “time to speak”, as they had been commanded by God. When they were discovered teaching in the temple, the high priest asked them, “Did not we

straightly command you that ye should not teach in this name? ... Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:28-29). Then they were beaten and commanded again not so speak in the name of Jesus before they were released. But they did not keep silent, for v. 42 declares, “...they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.” Neither did Paul and Silas keep silent when they were beaten and cast into the inner prison and placed in stocks for preaching the gospel. Acts 16:25 tells us, “And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.” You would think that midnight would be a time to keep silent! But it was their “time to speak”, and they could not be silenced.

In the midst of our darkest night and our deepest trial, when there seems to be no way out, and we are imprisoned by doubt and fear, we need to lift our voices to God in praise and not allow Satan to silence us. In addition, in these last days, we are living in a time of deep spiritual darkness, and midnight is fast approaching. Now is not the time to keep silent, for the spiritual prisoners in bondage all around us need to hear us singing and praying and praising God so that they can be set free.

We have been called to be witnesses, to speak “the truth, nothing but the truth.” Satan is, through various means, including the pandemic, still trying to silence the voices of ministers and other Christians at this present time, even here in America, just as he did 2,000 years ago. Last summer, the governor of California instituted a policy banning singing or chanting in church since it might spread the virus, and yet large crowds of protesters were allowed to shout and chant while marching in the streets. Don’t be fooled into thinking that persecution won’t come to Christians in America.

Satan knows that faith comes by hearing the Word of God, and he is using fear to close churches and to close the mouths of believers in order to try and prevent the Word of God from being spoken. We need to pray in the same manner as did the early apostles, in Acts 4:29, when they were under persecution: “And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word.” Then we, too, will have the holy boldness to do as God commanded in Isa. 58:1: “Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet...” for now is our “time to speak.”

(To Be Continued)

REFLECTIONS

...From the Editor

“**M**y times are in thy hand: deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me. Make thy face to shine upon thy servant: save me for thy mercies' sake.” Psa. 31:15-16

The times of which David speaks are surely varied. He gives here two overall summaries of such times which may often appear to be contradictory to one another. The first is a reference to some very difficult paths wherein God's deliverance is desperately needed. Next comes the delightful experience of time spent in His Presence, enjoying the glorious glow of His countenance.

18

Thus, all our times are also most assuredly in His hand. Many worthies of faith have testified of such times in their own lives. Job proclaimed these memorable words after his well-intentioned wife argued that he should curse God and die because of great difficulty. “...What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips.” Job 2:10 Paul declared the same truth with these iconic words. “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” Rom. 8:28 There is no doubt that the apostle had already proved these words to great degree in his own life. David again cries out that “The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD:...” Psa. 37:23 Solomon likewise testifies that “There shall no evil happen to the just:...” Prov. 12:21 The key word here is “...happen...” because the experiences of God's people, pleasant or disheartening, are not coincidence or happenstance. Rather “My times are in his hand...” and the steps of the good new creation man are specifically “...ordered of the LORD....”

It is a great joy to rest in these assertions because as David

proclaims in the opening text, all these experiences of salvation are "...for thy mercies sake." Titus plainly declares that, "...the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men," Tit. 2:11 This means that any time grace appears there will be salvation whether it be from great difficulty or as David declares above, into that bright realm wherein He will "...Make thy face to shine upon thy servant:..."

This glorious mercy or grace is also personified as "a mother," for Paul plainly proclaims that "...Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all." Gal. 4:26 The apostle's instruction here surrounds two women, both of whom had borne a child to Abraham. Hagar represents the covenant of law which "... answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children." Gal. 4:25 Divine Grace is likened unto Sarah, a mother who is very defensive of her children as she demanded that Abraham "...Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac." Gen. 21:10 God agreed with her and thus Paul explains; "Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman." Gal. 4:30

19

Thus, Divine Grace is portrayed as a very aggressive "mother" who will inject her presence into all times which may be required to bring forth the fullness of God's purposes into the lives of her children. It is with great joy that God's people can find complete rest in all His decisions, knowing as did David that ALL "My times are in thy hand:..."

