

# GROWING IN GOD

PODCAST



## GIG119 – The Great Tribulation – Part 2

My last podcast was entitled *The Great Tribulation – Part 1*, and because this is such an important topic, I feel like going on and doing more with it. I feel like we, as believers, need to be strengthened in our faith regarding the things of the end, and especially regarding this idea of the Great Tribulation. Part of my concern is that so many people live in so much fear of the end time, and they live in fear of just the terminology, “the Great Tribulation.” Then you read the book of Revelation, and it is just something that seems incomprehensible that you could experience or walk through and come out unscathed in your faith. But I believe that we can. I know what the Lord talked about in Matthew 24, and I will read verse 6: “You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end.” These are the words of Christ. This is Christ telling us about the days of the end and this time of great tribulation, and He is telling us not to be frightened. Remember in John 17, the Lord requested of the Father before He was crucified, saying, “I am not asking You to take them out of this world. I am asking You to keep them from the evil one.” What I believe we have to recognize is the fact that during these days of tribulation and persecution, the Lord is going to be with us. The Father is going to be keeping us, Christ is going to be with us, the Holy Spirit is going to be filling us – and we are going to be here with faith, with a purpose to walk through these days.

In the first podcast, I talked about the fact that this term “Great Tribulation” can be kind of confusing. I think the word “great” applies in one way to the fact that this is something that is global in its scope in a way that has never been seen before. It does not mean the things that are transpiring have never been seen before or done before. We remember that the Church Age began with persecution, with tribulation. Paul talks about the tribulation that he experienced, and the fact that the church really grew up around his times of tribulation and suffering that he went through. And he says they were not ashamed of him or his suffering. This is not something that is new. It is not something that is necessarily different in the scope of the things transpiring; rather, it may be the scope upon which they are transpiring. So again, I believe it will be a global event, whereas most of the time, we see persecutions and we see tribulation being more geographically isolated. You have what He talks about here, “wars and rumors of wars,” they happen in one location or another; but never before will we have experienced anything on a global basis. And we do see things now warming up to that direction. I believe COVID-19 was something that transpired on a global basis, which is unusual for the things that transpire in history.

So that is one aspect of it. I think the other is that it is a Great Tribulation because it is the last one. You go from this time of tribulation, it says, “immediately following these days, the sun is darkened and the moon will not give its light and the stars will fall from the sky and the powers of the heaven will be shaken, and then the Son of Man will appear.” So immediately following tribulation, how does it end? It ends with the appearance of the Son of Man. It ends with the return of Christ to the earth to establish His earthly Kingdom. That is something to look forward to! And in my mind, that is a great thing to think, “This is the last of tribulation.” The last two thousand years have been filled with persecution and tribulation, and now we will finally see that ended, and we will go from this era into another timeframe

that is His Kingdom – and it is not earmarked with persecution and tribulation. So all of these things give us an idea, maybe a better idea, of what is transpiring during these days of tribulation.

Now, personally, which is where I am coming from – and again, you can disagree with my thoughts or my understanding of Scriptures, or my personal belief system, that is fine with me. These are not jugular issues upon which our salvation is hanging. These are things that we know by Scripture will take place; how and when they take place, we do not know. So I do not want to get into a lot of speculation. I want to try to keep it simple, and I want to try to have it expressing my belief and my faith in it; because I believe that we will be here during the times of the Tribulation, if we are graced by God to live up to that point. And I say graced by God, because I think there is a way in which it is a tremendous privilege to live through these last hours of the age and to be a part and a participant in that. You may think I am crazy, and I don't know, maybe I am. But I believe that it is an honor to suffer with Him. And I believe that if we suffer with Him, that we reign with Him. And I think one of the greatest things that we can do as believers is be the light of the world and be His mouthpiece to spread the Gospel of the Kingdom to the ends of the earth. If we are honored to be here in this timeframe, God will, I believe, give us the grace to live through it with faith, and to make Him proud of us and our strength of being able to draw faith from Him and in Him.

