

## What is the Difference Between Temptation and Tribulation?

(Sabbath After Unleavened Bread)

*The testing of your faith vs troubles over which you have no control*

Fred R. Coulter—April 27, 2019

Greetings, brethren! Welcome to Sabbath after the last day of Unleavened Bread! There are occasions when we have a Sabbath and a Holy Day or a Holy Day and Sabbath and this has happened two years in a row.

This is very similar to what we have with Pentecost. We have the seventh Sabbath, Day 49 and then Pentecost Day 50. However, this is the last Holy Day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread on the sixth day of the week and the Sabbath comes right after that. This is very interesting the way that it comes.

- What is the difference between temptation and tribulation?
- What is the difference between being tempted and being in tribulation?

Let's look at a verse that many people think means *to be taken away from the tribulation*. But that's not what it means.

Revelation 3:7: "And to the angel of the Church in Philadelphia... [v8]: 'I know your works...' God knows the works of everyone everywhere. He can find out what it is at anytime. He's given all of us *free moral agency*. When we have the Holy Spirit of God, we are to let the Spirit of God lead us in making the right choices. Those are our works.

"...Behold, I have set before you an open door, and no one has the power to shut it because you have a little strength, and **have kept My Word, and have not denied My name**. Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who proclaim themselves to be Jews... [meaning *the way to salvation*] ...and are not, but do lie. Behold, I will cause them to come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you'" (vs 8-9).

Obviously, that's going to take place after the Millennium. So, sometimes fulfillment reaches way out into the future.

Verse 10: "Because you have kept the Word of My patience..."—*endurance!* Or you have endured in 'keeping My Word.' That means *in spite of everything that comes along!*

"...I also will keep you from **the time of temptation...**" (v 10). A lot of people think that means *tribulation*, but that is not true.

"...which *is* about to come upon the whole world to try those who dwell on the earth" (v 10). *This is going to be a worldwide event that's going to try every human being!*

It is a trial, and a trial involves *choice*. Whereas, we will see later that tribulation comes and you have no choice over the fact that the tribulation comes.

Verse 11: "Behold, I am coming quickly; hold fast that which you have so that no one may take away your crown."

Let's see the difference between this and tribulation. First of all **temptation**, which comes from the Greek: 'peirasmos.' Temptation means *to be tempted, to be tried, a test of proving!* Who is the tempter? *Satan the devil!*

Here's what Jesus said in the model prayer; Matthew 6:13: "And **lead us not into temptation...**" In other word, don't lead us into something that we cannot recover from.

"...but **rescue us from the evil one...**" (v 13). We're going to see that Satan the devil is called *the tempter*. Let's see how temptations come, and this is very instructive. As we will see, *temptation* involves our choices:

- Will we love God?
- Will we obey God?
- *In spite of the temptation!*

*Temptations*, we will see, also works with *our mind, our choices and our lusts!*

James 1:1: "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes, which *are* in the dispersion: Greetings!" If you're going to send a letter, don't you know who you're going to send it to?

Sidebar on James: there is no mention of Gentiles. So, this was written before 42<sub>AD</sub>, because that's when the first Gentile Church at Antioch in Syria was raised up. There is no discussion of Gentiles in James.

Verse 2: "Consider *it* all joy, my brethren, when you are beset by various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance" (vs 2-3).

What did we read in Rev. 3? *We kept the word of His patience, or endurance!* Now the testing of your faith: If everything is good and smooth, and there's nothing difficult or there's no problems at whatsoever, *your faith is not being tested!*

You read the situation, but when temptation comes, sometimes people just give up. So, it is a testing of your faith!

Verse 4: "But let endurance have *its* perfect work, so that you may be perfect and complete, not lacking in anything." *That's why we have temptations!* Let's see how we're to handle them.

Verse 5: "However, if anyone lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, Who gives to everyone freely and does not reproach *the one who asks*; and it shall be given to him. But let him ask in faith, not doubting at all because the one who doubts is like a wave of *the sea* that is driven by the wind and tossed *to and fro*. Do not let that man expect that he will receive anything from the Lord. *He is* a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways" (vs 5-8).

That can be defined in another way. If you're double-minded, you have half your mind in the world—or one foot in the world—and half you mind in the Word of God and the Church and—one foot in the Church. *You're double-minded and will vacillate back and forth! You won't pass the test!* The testing is what's important! That's why Paul says to 'count it all joy' because your faith is being tested; that's a good thing! God will give you the strength to overcome.