GH

ANNOUNCEMENT:

"Streaming" means that viewers can join us at Gospel Fellowship in "real time" as the services are taking place. Sunday School at 10 A.M. CST with worship following at 11 A.M. Afternoon services begin at 1:30 P.M. Wed. prayer meeting and bible study at 7 P.M. Bible College classes: Synthesis: Mon. Exposition Thurs. and Prophecy, Fri. all begin at 7 P.M CST.

Our Waiting!

Ray Quintana

“**M**y 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.” Psa. 62:5-7

It is so difficult to be calm and wait in the day of trouble. What happens sometimes when we are told in the natural to wait? We are not a waiting people, and when told to wait for anything, there is often complaint.

20

We know nothing is right in this world. But people do exactly what they want to do. Of course, they do not know they are being controlled by the very power of the devil and the flesh. There are hurts that one does against another, and it is sometimes difficult to focus on anything else. Some may not even go to the Lord in the midst of this turmoil. It is imperative NOT to focus on other people, what they said, or didn't say. But what is our attitude? Is it to retaliate or walk away? Our focus must be on the Lord only and come to Him. If we do not, He has a unique way of bringing this same test again until we learn the lesson. God is teaching us to wait on Him and we do not like to do that. We want answers immediately, but it is only because of divine grace that we can stand unmoved in the day of adversity. As Christians we must submit to the Lord, knowing that if He has us wait, it is for our benefit. We must remain thankful for where He has us.

The opening text contains both exhortation and expectation. David exhorts: “My soul, wait thou only upon God....” He addresses the very center of his being. If my soul is incorrect, then my eyes will follow after vanity, my lips will complain, my feet become swift to walk in the wrong path, and my hands meddle with mischief. It is my soul that needs feeding upon the Word of God. The psalmist simply means that my soul must make God the only object in life. He must be the pinnacle of all desire, seeking God and His righteousness. Whatever God allows in our lives, whether to wait or not, we must take it from His Hand. Many Christians are pursuing their own wishes in this

natural life. We know there are some desires that are moral and honorable. These are good things to have. God has surely placed many of those desires on multiple hearts. But we must make God our number one desire in life, and all these things shall be added unto us. With all our running, if we run ever so well, and gain it, will the end be to fall short of the mark for the prize of the high calling?

“My soul, wait thou only upon God.” It is only found in His Gospel. In the beginning, what was it that was hidden in God? The redemption of Christ brought out the Divine attribute Grace, which would have been hidden in God forever. It was in giving His only begotten Son that we can experience the fullness of Divine grace. We are accepted in the Beloved and grace gives us a place in Jesus Christ. We stand in the same grace as Jesus stands. So, since this is true, will not God provide everything that we need in our lives even if He has us waiting? “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” Rom. 8:32

When David said, “My soul wait thou only upon God, he meant, My soul, has no care but to please God. Perhaps the most miserable people in the world are the very careful ones. They are so anxious about waiting that they cannot enjoy the pleasures of today. What are the pleasures and where are they truly found? There is nothing that gives more pleasure to the soul or to God than sitting at the feet of the Lord Jesus in fellowship with Him. 21

Sometimes people listen for what they want to hear from even Christians. If someone says something that is appealing, is that where we go? David says to his soul, “My soul, be careful for nothing except God; cast all your care on Him; He cares for you.” Nothing compares with the faith that leaves all our care with God, the same faith that has no thought but how to please Him.

We do doubt at times and we must have compassion on others who may fall in this area. There are some people who are duped by the enemy, confused, and without understanding. Some who are so deceived and blinded by the enemy, not knowing God’s Word, need our compassion and direction from the scriptures. Some want to be independent, but it can be dangerous!

Solomon said: "Is there anything whereof it may be said, See, this is new? It hath been already of old time, which was before us." Eccl. 1:10 No doubt some things have changed in this world, such as methods, and ways, but the thoughts, reasonings, and the intent of man are still the same. One illustration of this is the tower of Babel. They had stone and mortar with which to build. Today we have very complex systems, but what was their desire? It was to be independent of God. "...Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." Gen. 11:4 Man has not changed. God confused their language but it did not stop him from pursuing his own desire, for he is still trying to be independent of God, producing nothing which has not been thought of already. Maybe it is more modern but it is still the same old heart of man. Man does not want to wait on God. They that wait on the Lord shall not want any good thing. That is the right kind of dependency. It is the man who knows no dependence except upon God. My soul, let this be thy care, to
22 serve God, and wait only upon the Lord Jesus Christ. David bids his soul to take God for his all in all.

