

Survival 1 of 14

Time of Trouble and Survival

#0425

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This is a series on things that lie between us and the coming of Jesus. The subject will be survival.

Three years before World War II, as the storm clouds were gathering over the world, there was a man who was looking around for a place where he might retire in safety. So, looking at Europe, he said, "I think there's bound to be trouble there." He looked at other parts of the world, and something was wrong with most every place that he considered. He finally settled on an island away in the south Pacific, and there he built himself a beautiful, as he thought, a safe place of retirement.

The Island's name was Guadalcanal, you've heard about it, haven't you. Some of the bloodiest battles of World War II were fought on that island.

The man had a good idea, but his problem was that he didn't know the right place. He didn't know the program of coming events, and consequently, he wasn't able to make a wise choice.

In 2 Peter 1:19, we read about a great searchlight on the road ahead which, if you and I will pay attention to, we can avoid the mistake of this man:

"We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts" 2 Peter 1:19.

The future is always dark to the mind that cannot see ahead. It's dark in the sense that it's uncertain. People speak about a leap in the dark, but the future today is doubly dark; because everything in the world about us is dark—dark with fear, dark with tension, dark with strife, dark with uncertainty. But we have a sure word of prophecy, a more sure word of prophecy, and it shines. It's a light in a dark place. It illumines the road ahead.

So tonight, we want to focus that prophetic searchlight on the pilgrim way that lies between us and the coming of our Lord. Solomon says:

"A prudent man foresees the evil, and hides himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished" Proverbs 22:3.

Oh, I hope we'll be wise men and look ahead, and see what's ahead, and get ready for it. What do you say?

I want every one of you to be among the survivors in the great troubles that are ahead. You and I are destined to see the greatest financial panic of this world's history and not lose our riches. We shall see the greatest famine in the 6,000 years of this world's history and not starve. We shall experience the greatest earthquake of all time and not be touched by it. We shall witness the greatest war in the history of the world and not be slain in that last battle. We're going to see the greatest pestilences and not be sick. We're going to experience the greatest boycott and not be strangled by it. We're going to see and hear, and we're going to witness the greatest miracles, wrought by Satan, to deceive the world, and not be taken in the snare. Yes, we are to see and experience all these things and more in the way of trouble, and not fall or fail, provided we see what's ahead and make provision for it.

I repeat, I want you to be among the survivors. Turn to Isaiah 24. I want you to see a picture of this time that's just ahead, and watch for the survivors in this 24th chapter of Isaiah. There is a picture of the survivors here, and you can be among them.

"Behold, the LORD makes the earth empty, and makes it waste, and turns it upside down, and scatters abroad the inhabitants thereof. And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the taker of usury, so with the giver of usury to him. The land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled: for the LORD hath spoken this word. The earth mourns and fades away, the world languishes and fades away, the haughty people of the earth do languish. The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate: therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left" Isaiah 24:1–6.

These are the survivors—A few men are left. When the whole earth is burned, when from pole to pole, east to west this planet is one big bonfire, there are going to be some survivors. Do you know how to survive that fire? Stay with us through this series, and you'll know.

An earthquake such as the world has never seen is predicted in the last verses of Revelation 16. You've read of some of the great earthquakes in history: The Lisbon earthquake in 1755, the great Japanese earthquake of 1923, and others. Thousands, tens of thousands of lives lost in those great catastrophes. But O my friends, this earthquake is going to shake every mountain and every island in this world. Millions will be buried under the falling rocks and the buildings as they come crashing, tumbling down. But you can be one of the few survivors of that earthquake. Do you know the way?

Think of this economic struggle that's just ahead—this boycott that I mentioned a moment ago, you read about it in Revelation 13. How in this world, will you and I go through a time when we cannot buy or sell?

That particular point sounds easy for those who will receive the mark of the beast. But you and I won't receive it, will we? We're not planning to. How then will we get through? How will we survive? This is the problem—the problem of survival. And do not think that this problem of survival is one that we simply leave with the Lord while we take the Pullman and go to sleep and ask Him to please call us when the train pulls into Grand Central Station—oh, no.

Oh, no. There is a problem of survival in these many situations that you and I must know God's plan. If we understand His plan of survival, we can be among the survivors economically, spiritually, physically, everywhere. Be among the survivors. But notice here in our verse, the sixth verse: there will only be a few survivors.

