

In Spite of a Troubled World, God Will Help You

Fred R. Coulter—November 17, 2012

We've had one week after the election and then one more week. A lot of people are already blaming the President, but like I said last week Dolores is on top of all of this and she has said that *we get the President we deserve*. It has to do with the people more than the man.

Let's see some things that are going to come about. Things are not going to get better. They're probably going to get a little more difficult. Sooner or later we're going to be confronted with some very difficult situations. Here's what happened to Jerusalem and God said it would happen. Historically you can read about it in *Josephus* and other publications about the destruction of Jerusalem in 586_{B.C.}

It was very interesting the way that all of that occurred because there were three invasions by King Nebuchadnezzar. After each invasion God gave Israel a chance to repent. Let's look and see some of the main reasons why these things occurred.

We look at what's happening right now. It seems as though everything is falling apart. There's war right there in the Gaza strip. The Jews are coming after the Palestinians. The Syrians are going after the rebels. Turkey is getting involved. Egypt and the Brotherhood are coming up and they're going to be belligerent against Israel. It doesn't look like there's going to be any good solution. In the meantime they talk about, 'Let's have peace talks.' They've had peace talks for 60 years? Maybe not quite that long.

Let's come to Zechariah 12 so we can talk a little bit about Jerusalem. I don't think it's right to call it the Holy Land, because it's anything but Holy. Nothing but war, blood, guts, killing and conniving, hatred, and everything like this.

How many wars have the Jews fought? *The 1948 war to get there!* Then they had the 1967 war and then they had the 1983 war. For a while they had Egypt as a peace partner. I think also we need to realize—and the Jews are going to have to understand some things, too—that there are some things that the Jews need to change if there's going to be any release from what they're going through.

Would we put up with it, with rockets coming through and bombing our towns? Yet, they put up with and put with it. You have such total absolute hatred; it is just vehement beyond any reason. You can't sit down and reason with anyone. *All of this is because of the sin of Israel and because of the fight between the brothers;* the twin brother of

Jacob—Esau; and the half-brother of Isaac— Ishmael. Now there's no relenting.

God says here, Zechariah 12:2: "Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling... [That's what it is right now. They had their first rocket come right in there.] ...unto all the people all around..." All of the nations affected right there. It also includes the whole world. Think about where the final battle with the return of Christ and the saints is going to be right in that area just north of Jerusalem.

"...all who burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces... [We've seen what the Jews have done to those who come after them.] ...though all the nations of the earth be gathered together against it" (v 3). That's what we're seeing right now. I wonder how long it's going to be before they say, 'Let's have some armies of different nations come in and keep the peace.' We'll have to see.

Verse 4: "In that day," says the LORD, "I will strike every horse with terror, and his rider with madness. And I will open My eyes upon the house of Judah, and will strike every horse of the people with blindness. And the governors of Judah shall say in their heart, "The people of Jerusalem *shall be* my strength in the LORD of hosts their God"" (vs 4-5). Now we have an Israeli prime minister who is not going to back down to anybody. So, this is going to happen.

Verse 6: "In that day I will make the governors of Judah like a hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire among the sheaves. And they shall devour all the people all around..." Think about the wars that they had against the Palestinians when they came the first time in 1948. They won! Think about the war that they had later with Lebanon. They won! They've had two wars with Lebanon. Think about the Yom Kippur war and think about the 1983 war. They won!

They were told that if they went against the Egyptian army in Sinai that they would be wiped out because the Egyptian army at that time was well supplied with all the Soviet arms. They had a large army. What happened, just exactly right here. The Jews came in there and they knocked out virtually all the tanks from air superiority and they took over the whole Sinai in about three days. So, the moral of the story is, *you don't want to mess with God*.

Ahmadinejad from Iran—which is Persia in the Bible—says that they want to destroy all the Jews. I think he would do well to read the book of Esther. Even though God is going to punish His people, He is not going to tolerate and stand for anyone doing anything that He has not proposed or that He has not caused to happen. We'll have to see

how that goes. Makes you wonder, will the Jews do something to Iran after they take care of Gaza?

You know the history of Gaza—don't you? They took Gaza because it was a place where they had a lot of terrorist activity. They kept it for a good number of years. Then they made a peace agreement with the Palestinians and they took all the Jewish settlers out of Gaza, moved them back into what they call Israel and gave it back to the Palestinians on the proviso there would be no terrorist activity from Gaza.

That has long since been violated. Right while we're speaking they may be invading and taking Gaza back, because they're not going to put up with it. Imagine if you lived over there where the rockets come, you wouldn't know whether you're going to live or whether you're going to die.

That's really quite an awful, terrible situation to be in. Notice what's going to happen here, let's pick it up here when Christ returns, v 7: "The LORD also shall save the tents of Judah first..." There's going to be a conversion of Jews. That's going to be just right before Christ returns.

