

THE END TIMES

Bible Report Quarterly

Winter 2006: Issue Number 35

Overcoming Fear in the End Times

“He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in Him will I trust... His truth shall be thy shield and buckler.”

Psalm 91:1, 2 & 4

There is an undercurrent of fear which runs through every element of society today, and rightly so, for the Scriptures state that men’s hearts will fail them for fear. (Luke 21:26) In these times of extreme weather changes, massive earthquakes, threats of pandemic outbreaks, and, the even more frightening expectation of terrorist attacks, how does a Christian overcome fear? God’s Word teaches that the faithful shall “...not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day...” (Psalm 91:5) But, how is it possible to not be afraid when the news is filled with terrifying end times events; and many predict even more fearful things to come?



Two primary aspects of the above theme text are key to overcoming fear:

1. Dwelling with and abiding in the care of the Almighty; and
2. Knowing God’s truth in the Scriptures and, through these, understanding His plans and purposes.

These thoughts are reiterated in Psalm 91:9-11: “*Because thou hast made the LORD, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.*”

DWELLING IN THE SECRET PLACE

To claim the promises found in Psalms 91, one must give his heart entirely to God by professing *full consecration* to Him. This means leaving behind all earthly desires and aims to live to do God’s will. God purposes in this age to call out a *little flock* of these *consecrated* believers who accept, by faith, the merit which His Son gave through his death on the cross. Christ died a “ransom for all to be testified in due time.” 1 Timothy 2:6

Some will accept Christ’s sacrifice for their sins now, and some will accept it in the day of judgment at the resurrection of the *just and the unjust*. (John 5:28, 29) Those who accept God’s invitation now, and who *covenant to sacrifice* their own wills to do God’s will, discover a *peace which passes all worldly understanding*. (Psalm 50:5; Philippians 4:7) These know that, come what may, God is in control of their lives and is not only all-loving, but all-wise and powerful. These trust that, even

though physical harm may come to their home, family, or person, there is an ultimately good purpose for everything that occurs in their lives. To them, “*all things, [not just some things,] work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.*”

Romans 8:28

But why do Christian believers have to experience trouble? This Christian Era was to be a time to educate and develop a select group of faithful saints out from this imperfect and corrupt world—a *Bride* for God’s Son. During God’s Kingdom, these will work as a helpmate to Christ in bringing the rest of humanity back into harmony with the Father. This *Bride class*, also known as *the body of Christ* or

the Church, will be willing to submit to the same kind of death as her bridegroom—a sacrificial death. “*For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection...*” (Romans 6:5) However, it is not up to the Christian to determine what this sacrifice will be. For some it will be the giving up of a successful career to live a more humble and simple life, and thus, be more available for service to God. To another it will mean the alienation from loved ones who hate God’s Truth. For another it will mean a life of illness or tragedy, and the joyful acceptance of enduring this as a momentary affliction during this short life. Only God knows what is best for His children, and by providence, He will work *all things* for their good. Yes, for the Christian, “*...though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.*” 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

Thus, Christians learn through their experiences to have the same *attitude* or *mind* found in Christ, “*who for the joy set before him endured the cross.*” (Philippians 2:5; Hebrews 12:2) Christ our *forerunner* was holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners—he was perfect. At the age of 30, he *consecrated*

his life to God—being baptized by John—giving up his right to live forever as a perfect man upon the earth. At this point, God counted His Son's life as a willing sacrifice to Him. From then on, every thought, every motive and every act of Jesus had to be in complete harmony with the will of his Father in Heaven.

What did Jesus do immediately following his baptism? He went into the wilderness to pray and meditate upon God's Word. Just here is the *second* of the keys to overcoming fear in this era of great stress upon the world. The joy which allowed Jesus to endure even the heaviness of his cross—a cross which he bore for three and a half years—was the knowledge of God's loving plan for all mankind.

