

PROPHETIC TRUTHS FOR TODAY

Unveiling the End-Time Events

by

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CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

FORTIFIED TO LIVE IN A NUCLEAR AGE

(II Peter 3:10-13)

I AM CONVINCED that there has been no previous age with such universal fears as those that we find characterizing our time. These unprecedented fears have loomed up like a tidal wave and have swept over all of mankind.

First, there is the fear of a third world war at which time doubtlessly weapons capable of the most frightful devastation will be employed.

In such a day there will be found no place in which to hide, for the missiles may come unannounced at any moment with such rapidity that bomb shelters cannot be reached in time. Along with the destruction possible through nuclear bombs is the dreadful fallout permeating and activating the entire atmosphere which envelops the earth. And likely biological warfare would be introduced in such a war. This is no fantasy as the head of our Civilian Defense has estimated that during the first 48 hours of atomic war, it would be reasonable to expect over 70 million casualties.

Then, there is the prevailing fear of Communism.

It has already engulfed one-third of the world's population, and it is expanding. Communism has reached Cuba, the outpost in the Caribbean, and hence it may be said to have come with potency to the western hemisphere. Africa is seething with revolutionary pressures, and the fanatical brand of nationalism on that continent may explode into even worse violence than that which was seen in Congo. Wherever in stability and revolution are present there is fertile soil for Communist penetration and exploitation. The expansion of Communism during the past 40 years has been nothing less than phenomenal.

Moreover, there is also the fear of a rising crime wave with all of its frightful elements, such as, e.g., vandalism, delinquency, murder, theft, and general defiance of law.

The inroad of crime has been an alarming development. For over a decade crime has increased substantially as the F.B.I. crime clock indicates.

Another cause of fear is that of an economic depression, one which might completely overshadow that which America experienced during the years 1929-33.

In our present complex economy, where each area is tied into some other sphere, it is easily understandable how far-reaching a dislocation would result should a major depression come. Former Secretary of the Treasury George Humphrey said not long ago, “Such a depression would curl our hair.” While we have made some progress in combating inflation and recession, there is no certainty that depressions may be relegated to the past.

Lastly, in this connection, we actually fear ourselves.

It seems necessary for many states to require loyalty oaths from the public school teachers. And thousands who work in sensitive areas must get security clearance. We also have our investigating committees, the most important of which is the Un-American Activities Investigating Committee. Other governmental agencies are at work seeking to ferret out dangerous persons. We seem to fear our own resourcefulness and ability in coping with subversives and those who threaten our security.

It is impossible for you and me to run away from our fears. It is only natural that the children of the world should live in fear and even buckle under the strain of these terrifying days in which we live. But what about God’s people—you and me? Paul puts it very well in these words, “**Ye are the children of light, and the children of the day, ye are not of the night or darkness**” (I Thessalonians 5:5).

Scripturally speaking, Christians ought never to be calamity howlers or peddlers of gloom. We as the children of God are messengers of truth, and heralds of the morning. The author of the Epistle says, “**But we are persuaded better things of you**” (Hebrews 6:9). As God’s people we must not be gripped by the fears and the bewilderment which generally characterize the unsaved people around us.

CHRISTIANS NEED A SPIRIT OF UNHESITATING CONFIDENCE

The best example from the Scriptures to bolster our position in these times is the account of Paul’s magnificent attitude demonstrated at the time of his shipwreck. The grain-laden freighter on which he was sailing was overtaken by one of these violent Mediterranean storms. Following two weeks of such a hurricane, the members of the once brave crew were resigned to a certain death. The passage in Acts points out that as far as they were concerned “**all hope was gone.**” They had been reconciled to the inevitable—a watery grave in the Mediterranean Sea.

In that darkest hour of despair the apostle Paul stepped forth with these bracing words, “**Be of good cheer, for I believe God**” (Acts 27:25). In other words, he recited his creed. These are days when we, too, need to recite our creed and declare our beliefs. A pussy-footing, stammering, negative and compromising brand of Christianity simply won’t suffice in these vexing days of unbelief.

A positive message is the crying need of this hour. All is not lost: the points of the compass still point the right way; the multiplication table has not changed, and truth has not abdicated from this earth.

Many of us evangelicals vigorously disagree with the philosophy of *John Dewey*, who taught that truth is relative —not absolute. This is a dangerous concept since we cannot survive if we are stripped of the absolutes. We lift up our hearts in thanks to God that the fundamental landmarks are all there. We have this verified in the Scripture: “**Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and forever**” (Hebrews 13:8).

The Psalmist puts in almost identical words, “**But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end**” (Psalm 102:24). It is unhesitating confidence we need in these days. In the Epistle to the Hebrews we are exhorted, “**Cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward**” (Hebrews 10: 35).

WE MUST COMBAT THE SPIRIT OF FUTILITY

Many people are resigned to the position that all is futile. They are abject and seemingly swept along by a spirit of hopelessness. The dark clouds overhanging the world at present cause multitudes great anxiety and often pessimism reigns. Someone has defined a pessimist as one who blows out the light to see how dark it gets. Another one has characterized a pessimist as one who sets his alarm clock to go off at a certain hour and yet lies awake all night for fear he will not hear it ring. Perhaps a more extreme definition of a pessimist is the person who counts his fingers after shaking hands with a stranger for fear he has lost one or more.

Christians simply must be optimistic and they should repeat with emphasis the words of the Psalmist, “**The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge**” (Psalm 46:7).

God has not vacated His throne; He still superintends the affairs of the universe. We must be able to take it on the chin, as it were, despite the fact that the world is rocking and reeling as a drunken man. Indeed, all is not lost: The Holy Spirit is here and He indwells His Church and each believer. Furthermore, Jesus Christ is our Advocate ever present before the throne of God.

