

Troubled Times (Go To Meeting) Roy Assanti—May 7, 2022

At this current time we observed the news; we can't get away from it watching the television. We can see trouble is brewing in the world. Where is the situation currently heading in the Ukraine? *It can go either way! It seems troubling!*

There is America backing and encouraging and supporting. We then have the U.S. sending arms to a former Russian communist state. So, how does Russia look at it. You can see the tensions in world events, world situations that we currently go through.

- What if the reverse was the case?
- What if Russia was sending arms to a seceding American state?

We need to see it from all angles!

What's going to happen with communist China? *The population there is 1.5 billion!* There is an ominous silence. It's almost like a power keg that can just explode. We can see it just continuing, and there's an uneasy silence.

I don't know if I'm absolutely, entirely correct in American politics, but we see from this side of the world (Australia) a perceived weakness in the American leadership. We don't see a strong President. So, it's concerning!

These are times of potential extreme trial, potential tribulation and war. We don't know, anything can happen. Is this or not the times that we have been living in?

Matthew 24:6: And you shall hear of wars and rumors of wars. See *that* you do not let *these things* disturb you. For it is necessary *that* all *these things* take place, **but the end is not yet**.... [this is what's going to happen]: ...For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines and pestilences and earthquakes in *different* places. Now, all these *things are* the beginning of sorrows" (vs 6-8).

This is not a time for spiritual sleep. It is not a time for slumber. Yet, nothing happens and we're here. There are urgent times ahead of us, realize it or not! There are challenges ahead right now. Looking at the personal and individual level, coming down a little to the personal, the individual, we all have faults, all of us. We all have weaknesses; yet, there is encouragement.

We need to seek encouragement. There are many examples of encouragement in God's Word. We need it especially as we go through these times,

as we have observed.

What I'm going to do is focus on an example of a character, an individual who likewise had faults, like we all have; who he overcame them. And we need to overcome, as well.

His original name actually translates as *supplanter!* One who takes by the heel, a shyster, a back-stabber! It more identifies his natural slant of character, a devious schemer! Yet, he was called of God. He had an incredible high calling. We understand that God does call the 'weak of the world.' **But not to stay weak!** He had a high calling!

There was a spiritual gold nugget of character potentially there in his weakness. There was a big plus in his character. It was determination that developed. It was a fervent desire. Why? *For an inheritance*; something of incredible value, and this led him to change, just like we need to change continually!

His inheritance was one that turned out to be an eternal, spiritual inheritance. The promise to us is likewise an eternal, spiritual, priceless inheritance, as well. You and I need to take note. It is imperative that we internalize this fact; that we are in a similar position now. Such personal and individual promises have been made, clearly made to us, clearly documented to us.

Why? *Because we also will inherit, it's about an inheritance!* We also stand to be rewarded with an incredible reward! Just like those documented in Heb. 11, we have an incredible reward, which will be unending, continual

Isaiah 9:6: "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given..."

This was not understood until Christ was impregnated in a physical mother, and He had to live a physical life.

"...and the government shall be upon His shoulders; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father..." (v 6).

When shall his name be called that? *At the time when the marriage of the Lamb takes place!* Can we visualize this time, this reality?

"...the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of *His* government and peace *there shall be* no end..." (vs 6-7).

Can we think about *no ending!* Everything

ends; in all our experience, everything finishes. But this is an incredible prophecy.

“...upon the throne of David, and over His Kingdom, to order it and to establish it with judgment and with righteousness from henceforth, even forever...” (v 7).

We read things, we think about it, and does *forever* really register with us? *Never ending, always growing*:

- in splendor
- in beauty
- in accomplishment
- in achievement

“...**The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this**” (v 7).

- How many times have we read this verse?
- Can we understand forever?
- Can we understand unending?
- Can we understand continuing, never to finish!

It's a hard concept for corruption to grasp! That's what we are, we're *corruption!* To grasp incorruption forever!

John 14:2: In My Father's house are many dwelling places...”

- Does this really sink in?
- What is this promise?
- What is Christ saying?

“...if it were otherwise, I would have told you. I am going to prepare a place for you” (v 2)—*potentially!* *We're not there, yet!*

Verse 3: “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; so that where I am, you may be also.”

Can we really ask ourselves, really meditate and grasp the height and depth of this promise! This is not story time, it's real and specific, not imagining, but iron clad! It is individual to each and everyone who is faithful and has received the promises on the journey, the promise of the Spirit. It's personal, to us, a promise of tomorrow with continuing and unending accomplishment.