"...so that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the people of Jerusalem may not be magnified above Judah. In that day the LORD shall defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And it shall be, he who is feeble among them at that day *shall be* like David... [all the Palestinians and Syrians had better watch out what they're going to do] ...and the house of David *shall be* like God, like the angel of the LORD before them. And it shall be in that day *that* I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the people of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace [repentance] and of supplication" (vs 7-10).

Let's see why all of these things are happening the way that they are happening. We're going to see that the Bible tells us more than any other commentator, more than any news channel. They have no idea what's in the Bible. They have no idea what's going on. Every time they try and solve a problem and come up with another government solution, it doesn't work because the problem is not the government. The government is reflective of the people. The problem is not a government program. The problem is that people have forsaken God.

Sooner or later it will come to this. You think about how quickly when the disaster hit back on the east coast, the stores were out of food, out of water, out of batteries. There are 200,000 still homeless. We're about 2-1/2 weeks since it occurred. Stop and think about this: What would you do if you were in their position—no home, no bed. You have to be in a shelter. You go back and look at your home if it's still there. There's the foundation.

Everything's all destroyed. How long are you going to be out of your home?

Like I said a couple sermons ago, people don't like it, but God doesn't like it when people leave Him because He's given everything to them.

Here's what He did to Jerusalem. The fallacy of Jerusalem is almost the same as the fallacy of America today. They said, 'We're Jerusalem. We're the city of God. This is where God chose to place His name. Surely He wouldn't do anything to destroy it.' The truth is, if the people don't do what God wants, He will destroy it and He will destroy the people. Same thing we say today: We're Americans. We can handle it; we can overcome it; we can do it.

What are you going to do when you have a disaster that is so large that there is absolutely nothing anyone can do? What's going to happen then? Let's look at some of the causes. The reason I'm bringing out the causes is so that we can watch the news, see things develop, and see exactly how it's going to come about just like God's Word.

Isaiah 3:1: "For behold, the Lord, the LORD of hosts, takes away from Jerusalem and from Judah the stay and the staff, the whole stay of bread and the whole stay of water, The man of might and the man of war, the judge and the prophet, the diviner and the ancient... [Everyone is going to be confused. No one is going to escape.] ...the captain of fifty, and the honorable man and the adviser, and the cunning charmer and the skillful enchanter. 'And I will give young lads *to be* their princes, and capricious children shall rule over them'" (vs 1-4). I think we see that happening today—don't we? *Yes, indeed!*

Verse 5: "And the people shall be crushed... [a lot of people feel crushed] ...every man by another, and every man by his neighbor; the young shall rise up against the old..." That's what happened in the election—correct? *Yes!* The young! The emotional! Of course, people today, the young think, 'We're smart, we're 'hep,' we're really cool, we're good. We have our cell phones. We have our government this, that, and the other and we're in good shape.' Hold on!

"...the young shall rise up against the old, and the base against the honorable.' When a man shall take hold of his brother of his father's house, *saying*, 'You have clothing, you be our ruler, and let this ruin be under your hand'" (vs 5-6). It's going to get so bad that no one's going to want it.

Verse 7: "In that day he shall swear, saying, 'I will not be a healer; there *is* no bread nor a cloak in my house. You shall not make me a ruler of people.'" So, we see the whole thing as it describes

it. We can just take this and we can expand it out to the modern nations of Israel today.

Verse 8: “For Jerusalem is staggering and Judah has fallen because their tongue and their doings *are* against the LORD, to provoke the eyes of His glory. The look of their faces witnesses against them; and they declare their sin like Sodom. They do not hide *it!* **Woe to their soul!...**” (vs 8-9). We’re going to look at quite a few woes, so look at those. We’ll see this is exactly what is happening today. ***We are bringing these woes upon us!***

“...For they have rewarded evil to themselves” (v 9). ‘As you sow, so shall you reap.’ Here’s some encouragement for us. God wants us at all times, when difficulties come along, take

- hope in Him
- trust in Him
- look to Him

He will deliver us! He will!

Verse 10: “Say to the righteous that *it shall be* well with him; for they shall eat the fruit of their doings.” God will watch over us. He will protect us. He will keep us from a lot of things that come along. We also have to take care of ourselves. We also have to be ‘wise as serpents and harmless as doves.’

Verse 11: “**Woe to the wicked!** For the evil doing of his hand will be given to him.” That is coming! It will be coming!

Look at this verse because this really describes a lot of things that are going on, v 12: “*As for My people, children are their oppressors... [Is that not true? Absolutely!] ...and women rule over them. Oh, My people, those who lead you cause you to err and destroy the way of your paths.*”

- by teachings in school
- by teachings from the government
- by teachings in the churches

They destroy the path that the people need to walk on. People are not told what is right and wrong. People are not told what is good and evil. More and more it’s getting that fewer and fewer and people are told that.

Verse 13: “The LORD stands up to plead His case, and stands up to judge the people. The LORD will enter into judgment with the elders of His people, and their kings...” (vs 13-14). We’re going to find out what’s going to happen with the government.