“WHO FOR THE JOY SET BEFORE HIM ENDURED THE CROSS”

Yes, keeping in mind the big picture of how God's plan is working out good for His entire creation is what provided the joy that helped Jesus endure his cross. This is the same joy which will carry the Christian through every trial. But are Christians always happy and joyful? Are there not times when trials are so heavy that tears come and fear grips the heart? Yes, even Jesus wept at the death of his friend Lazarus. And Jesus *feared* in the Garden of Gethsemane—a fear that he may not have fulfilled all that was expected of him before his crucifixion. *“Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers... with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him...”* (Hebrews 5:7-9) Note, Jesus was *made perfect*—implying a process in time to develop him as a *sympathetic high priest* and the *author and perfecter of our faith*. (Hebrews 4:15; 12:2 NAS) He sympathizes with our tears, and, not only so, but our loving Heavenly Father understands when we are overwhelmed by our experiences. *“Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear [reverence] Him. For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust.”* Psalm 103:13, 14

And so, the Christian can rejoice, even though there are times of fear and sorrow, for they recognize that there is a purpose to the suffering. Like our Master, we too, are being developed to have sympathy for mankind and their sufferings. As the Psalmist said, *“Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.”* (Psalm 23:4) God, our *Great Shepherd* guides and strengthens His *little flock* by allowing experiences to teach and discipline them. *“Now no chastening [disciplining experiences] for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.”* Hebrews 12:11

PEACE IN THE MIDST OF TROUBLE

The night before Jesus died upon the cross, he spoke these words to his closest followers: *“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall*

have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33, 34) He did not hide the fact that there would be difficult times ahead for those who walked in his footsteps. But, though he warned his followers of troublous times to come, he also assured them that he would be with them, guiding every affair of their lives. He promised comfort and guidance through the truth of the Scriptures. (John 16:13) God's Word is the source of all comfort and peace for His children. Indeed, truth—a faith based upon knowledge—is the *shield and buckler* of a child of God.

Yes, knowing what God is doing in the earth in preparation for His Kingdom is critical to dispelling fear. A Christian's faith must be built upon a solid foundation of truth in order to survive the storms of life. The Scriptures are filled with prophecies which provide the necessary information a Christian needs to be prepared for the time in which he lives. But, God only provides



the understanding of such prophecies as they become due. Jesus said, *“I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.”* (John 16:12) Truth unfolds as God sees that it will help His servants. For example, God said to Daniel, *“Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end..”* (Daniel 12:9) Although Daniel prayed for understanding of the end time prophecies he had been given, it was not time for God's people to know the interpretation. But, now, we are living in the *time of the end*—the *due time*, and God's people have been given great insight and understanding of the very prophecies which Daniel was told to *seal up*.

Discovering how God will end this present corrupt world and set up His Kingdom is critical in abating our fears. Every part of society—civil, social and ecclesiastical—has become corrupt and will be *shaken* until they collapse. Seeing that God must first tear down the old structure of society that He might usher in the new, will help calm our fears as we see one element after another being removed. It behooves each Christian, therefore, to search the Scriptures—not just to know what God's plans are, but to understand the purpose behind these. Then we can see why God's plan is the best solution—a remedy in which every person has experienced the effects of selfishness and evil, and those learning the lessons from this experience will desire God's righteous Kingdom.

But, beware. A misinterpretation of Scripture can cause confusion and unfounded fear. On Christian bookshelves today are many books which sensationalize and fictionalize the events of the Book of Revelation. In these, the symbolic passages in Revelation are interpreted as literal, and although the Bible does indicate trouble in the earth at this time, the wrong interpretation of Scripture can totally distort the loving character and plans of God. Therefore, it is a good practice to square every doctrine with two pivotal truths: 1. The *ransom for all to be testified in due time*; and 2. The fact that *God is love*.

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT HEART INTENTION

The Scriptures assure us that all Christians will be tested upon their faith, because each must be tried and developed by

experience to be found worthy of a *crown of life*. “*That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ...*” (1 Peter 1:7) For those who are seeking to live and reign with Christ in God’s Kingdom, they must have a developed, crystallized character which has remained loyal to Him. This is why God permits repeated testings. He is long suffering with us, and His *compassions fail not*, but we must still show growth and the *desire* to succeed. God is not looking for a perfect performance, for none are perfect, but for a perfect *heart intention*. And, it takes time, a lifetime to develop the mature faith that God is looking for in His saints. “*But speaking the truth in love... grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ...*” (Ephesians 4:15) “*Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*” Revelation 2:10

For this reason, the Christian does not always find peace and joy at the moment of consecration. No, it takes time to learn the doctrines and principles of God’s Word.