The primary need, it seems to me, is to combat the spirit of futility which grips multitudes, including believers.

WE MUST BE WILLING TO BE IN THE MINORITY

As Christians we need to be committed to the position of readiness in casting our lot with the minority. Let us remember:

- It was the majority that crucified our Lord.
- Usually the judgment of the majority is faulty.
- Enoch, who walked with God in one of the darkest periods of history, was in the minority.
- Elijah also was alone, humanly speaking, when he stood on Mount Carmel and conducted the test of the gods.

- Daniel, the man of God, was in the minority at the time the king's decree was published forbidding men to worship anyone but the ruler of Babylon.

Fortunately Daniel had a backbone, and not a string of cartilage which you find in some persons, figuratively speaking. Martin Luther was in the minority when he appeared before that august body at Worms. He stood his ground: "Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise, so help me God." The world has never been the same since he took that historic stand in 1520.

This seems to be a day when Christianity is popularized. People are prone to climb onto the bandwagon with the majority, whose position for the moment may be popular. Not very many are willing to **"go outside His camp bearing His reproach."**

It is exceedingly popular to federate. Ecumenicalism seems to be in the air. A massive world church is being built with the hope that it will make a major impact upon the world, and yet we find the Bible admonishing us as believers **"to come out from among them and be separate."** One simply cannot run both with the hound and the hare. The separated church, when it has been in the minority, has shined the brightest for Christ. The Church of Smyrna is a clear example of that position. The need today is to encourage God's people to demonstrate a willingness to be in the minority. I see no other alternative if we are to remain loyal to our Lord and fulfill our God-given mission on earth.

CAPACITY FOR CLEAR DISCRIMINATION

As believers we simply must be able to discriminate between the true and the false, the chaff and the wheat, also between the genuine and the spurious. We are specifically admonished by John to do this, **"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they are of God. Many false prophets have gone out into the world"** (I John 4:1).

The reason that millions of people fall for the present activities of cults and "isms" is that they lack the capacity of discernment. Never has the need been greater than now to check people's credentials. These cultists and deceivers always put forth that which seems plausible, and invariably they sugarcoat their pills of false doctrine in order that naive people may accept them. All across America I have seen once active and useful church people being swept into one or the other of these new-fangled concepts. We sorely need Paul's admonishment, **"Therefore, my beloved, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know your labor is not in vain in the Lord"** (I Corinthians 15:58).

THE NEED FOR STRONG CONVICTIONS

Coupled with the capacity for discrimination is the need of being know-so Christians. There are entirely too many in our day who prefer to be spectators, and this position they take at a time when great issues are debated and when much is at stake. In this respect they are like the people who followed the throng on Calvary's road. Most of them had no great convictions; they simply were there. The eyes of such people often become as big as grapefruit, but on the other hand, their brain becomes dwarfed and is no bigger than a split pea. Our fellowmen usually welcome a voice of certainty, and they listen to men who have the courage to say, **"Thus saith the Lord."**

The person who is sure of his subject still commands attention. Somehow, dogmatism is not a popular position in a day when theology is diluted. Many people, even preachers, do not know what they believe. Numerous questionnaires prove the lack of conviction on the part of most clergymen. Few there are who are ready to say with Paul, **“I know whom I have believed . . .”**

Many years ago I heard Admiral Richard Byrd at Detroit, Michigan, who spoke in a fascinating way concerning the Antarctic regions. He spoke with conviction because he had experienced conditions near the South Pole. We who have met Jesus Christ ought to have far greater experiences, and we should unhesitatingly declare the wonders of redemption in Him. When a friend asked the renowned scientist Michael Faraday during his last illness, “What are your speculations now?” “Speculations,” he replied with a note of indignation, “I have no speculations: I have certainties.”

A Christian who possesses convictions *will also remain a victor, never a victim*. In more than 30 years of ministry, which have taken me to most parts of this land and to some other countries, I have found a growing number of people who have become victims of fears, and not only fears, but victims of a diluted theology which has rationalized the Bible. This is unwarranted, I think, for we are called upon to be world conquerors. Rightly John says, **“Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.”** (I John 5:4). If I were to build a local church, I would ask the trustees to allow me to place over and above the outside entrance, and also above the entrance on the inside, these words, in bold letters, a Victor or a Victim. Surely this is the manner in which many people both come to and leave the church each week. It might be wholesome to dramatize the matter by placing such a statement so that every churchgoer would see it, and perhaps think seriously about that matter. There actually is no middle way or neutral position to take in the Christian life.

Now let us come back to Peter’s words, which constitute the text, **“What manner of persons ought ye to be?”** In reading the whole context, the apostle is talking about the climactic developments at the conclusion of the dispensations. Even atomic heat seems to be alluded to in the verses. It is a sobering presentation. Are we doing as Peter suggests, **“Looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God?”** Nothing so fortifies us to meet times like these as a conviction that the coming of the Lord is near. Premillennialists, and more specifically, premillennial pretribulation-rapturists, have every reason to be optimistic in these latter days.

The imminence of Christ’s return is the blessed hope; it bolsters us in facing unprecedented moments of history. Tragically, behind the pulpits, and within many seminaries today, there are a number of men who do a great deal of hedging on the subject of the Lord’s Return. We must not yield to the voices that clamor to be heard, especially those who urge us to surrender our convictions on the authority of the Scriptures and the literal, imminent coming of our Lord. Only people of great convictions and spiritual certainties are equipped to live in a nuclear age.

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