I think this next six weeks are going to be very important. I do not know what’s going to happen. I do not know if there is going to be an absolute cantankerous resistance between President Obama and the Congress. Don’t know what’s going to happen. It’s not going to lead to much good unless

they can do something and even if they do it’s like putting a Band-Aid on.

We were watching the news. How many saw on the news the Wonder Bread Company is shutting down? *18,000 employees because of greed from the unions!* They had no alternative. They said, ‘You want your jobs? You don’t own them, we give them to you and you want such high wages there’s no way we can make a profit. Unless we make a profit we’re out of business. We’re shutting down. That’s it.’

Likewise with the defense industry; probably as many as 100,000 people will be laid off. Those things will be just like dominos falling. As you can see wherever you are, when economic activity goes down, businesses go out of business. People are out of work. Difficulties come along.

I’m sure you have paid attention to the news what’s going on in Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain, now also in Belgium. Belgium is getting so overrun with Muslims that they predict that within 12 years it will become a Muslim state; a hard-core Catholic country becoming a Muslim state. Think of that! We’re looking at some very dangerous times. We don’t know what’s going to happen here in the U.S.

There is one case making its way through the courts. That was the law in Oklahoma where they said, ‘We will not recognize any Sharia Law.’ What does it say in the second amendment? *Congress shall make no law as to the establishment of a religion or the free exercise thereof!* The seeds of our own destruction were sown in what we thought was really a great statement. You have to recognize the other religion.

- Have we recognized Hinduism? *Yes!*
- Have we recognized witchcraft? *Yes!*
- Have we recognized other religions? *Yes!*

You can’t come along and say to the Muslims, ‘We’re not going to let you have Sharia Law.’ Have there been court cases allowed in laws where that if someone is keeping the Sabbath because of religious conviction they can’t come against them or fire them? *Yes, indeed!* So, what do you suppose is going to happen with Sharia Law once it reaches the Supreme Court?

Which, by the way, they are now analyzing that if things keep going the way that they are, the current President will be able to replace three of the Supreme Court justices. What’s going to happen if that occurs? The whole lesson is when you turn your back on God these things aren’t going to work. You can’t blame the people. You can’t blame the government, but they’re all involved.

God says to the elders of the people, v 14: “...‘For you have eaten up the vineyard; the spoil of the poor *is* in your houses. What do you mean? You

crush My people and grind the faces of the poor?' says the Lord, God of hosts" (vs 14-15).

Here we go again about the women. Think about how all the young girls today, the majority of them are being led right down this garden path. There are still a few good kids, good teenagers, those who want to do well; they are far outnumbered.

Verse 16: "And the LORD says, 'Because the daughters of Zion are proud, and have walked with stretched out necks and ogling with *their* eyes, walking and mincing *as* they go, and making a tinkling with their feet; Therefore, the LORD will strike with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and the LORD will uncover their secret parts'" (vs 16-17).

Verse 18: "In that day the LORD will take away the beauty of ankle bracelets, and the headbands, and the crescents, The pendants, and the bracelets, and the veils; The headdresses, and the leg ornaments, and the sashes, and the boxes of perfume, and the earrings; the rings and nose jewels; The festal apparel and the outer garments; and the mantles, and the purses; the mirrors and the fine linen; and the turbans and the veils. And there shall be, instead of fragrance, rotteness; and instead of a sash, a rope; and instead of well-set hair, baldness; and instead of a rich robe, a wrapping of sackcloth; *and* branding instead of beauty. Your men shall fall by the sword, and your mighty in the war. And her gates shall lament and mourn; and she shall sit deserted upon the ground" (vs 18-26).

Those are staggering things that happened before. If this is not bad enough, read the book of Lamentations by Jeremiah. Let's see how this came about. Let's see what they did. God likens Israel to a vineyard. He planted a good one, but it came up with wild grapes.

Isaiah 5:6: "'And I will lay it waste; it shall not be pruned nor dug; but briars and thorns shall come up. And I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.' For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah His pleasant plant; and He looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed; for righteousness, but behold, a cry of *distress!*" (vs 6-7). All of this is going to come back on our heads. These are the woes. We saw a couple of them over there in Isa. 3:9, 11. Now there are seven more that are coming here. Here's why:

Verse 8: "**Woe to those who join house to house...** [You can add to it and you expand it by going higher and higher. Look at the cities in distress back east where the hurricane came.] *...that* lay field to field, until *there is* no place left, and you

are made to dwell alone in the midst of the land!" Putting that all together.

He also shows this in v 10: "'Yea, ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath... [That is a measurement of grapes.] ...and the seed of a homer shall yield an ephah.' **Woe to those who rise up early in the morning to go after strong drink...** [Do we have an alcohol problem? Do we have a drug problem? *Yes, we do!*] ...who continue late into the night *while* wine inflames them!" (vs 10-11). They're all interested in music. They want a nightclub. They want to do all these things.

Verse 12: "And the lyre, and the harp, the drum, and pipe, and wine are *at* their feasts; but they do not regard the work of the LORD. Yea, they do not see the work of His hands. Therefore, My people are gone into exile because *they have* no knowledge, and their honorable men are famished, and their multitude is dried up with thirst" (vs 12-13). Look at that, all those things.

