

“The Great Tribulation” - *is it really that bad?*
Alfred Cachia

Throughout our Christian lives we have been admonished to “Be Ready” Luke 12:40 & Matt.24:44. Many of us have been in God’s Church for many years and we must have heard many sermons, sermonettes and even read articles regarding the admonishment to get ourselves ready. The question is: “Get Ready for What?” What does the Word of God say in response to this question? Notice Rev.3:10:

“Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep you from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth”.

The word “patience” is translated from the Greek word “hupome”. Strong’s gives the following definition for this word (G5281):

“Cheerful (or hopeful) endurance, constancy: enduring, patience, patient continuance (waiting)”.

God is here communicating that we must patiently endure the attacks that Satan sends against us. We are to remain steadfast in God’s Word as we wait for the time that we are taken to a place of protection:

“Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come... Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh” (Matt. 24:40-42, 44).

We must also overcome ourselves, this evil world and Satan the devil. Do effectively do this, we must continually be in a state of total and complete repentance. This is how we can be ready to receive deeper understanding from the Word of God, prove it beyond a shadow of doubt and put it into practise. No matter what problems we might face, if we endure steadfastly, persevere in complete faith to Him, and obey Him we will be rewarded with His protection.

Why do we need protection? Notice:

“For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Matt. 24:21).

This is the reason that we must be getting ourselves ready – to be protected from the coming Great Tribulation and then to be born into His Family! We must become one with our God! This entails listening to Him, taking His advice, obeying Him in all things, and supporting His Work which is being done on this earth today. We must remain faithful no matter what! Many have given up waiting and enduring over the years because they have gotten tired of being patient. The admonition of Rev.3:10 and Matt. 24:42 are sober warnings for all of God’s people that make up the seven congregations as outlined in the book of Revelation chapters two and three. Notice this admonition:

“Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep you from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth” (Rev. 3:10).

“Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh” (Matt. 24:42).

It is indicated that six of the seven congregations, spoken of in the book of Revelation (chapters 2 & 3), will end up suffering the consequences of the Great Tribulation if they do not repent and get themselves ready. All of God's people, and that include those of the Faithful Church of God in Laodicea, must take this warning personally and act on it with a positive attitude.

Do we believe the Word of God when it says that the Great Tribulation will be the worst time ever, and that there has never been a time like it nor will ever be again (Dan. 12:1)? We have had it relatively easy over the last few decades, and many in the western world have been enjoying abundance in many areas. Too many have forgotten the horrors of the two World Wars, the Korean and Vietnam wars and so on. Many that were called into the Church, in this age, would have been born in relative peaceful times and because of this might not be able to remotely imagine the coming Great Tribulation. It is important for us to "remember", as this may help us to understand, and get a small glimpse into, the worst time which this world – and God's people who get spewed into the Great Tribulation (Rev. 3:16) – are about to experience if they do not repent. To help us do this, we will here focus our attention on an article written by Mr. L.E.Torrance, which appeared in the Good New magazine dated August 1961:

How It Began

"The story of my "tribulation" in the Japanese concentration camps began on May 10, 1942. That was the day General Sharp surrendered the American forces on Mindanao to the Japanese. They interned us in the prison compound at Davao, Mindanao, Philippine Islands. At Davao we were forced to work on a starvation diet from early dawn until dusk. We soon began to suffer from acute malnutrition, then from scurvy malaria, dysentery, and beriberi. I remember how every fibre of my body cried out for food-as it wasted away, day by day, pound by pound, until I was reduced to an emaciated 100 pound skeleton. My every thought was about food. Pangs of hunger were greatly intensified by the sight of food that was everywhere about us in abundance. We could look through the prison camp fence and see the fruit and smell the bloom of the thousands of orange, banana, lemon and breadfruit, the guava, coconut, mango and avocado trees around our compound. The fruit ripened and fell to the ground. There it lay rotting. Our captors refuse to let us have it. They said that Americans deserved only to suffer. And suffer we did! The mental anguish of seeing such an abundance of food going to waste before our very eyes is indescribable. There were times when our ration of dry rice contained as many worms as kernels of rice. Gnawing hunger pangs forced us to overlook them. Our wretched diet of polished rice took its toll. If our captors would have allowed us to eat unpolished brown rice, with its vitamin B1, we would not have had so much beriberi. But our enemies knew what they were doing. They insisted upon feeding us polished rice which had the vitamin layer removed. Our legs swelled to twice their normal size. The nerves in our feet and finger tips became inflamed. They throbbed day and night. Our guards enjoyed hearing the groans of those who suffered the excruciating pains of beriberi.