Verse 12: "Blessed *is the* man who endures trials... [testing] ...because after he has been proved..." *That's why we have all the difficulties that we have; God is proving us!* He wants to know:

- Will you be faithful?
- Do you love God at all times under all circumstances?
- How is your faith?
- Is your faith good because everything is perfect?
- How is your faith when you suffer difficulties and trials that are tests to see how you do?
- Whom will you choose?
- God?

*or*

- Satan?

If he endures and overcomes "...**he shall receive a crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.**" Do not let anyone who is tempted say, 'I am being tempted by God'..." (vs 12-13). *We're going to see that temptations come*

*two ways:*

1. Satan
2. the carnal mind

"...**because God is not tempted by evil, and He Himself tempts no one with evil.** But each one is tempted when he is drawn away and is enticed **by his own lust**" (vs 13-14).

We're going to see that some of the tests that come along looks like it's a real benefit to you. Not all good things are righteous things. Not all things that *appear* to be good are righteous. They can lead to evil, though it looks like you're doing good. So, you need the understanding to distinguish between the two.

Verse 15: "And after lust has conceived..." You thought about it, like Eve, 'Boy, that fruit really looks good! It smells good! It tastes good! Here, Adam, have a bite!' And the test looked like it was to benefit them, but that was not true. That was a lie of Satan the devil.

"...it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is completely finished, brings forth death" (v 15). *Perfect description of Gen. 3!*

Also notice that at any time a temptation comes, which is a trial of your faith, you can choose to do right, rather than submit to the temptation and your own lust. A temptation comes along, and rather than rejecting it by the Spirit of God, you let your own lust get involved. Lust will tell you:

- this is good
- this is okay
- no one will know
- just think how good it will be for you

Verse 16: "Do not deceive yourselves, my beloved brethren. Every good act of giving and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with Whom there is no variation, nor shadow of turning. According to His own will, He begat us by *the* Word of Truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all His created beings" (vs 16-18).

What did James do? Like everything you need to do in every trial that you have, **keep your mind focused on the goal, the Kingdom of God through the love and grace of God!**

There are a lot of things coming here in Satan's temptation of Jesus; Matthew 4:1: "Then Jesus was led up into the wilderness by the Spirit in order to be tempted... [tired and tested] ...by the devil. And when He had fasted *for* forty days and forty nights, afterwards He was famished" (vs 1-2).

*Think about this for a minute! He's in the weakest physical condition possible.*

Verse 3: "And when the tempter... [Satan the devil] ...came to Him, he said, 'If You are the Son of God... [appealing to His human nature to prove that He was the Son of God] ...command that these stones become bread.'"

- Could Jesus have done that? *Yes, indeed!*
- What that offering Him something with a veneer or appearance of good? *Yes!*

If you haven't eaten for 40 days and 40 nights, some fresh cooked stones into bread would be fantastic! Think about it!

This reminds me of when I was delivering papers and I'd go by this donut shop every day. The smell of the wonderful freshly cooked donuts was amazing! I went by quickly because I didn't want to have any donuts. I had to make the choice. Was I going to the smell of the donuts lure me in? *No I didn't!*

Here is the lesson: ***Regardless of the apparent benefit of the temptation, if it goes against the Word of God it is wrong!*** Here's Jesus' answer, and this how we're to view everything that we do:

Verse 4: "But He answered *and* said, 'It is written... [quoting the Word of God] ..."**Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.**"

This tells us that when we have a temptation in the most extreme circumstances that we are in, we have a choice. That's the difference between a temptations and tribulation. When tribulation comes you have no choice about it! In temptation we have a choice, because it's a test and proving. Here Jesus was being tested! Who was the tempter? *Satan the devil!*

Verse 5: "Then the devil took Him to the Holy city and set Him upon the edge of the temple, and said to Him, 'If You are the Son of God, cast Yourself down; for it is written...'" (vs 5-6).

Here's another thing to understand: Satan quotes Scripture, so just because Scripture is quoted, doesn't mean it's necessarily from God. It could be from Satan the devil! How do you know the difference? *Very simple, commandments of God!* That's what happened to the early church after John died. The hatred for the Jews was so absolutely vicious and to such a high degree everywhere that those Sunday-keepers came along and said:

Look, you don't want to be marked with all these Jews and subject to persecution and being killed. Why don't you join us and we'll be accepted by

the Roman Empire, and they won't persecute us and we'll be just fine.

What a temptation that was, but the fourth commandment says, 'Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it Holy!' The temptation came along and said:

Look, you don't have to put up with this tribulation and trials. Come on over to Sunday; you'll see that we read the Word of God. We can worship God on Sunday. Can you not worship God on any day of the week? Why should you be bothered with the Sabbath when there's so much persecution and killing going on about Jews and Sabbath-keepers. Besides you're numbered with the Jews if you keep the Sabbath.