I believe that there are two purposes in the Tribulation. One purpose is the perfecting of the saints. I believe it is a time and an opportunity, like no other, to grow in the things of God; to appropriate from Him what He has made in provision for us through faith; and to become His witnesses in the earth, to become His matured people – true sons standing in faith in His Presence. So it has a great deal to do with God's people and the opportunity that He gives us as people to grow in Him, and to become in Him, and to be transformed in Him, by the appropriation of His provisions of the new man and the new self; to put on the mind of Christ. These things are available to us. That is one purpose – it is what God is doing in His people. And I want to keep that first and utmost, because to me, the positive is always the most important thing God is doing.

Secondarily to that, it is a decision time for the wicked. I believe that God is going to be bringing a final challenge to those who are wicked and living wickedly. It is a time when they can change. They will be hearing the Gospel of the Kingdom – they can believe, and be converted, and they can be saved, and they can find a walk with God – or they will continue doing wickedly. And if they continue in their wickedness, if they continue in their sin, then because the time is so great in its expression of what God is doing, it really is a finalization of, in a sense, the justification of God's final judgements on this generation. And you say, "That does not make sense to me." Well, I will give you an example in Scripture. It says that God kept Israel in Egypt until the iniquity of the Amorites had come to the full. The Israelites were not delivered by Moses out of Egypt until the people who possessed the land of Canaan had committed themselves so totally to being wicked and sinful and anti-God, worshiping other gods and serving other gods, that God was able to bring Israel into the land not only as a source of possessing their inheritance and promise that He had given to Abraham, but also to serve as God's vehicle of judging the wickedness of those who lived in the land. And that is just the way it was. God did not allow Israel to come into Canaan land until the iniquity of the Amorites had come to the full; and therefore, the judgements that He was preparing to bring were justified, and had been earned by those who refused Him during those years of, I am sure, Him calling unto them to repent, and they refused Him. At some point, He just said, "This is enough. Enough is enough. You have committed yourself to your sinful ways, and you are not going to change." Therefore, the judgment was warranted, and God used Israel as a source of that judgment.

I think in the days of the Great Tribulation, we are seeing both of these things take place. We are seeing the preparation of God's people for becoming sons, being transformed into His image and ruling and reigning with Christ in His Kingdom; and I think that we are seeing the wicked being given a chance to repent, because again, it says that during this time, the Gospel of the Kingdom is preached to all the nations. People are going to hear the Gospel and have an opportunity to repent, and change, and go another direction. It will be different, however, for those who refuse during this absolute confrontation of the things of God during the Tribulation. You know, when times get tough, people usually open up to the Lord. They begin crying out to God for salvation, and that is what God is looking for from the wicked during these times of great tribulation. And that is one reason I believe these times come, because the intensity of what humanity goes through is to drive you into God; it is not to drive you away from God. It is not to just torment you or scare you. We are not to be fearful; we are to be filled with faith and speaking His Word. We are to be reaching into more and more of God as His believers. We have to, because we are going through many of these trials and testings as the whole world is going through. It is not just for them, it is for us. It is a trial of our faith. It is a testing of our faith. And it is a testing of the wicked to see, "Are you committed to your wickedness and your evil ways? Or will you repent and open your heart to My salvation which I am holding out to you in total grace, and it is absolutely available to you during this time?" So I think we see two things, very, very plainly transpiring during these days of great tribulation that come upon the whole earth.

I want to read out of Isaiah the twenty-sixth chapter, starting at verses 20-21. It says, "Come, my people, enter into your rooms and close your doors behind you; hide for a little while until indignation runs its course. For behold, the Lord is about to come out from His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; and the earth will reveal her bloodshed and will no longer cover her slain." We see this picture of two things happening. God's people are to enter into their rooms. Now you say, "What does that mean? I don't get it." Well, remember Matthew 6, when the Lord taught us to pray? He says in Matthew 6:6-8, "But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you. And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him." Think about that – when we are in these days of testing, God knows what we need. Is it food? Is it shelter? Is it covering? Is it protection? He knows what we need before we ask Him. "Pray, then, in this way: Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