Let's see another woe. You can bring this out with everything that people do, v 18: "**Woe to those who draw iniquity** with cords of vanity, and sin with cart ropes;' Who say, 'Let Him hurry *and* hasten His work, so that we may see it; and let the purpose of the Holy One of Israel draw near and come, so that we may know!'" (vs 18-19). Mocking God. When you mock God what happens? You get rid of Him.

Verse 20: "**Woe...** [that means bringing distress, affliction, correction] **...to those who call evil good and good evil;** who put darkness for light and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!" That's what we've been doing.

When God says woe, He means it, v 21: "**Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!**" Today everyone's going after what they want to do. Everyone has an idea. Everyone has an opinion. Everyone has a way that they want to live separate from God.

Verse 22: "**Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine,** and men of strength to mingle strong drink."

I heard on the news driving up north today, there was this 21-year-old new adult up in Chico at the Chico State College—and this happened a year ago, too—that for his initiation being 21-years-old on his birthday he had to drink 21 shots of whiskey. He's dead! The colleges are known for their drinking, their sex, their carousing.

Then look at all the sports that they have. Think about that. Can you possibly get their minds on God when they're out there Friday night yelling and cheering on their football team or their

basketball team? Take a look at some of the sports. Look at the eyes of the students that are there cheering. If you walked up and you said, ‘Young man or young woman, have you ever thought about God?’ *God? You must be crazy!*

Verse 23: “Who justify the wicked for a bribe, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him!” Here’s what’s going to happen. I think as I covered last week that we have reached a point that it’s not going to be improving going up. I think we’ve reached a point that it’s going to be going down, *down, down*. Things compound upon another.

When these 18,000 lose their jobs, what’s going to happen? *Now you have 18,000 homes that may be subject to foreclosure pretty quick!* That affects how many other people? And you have all the children. The government does not get the taxes. That affects other people. So, it just compounds itself in such a way that it just gets out of hand and it escalates. I wonder what it would be like to spend a day or two in Greece? Yet, every one of them think they’re doing what’s right.

Verse 24: “Therefore, as the fire devours the stubble, and the flame burns up the chaff; their root shall be like rottenness, and their blossoms shall go up like dust because... [Here’s the whole cause. Everything that we have read right up to this point is *the cause*.] ...they have cast away the Law of the LORD of hosts, and despised the Word of the Holy One of Israel.”

God made us in His image for a great and wonderful purpose. We know that purpose, but the world is now blinded because they won’t listen, they won’t obey. Yes, there are some people out there trying to do ‘good.’ Yes, there are some few honest people out there. Yes, there are some few people out there who want to help their neighbor. But look at what’s going to happen. Sometimes in reading these, because they may not be immediate within the next year or two, but nevertheless, they do take place and have taken place. There it is right there.

Verse 25: “Therefore, the anger of the LORD is kindled against His people.” If you’re God’s people, then when you sin you receive God’s judgment. Same way whether it’s the nations or whether it’s the Church. Look at what is happening to the Christian Church in the world today. It is coming down so fast that it’s almost like rats fleeing a sinking ship.

“...and He has stretched out His hand against them, and has stricken them; and the hills trembled, and their dead bodies *were* as filth in the midst of the streets. In all this His anger is not turned away, but His hand *is* stretched out still” (v 25). Then it goes through showing again how He’s going to bring

other things upon them and what is going to happen. He says all the way through here and His anger is not turned away back. His hand is stretched out still. In spite of all the prophecy, in spite of all that God condemned the children of Israel for and Jerusalem. I want you to notice something very carefully in Jeremiah 17 and we will see what God offered the people.

God gave them a chance of repentance, Jeremiah 17:19: “Thus the LORD said to me, ‘Go and stand in the gates of the children of the people, by which the kings of Judah come in, and by which they go out, and in all the gates of Jerusalem. And say to them, “Hear the Word of the LORD, kings of Judah, and all Judah, and all the people of Jerusalem who enter by these gates!”’ Thus says the LORD, ‘Take heed to yourselves, and carry no burden on the Sabbath Day, nor bring *it* in by the gates of Jerusalem. Nor carry out a burden from your houses on the Sabbath Day, nor do any work, but keep the Sabbath Day Holy, as I commanded your fathers”’ (vs 19-22).

I don’t know if it’s even possible to conceive of any of this from the point of view: What would happen if there would be a lot of Sunday-keeping churches repent and start keeping the Sabbath? *That’s virtually what we’re looking at here with this!*

Verse 23: “‘But they did not obey, nor inclined their ear, but made their neck stiff, so that they might not hear nor receive instruction. And it shall be if you... [In spite of what your fathers have done, in spite of what’s happened here just recently.] ...diligently hearken to Me,’ says the LORD, ‘to bring in no burden through the gates of this city on the Sabbath Day, but keep the Sabbath Day Holy, to do no work in it”’ (vs 23-24).