- Isn't that what we're asked every time when it's found out that we keep the Sabbath?
- Are you a Jew?

So, Satan quoted this Scripture; "... "He shall give His angels charge concerning You, and they shall bear You up in *their* hands, lest You strike Your foot against a stone." ... [here is a tremendous answer and lesson for us]: ...Jesus said to him, **'Again, it is written... [always the Scriptures] ..."You shall not tempt the Lord your God"'**" (vs 6-7).

***If you challenge God in a way that is wrong, you are tempting God!*** That's quite a thing to understand, even quoting Scripture!

Verse 8: "After that, the devil took Him to an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, and said to Him, 'All these things will I give You...'" (vs 8-9).

You can take it from me; I'll give it to You. Look at how generous I am. I'm not trying to keep anything for myself. I'll give you the whole world. All the kingdoms, everything that's there. Just think about it! You don't have to continue in all these trials and tests and then be crucified somewhere down the road, do You? I'll give You an easy way to do it. All you have to do is bow down!

**"...if You will fall down and worship me"**" (v 9). *Satan has always wanted to be God, and he is 'the god of this world.'*

Verse 10: "Then Jesus said to him, 'Be gone, Satan! For it is written, "**You...** [He's referring to all human beings, because Satan will never do what is about to say here]: ...**shall worship the Lord your God, and Him alone shall you serve.**"

You can't have any other gods before Me; isn't that the first commandment? If Jesus would have worshiped Satan, Who would have been Jesus' god? ***Satan the devil!***

That's why He was tested, tried, and then all the things He went through from that time forward until it came time for the crucifixion.

Why was Jesus tried and tested so severely? *Because in order to be the Savior of mankind, He had to be tried and tested to the nth degree!* We'll see why in just a minute. Let's understand about Christ: What Christ did, the purpose of human beings, the plan of God and our entering into the Kingdom of God are all intricately tied together.

Hebrews 2:6: "But in a certain place one fully testified, saying, 'What is man, that You are mindful of him, or *the* son of man, that You visit him? You did make him a little lower than *the* angels; You did crown him with glory and honor, and You did set him over the works of Your hands'" (vs 6-7).

He gave the whole earth to man and said to be 'fruitful and multiply and have dominion over everything.' What a tremendous blessing that that was and is! Showing the great potential of human beings to become the sons and daughters of God. That's an amazing thing to think about!

Verse 8: "'You did put all things in subjection under his feet.' For in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing *that was* not subjected to him. But now we do not yet see all things subjected to him." Why? *Because the 'all things' includes entering into the Kingdom of God!*

Verse 9: "But we see Jesus, Who *was* made a little lower than *the* angels, crowned with glory and honor on account of suffering **the death**..." We covered that in the Passover, the kind of death that Jesus died.

"...in order that by *the* grace of God He Himself might taste death for everyone" (v 9). ***Everyone who repents and is baptized and receives the Holy Spirit of God is given the opportunity to enter into the Kingdom of God!*** Christ took upon Him the second death in your stead! That was the crucifixion. His death and symbolically our death.

Verse 10: "Because it was fitting for Him, for Whom all things *were* created, and by Whom all things *exist*, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Author of their salvation perfect through sufferings." *The suffering of temptation and affliction or tribulation!*

Verse 11: "For both He Who is sanctifying and those who are sanctified *are* all of one; for which cause He is not ashamed to call them

brethren, saying, 'I will declare Your name to My brethren; in *the* midst of *the* Church I will sing praise to You.' And again, 'I will be trusting in Him.' And again, 'Behold, I and the children whom God has given Me'" (vs 11-13).

That's what we're going hear on the Sea of Glass when we're resurrected and we're all presented to God the Father.

Verse 14: "Therefore, since the children are partakers of flesh and blood, in like manner He also took part in the same, in order that through death He might annul him who has the power of death—that is, the devil; and *that* He might deliver those who were subject to bondage all through their lives by *their* fear of death. For surely, He is not taking upon Himself to help *the* angels; but He is taking upon Himself to help *the* seed of Abraham" (vs 14-16).

Galatians 3:29: "And if you *are* Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to *the* promise." *This talking about those in the Church!* Not the physical descendants of Israel alone.

Hebrews 2:17: "For this reason, it was obligatory for *Him* to be made like *His* brethren in everything that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest *in* things pertaining to God, in order to make propitiation for the sins of the people. **For because He Himself has suffered, having been tempted in like manner, He is able to help those who are being tempted**" (vs 17-18). *The temptations always mean a choice:*

- Will you obey God or not?
- Will you stay true to the Truth or not?