Notice how the world portrays the power of God. They want to support God as if He will fail. My Father hangs the world and without a chain, He binds up the stars. He has laid the foundations of the universe! We Christians must be a display of God's universe. Our faith must rest in the Lord and in His confidence. Faith does not rest in what I am, or what I shall be in this life, or how I feel, or what I know, but in Who Christ is, and in what He has done, and in what He is doing in me. When we cannot see His hand at work, we must trust His heart for us. It is the power of God that will see us through in our weakest times. When we are so weak that we cannot do much more than cry, we create diamonds with both eyes. Some of the sweetest prayers to God are the groans and sighs of hearts with no hope in anything but His love. God is love, so my hope is in God alone.

This is sad, but true, the Bible is not the light of the world, it is the light of the Church. The world does not read the Bible, the world reads Christians! "You are the light of the world." We must,

in these last days, study His word and be in prayer. One of the ways we can wait on the Lord is to continually stay in His Word in fellowship with Him. If not, we will revert to be an unwilling and un-waiting people. We may be concerned that the Lord has passed us by, but it is not so: He who counts the stars, and calls them by their names, will never forget His own people.

Jesus prayed this for us. "For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are." Joh. 17:8-11 He knows our case as thoroughly as if we were the only one alive. He loves us unconditionally. We can come to Him and be at peace. But the question is, "How do we focus on the Lord when we have been violated by someone or some thing?" We must learn to lean wholly upon God. Dependent upon Him and not independent or looking to other things. We must not depend too much on some thing or person, for that dishonors Christ.

23

God is a jealous God and He will sometimes remove that wherein we put our trust. We must lean upon our Heavenly Father. He is our strength and support. He is our peace, rest, and safety. Let it not be said that the first thing we do in trouble is to knock at our neighbor's door. If our neighbor were prudent, he would say, "My brother, have you gone to God first?" I will give you no advice till God has given you, His counsel? Brothers and sisters, trust the Lord God for your compass. If we need to steer the ship through the dark billows, put the tiller into the Hand of the Lord Jesus Christ. Many a rock might be escaped, if we would let God take the helm. If we would leave it to His sovereign will to choose and to command our way by the Gospel, we will always be in His will.

Now, there is nothing wrong with getting Godly advice.

God's wisdom will lead us. But take our trouble to the throne of the Most High and on our knees by prayer, cry out, "Lord, direct me!" Some may come to us and say, "I want your advice." But they have made up their minds before they ask. They often go on their knees, and say, "Lord, show me what I ought to do," and then they follow their own intention and say, "I did ask God's direction." David charges his soul to wait only upon God, because he had no expectation anywhere else but there. We must wait at that door of our Lord, for He will open it with the hand of magnanimous grace. What is the reason God may have us waiting? God is preparing us for what He has promised. What is our ultimate promise? It is to be in that bridal company; to be at the closest place with the Lord, "To be joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." Rom. 8:17 It is to be full-overcomers! We must have something to overcome and that comes by suffering with Christ. It is His work in us, to get us ready for that promise.

24

David was one of the most prolific kings of Israel, but how did he become king? He was just a young shepherd boy whom God gave a promise through Samuel, the prophet. David was to become the next king, but it took many years. Why? God had to prepare David to become king. He is also preparing us for what He has promised. He is not going to take us into a new season until He knows we are ready. He is a good Father Who doesn't set His children up for failure. What is our part? To submit to Him and let Him prepare us. We know it is impossible to please God without faith. Sometimes God allows us to walk through times of waiting to help our faith grow stronger.

