

GROWING IN GOD

PODCAST



GIG120 – The Testing Of Our Faith

Welcome to this podcast. I hope you are enjoying the podcasts. I encourage you to go back over the last few and review them, or listen to them for the first time if you missed them. When you listen to the podcasts, I ask you to please go in and give us a five-star rating, or leave a good comment about the podcast with your provider. Please share it with your friends, and send it out to those on your social media to try to spread the word. Ask people to go to our website and see the blogs and the other materials that are there and readily available for people. And of course, we always invite people to become part of the ministry by being friends and fellow workers with us in all that we are doing. We appreciate your prayers and your offerings to help us continue in the release of this word, the messages that we are being given from the Lord, and also to help in all that we are trying to do in blessing Israel and working with other nonprofits there to help people in the land of Israel.

The last few podcasts have been about the issue of the Great Tribulation. One of my concerns is the fact that I do not like the spirit of fear that is so associated with the end time in the minds of people. I think this really has been a big part of the drive for the doctrine of Pre-Tribulation Rapture, because people are afraid to be here. Some of the material surrounding that doctrine really is purposed with generating fear in the hearts of people surrounding the events of the end time; and I think that is very unfortunate, because the time of the end is the time of our greatest joy. It is the moment we are waiting for, the return of our Lord to the earth to see the establishment of His Kingdom, to see the fulfillment of the disciples' prayer – Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on this earth as it is in heaven. We are looking forward to this time, and I really do not appreciate the fact that a lot of what is out there tends to drive people away from a faith and a joy towards the days of the end time. I think it would be a privilege for us to live through the end days. Even though they include times of tribulation and persecution, they also include great times of blessing, and I have been talking about that in some of the podcasts previous to this one. But I do want to continue to emphasize the fact that in the time of tribulation, as I see it, there is both judgment that comes from God on the wicked, but it is a tremendous time of the perfecting of the saints of God, and of the finish work that the Lord has started in us.

I want to read from James chapter 1, verses 2-4. It says, "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing." I don't know about you, but that is what I am looking for in my walk with God. I want to be perfected, I want to be completed, and I want to be lacking in nothing of the things that God has made available for me. It says, "He has provided all things pertaining to life and godliness" – I want to be able to appropriate those things and walk in those things. I know that during times of testing and trouble, we as humans tend to be driven to appropriate things and move into seeking God on a level that we have not done before. And so I know these days of tribulation, that are called the Great Tribulation, will be times when we will be motivated; and I believe that with our motivation, we will have the provision of God for us. It says, "In the day you seek Me with all of your heart, I will be found of you." I think these will be days when we

seek the Lord with all of our heart. I think they will be days in which we learn to endure, and we are perfected, we are completed, and we are lacking in nothing as we move forward into the things of God.

I want to go through some Scriptures that give us a feeling for this. But one thing I just want to add, before I get into the Scriptures, is to recognize that, especially those of us who live in America, we live in a tremendous country. This country has been founded on the blood of men and women who were willing to lay down their lives that we might have and enjoy the freedoms that we do have. I know my father was one of these people. He did not die in the war, but he gave his life for this country, and many in my family did. You may have a similar experience with those in your family. And when you think of the absolute faith they had, when you think of the guts they had, this was called the Great Generation – and I know it may be called the Great Tribulation, but I'll tell you, the Great Tribulation is going to be answered by great men and women of faith. That is going to be the answer to the Great Tribulation. As this generation faced the tragedies of World War II, they answered it by putting their lives on the line; and that was for a natural nation. We, as believers, are given the opportunity to lay our lives down for the Kingdom of God, for the establishment of the nation of God that will be the eternal nation that exists from now on. And I think there is no greater value – what more could we find to invest our lives into? So, were some of those people fearful? When you think about battles like D-Day, running up the beaches of Normandy, knowing that you were probably laying your life down – very few men made it off of that beach. But yet they ran out of those landing craft and up that beach with a determination and a boldness. They were literally offering their lives for what they believed in, in this nation that we call America. And there were other nations and peoples of those nations that fought in similar battles and had the same thing. It was a great generation, and they were tremendous people who did give their lives. They gave their lives for something on a natural level, but it was their families, it was their children, it was their future – and it was the future that they might not participate in, because of laying their lives down.

