



The World's Time is Running Out

THE CHALLENGER

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PROCLAIMING THE WORD TO THE WORLD

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A NEW YEAR: AN OLD REFUGE

By Pastor Mike Eccleston

“Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast.

“For, behold, the LORD cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.” Isaiah 26:20-21

This passage is a Scripture to God’s people in every time of impending calamity, yet the prophecy refers to the great storm of indignation that God is going to bring on this sinful world: the Tribulation period, upon which, if the days were not shortened, there would be no flesh saved.

In the universal flood, God brought His few people into the ark and “shut them in” until the deluge ended and the waters receded enough to leave the ark.

At the destruction of Jericho, Rahab’s family were all gathered within the doors of the house, and saved from the destruction that fell on all the others of the city.

In Egypt, as the death angel passed throughout, killing all the firstborn of each house where there was no blood applied to the doorpost, the LORD kept His own safely hid within their own dwelling places.

And in this coming storm on all mankind, God will gather all those who respond to Him, saying, *“Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be past.”*

In each case safety was determined by choice!

It is the teaching of God’s Word that in every calamity God bids us and our families find refuge in the Lord Jesus Christ. The truth is that there is no refuge elsewhere or in anyone else.

We know that: 1) Christ is a complete refuge in every storm. In other portions of Scripture He is compared to a hiding place, the shadow of a great rock, a fortress, or a high tower. 2) Christ is like our own chamber, with the door shut. This is seen in several ways:

Because there is safety in Him-

In an hour of danger there is no place in the entire world to look, as a refuge and place of safety than our own home (the inner chamber) – and such is the Lord Jesus Christ to each of His own.

Because there is rest and quietness in Him-

It is in the world that you look to conduct your business and find fields in which to play. But when you enter your chamber and shut the door, there is peace and calm – and such is the Lord Jesus Christ – in Him the weary are at rest.

Because there is a ready made retreat, near and of easy access in Him-

He is at hand, not afar off, nor do we have to bring Him down from above – He is always at hand. Such is the Lord Jesus Christ – He is our all sufficient refuge!

Christ is the refuge in the storm of conscience-

The lost go about living securely in their sins and not interested in much other than themselves and profit and loss and how it affects them, even though they live under the wrath of God. How can that be? It is so because that wrath hasn’t been poured out yet. The lost are dangling over the fires of Hell by a frayed cord, but they are not burned as yet. But then, sometime in their lives, a Gospel message is given and penetrates them and they become aware of their true condition before God. Suddenly a storm of conscience arises within them. Their security of life is shattered and the threat of wrath which was there all the time is now acknowledged. There is conviction of sin and the knowledge that God’s wrath awaits him forever. Who can bear that kind of storm? His business no longer goes as usual. His family can no longer cheer him. His sleep is no longer sweet or easy, for he is aware that he may awaken in Hell.

Even though the passage is for God’s people, this can apply to the lost, for the Lord Jesus Christ is near and ready to save. His arms are open to receive all who will trust Him as their personal Savior from sin.

Christ is the complete refuge in the storm of providence-

The scene is this: it is another picture of the unconverted, in good health and living as if there was no death – no hell; prospering in business as if this world were their own, buying and selling. It is a picture that all of us are familiar with, for it is all around us.

But we who are saved are not

(Continued on page 2)

A NEW YEAR...(Continued from page 1)

exempt from these storms and can be quite careless in times of continued prosperity. To be holy and like our Lord Jesus Christ or even the desire to be with Christ can become less desirable; we can suppose that gain is godliness; and we can allow the world's possessions to blur the view of our future inheritance that is, "... **incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.**"

What happens however, when God shakes things up and panic sets in? Suddenly it seems, the sky has darkened, the thunder sounds, and the storms come. They are destructive and wide spread. And the world stands with their wisdom confounded and staring imminent death square in the face. It is in these strong storms of the providence of God that Christ is still a complete refuge.

