

Gary Hargrave:

Someone recently asked me about the rapture and when it would take place relative to the tribulation. I chose to answer the question from a perspective of spiritual maturity, rather than answering it theologically. Now they say that there's no such thing as a bad question, but there definitely is such a thing as a wrong focus. And these days of transition and tribulation, which proceed the establishment of God's kingdom, we must have a clear and fixed focus on who we are and what the will of God is for our lives. I want to jump right into some scriptures that will help us understand this. In Luke 19:11, the Lord brings a parable. He says, while they were listening to these things, Jesus went on to tell a parable because he was near Jerusalem and they supposed that the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately. So he said a nobleman went to a distant country to receive a kingdom for himself and then return.

Gary Hargrave:

And he called 10 of his slaves and gave them 10 minas and said to them, do business with this until I come back. If we look at the scripture in the King James version, it's a little bit of a different wording. And it simply says that he called 10 servants and delivered to them 10 pounds and said to them, occupy until I come. I like that translation in this instance, because it gives this emphasis of what we are to do. Christ is giving a parable of a nobleman who went into a country to receive a kingdom. And that's exactly what Christ did. Following the cross he ascended into heaven to establish the kingdom in heaven, knowing that he is going to return to this earth. And he said, he called his disciples and he gave them these talents that they were to work with.

Gary Hargrave:

But he said, do business with this until I come back. And again, in King James, it uses a little bit of different terminology. It says occupy until I come. But the emphasis Christ is giving is, I've gone into the right hand of the father and I am working to fully establish my kingdom in the heavenly realm. And when that is accomplished, I will return. But until I return, your focus is to do business with the talents that I've given you and focus upon what is necessary to be accomplished in this earth so that as I return, I am able to establish my kingdom on this earth. And so this concept is something important for us to realize. We shouldn't be worried about a rapture or what's going to happen and looking off into the heavens. It concerns me at times because I feel people really are just worried about reading the book of Revelation and worried about the idea of tribulation and worried about what we're going to go through.

Gary Hargrave:

I think we need to, as difficult as it can be, just trust the Lord for what is going to happen in our days. We've seen the saints of God all through history go through very difficult times. And we likewise are preparing our own hearts. This is why I'm concerned about our spiritual maturity is that we should be preparing ourselves to walk through whatever we must experience and accomplish in this earth for the Lord during this time period that we're in. And so we are to do business with the talent that he's given us until he returns. We are to occupy until he comes. I want to look at Ephesians the fourth chapter starting at verse 11. It says he gave some as apostle, some as prophets, some as evangelists and some as pastors and teachers. Now, this is talking about after his ascension.

Gary Hargrave:

And what did he do? He gave these gift ministries of the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers for the equipping of the saints for the work of service. There is something that he wanted us

prepared to do in this earth, in these days, looking forward to his return and the establishment of his kingdom. Not looking, waiting and focusing. We're not to sit back and say, when is he coming? How is he coming? What will take place as he returns? No, we're worried about every day what we should be accomplishing with the gifts and the preparation that he is giving us for the equipping of the saints for the work of service to the building up of the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the son of God to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

Gary Hargrave:

As we read these verses, we see there's a lot of work to be done from where we are now until the coming of the Lord. We need to see the unity of the faith, the knowledge of the son of God, the building up of the body of Christ, that we come to a mature man to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. When I look around at the body of Christ at this point, when I look around at the church, I could say we're a long way from this, and we need our concentration not on some rapture and not what is going to happen in rapture. We need to be concerned about what is taking place right now on a daily basis surrounding us prior to the Lord's return.

Gary Hargrave:

We are not to be children in verse 14, no longer tossed here and there by waves carried about by every wind of doctrine by the trickery of men in craftiness and deceitful scheming. But speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into him who is the head, even Christ from whom the whole body being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part is causing the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love. We have a lot to do here. It's because of every person who is supplying their talent into the working of God on the earth in these days, in these moments prior to his return, that is really what our focus should be. We must attain to the proper working of each individual part because that is what causes, our gift being exercised in the body of Christ is what causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love. And this is who we are in this day.

Gary Hargrave:

This is what we are to be accomplishing. He has given the apostles and prophets in preparation for us, but we also realize that they are preparing us to do the work. They're preparing us to do the job. And it's each of us individually, as we're moving in the gift that he's given us and preparing us to do that the body comes to its place of maturity. And we can see this great return of Christ in the establishment of his kingdom and Ephesians two, starting at verse eight. It says for by grace, you have been saved through faith and that not of yourself it is the gift of God. Not as a result of work so that no one may boast, for we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. I mean, grasp what's being said here. We are his workmanship.