Notice what He said He would do. He would stop His judgment. He would take back His hand of correction, v 25: “Then kings and rulers sitting on the throne of David shall enter into the gates of this city, riding in chariots and on horses, they, and their rulers, the men of Judah, and the people of Jerusalem. And this city shall remain forever.” So, He gave them a chance.

Then He tells them how it would be with them, v 27: “But if you will not hearken to me to keep the Sabbath Day Holy, and not to carry a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath Day; then I will kindle a fire in its gates, and it will devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it will not be put out.”

Part of the problem that the Church has to face is—all the Churches of God—we need to be giving a good message so that as many people as can, *can repent*. I don’t know how much a difference this is going to make. God alone can do it.

But surely we can take a lesson here and say if right here at this juncture when God was warning them: 'You're going to go into captivity. All of these things are going to come upon you. I'm going to burn everything up. However, hold on, there's some good news. You know the Sabbath Day? Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it Holy? If you will do that, I will defer My judgment against you.' Wouldn't that be something?

(go to the next track)

Let's see how we can survive in the world because we're going to have to face these things. We're going to have to see them take place, and so forth. We need to keep our eyes on what we need to be doing all the time. Remember this: every time you see how bad it is in the world, just remember God has called you to correct it when Christ comes back. Now is not the time for us to correct it. God has to work out everything *His way*, not only in the world but in our lives.

Let's get some things out of Philippians, how then we can keep our bearings in spite of all that's going on around us, in spite of the difficulties that are coming. Otherwise, it's too easy to get caught up in it and say, 'This is too much. I can't handle it.' If we're forewarned, we are forearmed. If we are forearmed, then we are going to be doing what we need to do.

Here's a promise from God: Don't ever think, even in spite of the difficulties you may be going through, even in spite of the trials you may be facing,

- God is there to help
- God is there to intervene
- God is there to change circumstances
 - ✓ so we can get through
 - ✓ so we can survive
 - ✓ so we can escape

Philippians 1:1: "Paul and Timothy, servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, together with *the* overseers and deacons: Grace and peace *be* to you from God our Father and *the* Lord Jesus Christ" (vs 1-2).

You have peace with God. You may see all these things taking place and you may get anxious, you may get distressed. We haven't really seen anything really of a great and disastrous thing take place. We have seen some. None of us (those who live where this sermon is given) lived through Katrina, Irene or Sandy. Those people have seen it. But we have peace with God.

Verse 3: "I thank my God on every remembrance of you, Always making supplication

with joy in my every prayer for you all" (vs 3-4). ***Prayer is the key!*** Pray every day! Study every day!

- That's going to *fortify your mind!*
- That is going to *fortify your resolve!*
- That is going to *give you understanding!*

If you get discouraged and don't pray and don't study, then these things will mount up on you and multiply.

He's praying, v 5: "For your fellowship in the gospel from *the* first day until now." Notice this promise. Here is a promise from God. Don't think that things are so bad that you can't make it. Don't think that things are so bad that God is going to give up on you. Always remember this: ***Every sin—*** except the sin against the Holy Spirit by rejecting God the Father—***is forgivable!*** Did God forgive David what he did with Bathsheba and Uriah the Hittite, her husband? *Yes!* Was that a heinous thing to do? *Yes!* So remember that.

Don't get yourself in a situation where you think, 'God can't forgive me.' *Yes, He can!* If you're worried about it, then you go repent. That's why prayer everyday. Study everyday. Prayer is not just for the 'gimmees.' ***Prayer is to praise God and glorify Him*** for:

- His greatness
- His creation
- His Spirit
- His plan
- His calling

All of these things! That way then you are in harmony with God and His Spirit, because He made us to receive His Spirit.

Here's a promise from God, v 6: "Being confident of this very thing... [that's why we need confidence in times of trouble] ...that He Who began a good work in you... [God is working in you, the inner working of His Holy Spirit] ...will complete *it* until *the* day of Jesus Christ." God is not going to back down from that.

Through all of this, God is working with us. Sometimes we may not think so because we have things to overcome. We have problems and trials we are confronted with. God will see us through every trial and distress. He will complete the work in you until the day of Jesus Christ.

- Is God with you and for you? *Yes!*
- Does He understand you? *Yes!*
- Does He realize all of these things are going to be difficult to handle? *Yes!*

But He's doing something within us.

Ephesians 2:10: "For we are His workmanship..." God is:

- working with us
- changing us
- molding our minds
- giving us character
- granting us His love
- granting us His hope
- granting us His faith

“...created in Christ Jesus unto *the* good works that God ordained beforehand in order that we might walk in them” (v 10).

Stop and think about this. Even though Jesus said, ‘When the Son of man come, will He find the true faith in the earth?’ Yes, we’re rare—aren’t we? *Yes, we are!* I don’t think we’re going to look at hundreds and thousands of people, but we’re scattered.

- God loves you
- God has called you
- God has given you His Spirit

When we read all of these disaster things, like we read at the beginning of the sermon, we have to turn the coin to the other side and how are we going to go through these things. That’s why we keep the Sabbath. That’s why we keep the commandments of God, because He’s working in us with His Spirit.