I think this so applies to these days of the Tribulation and these days of testing that come on the earth, because we are praying to the Father, we are going into His Presence. What do we do? We run to His Presence. When things get bad, we run to Him, we come to Him. And what do we do in that secret place? He says in Isaiah, "Come, my people, enter into your rooms and close your doors behind you." That is what Christ is teaching His disciples when He teaches them to pray: close the door behind you. Hide for a little while there in the Presence of the Lord. And while you are there, cry out to Him, saying, "Your Kingdom come. Your will be done, on this earth as it is in heaven." You know why? Because that is exactly the next step of what transpires. It says, "When these days of tribulation are over, the sign of the Son of Man appears in the sky." We go into the time of His return, into the time of His coming. So once again, we see in the Scripture, here in Isaiah, a picture of two things: When God begins to move, He is moving with His people in a relationship where they come into His Presence and close the door. They hide themselves in with Him, and they come closer in a relationship to Him. I guarantee you, if we find

ourselves in the days of the Great Tribulation, we will be driven in our hearts to find a much closer relationship with the Father, with Christ, than we are driven on a daily basis to find right now. Do you agree with that? I think everyone would agree with that. We will be driven to be in His Presence, driven to find Him, to know Him, to seek Him with all of our hearts. In the day that we seek Him with all of our hearts, then He will be found of us.

I think this is part of the motivation of these days of tribulation and persecution. It has happened down through history to the Church. When they found themselves in these times, boy, they sought God! They prayed. Look at the book of Acts, where they were getting ready to kill Peter. Where are the disciples? They are in the room, the believers are in a room together, crying out to God, praying, praying, praying. Peter comes and knocks on the door, they go answer the door and they say, "Oh, it's Peter's ghost!" They could not even believe it was him, so they went back to praying, and he had to keep knocking on the door. They were crying out to God because they had already lost James, and they realized the persecution that they were under; they realized it did not stop with the apostles, that they were probably next on the list. And so, they were found together crying out to God. Believe me, we are going to have some of the greatest prayer meetings we have ever had in our lives during the days of tribulation. We are going to be seeking Him like we never have before. But it is this day in which two things are happening at once: God moving in a new way with His people, and God bringing the indignation on the earth for their sin, "to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; and the earth will reveal her bloodshed." All of the things that have transpired through the bloodshed and the wickedness of men, one person to another, will come out during this time. It is time for the debts to be paid. It is time. The wicked will have an opportunity, but they are going to have to repent. And if they do not, they are proving their commitment to wickedness and to evil, and they are going to find a great deal of recompense transpiring for that.

I want to go to Daniel, because Daniel does such a great job of painting the picture of these two things that are transpiring simultaneously during the days that are prophesied. Daniel 12, starting at verse 1: "Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued." He is saying to Daniel, "Hey, this is going to be a time as has never been before," and that is what Christ is saying. They are pointing to the same time of a great tribulation, or days of tribulation on the earth. And one of the first things he recognizes is that at this time, everyone who is found written in the book will be rescued. So what is going to happen to believers? This is a time of our rescue. It is a time when we are reconciled into a relationship with God as we have never known before.

Going to verse 2, "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt." So again, these are times of judgment. People come into the blessing of everlasting life, of eternal life with God, and others will find an eternal, everlasting life of contempt and suffering. And this is why it is important. If you are listening to this and you have not had an experience of salvation, I encourage you to open your heart to the Lord, to accept what He suffered on the cross for the forgiveness of your sins, and to believe in Him; and to receive the gift of grace, the free gift of God of eternal life in salvation, and receive it now. Don't wait till these days, receive it beforehand. Then grow a little bit in God, and be one of those who is spreading the Gospel of the Kingdom during times of tribulation.

We go on to verses 3-4: “Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.” So we see that those who have a walk with the Lord, who know the Lord, they are going to shine brightly. This is not going to be a day when your light goes out, when you are cowering in fear, when things are desperate and you are barely making it. This is the time when you shine brightly. God's people “shine brightly like the expanse of the heaven, and those who lead many to righteousness” – this will be a time of the preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom – they will shine “like stars forever and ever.” “But as for you, Daniel, conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time; many will go back and forth, and knowledge will increase.” Verse 10, “Many will be purged, purified and refined.” That is what happens with the saints and for the saints during this time of great tribulation. Yes, it is a testing on our faith, but the result is we are purged, purified, refined. I want and long for that experience. “But the wicked will act wickedly; and none of the wicked will understand, but those who have insight will understand.” So wickedness is going to grow, because those who are committed to wickedness will become more and more wicked, and more and more given to their wickedness. But we, as believers, are going to find this as a time of purifying, of purging, testing, refining of our faith, until we are shining brightly in these days. I believe for this. I believe it is the time of some of the greatest change. Some of the greatest saints that we have seen on the earth have been during the times of greatest tribulation and persecution, and we are going to see that again. And I remind you once again of the Words of the Lord: “Don't be fearful.” Do not fear. Be bold and believe. Believe to be changed. Believe to be purified. Believe to be refined in your faith. And believe to move in the power of God during these times. Remember, the weapons of our warfare are not carnal. They are powerful in God to the tearing down of these strongholds and spirits that are behind the wicked moving during this age. We are going to see it.