"And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father." Acts 1:4 The disciples were in that 40 -day period between Christ's resurrection and His ascension into heaven. The conversation turned to the future, when Jesus would return to heaven and the disciples would be left with orders to preach the Gospel. Imagine the excitement around the table that day. "Lord, what shall we do? Should we draft a master-plan and hit the road. James, you and John get started on the mission

statement. Peter, work out a 10-year strategy. Matthew, you are an accountant, aren't you? Run some numbers, let's see how much money we are going to need. We have to get the ball rolling. Lord, where do you want us to begin?" But hear Jesus' answer. "Go back to Jerusalem and wait there until the Holy Spirit comes." I am sure this must have come as a major surprise. God's answer was to wait! I imagine that was the last place many of them wanted to be. Jerusalem was no longer a safe city. Being a follower of Jesus, any place on earth was safer than Jerusalem. Jerusalem was the city that murdered and crucified Him. The disciples were in the middle of the battle field. Have you ever wondered why God does not speak to us more clearly? Could it be because we are going so fast that we might be unable to hear His voice? Especially when all hell is breaking up around us. Waiting rearranges our priorities, slows down our schedule, and forces us to listen to God. Jesus gave specific instructions in three areas: He told them what to do; "Wait!" And where to do it; "in Jerusalem!" And what to wait for; "The Promise of the Father, which was the coming of the Holy Spirit!" But He didn't tell them how long to wait. They had no idea whether they should wait a week, a month, a year, ten years, or 40 years. If my expectation is based upon God, my soul lives for God; I live to bless Him. 25

We will never know the fullness of Christ until we know the emptiness of everything except Christ. It is our necessity that we enter into that wonderful place of the realm of Divine Grace. In today's world with so many bad things happening, even to God's people, we must be searching for more grace and that through the Word of God. It will only be found in prayer and His Word. What is it that the Holy Spirit uses to comfort the hearts of God's tried, troubled, and trembling people? It is the wondrous and glorious Gospel of His grace. It is found in His Voice, in fellowship with the Lord Himself at the feet of Jesus, Waiting!

*** He that rests** most sweetly upon God's promise, is prepared most completely to be a co-worker with God.

“WARNINGS”

Cara Hawkins

“**N**ow these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.” I Cor. 10:6

One meaning of the word “example” is “warning.” There is value in a warning. God knows each of us so intricately that He gives warnings because He loves us and knows what is best for us. Signs are posted on roads to warn drivers during times of heavy rain: “Warning! This road may be impassable.” We are the wiser and feel relieved when we heed such sincere warnings. Paul issues a warning in the above text, which is a strong caution to those following Christ; warning us that even though some experienced mighty deliverances such as being “...under the cloud, and all passed through the sea;...were all baptized unto Moses...did all eat the same spiritual meat;... did all drink the same spiritual drink:... with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.” I
26 Cor. 10:1-5 Such things do not always guard anyone from lusting after things we may think we need or are in fact outside of the will of God.

Paul takes a look back, citing the mighty deliverance of Israel from slavery in Egypt. That nation would take forty years to make it to their God-planned destination that should have only required two weeks or less. Words such as “lusted,”... “coveted,” and “idolators” give us a picture into the deep hidden issues that surfaced while Israel was on their trek. A short paraphrase of I Cor. 10:1-11 would be: “I would not have you ignorant or unaware that regardless of God’s Presence in the history and life of Israel, remember, with many of them God was not well pleased. “Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition (warning), upon whom the ends of the world are come.” V. 11 The next verse is a sobering warning: “Wherefore let him that thinketh he stands take heed lest he fall.” Lusting or longing for, coveting or idolizing anything apart from God Himself and what God has provided are just some ways in which we can fall.

Man was created to worship. Being made in God's image means He's not only acquainted with every need we will ever have but He is the only real source for having our needs met. Paul even quotes Psalm 24:1 in I Corinthians 10:26: "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein." This is simply an invitation to run to God The Creator of the world **and each of us** with our personal needs rather than lusting and even scheming to get our own way. The surest way we can fall away into our own set of values is by doubting God's goodness just as Eve was made to question God by being tricked into thinking God was holding back a greater sense of knowledge from her husband Adam. Any attempts made to meet perceived needs my way lead to idolatry. I John 2:16 warns that longing after anything in this world is not pleasing to God. "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." The fashion of this earth and its values, which includes any earthly needs no matter how important we deem them to be, is passing away right before our very eyes.

27

We are the wiser if we heed warnings provided to us from the experience of the children of Israel. From their history we learn the importance of craving the presence of God, and how these hearts will crave something. Israel had the heart-rending experience of the symbol of the very presence of God in their lives, the Ark, being captured from them by their enemy, the Philistines. I Samuel 6 - 7 tells us the Ark of the Lord had been captured and was in the hands of the Philistines seven months. After this the Ark was recovered, being brought to Kirjath-jearim, and remaining there twenty years until King David began his reign. Nevertheless, Israel lamented and was grieved after the presence of the Lord due to worshipping other gods. Samuel advises Israel that regardless of the location of the Ark, it was imperative that they whole-heartedly return to God, including putting away their false gods. He tells them to "prepare" their hearts, "serve him only."