When we find ourselves in these times of the end, we too need to be bold. I mean, number one, there is nothing greater through history that we could lay our lives down for than the Kingdom of God. And there is no greater reward that we could have. These people, once they paid that ultimate price, they did not have a life going forward. They had sacrificed that life that others might live a life. We, in the Kingdom, will maybe lay our lives down; but we will pick those lives up, and we will live through the days of the Kingdom and into the time of the blessing and the reward of what we have accomplished through our faith and giving our lives for the Gospel and for the Kingdom of God. So I want to encourage us – somehow, let's throw off this fear. Let's throw off the fear that is imparted through some of the “Left Behind” theory, and the way that it is presented, and all that is shown. To me, it is very, very unfortunate that we have to try to bring people to salvation through a fear doctrine. I think we should do it with a faith doctrine. And we should believe that yes, we may face things, and we may suffer, we may be tested; but we will be purged, purified and refined, and we will understand, and we will have insight, and we will live a life that is winning for the Lamb the reward of His suffering on the cross. I do not think there is anything greater that we can live for. Let's face it, you are going to die – we should die in giving our lives to the Kingdom, however that is, in whatever way we do that and find in God to do that. But one thing we should not be is fearful. That is what the Lord Himself said about the times of tribulation, in Matthew 24:6 – “Don't be fearful, do not fear.” And I just say, Lord, we prophesy and speak against the spirit of fear that has been turned loose against the body of Christ and against believers, through false doctrines and teachings of fear that have implanted almost a withdrawal in the hearts of people, and have made people back away from these times as though it is nothing but

terrifying and troublesome. It is not that. It is a privilege to walk in these days. And we ask for the privilege that we can go through these days with the kind of faith we see in our forefathers, even on a natural level, that would lay down their life for America, for other nations of the world, that peoples and families that were yet to be born could walk and live in freedom. Lord, let us at least measure up to that natural level of giving of ourselves for something and to something greater than ourselves in this world. Let our life in this world count for something more than just a simple self-satisfying, self-seeking life of fulfillment on a personal level. Let us be those who step up and bring forth the Kingdom, and do it with a faith, and do it with boldness. We ask it in the name of Yeshua HaMashiach. Amen.

We just had to get that prayer in here. God grant us boldness. I know that was what they received in the book of Acts when they were all praying for Peter; it said, "The place where they were praying was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness." I loose that in our generation, that we be filled during these days with the Holy Spirit and we begin to speak the Word of God with boldness. Because as Christ Himself said, in Matthew 24, "During these days, the gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the nations." That is going to happen, and let us be the mouthpiece for it. Amen.

Luke 12:4 says, "I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do." You know, if we die giving our lives to the Gospel under persecution, or tribulation, there is no more they can do to you. Therefore, there is nothing more to fear. And when we do give our lives, we are putting our lives in the hands of Him who is the resurrection and the life. We will find ourselves not losing our life, but gaining it in truth; and we will be brought forth in life and stand with Him in newness of life, with a new body and a new faith to live in the Kingdom with Him, ruling and reigning. Amen. I love that! Let's go down to verses 11-12: "When they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not worry about how or what you are to speak in your defense, or what you are to say; for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say." Again, do not be fearful. You say, "I don't know what we are going to do! How do I act? What do I say? I am not some big theologian, I have not memorized a thousand Scriptures." The Lord is with you. The Holy Spirit is in you. He will teach you in that very hour, He will give you what you need. He will give you the boldness, He will give you the strength, He will give you the faith, and He will allow you to stand and be His witness and His testimony in that hour.

I love these Scriptures. I am just giving you little bites of Scriptures out of different locations where we can see these things that transpire for us during these times that we will go through. Ephesians 6:10-15 is another one: "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might." We won't go through these times in our own strength, that is impossible to do; but in His strength we can. So we go through them in the strength of the Lord, in the strength of His might. We "put on the full armor of God, so that we will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness." It will be a time of darkness, but we will be the light. We are not struggling against man and mankind, we are bringing down this world and age of darkness in order that the Kingdom of Christ can manifest on the earth. So we are "against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day." You can stand – we can do this. We can draw from Him. It is His strength that we walk in. We put on the full armor that is from God, and we will resist in the evil day. "And having done everything to stand" – what does it say? "Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of

the gospel of peace.” We put on all of the provision that Christ has for us; and believe me, in these days, all of these things will be available for us. We will put them on, and we will stand in His strength, in His might. We will find the way to do His will, because the Holy Spirit will be in us to teach us and to lead us.

James 1:2-4 says, “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” These are the days of our final completion as sons of God being brought forth. Remember, He was the firstborn among many brethren; and if we suffer with Him, we reign with Him. How was He perfected? It says He was made perfect by the things that He suffered; He learned obedience, therefore He was made perfect. We will go through similar experiences. We will be made perfect in the things that we suffer, and we will learn obedience in what we go through in these days. Therefore, they are our greatest days. They are the days that are the fulfillment of our prayer, the fulfillment of our cry unto God for the walk with God that we are looking for.