Again, in Matthew we are told not to be fearful. In Matthew 10:28, He says, “Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” And so, we are not to fear. He goes on in verses 30-34: “But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.” God is not losing track of you during this time. He knows right where you are, He knows everything about you, He is right with you – “Lo, I am with you, even to the end of the age.” “So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows. Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven. Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.” When we come to the time of the end, God is bringing His retribution. When Christ came the first time, He came not to bring judgment, but to bring salvation and to bring release to all those who would believe; to bring the purity of God's Word and His everlasting love to all mankind. But now we are facing the end of an age, just like was faced with those in the land of Canaan when Israel was on its way. People have chosen, and there is going to be consequence.

I want to end this by emphasizing the blessing that we are to receive. I want so badly to change people's perception about this time, to where we see it as a time of blessing and growth, of becoming what God has called us to become, because of what we are going through. God is not trying to hurt us. This is not a time of our discipline and God taking us into judgment. This is a time of perfection, and a time of blessing. So first, I would like to just remind you of Ephesians 6:10-11, that we are to put on the whole armor of God. How do we get through these things? There are the provisions of God, there are the provisions that Christ has made, that we are to appropriate. Maybe I will go into that more in another podcast, but right now I want to emphasize James, and I will start with chapter 1, verses 12-22: “Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life

which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.” That is what we receive – we are in this because we are in the process of receiving the crown of life. “Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am being tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.” So these days of evil and wickedness are not days to tempt us. These are days of our growth, as we come in to put on that crown of life. To others, they are already moving in the things of wickedness, and they are going to continue to do so. “But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures. This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God. Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.” This is going to be a great age, in which the Church steps up to the plate and proves themselves doers of the Word, not hearers who delude themselves with doctrines.

I want to go to James 1, verses 2-4: “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” I want that. I want this testing that we are going to go through to produce endurance. I want it to bring forth its perfect result in me and in you, which is to bring us forth perfected, complete, lacking in nothing. That is what the days of great tribulation are about for believers.

First Peter 1, verses 3-5: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” Your salvation is ready to be revealed in the last times. God is with us to protect us by His power and to reveal the fullness of His salvation. The things He has given us are imperishable, undefiled, and they will not fade away, they will not be tarnished by tribulation; but instead, they are pointing to what has been reserved for us in heaven.

Verses 6-11: “In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials.” We should look at these times. Okay for a little while, maybe we will go through these things – if necessary. But if necessary, we will go through them, and we will rejoice greatly as we do. And we will be thankful to the Lord to count us worthy to be those who suffer with the prophets and the saints who have gone before us. “You have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls. As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow.”

We see that these things were prophesied, and that these things came forth for Christ, and they will come forth for us. In verse 18, we have not been “redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from our futile way of life.” We recognize this. As he says in verse 7, “the proof of our faith is more precious than gold which is perishable.” There is nothing greater we can have than to go through times when by the grace of God, our faith in Him is tested and tried and proven in a way that it can grow and become even greater. We do not grow weaker, we grow stronger when we are tested.

I bless these words to you. And in ending this, I would just say a couple of things. I believe we will experience, or there will be those who are lucky enough to experience, the times of the Great Tribulation. In doing so, they will be part of the final events that lead to the return of Christ. The Great Tribulation will be the final sealing of judgment upon the wicked, but it will also be the final perfecting of God's children. That is what we revel in, and what we believe for.

I bless us in our faith. I bless us in our growth, in our walking with Him. Lord, be with us. Lord, help us. Lord lead us and teach us as we move forward into the days of Your Kingdom. Amen.