Warning: life may not get easier even though you've turned your life over to God. We all love a happy ending, don't we? But

the Bible never says that when Israel put away their false gods and served the Lord their God only, they never had any problems after that. Let's take a closer look at I Samuel 7. Samuel instructed them to put away their false gods, gather themselves in Mizpeh (meaning watch tower, or outlook,) and "I will pray unto the Lord for you." I love what happens next, for they draw water and pour it out before the Lord. Whether it was due to the abasement of their idolatry and having no other offering to bring, or whether water happened to be their most precious commodity at that time, they brought to the Lord, all that they had, and poured it ALL OUT before Him. What a comfort this brings. God just wants us to come to Him, pour all of ourselves out to Him so He can begin to pour Himself into us. Notice that Israel also fasted and made their confession to the Lord that they had sinned against him. Meanwhile, their enemy was learning of their exact location.

28

Warning: when trouble comes, you will be tempted to be intimidated and feel afraid. After the children of Israel had confessed their sin to the Lord, they cried out to Him, bringing about love and renewed fellowship with God. Nevertheless, the enemy lines were not too far away for, "The lords of the Philistines went up against Israel, the children of Israel became afraid." They didn't turn to any strange god for answers at this point. They turned to Samuel their Spiritual overseer, prophet and priest at the time, saying "Cease not to cry unto the Lord for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines." It wasn't a lack of faith in crying out to Samuel. Rather, they were standing on faith as they cried out for Samuel to pray for them and believe God with them. Situations in our lives can sometimes be so intense, we should solicit the help and strength of other Saints through prayer when we are weakened in any way. Thank the Lord He is an ever-present help in the time of trouble.

Warning: there's power in the blood. Samuel didn't stop with crying unto the Lord. He knew the kind of sacrifice that would thrill the heart of God. I Samuel 7:9 "And Samuel took a sucking lamb and offered it for a burnt offering wholly unto the Lord: and Samuel cried unto the Lord for Israel; and

the Lord heard him.” What was the result of such sacrifice? V. 10 As Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but the Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines and threw them into confusion; “...and they were smitten before Israel.” God put Israel in a place of total victory as He smelled the pleasing aroma of that sacrificial lamb. The victory was so sure, the children of Israel pursued the Philistines and struck them down!

Warning: no matter how sturdy your foundation appears to be, there’s only One Rock that’s sturdy. We are reminded in I Samuel 7 that landmarks are important; for they recall where we’ve been, and point us forward to where we want to go. Lest we be tempted to lust, covet, idolize our own way of thinking or trust in our own strength and ingenuity, let us recall our Rock. Remember, all the things that happened to Israel are recorded to be warnings to us. Israel wasn’t short on any number of gods they could have called upon for a false sense of security, and neither are we. So let us follow the next great example: (V. 12) “Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.” The landmark set up was a stone Samuel called “Ebenezer,” which means stone of help. May we always be quick to turn to, stand upon, call upon our personal Stone of Help, knowing that “hitherto has the Lord helped us,” knowing that he has helped, is helping and will continue to help and steady us no matter what challenges may lie ahead. 29

* **Many Christians** do not need more power; but they need to know how to use the power they have.

* **If I really live for Christ**, I need not worry over what my fellowmen think of me.

* **Grace does not drive**; but it draws. Jesus said, “And I if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto me.”

Hosea Chapter 4:15 (Cont'd)

