

## *The Rapture And God's Faithfulness*

There is no truth more fixed and dependable than God's faithfulness. His saints, redeemed by the Blood of His Son, Jesus Christ, are His delight. We are not just His servants; we are His friends and the future Bride of his Son. We are plainly instructed by the Apostle Paul that we are joint heirs with Jesus Christ. *"For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together."* (Romans 8:15-17). *"Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."* (Luke 12:32).

Understanding His faithfulness and knowing that we are "heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ" are foundational truths for the Pre-Tribulation Rapture. The wrath of God has never been directed against His chosen that find grace in His presence. Not one Scripture in the Word of God places the righteous and the unholy together under a display of the Father's wrath. From the worship of Cain and Abel in Genesis chapter 4, God always makes a distinction between obedience and disobedience. God accepted Abel's worship and rejected Cain's bloodless sacrifice and the manifestation of God's Spirit in accepting Abel's worship left no doubt. Holy Justice can never condemn the righteous for the deeds of the wicked. This is a principle that underlies every revelation of the Holy Bible.

### **The Differences Between Tribulation and Wrath**

*"... In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."* (John 16:33). It is probably unfortunate that we use the same word tribulation for the normal experiences of every Biblical saint with the period the Scripture calls the "Great Tribulation." There is a total difference between the "much tribulation" that Luke wrote about in Acts and the "Great Tribulation" that Jesus spoke about as recorded in Matthew. Luke stated, *"Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God."* (Acts 14:22).

Matthew recorded Jesus' words as following, *"And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened."* (Matthew 24:19-22). The difference is extremely clear.

The word *tribulation* embodies the idea of pressure and trouble. There are clearly many different levels of this pressure or trouble throughout the Scripture. Jesus Christ experienced incredible pressure and sorrows in His crisis of death. The tribulation of His sorrows in behalf of our redemption is the basis of why He said, *"... In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome (already defeated those tribulations) the world."* (John 16:33). The tribulation that the Son of God experienced for us that we face by faith in Him is not the wrath of God but the wrath of the world. This pressure that Satan and the world under his control brings to bear has no kinship to the pressure of God's wrath directed toward the wicked and Satan's crowd.

When you simply translate the word *tribulation* by its distinctive meaning of pressure and trouble, it clears up the confusion that many people have assigned to this subject. As Luke wrote in Acts, we enter into the Kingdom of God by much pressure and trouble. The world is not a friend to the saints of God. *"We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest*

*in our mortal flesh.*" (II Corinthians 4:8-11). These tribulations or pressures that we bear make mature saints out of us as we trust in Him and die to our own selves (the flesh).

The "Great Tribulation" is a distinctive time of pressure and trouble directed towards a population that is infested with and sin that has rejected the revelations of Jesus Christ. It is also planned as tribulation or pressure against the hordes of hell or Satan and his fallen angels. While our tribulation or pressure produces redemption of the saints, this future tribulation or pressure produces the redemption of the earth and God's cosmos. This makes it clear why the same word is used. In both cases, it is redemption that is produced by the pressure of tribulation.

### ***God Never Inflicts His Wrath on His Saints***

It is Biblically unthinkable that our God would ever allow His chosen saints to be left in the middle of His judgment of the wicked. He has never done so, nor will He ever do such an unprincipled thing. It is contrary to His nature and to His faithfulness. To leave the saints of God on this earth, while He poured out His redeeming wrath on the Christ-rejecting crowd would strike at the heart of His holiness. It will not happen because it cannot happen. Anything that is contrary to His nature must never be assigned to His actions.

### ***Days of Noah***

It was Jesus Christ Himself that compared the days of Noah with the coming of the Son of Man. *"But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come."* (Matt. 24:36-42). Reasonable scholars that do not have strange theology to defend believe that this is the exact language concerning the Rapture before the Tribulation.

The story concerning Noah is breathtaking. The Father was repenting that He had created man. *"And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, it grieved him at his heart."* (Genesis 6:6). He then determined He would destroy man and beast from the face of this earth and then He stated again, *"... for it repenteth me that I have made them."* (Genesis 6:7). Then our faithful God looked in the direction of a godly man named Noah and stated, *"But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD."* (Genesis 6:8). What a picture of the nature of God's holiness. He was ready to destroy His own creation, but then one man was not guilty of the filth of the rest and God devised a plan to save that one man and Family from the planned holocaust. This principle sets the tone for the entire Word of God and God's acts of judgment. He must judge sin, but He will do it by principles of His own nature.