Because of malarial fever, fever as high as 107° accompanied by blinding headaches and violent chills; half of the entire camp was always at the point of death. Nevertheless, the Japanese forced us to march to work even though we were so sick we could scarcely stand. If any of us were reluctant to march, guards jabbed the tips of their bayonets into our hips until the pain became more than we could bear. We marched to work-malarial fever or not. What would you have done? Can you imagine what mental and spiritual torment would have been added had we then also known the truth of God, that we could not work on the Sabbath, even though our "pagan" guards commanded us to? What would you have done when the searing pain of the bayonets being jabbed deeper and deeper into your backs and hips became so great you could no longer bear it? Put yourselves in our place. Imagine how difficult it would be to refuse to work on the Sabbath when all you would have to do to escape this brutal torture is to begin walking - walking to work.

Others Had Same Experiences

At Davao we met other prisoners who had been transferred from the prison camp at Cabanatuan, Luzon. They were in worse condition than we - the most wild-eyed, gaunt, wretched-looking men I have ever seen!

After talking to them it was obvious why they were in such a pitiful condition. For example: Lieutenant Colonel Mellink told us how the 7,000 Americans and the 5,000 Filipinos with him were treated after their capture on the Island of Corregidor. They were kept on a 100-yard square slab of concrete for 15 days, from May 6-22. After seven long days without food, they were given their first dish of rice.

One faucet served the entire 12,000 men. They waited in line 12 hours for each to fill one canteen with water. The heat on Corregidor was at its worst in May. Men fainted by the score. Hundreds died. The bloated and stinking dead bodies lay out in the sun. Clouds of black flies added to the misery.

On May 22, the Japanese loaded their remaining captives into three small merchant ships and steamed to a suburb south of Manila. When the heat of the day had reached its peak, the Americans were transferred and jammed into barges. After waiting an hour in the hot sun, they were towed to within a hundred yards of the beach. Although the barges could easily have run up to the beach, the Americans were forced to jump overboard and wade to shore. Thus, when they were marched through Manila in a Japanese victory parade, they presented the worst possible appearance-wet, ragged, exhausted, staggering from illness and hunger.

This "victory march" through Manila was a "subtle method of convincing the subject peoples of the Philippines that only the Japanese were members of the Master Race" (Life, Feb. 7, 1944). Just think! This same kind of punishment, and worse, will be soon inflicted upon our entire nation by the worst of the heathen-unless our people repent. The men who had been transferred from Cabanatuan to Davao told us what happened to two army officers and one navy officer who were caught attempting to escape. The Japanese beat the three Americans about the feet and calves until they were unable to stand. Then they stomped up and down on them with all their weight. These brave men were stripped of all their clothing, except shorts, and dragged outside the camp to a point in full view of the rest of the Americans. Their hands were tied behind them, and they were pulled up by ropes tied to their wrists, so they had to remain standing on their crippled legs and feet. Then began 45 hours of inhuman torture. The Japanese periodically beat the men with a heavy two-by-four. Their half-conscious screams were horrible to hear. They were battered beyond recognition. Strong men vomited. Others said, "Oh, just to be able to lie down and die!"

We Americans were horrified to learn of the intense resentment and hatred that the Japanese felt for us. Because they felt inferior to the Americans, they tried to show us how great they were by mistreating us in every way possible. Life as a prisoner-of-war was a living hell of fear, starvation, and forced labour.

A Sense of Humour

The evening of June 5, 1944, about 5 o'clock, the Japanese told us that they really liked us and wanted to feed us more. After a diet of virtually nothing but rice for many months, this was the best news that we had heard in a long time. They gave us soybeans and some half-rotten sweet potatoes to eat. The kitchen was kept open all night and we were allowed to eat all that we could hold. However, so much "rich" food was a violent shock to our stomachs. It caused us to vomit. But it was so much fun to eat that we kept coming back, again and again, all night long. Our digestive systems were not able to tolerate such a terrific shock. Severe cramps and

diarrhoea set in. The next morning we were marched on board a ship in Davao harbour. Six hundred of us were tightly jammed into a small, dark hold. They put the cover over the hatch, and then closed the door that led down the gangway into our hold. There were no toilet facilities. The heat was terrific, and there was no ventilation except one small porthole. Within a few minutes we were soaking wet with sweat. Our bodies stung as all the excess water was drained out of us by the terrific heat.