Let's look at Second Timothy, because I want to recognize, like we talked about on a natural level, there were those in our ancestry who gave their lives that we might have the blessings of the nations that we live in; and there were also those in the Scriptures who did the same. We find in Second Timothy 3, Paul talking to Timothy, encouraging him. In verses 10-11, he says, “Now you,” speaking to Timothy, “Follow my teaching, my conduct, my purpose, my faith, my patience, my love, my perseverance, my persecutions and sufferings, such as happened to me in Antioch, at Iconium and at Lystra; what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord rescued me!” What an amazing thing. Here is Paul encouraging his son Timothy. And I know I did not read this exactly, I added to, for emphasis, Paul using himself as the example: “Now follow my teaching, my conduct.” So yes, I added that, but I think it is for your encouragement to see what Paul was saying – “All of these qualities, Timothy, that you have seen and experienced in me, I want you to follow them. They were done before you as an example.” And one of those is his persecutions; his perseverance, what persecutions he endured. He says, “The Lord rescued me.” That was something that Timothy was supposed to recognize and follow. Realize that when you come into times of persecutions, the Lord will rescue you in these times. That is what Paul was teaching his son. And that is what he wants to teach us. It is a lesson we should learn, that our fathers in the faith demonstrate – we see it going through all of the Scriptures. We see what the prophets lived through, we see what they suffered; but we also see how they spoke the Word of God. We see how God rescued them out of many, many things, and saved their lives at times. So we want this to be our example, that we can follow the men and women of faith that we see in the Scriptures.

He says in verses 13-14, “But evil men and imposters will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them.” Timothy, in his relationship with Paul, learned all of these things; and Paul is saying, “Now follow the example, even where it comes to tribulation and persecution.” I want us also, in this generation, as believers, to realize this. We have examples all through the Scriptures of people who suffered. One of the greatest examples is Christ Himself. As it says, He was made perfect in the things that He suffered, and He learned obedience through the things that He suffered. It was part of Christ becoming the Savior, and it is part of our becoming sons of God, those who are sons after Him. He is the firstborn among many brethren, and we are going to be made perfect and completed in these days. Do not run from these days. Do not be fearful of these days. These days in many ways are the answer to our prayers, saying, “God, we want to be perfected. Lord, we want to become. We want to be as You are. As You are, we want to be in this world; and as the Father is perfect, we long to be perfect. We long to be free of our sin and the nature of sin. We want to put on the new

self that You have provided.” We long for all of these things, and I believe that during these days, much of this will happen for us. So we need to approach these days with faith.

I have one more Scripture for us as an illustration, from one more of the apostles. I know we are all very familiar with the book of Revelation, and we read it, and most of the time it does more to scare us about these times than anything else. But again, we are throwing off that fear, and we are realizing that it is a lie and an intimidation from the wicked one, who wants us to back off and wants us to be fearful. So we read about John, the apostle, as he begins the story that he tells in the book of Revelation. He begins this way, in chapter 1, verses 9-10: “I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet,” and John goes on into the book of Revelation. But think about this – and maybe you never have before, I know it is not something that is always real in my mind – that John was writing this book of Revelation out of and because of the persecution he was under. He himself was in tribulation. He said, “I am a fellow partaker in the tribulation with you, and in the kingdom, and in the perseverance.” See, these are qualities that the apostles had, that those in the first century Church had, that those who walked with Christ as disciples had. They experienced these things. John was saying, “Listen, I am a fellow partaker with you in the tribulation.” Here he is on the isle of Patmos because of the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus that he had, and he was under persecution. And now, what is he doing, that he is sitting there on this rock being in the midst of tribulation and persecution? It says, “I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day.” I think we are going to experience times like that. You think, “Boy, we are in some of the greatest times of tribulation and persecution I have ever seen!” And what is your experience? “Being in the Spirit on the Lord's day.” Being in His Presence – that is the Lord's response to what we go through. It is our response – we begin to worship. Remember when the apostles were put in prison, what did they do? They worshiped. What happened when they worshiped? The jail cell doors were opened and they were turned loose, the irons fell off of their hands. Many things are a result of tribulation. Our growth, our walk with Him expanded in a way of living in the Spirit of the Lord.

As we end this podcast, I want us to remember, there are days of tribulation that are coming. There are days of persecution that we will probably face as the body of Christ. But these will be some of the greatest days of the perfecting of our hearts and spirits; the final work of salvation in our lives can be found during these days. The Presence of the Lord, and us living in His Spirit, can be a very real place for us. To abide in His Presence, it says, “Enter your secret place and close the door behind you.” We shut ourselves in with Him, and we dwell with Him, and we cry out to Him, we worship Him, we pray unto Him; and He will be with us. He said, “I will be with you till the end of this age.” And we believe that. Amen.