Noah had to act in obedience to receive the promise of deliverance from the impending wrath. He was instructed to build an ark to the saving of His household and was given the plans for the same. This is the same principle that has never changed. Our salvation is free, but Jesus made it plain that our deliverance from aiding wrath is a matter of our faithfulness. Jesus said, *"But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh."* (Matthew 24:43-44). He forever makes a difference between the righteous and the unrighteous.

When Noah had finished the ark, God Himself came to see the project. While He was on the inside, He called to Noah, *"And the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation."* (Genesis 7:1). When Noah and his family, plus all the creatures of the earth had finished entering the ark, the Scripture states, *"... and the LORD shut him*

*in.*" (Genesis 7:16b). It's beautiful to see the Lord call him from the inside, but shut the door from the outside. God cannot be limited to an ark made by man, but He certainly was responsible for the security of Noah's family by securing the door Himself.

This story is a breathtaking truth. It is a perfect picture of God's faithfulness in the judgment of the wicked. The protection of the righteous is a personal thing with our Heavenly Father. He did not assign this project to even His most trusted angel.

### *The Days of Lot*

Lot and his removal from Sodom and Gomorrah before its destruction is another prime picture of God's nature in judgment. He will always and in every case judge sin, but He will never judge the righteous at the same moment or in the same manner. It is impossible for sin to ever go unpunished, but it is just as impossible for sin and righteousness to be treated the same. Sodom and Gomorrah's population had filled the cup of sin to its max. But, our God determined that He by His nature would do right and the righteous had to be delivered. Listen to the words of Abraham when he was speaking to the Lord, "*That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?*" (Genesis 18:25).

The Heavenly Father sent His angels right into the throbs of filth to assure the removal of Lot and those in his family that feared God. Our God even said that if He found as few as ten righteous persons in Sodom and Gomorrah, He would not destroy the city. "... *And he (God) said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake.*" (Genesis 18:32b). Settle it in your mind that this is God's nature and not just a story of how He acted in one circumstance. He is the Lord and He doesn't change.

Lot had family that had become compromised by the evil of their surroundings. They had no fear of God and laughed Lot to scorn. "*And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons in law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law.*" (Genesis 19:14). We live in a similar generation where the families of many believers are careless and unconcerned. It is evident that Lot had allowed himself to give up the more separated life of a Bedouin for the comforts of Sodom and Gomorrah. The New Testament writer said that Lot's righteous soul was "vexed by the unlawful deeds" of these sodomites. "*And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly; And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds)*" (11 Peter 2:6-8).

I believe he lost those family members because he chose worldly comforts over living a separated life with them in a pure environment. How many believers, themselves living holy lives, have taken their families into social settings and compromising churches only to watch their children lose the fear of God. It is sad to consider this Godly man having to leave these cities knowing that part of his family was "left behind." In fact, Lot was so hesitant to leave that the angels had to remove him. "*And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons in law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law. And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city. And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the LORD being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city.*" (Genesis 19:14-16).

The angels had to take Lot and his wife and two of his daughters by the hands and take them out of the city. This generation seems about as reluctant to escape this filthy world as Lot and his family were.

Finally, the angel said, "*Haste thee, escape thither; for I cannot do anything till thou be come thither. Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar.*" (Genesis 19:22). Do not forget those words, "...for I cannot do any thing till thou be come thither." This is the faithfulness of God. They were not saved by their goodness, but by His "grace." It is easy to understand why Lot's wife looked back and lost her deliverance. She was leaving daughters, son-in-laws, and probably grandchildren to be consumed in the flames of fire and brimstone. She could not refrain herself from looking back when her own flesh and blood was about to suffer hell on earth. "*But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.*" (Genesis 19:26).

Is it possible that this scenario will be repeated when the Son of Man comes for His saints? Will there be saintly people so besieged with passions for their unsaved loved ones that they miss the Rapture? I would not suggest so, but the thought strikes terror to my heart. Remember the Scripture, "*So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.*" (Hebrews 9:28). Regardless of what is left behind, His saints must look for Him without hesitation.