Hebrews 4:15: "For we do not have a High Priest Who cannot empathize with our weaknesses, **but One Who was tempted**..."—*tried, tested, tempted by Satan the devil. The human nature that He carried within Him!*

**"...in all things according to the likeness of our own temptations; yet, He was without sin"** (v 15).

We're going to have struggles in the flesh, but God grants us repentance and forgiveness so we can go forward. That's why in the daily prayer it says, 'Forgive us our sins.' And God does forgive them!

- How gracious is He?
- How loving is He?
- How good is He?

*To do so!*

Now, notice what He did in the body of

Christ for us! Romans 8:1: “Consequently, *there is* now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who are not walking according to *the* flesh, but according to *the* Spirit.”

It doesn't mean that we don't sin, but it means ***we're not living in sin!*** Everyone in the world is living in sin; there's no way they can get out of it, because of:

- the law of sin and death within them
- the way that society is setup
- the way that they have rejected God

*Whether they do it viciously or kindly, they still reject God!*

Verse 2: “Because the law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus has delivered me from the law of sin and death.”

How are we delivered? *We have the Spirit of God that gives us the ability to make the right choice to love God and do His will*, rather than be taken down by a temptation. Every temptation—which is a trial—has a testing: What will we choose to do? *In the flesh it can't be done!* You need the Spirit of God, and that's how we're delivered from it. It doesn't mean that the law of sin and death has been removed from us. *No! But we can overcome it with Christ in us!*

Verse 3: “For what *was* impossible for the Law to do. in that it was weak through the flesh...”

Remember that ***law cannot make anyone do anything!*** Law gives us statement of truth or righteousness, and we must choose to do it. But the Law is not going to make you do it.

Example: Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it Holy. You have to choose to do it! Does that Law make people keep the Sabbath? *Of course not, look at the world!*

“...God having sent His own Son in *the* likeness... [the same exact flesh] ...of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh” (v 3)—*and that was the flesh of Jesus Christ! He endured all the trials, all the temptations, and He was perfect and without sin!* Let's look at the parable of the sower:

Luke 8:11: “Now this is the parable: The seed is the Word of God.”

Every day that we eat of the Word of God, and have it in our mind, God is writing in our mind—and it has to be written and re-written—because the human mind of and by itself, without the Spirit of God cannot retain spiritual things.

Verse 12: “And those *that fell* by the road are the ones who hear, but the devil comes and takes

away the Word from their heart, lest they should believe *and* be saved.”

- no endurance
- no understanding of trial

Just step away. God says that they haven't committed the unpardonable sin, but...

Verse 13: “And those *that fell* upon the rock *are* the ones who, when they hear, receive the Word with joy; but **these do not have any root**, who believe *only* for a while, and in time of trial... [or temptation] ...fall away. And those that fell into the thorns are the ones who have heard, but are choked *while* pursuing *the* cares and riches and pleasures of life, and do not bring *any fruit* to maturity.... [perfection; that's what God is doing with us] ...And those that *fell* on the good ground are the ones who, in a right and good heart, hear the Word *and* **keep it, and bring forth fruit with endurance**” (vs 13-15). *That brings us right back to James 1.*

2-Peter 2 is talking about how there will be false teachers who will stealthily come in and bring in damnable heresies. That's talked about also in the other General Epistles. As a matter of fact, most of the General Epistles have to do with those who are bringing in false doctrine.

2-Peter 2:1: “But there were also false prophets among the people, as indeed there will be false teachers among you, **who will stealthily introduce destructive heresies...**”

{Note sermon series: *How Apostasy Starts*}

“...personally denying *the* Lord who bought them, and bringing swift destruction upon themselves. And many people will follow *as authoritative* their destructive ways; *and* because of them, the way of the Truth will be blasphemed” (vs 1-2).

When you're in the midst of trials, troubles and difficulties—which we are in this world—sometimes we have them every day. That's why the Sabbath is so great. We can get away from it, come together, hear the Word of God, understand the Word of God, and have the world and the burden of the world lifted from us.

Verse 8: “(For that righteous man, dwelling among them... [Lot in Sodom] ...through seeing and hearing *their* lawless activities, *was* tormented day-by-day *in his* righteous soul) **the Lord knows how to rescue the Godly out of temptation...** [**IF we choose God's way**] ...and to reserve *the* unrighteous to *the* day of judgment to be punished; but particularly those who walk after *the* flesh in corrupting lust, and hold in utter contempt *the* lordship of God....” (vs 8-10).