How would you feel if suddenly something happened and you were to inherit ten townhouses, properties that would be worth millions, from a long lost relative that you didn't really know. Have you ever really had great day when something good happened, for whatever reason?

It takes me back to my childhood. We are spiritual children! There's something about the

simplicity of childhood. I remember when I was given a fabulous little gift. That meant so much and I couldn't wait until the next morning to see my gift.

Luke 16:11: “...**who will entrust to you the true riches?**” *Not the ones you leave behind sometimes, but true wealth!*

I think about how tragic it would be to see the promise in all its beauty and joy and splendor, *and to realize that you have lost it!* It's something that we need to 'weigh up' and move away from. You could have it. How? Why? Lost in exchange for peanuts, *nothing!* ***The nothing of today!***

You and I are forewarned. There is a doing involved, activity involved so that we can inherit.

- the activity is now
- the responsibility is now
- the accomplishment is now

of believing and making sense of every single day!

Galatians 5:16: “Now *this* I say, **walk by the Spirit, and you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh.**”

It's about character! It's about who we become! This is the principle and the reality:

Verse 17: “For the flesh lusts against the Spirit... [our natural state] ...and the Spirit against the flesh... [you can't have both, it's either one or the other, the mind of the flesh or the mind of the Spirit] ...and these things are opposed... [a daily battle] ...to each other, so that you cannot do those things *you wish to do.*” *It's natural!*

The things we want to do, or naturally do, are wrong. We have to walk a path of wisdom and understanding that God has laid before us.

Verse 18: “But if you are led by *the* Spirit... [plugged into the power source day by day, when things really happen] ...you are not under *works of* law. Now, the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these...*” (vs 18-19).

The natural state, whether we realize it or not, that we have to continually struggle against. Who can say, 'I have no sin'? Who can say that? This is the reality day-by-day that we face. Our mind is geared this way, and we need to fight, it's a struggle.

Verse 19: “Now, the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness”—*and so on!*

Matthew 5:28: “But I say to you, everyone who looks...”—*the spirit, the thinking!*

It not only applies to one case, it applies all cases. There are the fruits of the flesh.

“...upon a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (v 28).

Principle: Any natural desire of the flesh that is contrary to God’s instruction; God’s way or Law!

Verse 29: “So then, if your right eye shall cause you to offend...”

We’re not going to pluck our eyes out, but this is underscoring the important, the focus that God puts on right thinking.

“...pluck it out and cast it from you...” (v 29).

- Do we take this for granted?
- How many times have we read this?
- How serious is it?

“...for it is better for you that one of your members should perish than *that* your whole body be cast into Gehenna” (v 29).

This is a principle that applies right through single-mindedness is needed. We need to have or develop a guidance system. Our lives are being focused; no sidetracks. You and I know when we’re on a sidetrack.

The Apostle Paul stated that an enlisted soldier is there to do the will of the one who enlisted him, who sent him. In other words, *we’re under orders!* Bottom line, there is no wiggle-room here. It’s not a matter of choice. It’s a matter of what we have to do! We cannot serve two masters! Here’s a very clear outline for us all:

Matthew 6:24: “No one... [not double-minded; this is specific and very, very clear] ...is able to serve two masters; **for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to the one and despise the other....**”

It’s about what we hold onto! Note the dominate thought is the one we hold onto!

Galatians 5:22: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control; **against such things there is no law.** But those who *are* Christ’s have crucified the flesh...” (vs 22-24).

- Are we of Christ?
- Have we crucified the flesh?

This doesn’t sound like a casual matter!

- What does crucify mean? *A lot of pain, killing! Slow death!*

The flesh, the nature, needs to suffer a slow, painful death!

Verse 24: “But those who *are* Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and lusts.”

It’s quite gruesome; it means *no mercy!* No going easy, no feeling sorry. Just a painful execution. How are we doing with applying that mandate daily? *Merciless!*

- Do we see?
- Do we bury?
- Do we attack *without mercy?*

I picture a bloody, suffering, nailed body in excruciating pain!

- Do we attack what’s wrong? *The fruit of the flesh!*
- What intensity do we apply? *Seeking continually God’s strength!*

Imagine crucifixion! Fighting for every breath of air with no mercy!

There’s no room for movement here. It’s absolute! That’s the --- we need to have. No turning back! We can’t serve two masters. ***Overcoming is a heavy mandate. It’s a one-way street with no turning back!***

Verse 24: “But **those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh** with its passions and lusts.”

