

Be Faithful to the End

Roger Kendall—November 16, 2013

Where are we in time and circumstances in the world? We truly get the impression that we're on the edge and are in difficult times. We don't like to focus on this. We like the good times! We like the peace! The harmony! The good things!

Yet, as we focus on world news, we have to realize that the circumstances that we're living under now are really quite temporary. In this past week there was a test the whole system. I don't know the details of that. We know that there are many circumstances that could become very serious, including the crash of the dollar, the financial crisis that we're facing.

All the experts are saying that it's not a matter of if, but *when!* What is holding up our economy? The stock market just reached a new high this week, and you look at the price of gold being the lowest in the last three years, it doesn't make any sense.

The administration is saying that the economy is growing, it's good, it's strong, but why are we seeing all these businesses close around the country? Why are people so anxious about ObamaCare? Indeed, it appears that ObamaCare could very well be the linchpin that could truly unravel the financial system, the economics. It could be China; could pull the plug on Treasuries—it could be a crisis in the Middle East, Iran. We look at circumstances in Europe. The world in is in a mess!

It's truly a time of, as Paul said in 2-Tim. 3, we're at the time of the end, living in perilous times. We can see that difficult times are coming! We know that it's something that we have to prepare for. We cannot live in a vacuum and keep our heads in the sand. We have to realize that we're going to go through some difficult times as God's people. So, what lies ahead for us, in terms of what we need to be doing? We need to be prepared spiritually, but the country continues to fall deeper into this abyss. It's not real! It's absolutely deceptive! It's beyond being able to unravel all of the things that are going on in the country.

We can expect that we will be coming under trials and difficulties and greater tests of our faith. Our *faith and faithfulness* will be tested because we're human. We're living in very abundant times; this is a time of abundance. None of us are lacking in food, shelter or basic commodities that we need on a daily basis; we're doing well.

- What if the grid goes down?

- What if we find that we no longer can depend on the electricity coming into our house?
- What if we find that the dollar that we have in our pocket is not worth a great deal?

It's very frightening! We're living in an age of *fear* in that respect. God does not want us to be fearful and afraid! He wants us to be strong! He wants us to be truly faithful to Him.

As a consequence of what's happening in the world, this Scripture is very appropriate to begin my message today:

1-Corinthians 16:13: "**Be watchful...**"—of what? We have to be watching world events, but we also have to be watching our *spiritual condition!*

- Are we close to God?
- Are we strong in the faith?

"...**stand fast in the faith...**"—meaning to be faithful to God; to not draw away from our worship and serving to Him.

"...**conduct yourselves with courage...**" We need courage; we need the strength of the Holy Spirit of Christ in us to remain strong.

"...**Be strong in the Lord.**" This is a message for us today. We need to truly keep this in the forefront of our mind.

Verse 14: "**Let everything you do be done in love.**" That's the foundation, the basis of how we're going to make it through the next few years.

It's through the love of God and our devoted love for Him, and that we are going to be faithful and not pull away and go back into the world, or literally 'lose it' in that sense.

God is watching out for us, brethren! He's there to protect, watch over and provide. But we, too—as God's people—must remain totally committed to God. **Be faithful to the end!** That is something that we all are striving and doing. I'm not giving this message because I feel a lack of faith; but because we're going to be tested! The life that we are living is going to become a thing of the past.

- if we do not have *faith* in God
- if we do not have the *faithfulness* to keep doing what God would have us be doing

We could lose that relationship that we have with Him!

We're going to see that this could happen to anybody in the world, or even one with God's Holy

Spirit. What's the guarantee? *It's the day-by-day staying close to God, loving God, doing His will!* We all have free will, choice to make. We need to be serving God!

Christ asked a very profound question in Luke 18; this is something we need to look at. This is talking about God executing judgment and vengeance for us as His elect.

Luke 18:7: "And shall not God execute vengeance for His elect, who cry out to Him day and night, and patiently watch over them?" We know that God is watching over us. He will avenge the elect!