That's what they do! What is the lordship of God? *All of His Word that we are hear, do and obey!* That's God exercising His lordship over us.

(go to the next track)

1-Cor. 10—In this chapter we will see how we need to make the right choices when temptations come along.

1-Corinthians 10:1: “Now, I do not wish you to be ignorant *of this*, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea. And all were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea. And *they* all ate the same spiritual meat. And *they* all drank *of* the same spiritual drink; for they drank from *the* spiritual Rock that followed *them*. And **that Rock was Christ**” (vs 1-4). Again affirming that Jesus Christ was the Lord God of the Old Testament.

Verse 5: “But with many of them God was not pleased, for their dead bodies were strewn in the wilderness. Now these things became examples... [or types] ...for us, so that we might not lust after evil things, as they also lusted” (vs 5-6).

They saw all the plagues that God brought upon the Egyptians, and how that God spared their firstborn. He destroyed the firstborn of man and beast of the Egypt, in addition to all the other plagues. They were able to leave Egypt, they crossed through Red Sea. But what did they do? *Instead of saying—when they needed food:*

Moses, we know that God can do anything, and we know that if you ask God, He'll do it for you! We're all hungry out here and we really are running out of unleavened bread. We just need you to intervene for God to send us some food. We believe that He'll send it to us, because He's God!

*No!* They didn't do that! Right in the presence of God—because He was in the cloud and fire by day and night—they sinned against God and didn't believe Him. So, Paul also writes:

Verse 7: “Neither be idolaters, as *were* some of them; as it is written, ‘The people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.’” Remember the case with Baal Zephon, the Moabites came over and here wafted up all this good smelling roasting food that they were giving to their gods and saying, ‘Come on over, we'll have a little food, have a little sex,’ and they broke the commandments of God.

Verse 8: “Neither should we commit sexual immorality, as some of them committed, and **twenty-three thousand were destroyed in one day**”—*because of that great sin!*

Verse 9: “**Neither should we tempt Christ...** [by not believing what He said and by doing contrary to what God has commanded] ...as some of them also tempted *Him*, and were killed by serpents. **Neither should we complain against God...**” (vs 9-10). Think about this for a minute. Even Paul said that he ‘counted it all joy’ when tribulations came upon him. We'll see in a little bit that tribulations are different than temptation. *But count it all joy!* God intervenes to try us, to test us, to help us through these temptations.

“...as some of them also complained, and were killed by the destroyer. Now **all these things happened to them as examples**, and were written for our admonition...” (vs 10-11).

So, the whole Old Testament is a testimony that human beings cannot live their lives without the Word of God, and by breaking the Word of God they are sinning and bringing the consequences upon themselves.

“...on whom the ends of the ages are coming. Therefore, let the one who thinks he stands take heed, lest he fall.... [God has given this promise]: ...**No temptation has come upon you except what is common to mankind...**” (vs 11-13)—*regardless of how severe; all temptations come to test us:*

- Will we love God and keep His commandments? *That's the test!*
- Will we be faithful to Him?

**or**

- Will we trust in our own thoughts and instincts?
  - Who can put thoughts into your mind that are contrary to God? *Satan the devil!*

“...For God, Who *is* faithful, **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).

That is if you love God and believe Him and cry out to Him to help you this difficulty and trial, whatever it may be. Let that be the proving of your faith. Then God will give you rest and peace in it.

Acts 20 is a very important chapter in the book of Acts because it's dealing with the elders in Ephesus who came down to see Paul at Miletus while Paul was on his way to Jerusalem. It shows how Paul was able to manage everything up to this point, and beyond.

Acts 20:18: “And when they had come to him, he said to them, ‘You know how, from the first day I came to Asia, *and* all the time I was with you, I

served the Lord with all humility and *with many tears and temptations*, which came upon me through the plots of the Jews” (vs 18-19). *That’s something!*

Read 2-Cor. 8; 11 and see how Paul suffered. It’s good to read that every once in a while for us to understand what Paul went through; he went through a lot. Then ask ourselves:

- How much have I really suffered? *Really very little!*
- What was the promise that we just read? *God is able to deliver you out of them all!*

Verse 20: “*And how I did not keep back anything that was profitable, but preached to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, earnestly testifying, both to the Jews and the Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ*” (vs 20-21). *That’s the whole key:*

- repentance and faith
- truth and obedience
- love and goodness

Verse 22: “*And now behold, I am bound in the spirit, and am going to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall happen to me there; except that the Holy Spirit fully testifies in every city, saying that bonds and tribulations await me*” (vs 22-23).

