

GNITN

#322

Dying For Christ

He Loves Me, He Loves Me A Lot

That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. (Rom 10:9-10, KJV)

I hear quite a few people who are concerned that by believing in a pre-tribulation Rapture and then teaching it we are doing the Body of Christ a great disservice. Why is that? Is it because we aren't preparing them to be strong when all the persecution comes? And to be fair, there will be a lot of that in the Tribulation. As anyone who's seen the 1970s movies that started with *A Thief In The Night*, you can vividly recall people having to make the choice to take the mark or face martyrdom by beheading. But that really sells short your survival skills in light of all the disasters ahead for anyone living during that time. Lost in all of this debate is that when you take a closer look into the warning of not getting people ready for these dire circumstances is that none of these at their core are new to Christians. And also lost in all the talk of getting people ready for the Tribulation is that no one could possibly have a plan that would allow them to survive asteroids falling from the sky, demonic creatures stinging you for 5 months and contaminated waters. So when people call pre-tribbers delusional and unprepared for hard times, they miss a key point: God, in His love already asked us to be ready a long time ago. Just because some people aren't tested on this as much as others misses that. And it points to another mistake being made by leaders.

Offering Salvation Without Lordship

For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Pet 1:11, ESV)

Many of us recall how we were saved. We remember the altar call or invitation regardless of the method of responding. The pastor or evangelist spent time giving us a sermon about our lostness and our sin and we felt the tugging at our heart strings to decide to let Jesus forgive our sins. And then there was the sinner's prayer that we recited and were admonished to mean it and not just repeat it. If the church was prepared, they would have someone praying with us and would sit us down and tell us that this was just the beginning of a life that would have ups and downs, trials, temptations, and tribulations, but we needed to stand fast through them all. But there are those who make such a big point of Jesus as savior that we hardly hear about Him being Lord in that sermon. It's a common omission in some circles, but a key one since people who were on fire at first can get cold later on, especially when their life after accepting Jesus and have their sins forgiven isn't all that different than their life before. They have to go to the same job, with the same co-workers and live in the same home with maybe unsaved family members. The parable of the seed and the sower comes to mind. Why do some stay with Jesus and some fall away? I think that making sure that Jesus is made Lord of our lives makes a world of difference.

Peter Leads The Way

It is interesting that verses using the phrase “our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ” show up in the writings of the Apostle Peter. I cited the first one in **2 Peter 1:11** but he also uses it in **2 Peter 2:20; 3:2, 18**. And this is the same disciple who denied Jesus not once but three times after the Jesus died on the cross. To say that Peter was a good example of a believer who certainly had his ups and downs is an understatement. But if his two epistles are any proof, he figured things out in the end. And he emphasized the titles for Jesus most likely because he did indeed figure things out. He stands as an example for we Christians who aren’t living a perfect life and cry out to Jesus to save us from ourselves, which is more than we’d like to admit. How many times did Peter relive those three denials in his head when he struggled to be the leader so many thought he was in the book of **Acts**? We’ll never know this side of Heaven, but I’m sure there were more than a few times. But it was his steadfast reliance on Jesus’s words and examples that kept him through the times of being beaten and even thrown into prison. And I think he recalled these words of his master uttered shortly before He went to the cross, words that also readied him and the other apostles for what was to come:

If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. 20 Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. (John 15:19-20, NKJV)

Jesus also told them in the Sermon on the Mount that they would be blessed if they were persecuted inferring there was a good chance they would be. Peter needed those words as much as anyone.

Avoiding Persecution Is An American Thing

It seems this line of thinking that we need to go through part or all of the Tribulation comes from a viewpoint that espouses that lack of persecution makes us weak or unprepared for trials in our lives. Whenever I read of someone talking against a pre-tribulation Rapture they usually cite examples of believers in the Bible that had to go through tough times like Daniel, the three Hebrew boys, Joseph, Moses, Elijah, and the list goes on and on. God protected them through not from these tests so why would we be exempt us from the same things? If there’s any group of believers that need toughening up, it’s those of us who live every day with an abundance of wealth and relative ease and freedom. We somehow have to be persecuted to test our loyalty to Jesus. How dare we think that God would keep us from hard times if people around the world are facing it? To some, by not telling us about the times of trouble just ahead they are setting us up for a crisis of faith, a crisis that will cripple and even kill our faith. But when I hear such logic it makes me ask what I think is a logical follow up question and that is just how do we prepare? What steps do we need to take to be ready that we aren’t taking now? I mean if that is your philosophy, follow through on your beliefs if only to help those of us who hold to a Rapture that happens before the Tribulation.

Survival Tactics

OK, so we live in a time when solar generators and survival food kits are all the rage. We have billionaires building doomsday bunkers in Hawaii and survivalists telling us how to handle an electromagnetic pulse or EMP attack that will cripple our power grid and render all of our electronics useless. Many of us remember the panic surrounding Y2K, that would be the year

2000 potential crisis for those who don't like acronyms. If you don't prepare for these things you're not smart we're told. I'm not criticizing such planning, but not everyone has the money to throw at all the things on the market right now. And not everyone can literally live off the grid at the drop of a hat. In short, there are only so many things you can do to be totally equipped to handle the very worst the world can throw at you. So when I read about all of the things that the earth will experience in the Tribulation and people tell me that by expecting to not go through it I'm foolish, well I want these people tell me just how am I or anyone else going to get ready for it. The examples given of God preserving people sounds good and all, but why are we that believe that God doesn't want us to even be around for the worst period in all of history being called escapists and wanting it easy? Besides that, no underground bunker will save anyone from all that God releases on this world in the Tribulation, especially the last half of the seven-year period. In short, please tell me how to prepare, please. Hold your tongue because I already have that answer for you. There is only one way Biblically to prepare anyone for hard times and it doesn't matter if you are never fully tested on it.

Are We Willing To Die For Christ?

As a young believer I was an avid fan of the music and ministry of the late Keith Green. One of the last songs he wrote was "I Pledge My Head to Heaven" and it was all about him being willing to die to loving anything or anyone above his love for Jesus. As I recall, Keith was inspired to write it after he read the phrase in a devotional book. While I struggle to find the exact source, the song itself provides all we need to be fully prepared for any trial or tribulation in our lives. If we could ask any of all the martyrs for Jesus why they never rejected Him even knowing it would mean their lives I'm sure we would hear a great deal of emotions and feelings, but regret wouldn't be on the list. As we also know, 11 of the apostles died for their faith with John being thrown into a vat of burning oil only to have God miraculously spare his life. If we turn to the classic *Foxes Book Of Martyrs* we can see a multitude of believers who died for Jesus rather than live without Him. To cast aspersions at Christians who believe that they aren't going through the Tribulation because they are weak and have a shallow faith is to judge their hearts, something God tells us not to do. The only preparation for hard times, even trying times is to settle in your heart that you are willing to die for Christ rather than reject Him, even if you don't have to actually face that moment.