To find a parallel for this, we must go back to that great flood that covered this earth in the days of Noah. Jesus, himself said that this time that we're talking about would be like the days of Noah, didn't he? That's what He said in Matthew 24. That was a great catastrophe. It affected everybody in this world. And there were few men left, a very few. So shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

May I remind you that provision had been made for many survivors? God, oh how happy He would have been to save everybody. He would be happy to save everybody today. He's not willing that anyone should perish. He takes no delight in the suffering or loss or death of any of His creatures; although He is long-suffering, not willing that any should perish, nevertheless:

“...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” 2 Peter 3:10.

Now my text here says the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left.

Now there's another phase to this experience of survival that must come even closer home to our hearts than anything I have mentioned so far—look at the 13th verse:

“When thus it shall be in the midst of the land among the people, there shall be as the shaking of an olive tree, and as the gleaning grapes when the vintage is done” Isaiah 24:13.

Did you ever take part in a harvest of any tree when the method of getting the fruit down was to shake the tree? Perhaps it was a pecan tree, or a walnut tree, or perhaps it was some kind of fruit. Well, over there in the Bible land, there were many olive trees. The prophet sees the coming time of test as the shaking of an olive tree. Do you know what that olive tree is? Well in Romans chapter 11, Paul uses the symbol of the olive tree to represent the true Israel of God. This is the

church, my friends. And this church, our dear church, God's true church is going to experience a most terrible shaking—a mighty shaking. And you'll notice that in the shaking there are some that won't let go.

Oh, what it will mean to live through the time when multitudes leave the church because of persecution on the one hand, or mighty miracles of deception on the other. I want to study these various things with you in this survival series. We need to know what's ahead. Our greatest peril does not lie in the earthquake or the pestilence. It does not lie in the war or economic struggle. Our greatest peril lies in this problem of how to be among those few olives that stay on the tree instead of the multitude that are shaken out. This is the problem of survival. Will you be among those that stay with the remnant church? "Oh," says one, "sure, I know I will."

You remember that just before He went to Gethsemane and the cross, our blessed Jesus gathered His little band of disciples together and told them that there was a mighty shaking and sifting just ahead for them. You remember? He said to Peter:

“...Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat” Luke 22:31.

He foretold that in the crisis hour, the pressures would be so great that they would forsake Him and flee. But what did Peter say? Ah Lord, I'll never do that.

Peter said, Lord, I will never do that. I know I will stick with You no matter how hard they shake the tree, I'll not shake loose, I'll not shake off. I'll be right there.

But what happened? When the tree was shaken He fell to the ground. Oh, what it will be in this crisis hour ahead to see men who have bourn responsibilities such as Peter bore, to see men close to the Master like John was, fail. How can you and I be sure to be among the survivors? That's what I want to study with you in this class. Oh, I want you to have a certain hope. Not a bold, boastful confidence such as Simon Peter had. That will not carry you through. But a humble, trustful faith in Jesus, and an experience such as Christ Himself had.

For concerning the remnant who go through this time of trouble ahead, it is written:

“...here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus” Revelation 14:12.

They not only keep God's commandments, they have Jesus' faith. They have the same faith He had. They will need it, for the struggles we will go through are more like what our Lord went through than any other group of people of experience down through the history of the world. So, you see this problem of survival has many facets. I pray that God will lead us step by step in this study.

On the blackboard, I've put a simple diagram representing three different steps in what lies ahead; three different periods covering the time between now and the coming of Jesus.

You'll notice here first a short time of trouble. That is spoken of in the book *Early Writings*. I wish you would study it.

“At the commencement of the time of trouble, we were filled with the Holy Ghost as we went forth and proclaimed the Sabbath more fully...

“‘The commencement of that time of trouble’ here mentioned, does not refer to the time when the plagues shall begin to be poured out, but to a short period just before they are poured out, while Christ is in the sanctuary. At that time, while the work of salvation is closing, trouble will be coming on the earth, and the nations will be angry, yet held in check so as not to prevent the work of the third angel. At that time the ‘latter rain,’ or refreshing from the presence of the Lord, will come, to give power to the Loud Cry of the third angel, and prepare the saints to stand in the period when the seven last plagues shall be poured out” *Early Writings*, pages 85–86.

These few sentences have sufficient material to study for several hours. I can only refer to them this evening. We shall study them more fully in future lessons.

But now note here is a period spoken of as a short period just before the plagues are poured out. Concerning this period, it says that Christ is still in the sanctuary. He's still in the sanctuary during this short time of trouble. He's *not* in the sanctuary when the plagues are poured out, is he?

This leads us into the second period that I want you to notice here: The great time of trouble, or the time of Jacob's trouble. Now, there are various expressions used for this, and there's a little overlapping of different ones, but for the purpose of our study this evening, let's just speak of it as the time of Jacob's trouble. If you and I are part of the Israel of God, we'll have to go through it. Jesus won't be in the sanctuary then. How are we going to get through that time without Jesus in the sanctuary?