Verse 8: I tell you that He will execute vengeance for them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man comes, **shall He find the true faith** on the earth?" Why does Christ say this? *Toward the end of the age, faith is going to be in short commodity relative to God the Father and Jesus Christ!*

We're coming on a time of apostasy that the world has never seen before. We're looking at a generation who doesn't know God; who don't know Jesus Christ. All that the world's churches are doing is *playing at religion*.

Where is the true faith? *In the people of God!* But this is applying to us, as well. Will He find *true faith* in the people of God who are on the earth at the time that He returns? It's kind of a question that we need to take to heart with in terms of: What about us?

Having *true faithfulness* is an essential part of our covenant with God. We do know that faith is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. We're going to find out what faith is, but also what faithfulness really entails. Let us remember that if we're not faithful to God, He will forsake us *if* we forsake Him.

Matthew 10:32 is a warning to the world, but also to us, as well: "Now then, whoever shall confess Me before men, that one will I also confess before My Father Who *is* in heaven. But whoever shall deny Me before men, that one will I also deny before My Father, Who *is* in heaven" (vs 32-33). The onus is on us, brethren, not on God.

God is going to be faithful. God is going to do exactly what He's promised to do. What about us? I don't know if you struggle with this, but the point is: What will you do when things really fall apart—as far as the physical world is concerned?

I don't want you to dwell on this, because we need courage, we need to go forward with a positive frame of mind. But let's realize that faithfulness is a description of one who *endures to the end!*

Faithfulness is something that we need to really make sure that we have plenty of. *Faithfulness* is something that is ongoing; it's a dynamic thing.

Matthew 24:13: "But the one who **endures to the end**, that one shall be saved." Patiently keep going; one who remains faithful. We could say, 'the one who remains faithful to the end, that one shall be saved.'

A sign of those who are with Jesus when He returns will be *faithfulness*. Revelation 17:14: "These... [the beast and kings of the earth] ...will make war with the Lamb, but the Lamb shall overcome them; for He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and **those who are with Him**... [the saints of God; resurrected and are with Christ] ...**are called, and chosen, and faithful**." Three aspects:

1. *called* by God
2. *chosen* because we choose to come into covenant with God
3. *faithful* to the end

Let's look at *faithfulness and being faithful*. Here is a Scripture dealing with the faithful servant:

Matthew 24:42: "Watch, therefore, because you do not know in what hour your Lord is coming." Christ is saying to be *spiritually prepared! Watch! Be aware! Be alert as to what is going on!*

Verse 43: "But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have been watching, and would not have allowed his house to be broken into." An analogy of not just our physical house, but maybe our thinking in our minds, breaking in and challenging us.

Verse 44: "Therefore, you also be ready. For the Son of man is coming at a time that you do not think." One who is faithful is *prepared; looking ahead! He is watching!*

Verse 45: "Who then is the faithful and wise servant whom his lord has set over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed *is* that servant, whom his lord when he comes shall find so doing" (vs 45-46).

Brethren, this means that we have to continue to keep on keeping on, seeking the Kingdom of God with all of our heart, with all of our mind, and that has to be in the forefront of our mind day-by-day, hour-by-hour. Our prayers need to be going up to God on a daily basis, if not an hourly basis, so that we're close to Him, realizing that God is faithful to us, and we have to be sure, on a daily basis, that we're faithful to Him.

In Gal. 5:22 are the fruits of the Holy Spirit and *faith* is listed. Many modern translations render the Greek word ‘*pistis*’ for *faith* or *faithfulness*. I want to draw a distinction here. *Faithfulness* is a different aspect of faith. Hopefully we can understand that as we go forward. The root of faithfulness is *faith*, but the fruit of faith is being *faithful*.

This is *Strong’s* word #4102, and Strong discusses this. The meaning of this word by association can mean:

- *conviction* of belief
- *constancy*—being constant and not changing
- *loyalty* to a cause
- *trustworthiness*

All of these aspects are an extension of what the foundation of faith is. These are aspects of someone who is faithful.