30 This nation is also forbidden to "...up to Bethaven,..." which means "house of vanity" and represents the vanity of the world as men find their place in Christ. That victory is nowhere to be found in the hearts of idolaters, and thus they are also instructed not to "...swear that The LORD liveth." They have no right to claim such victorious knowledge because they have blatantly rejected Him and claimed the false benefits of idolatry. They began as a people who trusted God and experienced glorious blessing because of it, but now "...Israel slideth back as a backsliding heifer:..." This analogy has often been used to describe a person who "had been saved but lost it and is now bound for hell." The context of this phrase, however, describes Israel, who had at one time enjoyed so many benefits of God's provision, but have now relapsed into idolatry. The next phrase of this verse indicates that rather than sinking into oblivion as many interpret, God says "...now the LORD will feed them as a lamb in a large place." V. 6 The little word "...now..." indicates that God has not cast off His people forever, and scripture is very clear that even in the midst of their rebellion and rejection during this Church Age, He will still "...feed them as a lamb..." Such "...feeding..." is also a direct prophecy of the Millennium, showing forth the fact that this entire nation of 12 tribes will eventually be restored AFTER they accept their Messiah and leave the ways of idolatry far behind. Paul describes this scenario by first asking the question "...Hath God cast away his people? God forbid...." Rom. 11:1 He then declares that "...all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness (even the full extent of their idolatry) from Jacob:" Rom. 11:26

Hosea continues, however, with the conditions at the time then present, for "Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone." V. 17 They have continued in that same idolatrous mode down through the ages into this present time, and God's instruction is "...let him alone." There would come a time when prophets such as Hosea would no longer warn them, for they must learn by experience that "Their drink is sour: they have committed whoredom continually:..." V. 18 The sweet wine of God's provision has been replaced with the sour or literally "revolting" drink of idolatry, and the rest of this verse indicates that the rulers of the

nation must claim responsibility for it, because "... her rulers with shame (dishonor) do love, Give ye." These rulers most assuredly do dishonor God with their idolatry, but it seems that they love to demand of others, including God, "...Give ye."

This chapter closes, explaining that gross idolatry has brought Ephraim to a very unstable condition, for "The wind hath bound her up in her wings, and they shall be ashamed because of their sacrifices." V. 19 When men are not stayed on the Truth of God's Word, they are very easily deceived and are then "... carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;" Eph. 4:14 Ephraim has succumbed to such a state and is now committed to a path of shame "...because of her sacrifices," unto idols rather than God.

Hosea Ch. 5

"Hear ye this, O priests; and hearken, ye house of Israel; and give ye ear, O house of the king; for judgment is toward you, because ye have been a snare on Mizpah, and a net spread upon Tabor." V. 1

God indicts three separate groups here as the priesthood, the "...house of Israel..." or the entire nation, along with the political rulers are accused of being "...a snare on Mizpah..." and all deserve judgment. The word "...snare..." means a "spring net," bespeaking the fact that Mizpah is no longer the place of refuge it had once been. That history goes back to a time when Jacob fled from his father in law Laban who later overtook him and they made an agreement at Mizpah saying "...The LORD watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another." Gen. 31:49 Mizpah means "Watch-tower," signifying God's protection over both of them. The significance of that name in this text is that none of the aforementioned factions may claim Mizpah due to the horrendous idolatry pervading the entire land. There is also "...a net spread upon Tabor, which means "thou wilt purge" signifying that God is through with all His warnings and nothing but judgment lies ahead.

Hosea continues his assault against these three, declaring that "...the revolvers are profound to make slaughter, though I have been a rebuker of them all." They have all become masters in the depths of "...slaughter..." or destruction due to their idolatrous ways, and though God has done everything in His power to correct

them, it has been to no avail. However, He has not forgotten any of their antics and asserts that, "I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hid from me: for now, O Ephraim, thou committest whoredom, and Israel is defiled." V. 3 Both of these names, once again, are a reference to the ten tribes of Israel. Ephraim means "doubly fruitful," while Israel signifies "prince of God." Both meanings testify of God's power over them showing forth great blessing in their behalf, but this idolatrous nation cannot at this time enjoy the bountiful blessing of either name due to the truth of the next charge. "They will not frame their doings to turn unto their God:..." That is, they simply will not forsake their idolatrous ways directly because, "...the spirit of whoredoms is in the midst of them, and they have not known the LORD." V. 4 Whoredom is ingrained in them, having become a spirit or way of life which comes from deep within. The origination of such idolatry stems back to the time when God told Jereboam, "...thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee:" I Kings 11:31 Jereboam was not a man of faith, therefore he reasoned "...