We know that through baptism that the promise is there to us. It requires continual striving, otherwise we will be overcome.

Verse 25: “If we live by *the* Spirit, we should also be walking by *the* Spirit.”

Our direction at baptism, or on the way to baptism, our direction changed, just like Jacob’s direction changed. For Jacob it was a determination, a fervent desire for an inheritance, which turned out to be *eternal, a spiritual inheritance!*

We need to realize this, but the fact is there are some who take God’s ironclad promises for granted. Today we need to consider:

- if the difficulty before us
- if the trial that we are faced with
- if the situation ahead and one that you may well be facing now
- if it seems to be without resolution

▪ Are we losing ground?

or

- Are we standing firm regardless?

It may seem to be dire, and there are troublesome

situations. There are trials that are there to strengthen us. But we don't know where, when, how resolution comes.

It might be one of finances, one of relationships and it can be a torturous trial! Perhaps it's one of health.

Among other things, we need to keep in mind that there are priceless lessons to be learned from observing the life and character, the growing character, of Jacob. He had mountains to climb. From the time God began working with him—his character was that of a trickster, a shyster—into what he became. How did he change? *By striving, by believing, by being moved with a fervent desire for the reward!*

- the reward is what motivated him
- the inheritance
- the priceless promise

Jacob valued it!

This desire can be encapsulated by the events of one night in microcosm. We can see a desire, the events of this one night in his life. It's a summary, a snapshot of the mindset that he had of determination. One that we will do well to emulate. He's dead now, but he's made it; he overcame his weaknesses and so on. Never yielding determination is what he had. The example is there for our instruction, for our inspiration for every single day.

Genesis 32:24: "And Jacob was left alone...."

Are there times when we are left alone? When we think and feel what is happening, when we don't necessarily know what's happening with the strange trial that comes upon us. No one else is there.

"...And a Man wrestled there with him until the breaking of the day" (v 24).

Jacob was left alone and "...wrestled there with him until the breaking of the day." Can you imagine all through the night not yielding, not giving in, but striving!

There's something poetic about this wrestling example here, about striving through the night until the daylight.

Verse 25: "And when *the Man* saw that He did not prevail against him, He touched the hollow of his thigh.... [if that wasn't enough, it gets worse] ...And the hollow of Jacob's thigh became out of joint as he wrestled with Him." *It didn't stop, kept going!* It got worse, but Jacob didn't yield.

It can get incredibly difficult and hard,

whatever trial you may be facing, might have to face. But you never ever let go! Think about that example. He wrestled through the night. We go through a night of trial. ***We need to hang on! Hang on never ever yield, never let go!***

Verse 25: "And when *the Man* saw that He did not prevail against him, He touched the hollow of his thigh. And the hollow of Jacob's thigh became out of joint as he wrestled with Him. And He said, 'Let Me go, for the day breaks.' And *Jacob* said, **'I will not let You go except You bless me'**" (vs 25-26).

When there's a trial, a difficulty that we go through, **do we let go?** If we're asking for something, whatever difficulty we may be facing, **do we let go? or do we hang on? Hang onto the promise until we are delivered!**

Verse 26: "And He said, 'Let Me go, for the day breaks.' And *Jacob* said, **'I will not let You go except You bless me.'**" *We do not let go!*

We can ask when it's tough, when it hurts to hang on to a promise. When we think it isn't going to happen.

- Do we get discouraged?
 - Do we let go?
- or*
- Do I hang on regardless?

That's the lesson here!

Revelation 2:17: "The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. **To the one who overcomes...** [like Jacob, there's the example for us] **...I will give the right to eat of the hidden manna...**"

What's the hidden manna? *God willing we'll find out!*

"...and I will give him a white stone..." (v 17).

This is a new term to us, but obviously, it's one of great meaning in the spiritual realm. It's associated with the reward, with overcoming, with growing, with being accepted as an overcomer.

"...and on the stone a new name written, which no one knows except the one who receives it" (v 17). *It's personal, individual and unique!*

Genesis 32:27: "And He said to him, 'What is your name?' And he said, 'Jacob.'"—*supplanter, one who takes by the heel!*

Verse 28: "And He said, 'Your name shall no longer be called Jacob... [not a supplanter anymore] ...but Israel; ***for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed.***" *A new*

name!

That brings up that we will be given a new name, as well! Interestingly, to those who overcome in this age, there is also a name change, and a promise that is personal, unique and individual.