Paul went through some very difficult times and went through them *so that we could have hope*. I remember that there was a minister one time who said, ‘I don’t know why we have 1st and 2nd Corinthians in the Bible. We don’t have any of these problems in our church.’ Wasn’t too long after that they started to sprout out. Here again this is why it’s important to understand:

2-Corinthians 1:2: “Grace and peace *be* to you from God our Father and *the* Lord Jesus Christ.” That is directly from the throne of God to you, each one of us individually.

Verse 3: “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 3-4).

- God will comfort you
- God will give you peace of mind
- God will help you through these difficult and trying times

Let’s see what all of this is to lead to because this is important for us to understand. This is what we need to keep our eyes on. We don’t need to worry about the things going on in the world.

I talked to a woman the other day. She called the office and I talked to her. She says, ‘You know, I read Psa. 91 everyday. That helps me keep my feet on the ground and trusting in God in spite of all that’s going on.’ We’ve never lived through a time where the country around us is going to come apart, but we’re approaching that time. If we are strengthened with God’s Spirit, then we can get through those difficult times.

Here is what we must be doing, Philippians 2:1: “Now then, if *there be* any encouragement in Christ...” That’s what we need. We need to face the things that are coming, and the reality that they are going to come, but we need to understand that God is going to correct the whole thing when Christ returns and we’re part of that.

“...if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any *deep* inner affections and compassions” (v 1). We can let these things affect us so much that we can get discouraged and start coming after each other. God doesn’t want that.

Verse 2: “Fulfill my joy, that you be of the same mind...” We’re going to see what mind this is. How are we to think? Think about what Jesus went through and He did that for us. He willingly laid down His life. He willingly went through everything that He did so that we could be His.

“...having the same love, being joined together in soul... [You’ve heard of the Soul Brothers? That’s what that means.] ...minding the one thing” (v 2). What is that one thing? *The Kingdom of God!* That’s the one thing.

Verse 3: “*Let* nothing *be* done through contention or vainglory, but in humility, each esteeming the others above himself. Let each one look not *only* after his own things, but *let* each one also *consider* the things of others” (vs 3-4).

- to help them
- to encourage them
- to uplift them

That can’t be done just in a false or maudlin way. That has to be done through strength that comes from God and the love of God.

Here’s the goal, v 5: “Let this mind be in you... [That’s what we’re developing. That’s why we have trials and difficulties that come; so that we can face them the way God wants us to.] ...which *was* also in Christ Jesus.”

Then he goes on showing what Christ did. This is a hard thing for some people to accept that God would do this. What a fantastic thing that it is. Stop and think: What is the most precious thing that you have? Are you willing to give it all up the way

that Christ did? Remember, He was God before He came in the flesh.

Here's what He did, v 6: "Who, although He existed in *the* form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God... [Think what He had to do to become that pinpoint of life, to be begotten in the virgin Mary.] **...but emptied Himself...** [I don't know exactly how He did that, but He did.] *...and* was made in *the* likeness of men, *and* took the form of a servant... [The Greek there is 'doulos,' which means *slave*. They had a lot of slaves back then. They didn't have appliances; they had human slaves.] *...and* being found in *the* manner of man..." (vs 6-8).

Remember the one case where they were in the little ship crossing the Sea of Galilee and a storm came up and the waves were coming in. The disciples were all anxious and worried. Jesus was at the stern sleeping on a pillow. They came to Him and said, 'Master, don't you care anything about us? We're dying.' So, He stood up and rebuked the wind and the storm and there was a great calm. *God can do the same thing with your trials and difficulties.* He can do it!

Verse 8: "And being found in *the* manner of man, He humbled Himself..." (v 8). We need to ask ourselves every once in a while: How much have you humbled yourself? Or put it in the first person: How much have I humbled myself? You do that in prayer before God. You do that in serving and helping each other.

"*...and* became obedient unto death... [He faced the worst that could possibly be.] *...even the* death of the cross" (v 8). Let's see how He faced that. Yes, He did pray just before He was arrested, 'If it be Your will, take this cup from Me, but nevertheless, not My will be done but Your will be done.'

This is after the chapter concerning faith. Paul writes in Hebrews 12:1: "Therefore, *since* we are surrounded by such a great throng of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight... [every problem, every difficulty, every anxiety] *...and* the sin that so easily entraps *us*... [Don't get yourself caught into reacting to things and sinning.] *...and* let us run the race set before us with endurance. Having *our minds* fixed on Jesus, the Beginner and Finisher of *our* faith..." (vs 1-2). That's what to have our minds on, not on the side issues, not on the difficulties. You first have your mind fixed on Christ. Then you can handle the side issues; then you can handle the difficulties. God will bless you in it.