Our thirst became maddening. I remember that the physical and mental anguish caused by the constant, ever-present pangs of hunger was so unbearable that I even despaired of living. Then when the unbearable physical agony of intense thirst set in, I suddenly knew that extreme THIRST was far worse than the extreme hunger I had been suffering. I thought, "Oh! Just to get back to the United States where I can get a drink of water. Food is easy to get!" Men began to "pass out" all around due to the heat and suffocation. A desperate struggle for breath began. I then discovered how very much worse it was to be without AIR, than it was to be thirsty or hungry. A dying man clings desperately to the last thread of life. When you are without air, and life begins to fade away, panic sets in. As far as I can remember, for the FIRST time in my life I prayed-"Oh God, just let me get back to the United States alive, where I can take a breath of 'fresh' air. I know that I can always find food and water-I'll never, never again complain, never! "

Finally, after men began to die, the Japanese opened the hatch door and gave us a little air. Yet, as bad as that experience was, it is certain that there is coming upon this nation CATASTROPHE that will be far worse than anything that has ever been experienced by humans in the whole history of man! The Almighty God says so! It grieves me to realize that some of my friends, yes, some of you, are deliberately choosing to go through an experience that will be far worse than my 3 1/2 years of "tribulation." Many of you are proving by your very actions that you really believe it is too much work to study and pray now, too much work to struggle to overcome. Some of you actually have said to me that it will take the tribulation to make you "spiritual," that in the face of great danger you will suddenly become willing to give your life for the faith.

Listen!

Let me assure you that it is much, much EASIER to give your life in service to God NOW-it is much easier to study and pray now-it is much easier to have a living, active part in spreading the work of God now than it will be to die an agonizing death for refusing to disobey God when brutal, vicious guards try to see how much torture they can inflict upon you. If you have to go through the tribulation, I am certain that the mental agony you will have - when you realize that you could have escaped all this torture-may well be more than you can bear. It will be worse than the agony of starvation, thirst, and suffocation. The tragedy of it all is that some of you don't even know that you are "lukewarm." You have never studied the Bible enough to let the Word of God correct, reprove, and instruct you in righteousness. "You don't know that you don't know." But-if you REPENT-you need not go through the coming tribulation, for God has promised that the faithful will escape (Rev. 3: 10)." *End quote.*

What can we learn from what we have just read? Is there a vital lesson in it for us in today's modern world?

This man, like thousands of other soldiers from United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Britain, suffered as no others did during those dark days of the Second World War. Many of the survivors still tremble and sweat at night because of the dreams that bring it all back to them. They witnessed their friends being murdered before their eyes and they experienced the death marches in which many of them had to take part. They were broken

and beaten by an enemy that had no mercy upon them. Those that were too sick to work were put to death. As simple as that!

The Great Tribulation is guaranteed to be much worse than the account we have just read. Notice Deuteronomy 28:62-67 from the New Living Translation:

“Though you become as numerous as the stars in the sky, few of you will be left because you would not listen to the Lord your God. Just as the Lord has found great pleasure in causing you to prosper and multiply, the LORD will find pleasure in destroying you. You will be torn from the land you are about to enter and occupy. For the Lord will scatter you among all the nations from one end of the earth to the other. There you will worship foreign gods that neither you nor your ancestors have known, gods made of wood and stone! There among those nations you will find no peace or place to rest. And the LORD will cause your heart to tremble, your eyesight to fail, and your soul to despair. Your life will constantly hang in the balance. You will live night and day in fear, unsure if you will survive. In the morning you will say, 'If only it were night!' And in the evening you will say, 'If only it were morning!' For you will be terrified by the awful horrors you see around you.”

God knows what He is doing, but too many of His people have turned away from doing His Will. It seems as though the admonishment given in the pages of the Bible has, and is, falling on deaf ears. How do we know this? Because God gave us a warning which He repeated seven times for greater impact on our minds. Notice:

“He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches [congregations]” (Rev.2:7, 11, 17, 29; Rev. 3:6, 13, 22).

The coming Great Tribulation is much, much worse than we can ever imagine, but we have need not be caught up in it. Today is the time to be getting ourselves ready and at-one with our Creator. Tomorrow will be too late. We must not harden our hearts and stubbornly reject what the Almighty is communicating to us in these last and very dangerous days. He who rejects will be left to suffer as no others have suffered, but those who will receive will be taken to where more will be revealed to them, and where protection and safety will be provided to them by God. We are to take God's warning seriously and get ourselves ready by repenting and allowing Jesus Christ to live and work in our lives. Let us all work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. This is impossible to do on our own, but with God helping us to “Get Ready” all Things are possible! Remember what is stated in *Rev.3:10*:

“Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep you from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth”.

God will keep His promise! Will you do your part to claim His promises?