Thrive in Perilous Times

> *"But understand this, that in the last days will come (set in) perilous times of great stress and trouble [hard to deal with and hard to bear]."*
>
> *2 Timothy 3:1 (AMPC)*

The troubled times, which preachers have for decades been warning about and telling us to prepare for, are at last upon us.

The assault on truth, justice, righteousness and freedom from the marching hordes of hell, is on many fronts simultaneously. And it's more coordinated than we've seen at any time in mankind's history.

The US is in the hands of a rogue marxist-leaning government whose election rigging tactics, and the proceeding attempts to cover it up, went as far or further than any repressive communist regime's best efforts. The relentless persecution of their political opponents in shameful human rights abuses continues unabated, as their corrupted legal system turns a blind eye. A recklessly irresponsible border policy has filled the country with drugs and criminals – not to mention terrorists – and has given child traffickers a free hand to peddle their wicked trade and exploit their victims on a whole new level. Though their party platform was filled with humanitarian horrors, yet they still won many votes. All of this took place in the 'land of the free', the country which some describe as 'the last bastion of freedom'.

Over in Europe the French government have taken another step towards totalitarianism with the so-called
'Article Pfizer'

law which legal analysts say qualifies any opposition to covid mRNA injections (for example) as a “sectarian aberration” carrying a penalty of up to 3 years imprisonment and 45,000 euro fines.

Meanwhile in Germany the government has so trampled on its constitution – which would protect the rights of freedom of speech, freedom of conscience and freedom of religion – that it’s scarcely worth the paper it is written on. I know this from first-hand experience, having been told that my well-founded religious objections were not recognised by the law.

Elsewhere we see rampant warmongering, a fresh explosion in anti-semitism, man-made epidemics (and counter measures which long-term studies will likely show are worse than the man-made epidemics) and the list could go on and on.

It may feel overwhelming. It may seem like our spiritual enemy has the upper hand and that there is no hope of ever turning the tide. But these feelings are misleading. For one thing, when was Satan ever smarter than God?

> *‘”But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written: “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”’*
>
> 1 Corinthians 2:7-9

How should we respond to the stress and difficulties of our time? What preparations can we make for what is still to come? I would like to propose a seven-pillar strategy which is straight out of the Good Book.

1. Have a Feast!

Remember that big Philistine giant that intimated the whole nation of Israel for weeks on end? All it took to bring him down was a well aimed pebble from a boy (David) who was mindful of his covenant with God. And this is the key: mindfulness. What is *your* mind full of?

I can answer the question for you: your mind is full of whatever your soul has been feeding on.

> *“Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your earnings for what does not satisfy? Hearken diligently to Me, and eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness… Incline your ear… and come to Me; hear, and your soul will revive.”*
>
> *Isaiah 55:1-3 (AMPC)*

Feed your soul on the right things and you will be delighted! There are many who fill their souls with carnality from Netflix, social media and secular news, and they are discouraged. This should not be a surprise. They need some Bread of Life: He's called The Word of God and, by another name, Jesus. He is the one of whom it is written: "You prepare a table for me, *in the presence of my enemies*".

We are instructed to **always** rejoice in the Lord (Philippians 4:4). If you claim to be a disciple of Jesus, then take this commandment seriously.

> *"All the days of the desponding and afflicted are made evil [by anxious thoughts and forebodings], but he who has a glad heart has a continual feast [regardless of circumstances]."*
>
> *Proverbs 15:15 (AMPC)*

This feast is not a 'nice-to-have', it is a necessity if we are to have the strength to thrive. And thrive we must, if we are to push back the darkness for our own sake and for all of those around us whom we hold dear.

2. Know your part.

The Lord Jesus himself is our Captain. His battle plans are extremely precise and detailed, involving all of us. Remember that, being the Alpha and Omega, He already knows every move his enemy is going to make before he makes it. We cannot know, neither would it help us to know, all such details. But it is important for us to thoroughly grasp the part we are to play. We gain the victory as an army by individually focusing on Him and doing what He directs us to do; every day, until the job is done.

Remember Nehemiah's story? Everyone built and defended their section of the wall. Israel's enemy was astounded at how quickly that wall was completed, in spite of the intense opposition and plots to undermine it. Victory came because individuals took responsibility for their part, not leaving it to someone else to sort out.

3. Gather Intelligence.

God has provided the church with prophets. And amongst them are those with the authority

to prophesy to the nations. You will not do very well if you have closed yourself off to prophetic voices, as some have done.

Throughout history there have been true prophets and false prophets; so ‘fake’ prophecy is not a new problem. Our enemy uses false prophecy to bring confusion and to induce us to reject all prophecy. He wants to steal this powerful gift to the church, so that he can kill and destroy. Don’t play into his hands, for it will not end well for you if you do. Get to know who the true prophets are, those who can be trusted. We can judge them by their fruit and by their track record. Don’t go to the internet to harvest opinions – for the greater the leader, the more slander you will find about them.