Gary Hargrave:

We are created in Christ for good works, which God prepared beforehand. He's already predetermined these works. He's given us these gifts and these callings that we are to walk in. And so he has prepared beforehand that which we would walk in. So we have these works that he has prepared for us and that we are called to walk in. I want to look at John, the 17th chapter, now. This is Christ speaking. He said, I glorified you on the earth. He's speaking to the father. I glorified you on the earth having accomplished

the work which you have given me to do. Now father glorify me together with yourself, with the glory which I had with you before the world was. There will be that time where we are with the Lord forever. But in the meantime, as Christ, he said, I glorified you on the earth by accomplishing the work which you gave me.

Gary Hargrave:

Christ had a work to do and he was driven to do that. And he accomplished that work. And so we likewise have been given these gifts, these callings from God, and we are on this earth to be focused on the completion of the work which he has given us to do. And I know sometimes we don't feel worthy and we feel like we've got problems, but I want to look at the apostle Paul in first Corinthians 15, starting at verse nine, he says, for I am the least of the apostles and not fit to be called an apostle because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God, I am what I am. And his grace toward me did not prove vain, but I labored even more than all of them. Yet not I, but the grace of God with me. So we see that Paul had the problems he faced.

Gary Hargrave:

He lived with the reality that he'd been a persecutor of the church. And he says, I'm not even worthy to be called an apostle. But by the grace that was given to me, I labored more than all of the other apostles. And sometimes I feel like people are concerned about the problems they've had, the needs that they have, what they've gone through in their life. But we have to understand that God has prepared us and he's given us grace. And in that grace is the giftings. It's the talents like we began in Luke 19, where Christ called those in the parable together and said, look, I'm giving you these talents and I want you to do business with this. I want you to occupy until I come. I want you to labor in the earth. I want you to focus on what needs to be accomplished here on the earth that triggers and opens the door for my return.

Gary Hargrave:

And that is the way that we should think about ourselves. That is the way that we should be driven. Let's not get caught up into concerns about theology and how this is going to take place. Not fall into the trap of fear as we look at some of the stories that we read about in Revelations of what's to happen prior to the Lord's return. These days, we will find God's grace for us just like Paul found grace for him, just like Christ found that he had the grace of God in his life, that he was able to endure what he was given to endure. And he completed the work which God gave him to do. And we likewise will be able by the grace of God to complete the work which God has given us to do. And by those talents and enabling of his Holy Spirit, we will be able to bring forth in this earth that which is necessary during this great time of transition into his kingdom.

Gary Hargrave:

We have to think about this podcast and what God wants us to understand from it. God has always used humans to perform his will and his works on the earth. When we look at the scriptures, we see that men and women were moved by the Holy Spirit during times of trouble and transition to do the will of God. You know, if you think about it, how many prophets existed in the Old Testament during wonderful easy times? I can't think of one off the top of my head right now. The prophets of God manifested in the scriptures during times of need, during times of trouble, during times of transition from one age into the next. That's what was necessary. Moses came on the scene when they had to be delivered out of the

bondage of slavery. So we have to realize this in our own hearts, that God is looking to use us as his instruments.

Gary Hargrave:

And he's given us these talents by which we can function through the Holy Spirit, using the grace which he's made as a provision for us. And we'll see in this age, men and women of God moving in God during this tremendous time of trouble and transition. And by his grace, we will be able to move and accomplish his will and his works on the earth just as Yeshua was able to do. I have completed the work on the earth that you've given me to do and by virtue of that, I have glorified you.

Gary Hargrave:

We see that this is a great time of transition and tribulation, bringing the earth into the messianic age of God's kingdom. And now more than ever, God is needing sons and daughters who will walk in the footsteps of Yeshua, of Jesus, who glorified the father by completing on this earth the good works which he had beforehand prepared that we should walk in them. They are prepared, the grace is there, let's remember that. By grace we are able to walk in all that he has prepared for us to walk in and we will be able to do his will. We'll be able to glorify his name on this earth and bring forth all that he has called us to walk in as his people. Lord, bless this word to our hearts, give us the faith and the trust and the enablement to walk in it. Amen.