Hebrews 11:1—the definition of faith: “Now, faith is **the substance of things hoped for, and the conviction of things not seen.**” Faith is:

- belief in God
 - ✓ *we believe God*
 - ✓ we believe His Word
 - ✓ we believe His promises
 - ✓ we believe in the salvation of Jesus Christ through His shed blood
- trust in God
 - ✓ with our very being
- confidence in God
 - ✓ that God will do what He has said He will do
 - ✓ that we should not fear that God will abrogate or take away whatever He has promised to do for us

Faith can be said to be the root of the *fruit of faithfulness*. Being faithful is a commitment, loyalty, being actively pursuing commitment to loving God on a daily basis; obeying His Word and actively doing His will.

- ***faith*** is the ‘substance’
- ***faithfulness*** is the fruit, which comes forth from one who is being faithful

Hebrews 10:22: “Let us approach *God* with a true heart...” What is a true heart? *One who is sincerely committed to God, filled with the Holy Spirit and truly looks to God!* A true heart! Sincere! Not with hypocrisy or any kind of things of the world.

“...with full conviction of faith... [that is being faithful] ...our hearts having been purified from a wicked conscience, and our bodies having

been washed with pure water” (v 22). Our minds have been cleared; we’ve been baptized in the water of baptism, but we’ve also been washed clean by the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

Verse 23: “Let us hold fast... [being faithful] ...without wavering *to* the hope *that* we profess, for He Who promised *is* faithful.”

Brethren, we see that we have an obligation, and again, it’s something that we just can’t take for granted, because in the days ahead it will be challenged. Our faithfulness will be challenged because the dark powers of this world—the deceptive nature of the world we live in—is going to come upon us like a tsunami! Hopefully, we will all be secured in the very hands of God. God has promised to be there for us.

Another way of looking at faithfulness is a characteristic of *spiritual maturity*. Faithfulness is developed over time. It’s not something that you didn’t have one day and have the next. It’s something that builds *in* us. It’s a part of *being converted*. The more our minds are converted, the more we put God first in our lives in everything, and we will then develop and grow in the fruit of *faithfulness*. It goes hand-in-hand.

- never fall away
- never go back into the world
- never look to our own resources to save us

1-Corinthians 15:57: “But thanks *be* to God, Who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” And praise be to God that we have victory through Christ.

Verse 58: “So then, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable...” In other words, we are standing on the Rock and nothing will move us off that Rock. We’re standing fast!

“...always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in *the Lord*” (v 58). Brethren, this really focuses on the very nature of being faithful.

There are many examples in Scripture that we can look to of men of God who were faithful to the end. We can look to the examples of:

- Noah
- Moses
- David
- the prophets
- the disciples

I. Jesus Christ:

But the very best model we have of faithfulness is God the Father and Jesus Christ. They

are the example, the model, of *faithfulness*. They are committed, loyal, dedicated to bringing us into Their family; to make us a part—sons and daughters—of the great God of creation.

These Scriptures just help us and reassure us—though we be weak—without strength physically. Brethren, we need to be strong spiritually. Focusing on *God's faithfulness*. Many verses in the Psalms show that God is a *faithful* God.

Hebrews 6:17: “In this way God, desiring more abundantly to show the heirs of the promise the **unchangeable nature** of His own purpose, confirmed *it* by an oath.” God is ‘the same yesterday, today and tomorrow.’ He changes not! His character, His way, His very nature is unchangeable.

Verse 18: “So that by two immutable things, in which *it was* impossible *for* God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to lay hold on the hope *that has been* set before *us*; which *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both secure and steadfast, and which enters into the *sanctuary* within the veil; where Jesus has entered for us *as* a forerunner, having become a High Priest forever according to the order of Melchisedec” (vs 18-20).

These Scriptures should give us a great deal of hope and encouragement. When times get difficult and perilous God is there. He does not lie! He will preserve us! The Scriptures are full of the fact that when the world is going to hunger and going through hunger and difficulties and starvation, we will be fed! We will be protected under the very wings of the mother hen covering her chicks. God is going to watch over us.