We’ll get into tribulations in just a bit, but tribulation is something different from temptation. Temptation is a trial and difficulty that you have to choose God’s way, and God will provide a way out. Tribulation is different. It’s not a sin that you have committed. It’s not a temptation of you. It is a tribulation coming against you for the sake or the reason or the meaning to destroy you. It’s something that’s perpetrated by others. Satan may stir them up to do it, but that’s different than a direct temptation of Satan against any of us.

Verse 24: “*But I myself do not take any of these things into account...*” He didn’t say, ‘I wished I hadn’t been called.’ *I’ve heard some people say that! ‘Why didn’t God wait and call me at the second resurrection.’ Because He wants you in the first and the first resurrection is better!* Paul didn’t let any of these things bother him. That’s a good one to really read and remember.

“...nor do I hold my life dear to myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to fully testify the **Gospel of the grace of God**” (v 24). *There are two aspects to Gospel!*

1. Gospel of Grace
2. Gospel of the Kingdom

Verse 25: “*And now behold, I know that you all, among whom I have gone about proclaiming the Kingdom of God, will see my face no more; wherefore, I testify to you on this day that I am pure from the blood of all, for I have not held back from preaching to you all the counsel of God*” (vs 25-27).

Now, here’s something for all of us, but especially to those who serve the people as elders, ministers or deacons:

Verse 28: “*Take heed, therefore, to yourselves...*” Every minister has to take heed to himself to overcome the difficulties and problems in his own life. I have learned that many of these come so that we will experience the trial and overcome, which then gives us the experience to help others who are in the same difficulty. *Think of that for those who are ministers and elders!*

Verse 28: “**Take heed, therefore, to yourselves** and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which He purchased with His own blood.”

Notice the warning that Paul gives; this is where you ought to be with your strength; this is where you ought to be in your perspective and what you’re doing in serving the people. Here’s what’s coming:

Verse 29: “**For I know this: that after my departure grievous wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock...** [you can read of that in 3-John] **...and from among your own selves men will rise up speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after themselves**” (vs 29-30).

- Have we been through that?
- Have we not experience that?
- *Yes, indeed!*

*That’s why, brethren:*

- in spite of all temptations
- in spite of all tribulations
- in spite of all difficulties that come

**remain faithful to God!** God will take care of those things that you cannot. It may not work out the way that you would like them to work out for others, **but God is in charge! He knows!** So, don’t get discouraged and begin complaining to God, because something in someone else’s life, that you know and love—like your own children—that God doesn’t work it out.

- you are the one who is being tested
- you are the one who has to have faith in God

We are the ones who always have to be faithful with the Word of God and Truth of God in teaching the brethren. *All of us!*

Verse 31: “Watch, therefore, remembering that *for* three years I ceased not to admonish each one night and day with tears. And now I commit you, brethren, to God and to the Word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified” (vs 31-32).

The Word of God is what’s going to save us, through Jesus Christ, and with the power of God’s Holy Spirit! I want all of us to remember that ***the Word of God is perfect and eternal!*** It covers all situations of all lives regardless of the strengths or difficulties, the poverty or riches of anyone’s life. They are there for us to learn, ***because God wants us in His Kingdom and that is why we have these temptations and tests!***

Now let’s see where we have a combination of trials and tribulations; or trials and persecutions. Persecution is tribulation, because it is initiated by someone else, and Satan can come and cause you to be tempted, or he can cause other people to bring persecution against you. That would tempt you in the same way.

We find this in 1-Thess. 3; persecution comes from the outside. Temptation comes not only from the outside, but from the inside to test our faith.

1-Thessalonians 3:1: “Accordingly, when we could not bear to wait any longer, we thought *it best for us* to be left in Athens alone; and we sent our brother Timothy, a servant of God and our fellow worker in the Gospel of Christ, in order to establish you and to encourage you concerning your faith, so that no one might be unduly shaken by these persecutions....” (vs 1-3).

We have been relatively free of overt persecution. But we know that they’re going to come! ***Those will be tribulations!***

“(For you yourselves know that we are appointed to this very thing; and also, when we were with you, we told you beforehand *that* we would suffer persecutions, exactly as it also came to pass; and you are aware *of this.*)” (vs 3-4).

This was really a situation for Paul. He didn’t know what was going to happen when these persecutions came.