"...Who for the joy that lay ahead of Him endured *the* cross, *although* He despised *the* shame, and has sat down at *the* right hand of the throne of God.... [notice why he wrote this]: ...Now meditate

deeply on Him Who endured such great hostility of sinners against Himself so that you do not become weary and faint in your minds" (vs 2-3). That's quite a lesson for us—isn't it? Jesus said that He laid His life down. No one took it from Him and to receive commandment from the Father to take it back.

Then Paul reminds us. You have a hard time overcoming sin? You've had difficulties and problems? Paul reminded them of this, v 4: "You have not yet resisted to the point of *losing* blood in your struggle against sin."

We have those things as anchors. Christ said we're to build on the Rock and He's the Rock. He said the rain would come, the floods would come, the wind would beat on it, but it wouldn't fall because it's founded on a rock. If we do what Jesus did, then we'll be founded on the Rock.

Philippians 2:9: "Therefore, God has also highly exalted Him... [the day of our exaltation is going to happen at the resurrection] *...and* bestowed upon Him a name which *is* above every name; That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of *beings* in heaven and on earth and under the earth" (vs 9-10).

What's going to happen when we're resurrected? *We're going to be given a new name!* Wonder what that is going to be? *Let's attain to it and we'll find out!*

Verse 11: "And every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord to *the* glory of God *the* Father.... [let's look at what Paul said, all of this leading up to this] *...So* then, my beloved, even as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.... [But with love and strength as God gives it to you.] *...For* it is God Who works in you..." (vs 11-13).

Remember we talked about the inner working of God? God is doing a work in His people. It's not evident to the world. Sometimes the things that we go through, it's not evident to us right away, but then we see God's hand in it later.

"*...both* to will... [to have the desire] *...and* to do... [to follow through and obey] *...according* to *His* good pleasure. Do all things without complaints and disputes" (v13-14).

Here's what we are to be. It's going to be a thing that we can recognize in each other and hopefully the world can recognize in us as we go down in time.

Verse 15: "So that you may be blameless and without offense, innocent children of God in *the* midst of a crooked and perverted generation... [It's crooked and it's perverted and it's going to get worse.] *...among* whom you shine as lights in *the*

world.... [How do we do that?]: ...Holding forth the Word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, nor labored in vain” (vs 14-16)

Let’s see what Paul said concerning himself and his past life. Then we’re going to see another aspect of growing and overcoming and letting God work within us.

Philippians 3:1: “Finally, my brethren, rejoice in *the* Lord. Indeed, for me to write the same things to you *is* not troublesome, but for you *it is* safe. Beware of dogs... [That’s not the barking, growling kind. Those are the ones who are against God and Christ.] ...beware of evil workers, beware of the concision” (vs 1-2). We have to watch our spiritual lives as well.

Verse 3: “For we are the circumcision... [the true spiritual circumcision of the heart] ...who serve God in *the* spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and do not trust in *the* flesh.” With that focus, that’s what we’re doing.

Now then, he gives a comparison here, v 4: “Though I might also have *reason* to trust in *the* flesh. If any other thinks he has *cause* to trust in *the* flesh, I *have* much more.” This is quite something because this really shows the true humility of God within Paul. The Jews are notorious for being arrogant against all other people. So, this is truly a miracle of conversion.

Verse 5: “Circumcised on *the* eighth day; of *the* race of Israel, from *the* tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; with respect to law, a Pharisee... [You can’t get any greater than that.] ...With respect to zeal, persecuting the Church...” (vs 5-6). Here’s a good example for us. Whenever we have a real difficult problem, we get over the sorrow of it. We get over the emotion of it, but we learn the lesson from it, because you can’t go back and undo it. How many Christians he put to the sword, we don’t know. How many he had thrown in jail, we don’t know. But he says that was really something ‘with Judaism with me.’

Verse 7: “Yet, the things that were gain to me, these things I have counted *as* loss for the sake of Christ.... [That’s why baptism, and we’re joined to Christ.] ...But then truly, I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord...” (vs 7-8). That’s the kind of mind and understanding we need to come to. God will help you do it. It’s not something you do quickly. It’s not something that comes easily.

“...for Whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count *them* as dung; that I may gain Christ” (v 8). The whole thing is

- focus on eternal life

- focus on Christ
- focus on the Kingdom,
- focus on God the Father

Verse 9: “And may be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which *is derived* from law, but that *righteousness* which *is by the* faith of Christ—the righteousness of God *that is* based on faith.” So that you have all the characteristics of the Spirit:

- faith
- hope
- love
- joy
- peace
- longsuffering
- self-control

Verse 10: “That I may know Him...” You’re going to see Christ face-to-face. You’re going to see God the Father face-to-face. Isn’t that something? You look forward to that and you can put all the troubles, all the sorrows, all the disappointments, all the trials and tribulations we go through to the side.

“...and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; if by any means... [that’s why God has called us] ...I may attain unto the resurrection of the dead” (vs 10-11). ***Whatever God wants to attain to the resurrection of the dead, then we have made up our minds though we don’t know what is ahead, that God will see us through it***

- with strength
- with joy
- with understanding

But he gives a little caution here, v 12: “Not as though I have already received, or have already been perfected; but I am striving... [That’s what we need to be doing—striving. That’s what overcoming is.] ...so that I may also lay hold on that for which I also was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.”