Read Psa. 91 and draw in the confidence and trust that we can have in God's Word. Jesus Christ truly was a faithful servant Who came with a message, a purpose to become the Lamb of God, to lay down His life for humanity, to cover the sins of the whole world. We can read about the faithfulness of Jesus Christ:

Hebrews 3:1: “Because of this, Holy brethren, partakers of *the* heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of *the faith* we profess—Jesus Christ, Who was faithful to Him... [God the Father] ...Who appointed Him, even as Moses *was* in all His house” (vs 1-2).

Verse 6: “But on the other hand, Christ *was faithful* as *the* Son over His own house; Whose house we are, **if we are truly holding fast** the confidence... [It's conditional. Are we holding fast? doing our part?] ...and rejoicing of the hope firm to *the* end.”

This focuses on the faithfulness of Christ, but as Paul points out: Are we holding fast? Are we doing our part?

II. Abraham:

We know the faithfulness of Abraham, *the father of the faithful*. Let's turn to the book of faith, dealing with the *faithful*.

Hebrews 11:8: “By faith Abraham, being called *of* God to go out into the place, which he would later receive for an inheritance, obeyed and went, not knowing where he was going. By faith... [being faithful] ...he sojourned in the land of promise, like a foreigner, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the joint heirs of the same promise; for he was waiting for the city with *the* foundations of which God is *the* Architect and Builder” (vs 8-10).

One of the things we need to recognize is that Abraham's faith and faithfulness was tested. God tested Abraham in Gen. 22. What did God tell Abraham to do? He said, ‘Take your only begotten son Isaac and take him to Mt. Moriah. I want you to sacrifice him as burnt offering to Me.’

A shocking thing that God said to Abraham, did Abraham argue with God? Did he say, ‘No, I'm not going to do it'? **NO! He trusted God!** He had faith! Abraham *showed his faithfulness* by doing what God had requested that he do. **So, faith reproduced faithfulness by actively doing what God requires!**

We know the story, as he was about to raise the knife to kill Isaac, the voice came, ‘Abraham! Abraham! Do not lay your hand upon the boy, for now I know your heart is faithful to Me.’ In other words, *then* God **KNEW** that Abraham was going to be faithful! What was more precious *physically* to Abraham other than his marriage? **His son!** That was the most precious thing that he had, and he was willing to give it up for God! That's the message for us, brethren! **Are we willing to give up everything for God?**

III. Moses:

Moses had an incredible life, Hebrews 11:23: “By faith Moses, after he was born, was hidden three months by his parents because they saw *that* he was a beautiful little child; and they did not fear the king's decree. By faith Moses... [being faithful] ...after becoming a great *leader*, refused to be called *the* son of Pharaoh's daughter” (vs 23-24).

He could have chosen to go the way of opulence, of great power, wealth and influence in the world. But instead he chose to be with his people

and to be God's servant.

Verse 25: "Choosing to suffer affliction with the people of God, rather than to enjoy *the* temporary pleasure of sin; for he esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt because **he was looking intently to the reward**" (vs 25-26). That's what we need to keep our eyes on.

When things get bad, don't focus on that, but focus on what God has in store for us in the Kingdom of God. That's what martyrs and those of old went through. They had to go through this many times, and they kept their eye on the kingdom.

Verse 27: "By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he persevered, as if *he were* seeing the *One Who is* invisible." That's an interesting Scripture. In his mind he could see God!

Verse 28: "By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not slay them. By faith they passed through the Red Sea..." (vs 28-29).

IV. **Joshua:**

You can read the other examples here, incredible examples of faithfulness. I was going to take time to go through the life of Joshua, because Joshua carried on after Moses. He was an incredible individual; a man of faith and truly faithful to God when many others fell away and were not faithful.

- Joshua believed God
- he served God
- he never turned in any way

Through his whole life he never faltered at any time; he kept his eye on God and on doing His will. Notice at the end of his life a very profound statement:

Joshua 24:14: "Now, therefore, **fear the LORD, and serve Him in sincerity and truth**. And put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River, and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you live. But **as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD**" (vs 14-15).

He gave a witness to the elders at that time, and those elders were probably faithful to a degree, but the subsequent generations of the children of Israel did not remain faithful. They fell away! They failed to see God in their lives, the relevance of serving and worshiping God; they broke the covenant.