Verse 5: “For this reason, when I could not wait any longer, I sent *Timothy*, in order to know your faith, lest perhaps **the tempter had tempted you**, and our labor might be in vain.” *The tempter is Satan the devil!*

- Satan can cause temptations
- our own internal lust can cause temptation

Satan is the one who causes persecution, and that we have no say-so in. That comes against us unexpectedly! What do we do with this? *We will see that these are also to strengthen our faith!*

Verse 6: “But now, after Timothy came to us from you and told us the good news *of your* faith and your love, and that you always keep us in mind, *and* are longing to see us, even as we also *long to see* you. Through this *report* about you we were encouraged, brethren, in all our persecution and trouble—because of your faith.” ***Paul had persecutions and troubles!***

Let’s see how important all of these things are for us to grow in grace and knowledge and understanding. God uses every one of these things to help us. Let’s look at that way, in that way we can get closer to the attitude that Paul had that he *joyed* in tribulation, because it helped him to draw closer to God. I don’t think many of have come to that point, yet, that we joy in tribulation. Most of us get angst when it comes around.

Romans 5:1: “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through Whom we also have access by faith into this grace in which we stand...” (vs 1-2)—***access with this grace directly to God the Father and Jesus Christ!***

Remember what we covered on the last day of the Feast, *If God is For You **Nothing** Can Be Against You!*

“...and we ourselves boast in *the* hope of the glory of God.... [*keeping the goal always in mind*] ...And not only *this*, but we also boast in tribulations, **realizing that tribulation brings forth endurance**” (vs 2-3).

God uses these things to help us build the character that we need! So that we will, at all times, in all circumstances, love God the Father and Jesus Christ and ***put Them first! The Word of God next! The Truth of God and the Word of God to help us and strengthen us, and fortify us!***

Verse 4: “And endurance *brings forth* character...” What God is creating in us, in spite of all the unwarranted and uncalled for tribulation that may come. Will we remain faithful? *or* Will we give in? *That’s why they come along!*

“...and character *brings forth* hope. And the hope *of God* never makes us ashamed because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, which has been given to us” (vs 4-5).

*That's how God works!* To the world, they don't have a clue as to what is going on. This is why we need to look to God in everything that we do, and the tribulation does this for us.

2-Corinthians 1:1: "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by *the* will of God, and Timothy *our* brother, to the Church of God that is in Corinth, with all the saints who are in *the* entire region of Achaia: Grace and peace *be* to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.... [*always his mind on God*; that's what's important and how we overcome] ...Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, **the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforts us in all our tribulation**, in order that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trial, through the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God" (vs 1-4).

I want you to think about the brethren back in the Middle Ages. They were hauled off to be tortured and beheaded, to be burned at the stake. This came against them; it wasn't anything that they did. But it came from Satan and the enemy. It wasn't a choice. There was no choice. Whether they were faithful or unfaithful, they were executed.

So, what they did is stay faithful, and many of them were singing psalms and hymns, and praising God while they were taken out to be burned at the stake, or down to the dungeon to be tortured just like Paul here. God must have given them the comfort that they needed in order to have that attitude.

Notice that this is the same attitude that they had in the Middle Ages; v 5: "For to the degree *that* the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so also our comfort abounds through Christ. And if we are in distress, *it is* for your comfort and salvation, which is being worked out by *your* enduring the same sufferings that we also suffer; *and* if we are comforted, *it is* for your comfort and salvation (and our hope *is* steadfast for you)" (vs 5-6).

Quite a thing! Quite a way to write! I imagine that those saints back then—because they had the Word of God in their own native language—read these Scriptures and this gave them a lot of hope and strength. God must have given them the strength, because those were horrible things that they went through.

Verse 7: "Knowing that as you are partners in the sufferings, *you are* also *partners* in the comfort. For we do not want you to be ignorant of our tribulations, brethren, *even the trials* that befell us in Asia; we were exceedingly burdened **beyond our own strength**... [they had to get the strength from God] ...so much so that **we even despaired of**

**living**. For we had the sentence of death within ourselves, **so that we would not trust in ourselves but in God...**" (vs 7-9).

The whole purpose of all of it is that we *trust in God*. It's easy to say that you trust in God and believe in God when everything is nice, smooth and good. **Let that be the strength of your behavior when it is difficult!**

Verse 10: "Who delivered us from so great a death, and continues to deliver; in Whom we have hope that He will even yet deliver."

Here is a great and important thing that we need to reinforce, because we don't know what the days ahead are going to be. Everything in the world is just kind of teetering on the brink of great disasters and troubles. *We need to be armed and ready!*

2-Corinthians 8:1: "Now, brethren, we *wish* to make known to you the grace of God that has been given to the churches in Macedonia, that in a great trial of affliction, their abundant joy and their deep poverty has overflowed unto the wealth of their liberality" (vs 1-2).

He's praising them for being able to plant the crops and harvest the crop to send relief for the famine down in Judea.