Christ has given a bottom line in Luke 14. we all know it; yet, **some of us**—even though we're told—**will miss out!**

Luke 14:16: “But He said to him, ‘A certain man made a great supper, and invited many. And he sent his servants at suppertime to say to those who had been invited, “Come, for everything is now ready”’” (vs 16-17). *It's a promise! The promises!*

Verse 18: “But everyone with one *consent* began to excuse himself. The first said to him, ‘I have bought a field... [his mind is on today; not tomorrow, not the inheritance] ...and I need to go out to see it; I beg you to have me excused.’”

From the incredible priceless promises that lie there before us, to encourage, inspire and motivate us. That's what it's saying!

Verse 19: “And another said, ‘I have bought five pairs of oxen... [another excuse; big deal] ...and I am going to try them out...’”—*to see if they are going to do what they are supposed to do!* ‘It's important, I've made an investment.’ *That's the focus!*

“...I beg you to have me excused” (v 19).

- Would that be an excuse?
- What could be our potential excuse?
- What could be your potential excuse to lay aside God's promises, which are without measure or value?

Verse 20: “And another said, ‘I have married a wife... [just got married] ...and because of this I am unable to come.’”

*Here's the principle, the bottom line; v 26: “**If anyone comes to Me and does not** hate his father and mother, and wife, and children, and brothers and sisters, and, in addition, his own life also, **he cannot be My disciple**. And **whoever does not carry his**... [and her] **...cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple**” (v 26-27).*

No matter how bad it gets, no matter how difficult it is, you keep moving! You're never ever to be discouraged! We also are given mountains to climb, even if may not seem to be so. The journey we've been given, the life that we need to lead is not ‘a walk in the park.’

Matthew 10:25: “...If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more

*shall they call those of his household?” **There is opposition to overcome!***

2-Timothy 3:11: “...*You know* what sort of persecutions I endured; and the Lord delivered me out of them all. And indeed... [here's the principle, the point]: ...**everyone**... [no exceptions] ...who desires to live Godly in Christ Jesus shall be persecuted” (vs 11-12).

There you go, we are not left out! We're going to go through some difficult times! Why? *Because the reward is so great, that God has to make sure that we are the genuine article! That we will not turn!*

The very best that God could create by fiat, who was called the ‘light-bringer’; the bright shining star of the dawn. The very best turned and fought against his Maker. He actually thought he had a chance. He wanted a bigger slice, but it was not to be. Basically God learned and we learned—we're made in His image—there's got to be a better way. With us, with our future, it is **produce or perish!** There is no other way!

We need to know that the element of determination is needed. What kind of determination is required? Our part is one that requires continual effort, there's no slacking off. There's no sitting down on the job. It is one of continual improvement and growth, continual movement.

James 1:2: “Consider *it* all joy, my brethren, when you are beset by various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance” (vs 1-2).

We have to learn to stay with it! To be with it! Not to forget!

Verse 4: “But let endurance have *its* perfect work, so that you may be perfect and complete, not lacking in anything.”

Just a point here about the word *endurance*: How is endurance developed physically. If anyone has done distance running, it's not easy. You have to:

- pace yourself
- focus
- put aside pain
- keep moving

Whatever you can do, if you are able to run, give it a go! *That is physical endurance!*

Could we say that endurance is exemplified by keeping going, going a little bit farther than you went before. Pushing the boundaries! *Endurance!*

I've mentioned before about *minimum effort!* One of the things we've always said, there's a minimum every day to keep spiritually fit. A half hour Bible study and a half hour of meditation on that study and a half hour of prayer. But it was more like an hour study, half-hour of meditation and a half hour prayer.

So, there's a minimum effort that we need to apply. A minimum. But do we stick to a minimum? Every now and then we can go a little farther. Keep a diary record.

Luke 17:10: "Likewise you also, **when you have done all the things that are commanded** you, say, 'We are unprofitable servants, because we have done that which we were obligated to do.'"

So, when you've done it all, keep going! We've got to overcome and grow. The beauty and value of the reward is going to be worth it in the end.

With some concluding thoughts, let's look at some of these promises: a pearl of great price is offered.

Matthew 13:45: "Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is compared to a merchant seeking beautiful pearls; who, after finding one very precious pearl, went and sold everything that he had, and bought it."

It's a parable of the Kingdom; everything is second! That is the focus and priority that we need to have! Rom. 8 gives us a hint of the reward, the treasure that awaits us. It's an encouragement to hang on to the promises.

Romans 8:16: "The Spirit itself bears witness conjointly with our own spirit..."