V. **Apostle Paul:**

Paul was an apostle that God used mightily to bring the Gospel to the Gentile world, as well as to us today through the Scriptures that he wrote. He was faithful and true to his God in all that he did.

- yes, he got discouraged
- yes, he was down at times

But he always recognized that God was there for him, and that he could have confidence in that.

2-Tim. 3 is one of the last books that Paul wrote before he was martyred. He gave his life for his faith. 2-Timothy 3:10—Paul is talking to Timothy: "But you have closely followed **my doctrine, conduct**..."—how he lived his life; he set the example.

"...**purpose**..."—to preach Christ; to teach Christ to the people; to serve and love Christ.

"...**faith**..."—you have followed my faithfulness

"...**patience, love, endurance**" (v 10). These are all qualities of one who is faithful.

Verse 11: "**Persecutions and sufferings**..." You can read in 2-Cor. 12 where you can see all the sufferings that Paul went through. He went through so much suffering, abuse and persecution that only through God's grace he survived. God kept him alive to accomplish His purpose.

Again, he's an example of one we can truly look to in having the inner faith, devotion and commitment that we all need to have.

- Will we endure to the end?
- Will we have faith when things go bad?
- Are we willing to give up all things?
- Are we willing to endure all things for Jesus Christ?

Christ asks us that very same question. We had to count the cost before we were baptized. We had to acknowledge that we desired to have a relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ. We had to count the cost, and part of that cost is to be willing to serve God to the end of our very lives; be willing to serve God and love Him above all else. Christ reiterates this:

Matthew 10:37: "The one who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and the one who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me."

Brethren, we can look at examples and occasions when some day this may be challenged: Do we love God more than our own families? Is He first in our lives?

Verse 38: “And the one who does not take up his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me.” The cross that we bear is not only the trials and tribulations, but we have to put to death the carnal nature that is within us. Also, we have bear the persecutions and the trials that may come upon us because we are true to God—*faithful!*

Verse 39: “The one who has found his life shall lose it... [This is a very interesting way to put it. When you find your life, you lose it] ...and the one who has lost his life for My sake shall find it.” **Are we willing to give up everything for God?** That’s what this means. When you think about somebody finding their life in the world, what do they find? *They find wealth, power, pride!* They’ve got it ‘made.’ That’s when you find your life, when everything is going smoothly in your physical life. That’s when you find your life. He who finds that and puts it *ahead of their true worship* of God is going to lose their life.

It’s one who will *lay down his life* and give up all things to God is the one who will stand on the Sea of Glass at the end-time. God will test us.

1-Peter points out that the testing of our faith is a good thing. It’s not pleasant, but something that will prove to us and to God that we will endure, stand fast, and that our commitment to God is more than skin deep. It’s to the very central core of who we are.

1-Peter 1:6: “In this you yourselves greatly rejoice...”—in the promises of God, that we’ve been sanctified and we are truly a part of God’s eternal family. That’s what we rejoice at.

“...though for the present, if it is necessary, you are in distress for a little while by various trials” (v 6). Suffering, trials of finances, family, loss of a loved one. There are many trials that we go through, and we suffer in this world. But it’s for our good, brethren, because by suffering in the flesh we understand that the true riches are spiritual, not physical. ***The true riches of God are spiritual!***

Verse 7: “In order that the proving of your faith...” That’s what trials do. If we respond to trials in a proper way, we become stronger, not weaker. We become stronger in faith and belief.

“...which is much more precious than gold that perishes...” (v 7). That’s the physical side. The physical gold is going to perish.

“...though it is being tested by fire, may be found unto praise and honor... [talking about the very character that’s in us; through testing our character is being tested] ...and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ; whom, not having seen, you love...” (vs 7-8). Have we seen Jesus Christ? *I*

have not seen Jesus Christ! I have not seen God the Father! Do you believe? Yes, we do! We believe because of the faith in us, because God has converted us and given us His Spirit! We believe!