Then after the time of Jacob's trouble, beginning with the opening of the seventh plague comes the greatest war in all history. You can read about it in Revelation 19. We'll study it more fully in another lesson.

I want you to see these three periods: The short time of trouble while Jesus is still in the sanctuary; when trouble is coming on the earth, yet the nations are held in check so as not to prevent the work of the third angel. At this time, the Latter Rain falls. At this time, the Loud Cry is given. At this time, all the true-hearted in all the other folds are gathered into the one true fold. It's going to be a wonderful time, but it's going to be a testing time. The olive tree is going to be shaken. Then comes the close of probation, and we enter into the ordeal of Jacob's trouble. Then we go into earth's last war.

Each of these periods has something in it to prepare for what follows. Even earth's last war is the preparation for our trip to Heaven. Those who survive earth's last war will take a wonderful space trip. We'll notice it another time.

But before we are prepared to enter earth's last war, we must go through Jacob's trouble and pass that test successfully. And before we can enter Jacob's trouble, we must first go through the test of the short time of trouble and experience the wonderful blessings that come during the Latter Rain and loud cry time.

But before *any* of these three times come, there is a work of preparation, and that belongs to the present hour. That belongs to tonight, my dear friends. As the sure word of prophecy focuses its searchlight upon the road ahead and shows us these three great testing periods ahead, it also shows us, thank God, how to get ready now for what is coming tomorrow.

Let's turn to Psalm 46. This is one of the great survival psalms. This psalm will be sung during the great time of trouble that's just ahead:

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof" Psalm 46:1–3.

You see, those who sing this song know where their help is, and even if everything in the world around is giving way, if the earthquake is shaking every mountain and island, they're not afraid. They are survivors, not fatalities. They live *through* these times of trouble. They don't go down.

Now I want to ask you something friend: If you were the master teacher, how would you get a group of students ready to pass a final examination like we've been looking at tonight? You know, in World War II, as our boys were called in from farm, shop, from college, from office, drafted by the millions for service overseas in all directions, they were put through a period of training. Some of you went through that, didn't you? Tell me, did the government say, "Well, these boys are going to have a hard time over in the jungles of the tropics or over in the deserts of Africa, or in other terrible scenes of warfare invading the European continent. So, since they're going to have such a hard time ahead, we'll give them an easy time here in the USA. Was that the program? Would it have been a good program? No, it would have been a very poor program. Some of you know that they even went to this point after they had trained a group of men in the experiences of the battlefield, they had them go out and go through war maneuvers in which they actually played those machine guns right over their heads, and they had to crawl on their stomachs through barbed wire entanglements, and in jungle and other places with those live bullets spraying over their heads. They knew that if they got up, they'd be killed. Occasionally one got fearful or something and did that very thing, and was killed.

You say, How terrible. Indeed. But what was the purpose of it all? To get those men ready so that when they got into battle, they wouldn't be so green that they wouldn't know what to do.

I want to ask you something friends; will the greatest General of the universe know how to train His soldiers for success in earth's last war? Will He get us ready for a time of trouble such as this world has never seen by seeing to it that we don't have any troubles at all until the last war breaks—will He?

What is the purpose then of trial? What is the purpose of the problems that beset us? Are you having any problems? Oh, someone says, if you only knew. God knows. And thank our heavenly Father; He has laid help upon One that's mighty. We have a great High Priest that has passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God.

“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.

The survivors in the great time of trouble will be those who have learned how to survive in the little troubles of daily life, in the home, in the school, in the factory, the shop, in the office, wherever the providence of God has placed you.

If you are willing, you are being taken through a training for survival.

How are you making it? Are you learning that the answer to every problem is in Jesus? Are you learning to sing this song? God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble?

Oh for this, He lives. For this, He died. For this, He rose. For this, He pleads. For this, He intercedes tonight that you and I may know Him as a present help in trouble.

Oh, may God bless us with learning this lesson now so that we may go through the greater test tomorrow, and a still greater test beyond.

And finally be among those survivors which shall travel with Him all through the universe, and tell the wonderful story of the last battle of the great controversy.

Shall we bow our heads? Dear Father, we thank Thee for light on the road ahead. We thank Thee for light in the sanctuary above. We choose to lift our eyes, and lift our hearts.

Oh, we thank Thee for a Savior who lives to make intercession for us. We know that as we place our little hands into His great hands, He will lead us and never let us go. We thank Thee in His name, amen.

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