> *“…so we have been given the prophetic word—the written message of the prophets, made more reliable and fully validated by the confirming voice of God on the Mount of Transfiguration. And you will continue to do well if you stay focused on it. For this prophetic message is like a piercing light shining in a gloomy place until the dawning of a new day, when the Morning Star rises in your hearts.”*
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> 2 Peter 1:19

The emphasis here is on the holy scriptures – these we must know above all else for they help us discern true prophecy – but the principle holds true for all true prophecy.

4. Be Wise, Be Innocent.

> *“Listen carefully: I am sending you out like sheep among wolves; so be wise as serpents, and innocent as doves [have no self-serving agenda].”*
>
> Matthew 10:16 (AMP)

Notice that it doesn’t say: be as informed as serpents. Studying too deeply what our enemy is doing is a dangerous pastime. Wisdom is what’s needed and this comes from God’s Word, the Spirit of God and good counsel.

I will turn to that great writer of fiction Tolkien to illustrate my point. These are the words of Gandalf, as he reflects on the folly of Denethor, the head of Gondor:

> "… long ago I guessed that here in the White Tower, one at least of the Seven Seeing Stones was preserved. In the days of his wisdom Denethor did not presume to use it, nor to challenge Sauron, knowing the limits of his own strength. But his wisdom failed; and I fear that as the peril of his realm grew he looked in the Stone and was deceived: far too often, I guess, since Boromir departed. He was too great to be subdued to the will of the Dark Power, he saw nonetheless only those things which that Power permitted him to see. The knowledge which he obtained was, doubtless, often of service to him; yet the vision of the great might of Mordor that was shown to him fed the despair of his heart until it overthrew his mind."
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> *J.R.R. Tolkien – The Return of the King*

We *are* encouraged to be aware of our enemy's schemes, especially those tricks he has been using from the very beginning, for, in the words of Solomon: there is nothing new under the sun.

Be aware that the Deceiver's deceptions are predominantly aimed at instilling fear in you, because then he can manipulate and control you, and turn your heart away from God.

As we 'watch and pray', staying close to the Lord, He will show us from time to time specific attacks the enemy is planning and how to counter them. But let Him show you, and do not speculate, for speculation tends only to confusion and then depression is never far behind.

5. Focus on the Light.

In the middle of a teaching about focus and the loyalty of your heart Jesus says:

> *"The eye is the lamp of the body. So if your eye is sound, your entire body will be full of light."*
>
> *Matthew 6:22 (AMPC)*

The King James Version puts it this way: "The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light."

6. Get into Training.

> *“Do not waste time arguing over godless ideas and old wives’ tales. Instead, train yourself to be godly.”*
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> *1 Timothy 4:7 (NLT)*

Or as the Living Bible puts it: “Spend your time and energy in the exercise of keeping spiritually fit.”

This is about becoming a true disciple of Jesus. It is not godly to be afraid. It is not godly to let your heart be troubled. It is not godly to hate. It is not godly to doubt. All of these things go against the commands of Jesus. So train yourself to believe, train your heart not to fear but to walk in love and always be joyful.

7. Become a Trainer

Once you yourself have become a true disciple of Jesus, go and disciple others.

> *“Jesus approached and, breaking the silence, said to them, All authority (all power of rule) in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Go then and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything that I have commanded you, and behold, I am with you all the days (perpetually, uniformly, and on every occasion), to the [very] close and consummation of the age”*
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> *Matthew 28:18-20 (AMPC)*

A Final Encouragement

King Nebuchadnezzar was given a dream of all the great empires that would rule the earth, beginning with his own. Here is Daniel’s description of the end of the dream:

> *“… a Stone was cut out without human hands, which smote the image on its feet of iron and [baked] clay [of the potter] and broke them to pieces. Then the iron, the [baked] clay [of the potter], the bronze, the silver, and the gold were broken*

> *and crushed together and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors, and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them could be found. And the Stone that smote the image became a great mountain or rock and filled the whole earth."*
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> *Daniel 2:34-35 (AMPC)*

And the interpretation was this:

> *"And in the days of these [final ten] kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall its sovereignty be left to another people; but it shall break and crush and consume all these kingdoms and it shall stand forever. Just as you saw that the Stone was cut out of the mountain without hands and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold, the great God has made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter."*
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> *Daniel 2:44-45 (AMPC)*

I believe the Stone referred to is the Cornerstone, the one which 'the builders rejected'.

> *"But [Jesus] looked at them and said, What then is [the meaning of] this that is written: The [very] Stone which the builders rejected has become the chief Stone of the corner [Cornerstone]? Everyone who falls on that Stone will be broken [in pieces]; but upon whomever It falls, It will crush him [winnow him and scatter him as dust]."*
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> *Luke 20:17-18 (AMPC)*

The governments of this world that lead people away from the ways of God will ultimately come to nothing. We will see the government of the Kingdom of Heaven ever expand on the earth as the day of the Great King's return approaches. This will happen as we take individual responsibility for living in accordance with the pillars I have outlined here.

We were not born into the times in which we live by accident. We were chosen for this time.

And that is an encouraging thought!

I conclude with some final words of wisdom from Gandalf:

> “I wish it need not have happened in my time,” said Frodo. “So do I,” said Gandalf, “and so do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us.”
>
> *J.R.R. Tolkien – The Fellowship of The Ring*