“...in Whom, *though* at the present time you do not see Him, you believe, *and* rejoice with unspeakable joy...” (v 8). That’s the heart and core of our relationship with God: joy, peace, love:

“...and filled with glory; *and are* receiving the end of your faith—*even the* salvation of your souls” (vs 8-9).

Brethren, we can truly understand that the trials are for our good. But notice what it says in 1-Cor. 10. *God will not test us beyond what we are able to bear!* That’s a promise! That’s one of the promises that God has given us; that we can take to the bank and believe in.

1-Corinthians 10:13: “No temptation has come upon you except what is common to mankind...” We cannot say that we’re being sorted out and not suffering those trials.

“...For God, Who *is* faithful...” Again another expression of God’s faithfulness

“...**will not permit you to be tempted beyond what you are able to bear**; but with the temptation, He will make a way of escape, so that you may be able to bear *it*” (v 13).

- God the Father is there for us!
- Christ is there for us!

When we go through a trial—even though we feel that we’re at the bottom of the barrel, even though things are going horribly bad—***know that God loves you and He is there for you!***

All we need to do is to continue to honor God, praise God and stay close to Him, looking to Him to fill us with His love and to be able to stand before a trial when it comes.

1 Corinthians 13:7: “*Love* bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, **endures all things.**” If we look at endurance, patience, and we look at *love produces the faithfulness*. As we grow in conversion and the love of God, we will become more faithful and dedicated and nothing else will take precedence over God. These are things that we need to truly keep in mind.

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Christ said, ‘Will He find faith on the earth?’ Is it possible, even for us, to fall away? *Yes!* We don’t have to fear that as long as day-by-day we stay close to God. But there are factors that will cause a person to fall away from the faith. I’m talking about one who is converted, who has the Holy Spirit, but later fell

away. This can occur.

You start out very strong, dedicated and zealous. We can look back on our own experience with brethren in the Church, and we can know the fruits of a person's life. We can see that. We can't know their hearts necessarily. We saw individuals who were moved by the Holy Spirit, but where are they today. **Many have given up! Many have fallen away!** We don't know for sure if they had God's Spirit, but we assume that many of them did.

Why did they fall away? **They let something come between them and God!** Something came between them and caused them to divert their attention and focus on something else.

- Was it their own life?
- Was it their own family?
- Was it because of disagreement?

It can be so many different factors! But one factor is, that is very clear, the first point that can pull someone away from being faithful:

Points that will pull you away from Christ

1. cares of this life and the deceitfulness

Matthew 13:22: "And the one who was sown among the thorns is the one who hears the Word, but the **cares of this life and the deceitfulness** of riches choke the Word, and it becomes unfruitful."

Again, if we want to save our physical lives, we shall lose it. That's what this is saying, if we focus on the cares of the world. God knows we have need for food, shelter, clothing; things that we have need of to preserve our physical lives. That's what is not is being focused on here. But the cares of this life is all that goes in there, and pride and vanity, etc.

The best example of this that we can find in the Bible is probably Solomon. The cares of his life and the deceitfulness of riches and pride led him away from a close, personal relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ. Of course, Jesus Christ was the God of the Old Testament, the great 'I AM.'

In the beginning Solomon prayed to God. He said, 'God, I am a child and I don't know if I am to go to the left or the right. I am weak, I need Your help. I want to serve You and do Your will.' God was moved by Solomon's dedication, and God gave him wealth, power, wisdom; gave him everything possible that anybody could ever wish or hope for. He had everything! Yet, with that is there not a possible curse behind having everything?

Indeed, he was on the top of the world. He had peace. That whole period of time was like the Millennium. He had 700 wives and 300 concubines.

He really was 'living it up'! He had everything!

What happened to Solomon? **He turned his heart away from God!** Just think about all the family problems he must have had. But more than that, he was building all kinds of projects. He was out there spending his gold, doing this and that. He was just busy doing everything.

Then his wives said, 'You've got your temple to your God, I want my temple for my god.' So, he had temples of all the pagan gods all around. Didn't listen to the inner-conscience that was from God. He followed *his own will* (1 Kings 8-11). Because of Solomon's unfaithfulness, God tore the kingdom apart from under Solomon's son Rehoboam.