We don't think like people in the world. We shouldn't go after anyone or any goal that is around us. ***This is our goal!***

"...testifying that we are *the* children of God. Now, if *we are* children, ***we are also heirs***... [of a fortune; unending life] ...—truly, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if indeed we suffer together with Him, so that we may also be glorified together with Him. **For I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.** For the earnest expectation of the creation itself **is awaiting the manifestation of the sons of God**" (vs 16-19).

God has inspired an account, a witness, a documentation of the reward to those who are faithful. Of all the planets, this is the only planet that supports life! Can we grasp the immensity of what is being documented of what we're going to read? Is it too much to take in? It is not a false witness; ***it's a faithful and true witness!***

Revelation 21:1: "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away, and there was no more sea. And I, John, saw the Holy City, *the* New Jerusalem...]where we have a place in there all ready] ...coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice from heaven say..." (vs 1-3).

Imagine thunderous, empowering words coming out! ***Thundering!*** Words can't describe it.

"...Behold, the Tabernacle of God... [where God lives] ...*is* with men; and **He shall dwell with them...**" (v 3).

Eyes that are like flames of fire; bronze feet and face shining like the sun in full strength. We only have a little glimpse 'through a glass darkly.' We have no real idea, but we can imagine! We need to dwell on it and keep it alive.

"...and they shall be His people; and God Himself shall be with them *and be* their God. And God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes..." (vs 3-4).

We're not going to remember. That's an incredible promise!

"...and *there* shall not be anymore death, or sorrow, or crying; neither shall *there* be any more pain, because the former things have passed away" (v 4).

Verse 5: "And He Who sits on the Throne said, 'Behold, I make all things new.' Then He said to me, **'Write, for these words are true and faithful.'**"

This is telling us what is going to happen! Think on it! This is the reward!

Verse 9: "And one of the seven angels that had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, 'Come here...'"

It can be asked, as well. It's as if we could have been there with John. We have imagination. We know that it's the Truth; can we think about it?

"...and I will show you the Bride, the Lamb's wife.' And he carried me away in *the* Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, Holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God" (vs 9-10). ***Incredible!***

Verse 11: "Having the glory of God. And her radiance *was* like a most precious stone, as crystal-clear *as* jasper stone. And *the* city also had a great and high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and inscribed on *the* gates were *the* names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel. On *the* east *were* three gates; on *the* north

were three gates; on the south were three gates; on the west were three gates... [described in detail] ...And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and written on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. And the one who was speaking with me had a golden measuring rod, so that he might measure the city, and its gates and its wall” (vs 11-15).

Verse 18: “And the structure of its wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like pure glass. And the foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every precious stone: the first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprasus; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each of the gates respectively was a single pearl; and the street of the city was pure gold, as transparent as glass” (vs 18-21). *Promises that God puts before us!*

Verse 22: “And I saw no temple in it; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the Temple of it. And the city has no need of the sun, or of the moon, **that they should shine in it; because the glory of God enlightens it**, and the Light of it is the Lamb. And the nations that are saved shall walk in its Light; and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory and honor into it. And its gates shall never be shut by day; for there shall be no night there” (vs 22-25).

Always, opulence, greatness, light, beauty!
It’s just beyond us! Meditate and think about it!

Verse 26: “And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it. And nothing that defiles shall ever enter into it... [pure, righteous, goodness, beauty unending] ...nor shall *any*one who practices *an* abomination or *devises* a lie; but *only* those who are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life” (vs 26-27).

In conclusion: Sure we’re going through troubled times, but the promises of God are so great, so incredibly immense that if we keep our heart and mind in the right place ***nothing, nothing can deter us!***

Scriptural References:

- 1) Matthew 24:6-8
- 2) Isaiah 9:6
- 3) John 14:2-3
- 4) Luke 16:11
- 5) Galatians 5:16-19
- 6) Matthew 5:28-29
- 7) Matthew 6:24

- 8) Galatians 5:22-25
- 9) Genesis 32:24-26
- 10) Revelation 2:17
- 11) Genesis 32:27-28
- 12) Luke 14:16-20, 26-27
- 13) Matthew 10:25
- 14) 2 Timothy 3:11-12
- 15) James 1:2-4
- 16) Luke 17:10
- 17) Matthew 13:45
- 18) Romans 8:16-19
- 19) Revelation 21:1-5, 9-15,18-27

Scripture referenced, not quoted: Hebrews 11

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Transcribed: 5/22/22

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