Notice the next few verses are very important to really grasp and understand so we can use this knowledge and information and not be overwhelmed with the things that are going to take place. Especially because we have had things smooth sailing—haven’t we? You think about it. Have you lacked anything? *No!*

You open up your refrigerator and it’s stuffed, jammed, from top to bottom. You look at it and say, ‘There’s nothing to eat.’ You have clothes, shoes, everything that you need. You have a roof over your head. You have God’s protection. You have His angels about you. You’ve got God’s Spirit, God’s promises, *all of these things from God!* This

is why it's good for us to look at what is going to come, but let's look at how we need to handle it.

"...but I am striving, so that I may also lay hold on that for which I also was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not count myself as having attained..." (vs 12-13). What did Jesus say? He said, 'Take no thought for tomorrow. Sufficient is the evil of the day. But seek first the Kingdom of God.' Same thing applies right here.

"...but *this* one thing *I do*..." (v 13). Here's what needs to be. Sometimes this is hard. Many things are ingrained in our mind and we can see them and picture them in our mind. That's why we need the washing of the water by the Word.

"...forgetting the things that are behind... [He had a lot to forget. A lot of things he had to put out of his mind.] ...and reaching forth to the things that are ahead... [always look ahead] ...I press... [he worked at it] ...toward *the* goal for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (13-14). ***We press toward that goal!***

Now here's another promise. You might say, 'What if I'm weak and I fall short? What is God going to do? What if I'm old and weak?' *God knows that*. He promises back there in Psa. 78, even though you're old and gray and weak, He's not going to abandon you. He knows that; He understands that.

Here is what we're aiming for. Here is the whole purpose of the book of Philippians, v 15: "So then, let as many as *be* perfect be of this mind.... [You can't be perfect in the flesh, but you can be perfect in the mind and attitude with God's Spirit. That's what he's talking about.] ...And if *in* anything you are otherwise minded... [Whatever problem, whatever difficulty, whatever sin comes along. This is important to understand.] ...**God will reveal even this to you.**" It's God Spirit in you purging these things out. God doesn't want you to keep those things. God wants you to grow in grace and knowledge, grow in truth and kindness, goodness, love, while at the same time living in a world that is upside down and in rebellion and revolt.

Verse 16: "Nevertheless, *in regard* to that which we have attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.... [that's the mind that God wants us to have] ...Brethren, be imitators together of me... [We can go through the Epistles of Paul and see how he was, see how he behaved. Then we imitate that.] ...and bear in mind those who walk in this way, as you have us *for* an example" (vs 16-17).

Then he talks about those who have left, v 20: "But for us, the commonwealth *of God*..." That's interesting. What is commonwealth mean? *It means sharing the wealth!* That's talking about the wealth

of God, character of God, and also the substance of what God is going to give us. It's going to be so great that gold is going to be pavement for the streets of New Jerusalem. Think of that! Today blacktop is the motif, blacktop and cement. This will be gold! Wonder what that's going to be like to walk on gold.

"...the commonwealth *of God* exists in *the* heavens... [because He's going to bring it] ...from where also we are waiting for *the* Savior, *the* Lord Jesus Christ" (v 20). Here is what He is going to do. That's why we're not to be weighted down with any problems or difficulties or anxieties because all of that is going to be changed in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye.

Verse 21: "Who will transform our vile bodies that they may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the inner working of His own power, *whereby He is able* to subdue all things to Himself."

That's the end result of all of it. According to God's plan, even with all the strife and turmoil that's going on, all the death and destruction that is taking place, ***God is still a God of love*** so much so that all of those people who have lived and died, who have been blinded, who have followed Satan the devil but have not committed the unpardonable sin, He's going to resurrect to a second life. A second life is going to be in the flesh. That's necessary for the first opportunity for salvation.

Just think of what it would be if it's like the way most people say. 'If you're not going to be saved when Jesus returned, you're going to go burn in hell forever.' God is going to show His love to them at that time and give them an opportunity for salvation. We are the ones who are going to bring it. ***Keep all that in mind!***

- Let the world be!
- Let the world go the way it's going to go!

You can't solve spiritual problems by physical means. ***Let's keep our eye on doing the things we need to do!***

Scriptural References:

- 1) Zechariah 12:2-10
- 2) Isaiah 3:1-26
- 3) Isaiah 5:6-8, 10-13, 18-25
- 4) Jeremiah 17:19-25, 27
- 5) Philippians 1:1-6
- 6) Ephesians 2:10
- 7) 2-Corinthians 1:2-4
- 8) Philippians 2:1-8
- 9) Hebrews 12:1-4
- 10) Philippians 2:9-16
- 11) Philippians 3:1-17, 20-21

Scriptures referenced, not quoted: Psalm 91, 78
Also referenced: Book: *Josephus*

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Transcribed: 11-29-12 Formatted: 11-21-12

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