This is all to very reminiscent of what we find in Rev. 3:15. We talked about the Church of Laodicea who were very much concerned with this world and the abundance. They were focused more on the good life that God had provided, and they were not focused on the *true riches*. This is dealing with the Church of Laodicea. We know their malady, their disease of lukewarmness:

Revelation 3:15: "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot; I would *that* you be *either* cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and *are* neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of My mouth. For you say, 'I am rich, and have become wealthy, and **have need of nothing**'..." (vs 15-17)—including spiritual help from God!

Today we have Wal-Mart. We can go to the store, our refrigerators are stacked full, we've got clothes galore—we've got everything we should ever need. Generally speaking we're doing pretty well. Don't get 'Laodiceanitus'—being concerned with too much wealth. It's not wrong to be rich, but that it's first in your life it becomes sin! 'Laodiceanitus' is the inflammation of your heart that gives rise to greed (it's a word I made up).

We know the rest of the story, and in v 19, Christ says: "'As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore, **be zealous and repent.**" To seek out the salve so that you might see and pursue the *true riches*, and put on clothing that you would not be naked. In other words, this is pretty revealing of the spiritual condition that comes because of the cares for the world, and cares for the riches of the world.

2. Persecution and Trials

We've covered that. In Matt. 13:20-21 A person receives the Truth, but then when trials and persecution came they fell away. In other words, they took their eyes off God and Jesus Christ! It's

the last thing you want to do! You want to be in prayer and close to Him so that He will give you strength to endure the trial. If you take your eyes off the kingdom and off your goal, you're going to ebb back into trusting in yourself. Paul writes to the Church at Rome and he talks about what would separate a person from God; take them away and cause them to be unfruitful and unfaithful.

Romans 8:35: "What shall separate us from the love of Christ? *Shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?" Quite a list of trials and difficulties!

Verse 36: "Accordingly, it is written, 'For Your sake we are killed all the day long; we are reckoned as sheep for *the* slaughter.'" That is, as God's people we will become enemies of the world. We will become targets. We need to recognize that our faith needs to be kept strong!

Notice that Paul says to be encouraged, v 37: "But in all these things we are more than conquerors... [we have victory through Jesus Christ] ...through Him Who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers..." (vs 37-38). This is talking about the demonic forces of Satan and his world; the dark forces of wicked places upon the earth.

"...nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which *is* in Christ Jesus our Lord" (vs 38-39).

Brethren, this is pretty strong encouraging language. If the love of God is in us and it's strong, and we're devoted, converted, Paul says, God will not allow anyone to take us out of His hand. But we have to be aware that we can take ourselves out of God's hand if we choose. None of us want, nor even contemplate, that.

3. Deception

Deception is one of the major weapons that Satan will use against us. If you look at the world today, it looks surreal. There's so much deception, corruption. I'm talking about the way people live today. Is it really for real out there, what's going on? It's a great deception! Beyond that, we know that Satan is going to bring about a great deception. Matt. 24 Christ warns us not to be deceived; He's talking to us as Christians.

Matthew 24:4: "Then Jesus answered *and* said to them, 'Be on guard, so that no one deceives you.'" That is leads you in a path of destruction through lies and deception.

Verse 24: "For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and they shall present great signs and wonders, in order to deceive, if possible, even

the elect."

That jumps off the page at me because if we're not doing our part in holding fast, then truly we may be deceived in some way. What's coming at us with deception, we haven't seen anything, yet! I believe that Satan has things up his sleeve that will truly confound the world!

2-Thess. 2 deals with the coming of the antichrist, the one who will come into the temple of God and who will say that he *is* God. This is part of the great deception that is coming upon the world. Satan is going to present himself as being the true God.

2-Thessalonians 2:8: "And then the lawless one will be revealed (whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth, and will destroy with the brightness of His coming); *even* the one whose coming is according to *the* inner working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders" (vs 8-9).