32 Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David: If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam ... Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." I Kings 12:26-28 Herein lies the secret of idolatry or whoredom, as seen in chap. 2, for it means that one attributes to others that which only God can do, or indeed has done already. Such idolatry had escalated down through the years to this present time of Hosea, and thus God proclaims that, "... the pride of Israel doth testify to his face: therefore shall Israel and Ephraim fall in their iniquity; Judah also shall fall with them." V. 5 The pride of Israel is their attitude of total independence toward God of which their actions testify openly "...to his face:..." and they will most assuredly "...fall in their iniquity..." with Judah following. Judah's fall did not come immediately but because they bowed to the same curse of idolatry, they too were taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar quite a number of years later. God's Word will always be fulfilled.

"They shall go with their flocks and with their herds to

seek the LORD; but they shall not find him; he hath withdrawn himself from them.” V.6 There is always severe consequence for the aforementioned idolatry or whoredom. The word “...They...” in this verse undoubtedly includes both the ten tribes of Israel and Judah as noted in V. 5 and both of them would experience God’s rejection, for though they would seek Him, trying to offer their gifts and sacrifices, God would pay no attention to them. The reason for that continues as the prophet declares that “They have dealt treacherously against the LORD: for they have begotten strange children: now shall a month devour them with their portions.” V. 7 The word “treacherous” tells of that which is “hidden, deceitful, and unfaithful,” all of which describe the conduct of both Israel and Judah. Scripture boldly declares that they should have heard God’s message long ago. “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD:...thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might...these words, which I command thee this day,...thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.” Deut. 6:4-7 Hosea’s message indicates that the parents had in no wise complied with such admonition, for “...they have begotten strange children:...” These pathetic children apparently know no other way than that of idolatry and, “...now shall a month devour them with their portions,” meaning that judgment is not something that will occur sometime in the distant future but is even now at the door.

“Blow ye the cornet in Gibeah, and the trumpet in Ramah: cry aloud at Bethaven, after thee, O Benjamin.” V. 8 Benjamin was allied with Judah, and seems to be the only one spiritual enough to be chosen as God’s messenger in calling attention to His decree for Ephraim as announced in V. 9. “Ephraim shall be desolate in the day of rebuke: among the tribes of Israel have I made known that which shall surely be.” The “...cornet...” is a “showphar” an instrument made from a ram’s horn. It was to be blown in “...Gibeah...” meaning “hill,” speaking of God’s lofty inheritance in Christ. Next Benjamin was to blow a “...trumpet...” which was made of silver. Both the showphar and the silver trumpet testify of redemption and the latter was to be sounded in Ramah. This place has a history of godliness, for it

was home to Samuel, one of the greatest judges ever to preside over Israel. The word means "height" and again announces the high place of victory and provision for God's people, but now it is associated with idolatry, as is also the significance of Benjamin crying "...aloud at Bethaven,..." or "House of vanity." Both the cornet and trumpet are used to attract attention, and the announcement here is the desolation of Ephraim "...in the day of rebuke...." This pattern of God's judgment upon those who refuse His offer of great riches is not new. David declared, "Let their table become a snare before them: and that which should have been for their welfare, let it become a trap." Psa. 69:22

The order of this verse is interesting because God first rebuked Ephraim. However, since those warnings went unheeded, God says I have "...made known that which shall surely be," that is the aforementioned judgment. Likewise, the judgments coming on this present world are not empty threats.

34 It has been noted that Hosea's prophecy was primarily directed toward the ten tribes of Israel. However, Judah is also included at various times and the remaining verses of this chapter once again attest to that fact. "The princes of Judah were like them that remove the bound: (boundary) therefore I will pour out my wrath upon them like water." V. 10 The "...princes of Judah..." refer to both their political and religious leaders, for both were guilty of failing to maintain spiritual boundaries of God's Word. There was no restraint, as men simply followed the fleshly desires of their own hearts even as is the case with all mankind today. There is great consequence for such an attitude, as God quickly declares "...I will pour out my wrath..."

(To Be Continued)

* **If Adam and Eve** needed God's keeping power in the garden in Eden, how much more do their offspring need His keeping power out of the garden.

* **If Adam and Eve** could not keep themselves when they were innocent and sinless, how can their descendants make themselves free from the sin which they have inherited? How can they keep themselves saved, with sin in the flesh?

* **If the sinless pair** proved unworthy of being trusted in the garden, surrounded with every comfort and convenience, it is not strange that God said of fallen man, "Have no confidence in the flesh."



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