### ***He Reserves Wrath For His Enemies.***

This prophetic truth spoken by a prophet named Nahum is breathtaking, "*God is jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and is furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies*" (Nahum 1:2).

What a statement of absolute perfection concerning the nature of God in His judgments. The wrath of God cannot be mixed but is always divinely discerned in the objects of its activities. God is a jealous God. He will not allow sin to go unpunished. But He reserves His wrath for His enemies. As our Heavenly Father, He will chasten us, lay His rod of correction upon us and deal correctingly, but lovingly with us. He may even direct His righteous anger at us because of Disobedience, but His wrath is reserved for the wicked that refuse to obey His will. He created this universe for His glory and honor and He is jealous over it with an unflinching love. It will be subject unto Him shortly and all that opposes His will *will* be consumed by His wrath.

This principle lives even more beautifully in the New Covenant. Jesus filled His message with the promises that He came not to condemn but to save. Jesus said, "*For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.*" (Jn 3:17-21).

His great message of deliverance forever tempers the rigid positions of His commandments. The laws of God bring conviction of sin, but the grace of God cleanses and delivers us from the powers of sin. He is the door by which we escape the coming wrath; therefore, we are no longer under the "fear of judgment."

The coming "seven years of wrath" isn't a *New Covenant* message. It is an "Old Covenant" message. Jesus reiterated this fact when He prophesied of its future fulfillment. The wrath of God and the wrath of the Lamb are seen in their coming horror in Revelation chapter six. This earth cannot be a "Garden of Eden" until righteousness is established in judgment. Sin was finished on the cross, but the finality of this finish has to be manifest by an outpouring of wrath on those that refuse the pardon from sin's prison. Sin is finished in those that are redeemed by His blood, but the enemies of God are yet to be dealt with.

Now, we see why the "wrath of God" must be poured forth, but it is unthinkable and impossible for those redeemed by His blood to be subject to this wrath. He has Himself borne our wrath on His cross at Calvary. If we were subject to that wrath, then Calvary would have been in vain. We must look at this wrath and note those that cry out because of its terror. *"And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?"* (Rev. 6:15-17).

The saints are already around the throne as this defining moment begins. Paul's epistle confirms this truth, *"For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do."* (2 Thessalonians 5:9-11).

This Scripture, when viewed in light of the above facts, almost comes off the pages of Holy Writ. The Jewish believers were students of the laws and prophets of God. They trembled under the weight of the coming judgments for sin. Their history is filled with examples of God's wrath. The story of the Assyrians and Babylonians, who acted as God's instruments of judgment, were all too familiar. It was "Good News" to hear Jesus Christ had taken their wrath on the cross and they no longer had to flee.

As a whole, the Nation of Israel refused this message and rejected the Son of God and they have lived under wrath since that day with more to come. As wounded as my heart feels for the Nation of Israel today, even as I pray for the peace of Jerusalem, that peace cannot be complete until Messiah comes and they are redeemed. We resist the truth of God's Word when we expect them to have complete peace until they repent for helping crucify the Son of God. Thank God we are at the door of that prophetic moment. Israel, along with the Gentiles that refused the pardon of His Blood, will soon be under the ultimate wrath of the Lamb and will soon be raptured up to Himself and removed to His Heavenly Jerusalem. Our present joy is to "wait for the Son from Heaven." The apostles' messages were constantly filled with this assurance. They knew that God's wrath was a future fact, but they had no dread. *"And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come."* (I Thessalonians 1:10).

Apostle Peter spoke with enthusiasm of the same assurance. Look carefully at the hope of His words: *"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass—away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless."* (II Peter 3:10-14).

### **Conclusion**

On and on you can search the pages of the New Covenant to find much assurance that we, as His saints, are not "appointed unto wrath." We have been delivered from that wrath because he took our wrath for us. "Isaiah the prophet said, *"It pleased the Lord to bruise Him"* that we might be set free. This does not give us liberty to be lovers of this world and to live carelessly. Rather, it calls us unto holiness and soberness of mind. John the Revelator summed it up to the Church of Philadelphia. He stated by the Holy Ghost as given to Jesus by the Father,

*"Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth."* (Revelation 3:10).

For the saints of God, who are watching the incredible events of prophetic fulfillment, the atmosphere is filled with the Blessed Hope.

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