Brethren, we haven't seen the power that's going to be manifested in the world coming up. It's going to carry the great apostasy of the whole world. The lie will be that God did not create us, but we came from some alien forces out in the vast universe, and that, indeed, we can be changed through transhumanism to truly never die. This lie is coming! That we will, through transhumanism—which is the interface, computerized, with the human mind. Just go online and put in 'transhumanism.' It's genetic manipulation! It is truly 'now technology,' artificial intelligence. It's enhanced humanity! But it's something that is not human; it's a hybrid.

What's going on in the scientific, technological developments will really have a direct impact with the coming of the *mark of the beast*. The *mark* is far more than just being a chip in you mind to allow you to buy and sell. That's just the surface. The *mark* will control your mind; it will take away your free will. You will then be a true slave of the rich men of the earth, when you take the mark of the beast. That is, of course, Satan the devil.

The deception that's coming upon us is going to be so profound that it's going to 'blow us away' if we're still here. We don't know that; we just have to endure to the end.

I want to encourage you, brethren, because what I've been talking about is not very uplifting and enlightening. But we need to be aware! We need to stand guard! How can we look at ourselves and measure faithfulness? I'm going to give you a very short list of things to think about. Faithfulness is:

1. being zealous for God's kingdom
 - to pray and study daily

- to apply it in our lives
- 2. stay close to God
 - in love
 - in truth
 - in righteousness
 - walk by faith, believe in hope and live in love
 - stand for the Truth

Brethren, if we're doing these things we're being faithful and we'll stand in the Tribulation

- 3. eliminate fear, doubts and anxieties
 - trust in God
 - love casts out all fear

We do that through prayer, trusting in God

- 4. put on the armor of God daily
 - Eph. 6

The shield of faith will guard us from the fiery missiles from Satan the devil. We need to have faith and be faithful!

- 5. be steadfast and never compromise the Word of God
 - never use the Word of God in a deceitful way
 - be steadfast
 - hold fast
 - never compromise the Truth
- 6. Watch and be not deceived—*be aware!*
- 7. Endure all trials and be faithful to the end!

2-Thessalonians 3:3: “But the Lord is faithful, Who will establish you and keep *you* from the evil one.” We can be thankful that God will keep us from the evil one: Satan the devil. God is faithful, and that's what He's promised to do. You can take that to the bank—***believe!***

Verse 4: “Now concerning you, we trust in *the* Lord that you both practice and will be practicing the things that we command you.” ***Be faithful!***

Verse 5: “**And may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the endurance of Christ.**”

Does not Christ live in us? Ask God to fill us with His Holy Spirit and then we will have the *endurance of Christ* within us. We are the temple of the Holy Spirit and we can persevere and endure to the end.

Brethren, this is a message that we need to review and understand, because the days are coming when this will be paramount. We need to be strong and have good courage! See the troubling days ahead and

- be faithful in all things

- love God
- do His will
- be serving Him

Let's keep on keeping on and being faithful to the end!

Scriptural References:

- 1) 1 Corinthians 16:13-14
- 2) Luke 18:7-8
- 3) Matthew 10:32-33
- 4) Matthew 24:13
- 5) Revelation 17:14
- 6) Matthew 24:42-46
- 7) Hebrews 11:1
- 8) Hebrews 10:22-23
- 9) 1 Corinthians 15:57-58
- 10) Hebrews 6:17-20
- 11) Hebrews 3:1-2, 6'
- 12) Hebrews 11:8-10, 23-29
- 13) Joshua 24:14-15
- 14) 2 Timothy 3:10-11
- 15) Matthew 10:37-39
- 16) 1 Peter 1:6-9
- 17) 1 Corinthians 10:13
- 18) 1 Corinthians 13:7
- 19) Matthew 13:22
- 20) Revelation 3:15-17, 19
- 21) Romans 8:35-39
- 22) Matthew 24:4, 24
- 23) 2-Thessalonians 2:8-9
- 24) 2-Thessalonians 3:3-5

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Galatians 5:22
- Psalm 91
- Genesis 22
- 2 Corinthians 12
- 1 Kings 8-11
- Matthew 13:20-21
- 2-Thessalonians 2:3-7, 10-11
- Ephesians 6

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