It also takes time to practice these principles through the experiences of life. There will be struggles against the flesh—victories to win by God’s grace. Note the struggle that Paul expresses in his words: “*For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not... O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*” (Romans 7:18, 25) There is a constant conflict between the mind of the flesh and the mind of the *New Creature in Christ*. Paul’s conclusion is that the only refuge we have from our fears and the bondage of our flesh is through Christ.

“REVERENCE OF THE LORD IS THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM”
PROVERBS 9:10 (NAS)

The Apostle John gives further assurance to the developing Christian: “*My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an **advocate** with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous...*” (1 John 2:1) Though the flesh fails in having perfect trust and faith, the Christian who has given his life to God in Christ has assurance that Jesus Christ will intercede on their behalf. “*Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*” (Hebrews 4:16) To those who have fully given their hearts to God and who have accepted Christ as their *advocate*, there is an open invitation to approach the Heavenly Father in prayer for needed grace and help. There is no need of an earthly intermediary—Christ alone is our advocate.

But, praying to the Heavenly Father is not a privilege to be taken lightly. The early disciples of Jesus inquired: “*Lord, teach us to pray.*” (Luke 11:2) This was an appropriate question, as all followers of Christ should learn that there is a certain manner in which to approach the King of the Universe. Jesus responded: “*After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, **Hallowed** be thy name.*” (Matthew 6:9) Only those who

have given their heart to God have the privilege of calling Him Father, and such have the assurance that God has the affection and watch-care of a true father for his child. (See also Romans 8:13-17) But the manner of approach to our Father is one of supreme reverence—“*Hallowed be thy name.*” Some make the mistake of bringing God down to their level, but the Scriptures are very clear that “*the reverence of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.*” Psalm 111:10 NAS

FEAR AND CONCERN FOR THOSE STILL IN DARKNESS

Perhaps our fear is not for ourselves, but for our loved ones who, thus far, have failed to put their trust in God and who live contrary to His commandments. Jesus is the Christian’s advocate, but what will happen to those who have not accepted Christ now? “*And he is the propitiation for our sins: and **not for ours only**, but also for the sins of the whole world.*” (1 John 2:2) “*...we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of **all men, specially of those that believe.***” (1 Timothy 4:10) Here again, the knowledge of God’s loving character and plans gives us peace and hope. When God’s will is finally done on earth as it is being done in Heaven, then He “*...will have **all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified **in due time.*****” (1 Timothy 2:3-6) Our *due time* may be now, but others will be given a full, fair opportunity for developing Christ-likeness in the future Kingdom of God on earth.

Imagine a time when God’s loving Son—not Satan—will be the ruling prince in all the earth. (Compare 2 Corinthians 4:4 with 1 Corinthians 15:22-26) Picture the world of mankind learning righteousness in a time when Satan and his demon legion are removed from the earth. (See Isaiah 26:9 and Revelation 20) Find rest in the fact that Christ returns with *healing in his wings*—a ruler who will judge and reign with his Bride in righteousness. Review Malachi 4:2; Isaiah 35:1-10; Revelation 22:17

What a wonderful and merciful plan our benevolent Creator has provided! Christ and his Bride—sympathetic because of their experience with pain and suffering—will be the honored agents of God in bringing the remainder of mankind back into harmony with Him. (Acts 15:16, 17) At that time, those **now blinded** by error and sin will **begin to see** that the permission of evil has been for their benefit, for their development, so that their hearts might be ready and willing to accept the new government.

“*Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment. And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim, and the ears of them that hear **shall hearken**. The heart also of the rash **shall understand knowledge**, and the tongue of the stammerers **shall be ready to speak plainly.***” Isaiah 32:1-4