Verse 3: "For I testify *that* according to *their* ability, and *even* beyond *their* ability, *they were* willing *to give* of themselves, earnestly entreating us to accept the gift, and *their* participation in the service for the saints. And not *only* as we had hoped, but they gave themselves first to the Lord, and to us by *the* will of God" (vs 3-5).

Whatever the difficulty is, give yourself **first** to God! **That's how you endure all the tribulations!**

Let's see why Rev. 3:10 is not the Great Tribulation. Let's see what Matt. 24 says about the Great Tribulation. This is coming through war, famine and different things: maybe terrorism, plagues, whatever it may be.

Matthew 24:21—Jesus said: "For then... [after you see the 'abomination of desolation' standing in the Holy Place] ...shall there be **great tribulation**, such as has not been from *the* beginning of *the* world until this time, nor ever shall be *again*."

*It's going to come!* Who knows if we're going to live to see it, but there will be those who will live to see it. How will they survive? *By being faithful whether they live or die!*

Rev. 6 & 7—all of these things are tribulations, and tribulations give us chance to build character because of the Spirit of God and looking to

God. These things are going to come absolutely for sure.

Sidebar: I have a report that says the Mormons have sent a delegation to Pope Francis I. What you've heard in the past that all the religions of the world are going to get together, you know they are!

But the Churches of God will then be absolutely singled out! We will see that that will be the Great Tribulation that we are kept from. The Great Tribulation is coming on all the earth.

Rev. 6—when we come to the second seal there's war. You have no control over whether there is war or no war. What are you going to do if you find yourself in it? *That is a tribulation!* The next one is famine, and there's going to be death and people dying right and left all around you.

- What is going to happen?
- What are you going to do?
- Are you going to be faithful?

It is going to get so bad that the fifth seal is that those souls, in vision, tell John how bad this is going to get. 'How long, O Lord, do you not avenge our blood?' *Until your fellow servants and your fellow brethren are killed like you!* So, there is coming another martyrdom!

- What will you do when you're faced with that? *That's not a temptation! That's a tribulation!*
- What is going to be the temptation to try the whole world? *That's going to be when the beast comes on the scene!*

Here is the test, the temptation: ***When the man of sin, the son of perdition, goes into the Holy of Holies and declares himself to be 'God.'*** The pope is performing miracles and great things are happening, the miracles of Satan, to deceive the world, **what will you do?**

Paul tells us, 2-Thessalonians 2:1: "Now, we beseech you, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, that you not be quickly shaken in mind, nor be troubled..." (vs 1-2). ***You keep your mind and your strength and the Spirit of God!***

"...neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by epistle, as if from us, *saying* that the day of Christ **is present**" (v 2). That's different than saying *His return!* They will say that the Day of Christ is present when *the beast*—and all the world is worshipping *the beast*—will be accepted as 'God' manifested in the flesh.

Verse 3: "Do not let anyone deceive you by any means because *that day will not* come unless the apostasy shall come first, and the man of sin shall be revealed—the son of perdition, the one who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is an object of worship; so that he comes into the temple of God... [soon to be built] ...and sits down as God, proclaiming that he himself is God" (vs 3-4).

*That is the great temptation!* When it says in Rev. 3 that God will keep us from that temptation, that means He will:

- watch over us
- take care of us
- keep an eye on us
- observe attentively

Keeping us from being swept away into this worship of the one who possessed by Satan the devil! That's going to be ***the temptation of the whole world!***

The Great Tribulation comes after that! It comes with the opening of the second seal, and then literally all hell on earth is going to break loose!

***That is the difference between temptation and tribulation!***

Scriptural References:

- 1) Revelation 3:7-11
- 2) Matthew 6:13
- 3) James 1:1-8, 12-19
- 4) Matthew 4:1-10
- 5) Hebrews 2:6-16
- 6) Galatians 3:29
- 7) Hebrews 2:17-18
- 8) Hebrews 4:15
- 9) Romans 8:1-3
- 10) Luke 8:11-15
- 11) 2 Peter 2:1-2, 8-10
- 12) 1 Corinthians 10:1-13
- 13) Acts 20:18-32
- 14) 1 Thessalonians 3:1-7
- 15) Romans 5:1-5
- 16) 2 Corinthians 1:1-10
- 17) 2 Corinthians 8:1-5
- 18) Matthew 24:21
- 19) 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Genesis 3
- 2 Corinthians 8, 11
- 3 John
- Revelation 6; 7; 3

Also referenced:

- Sermon Series: *How Apostasy Starts*

- Sermon: *If God is For You Nothing Can Be Against You!*

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