When we hide in Him we are saved from all our distresses. In Psalm 34, four times it is mentioned that we are saved, not out of one trouble, but all our troubles. In verse 4, "**delivered me from ALL my fears.**" In verse 6, "**saved him out of ALL his troubles.**" In verse 17, "**delivereth them out of ALL their troubles**". In verse 19, "**the LORD delivereth him out of them [afflictions] ALL.**" The reasoning is clear: by hiding in the Lord Jesus Christ, we know that He will make, "*all things work together for [our] good.*"

The dangers we are exposed to are but for a time and these too, shall come to pass. "*Hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast.*" Romans 8:18, states,

"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Temporal troubles will not last forever: they will pass. Days of wrath are coming, such as the world has never known before. There is no safety for any soul that is not hiding in Christ. You may lie down in your bed tonight, without having the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, your refuge, and He may return before sunrise. You could perish in that sleep, only to awaken, "**where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.**"

There is not one of us who would ever know the blessings of such a chamber as the Lord Jesus Christ if there were no dark days, problems, troubles, or afflictions to cause you to live and be more like Him. When wrath falls all around us, let it speak with new power to our soul and give new life to that faith by which we have been eternally saved by His grace.

We welcome in a new year in the power of an Old Refuge: our Blessed Lord Jesus Christ!

THIS WORLD: Playground or Battlefield?

"Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls..." - Jeremiah 6:16

Things are for us not only in the sense of what they are: they are what we hold them to be. That is to say that our attitude toward things is likely, in the long run, to be more important than the things themselves.

This is a common coin of knowledge, like an old coin, worn smooth by use. Yet it bears upon it the stamp of truth and must not be rejected because it is familiar.

It is strange how a fact may remain fixed, while our interpretation of the fact changes with the generations and the years. On such fact is the world in which we live. It is here and has been here through the centuries. It is a fact quite unchanged by the passing of time, but how different is modern man's view of it from the view that our fathers held. Here we see plainly how great the power of interpretation is. The world is for all of us not only what it is: it is what we believe it to be. A tremendous amount of sorrow and pain or soundness and joy rides on the accuracy of our interpretation.

Going no farther back than the times of our founding and early development of

our country, we are able to see the wide gulf between modern attitudes and those of our fathers. In the early days, when Biblical Christianity exercised a dominant influence over American thinking, men conceived the world to be a battleground. Our fathers believed in sin and the devil and hell as constituting one force; and they believed in God and righteousness and heaven as the other. These two were in the nature of them forever opposed to each other in deep, grave, and irreconcilable hostility. Man, so our fathers held, had to choose sides - he could not be neutral. For him it must be life or death, heaven or hell, and if he chose to come out on God's side, he could expect open war with God's enemies. The fight would be real and deadly and would last as long as life continued here on earth. Man looked forward to heaven as a return from the wars, a laying down of the sword to realize finally, the peace and home prepared for him.

Sermons as well as songs in those days often had a martial quality about them, or perhaps a trace of being homesick. The Christian soldier thought of home and rest and reunion, and his voice grew plaintive as he sang of battles ended and victories won. But whether he was charging into enemy guns or dreaming of war's end and the Father's welcome home, he never forgot what kind of world he lived in. It was a battleground, and many were the wounded and the slain.

That view of things is unquestionably the scriptural one! Allowing for the figures and metaphors with which the Scriptures abound, it is still a solid Bible doctrine that tremendous spiritual forces are present in the world, and man, because of his nature, is caught in the middle. The evil powers are bent upon keeping him as one of their own and then destroying him, while the Lord Jesus Christ is present to save him through the power of the gospel of Christ. To obtain deliverance, he must come out on God's side by faith which will manifest itself as genuine by obedience to God's Word.

How different today. The fact remains the same, but the interpretation has changed completely. Men think of the world not as a battleground, but as a playground. They believe that we are not here to fight - we are here to frolic. We are not in a foreign land, we are at home. We are not preparing to live, we are already

(Continued on page 3)

Personal Word

**“THEREFORE IF ANY
MAN BE IN CHRIST, HE
IS A NEW CREATURE:
OLD THINGS ARE
PASSED AWAY;
BEHOLD, ALL THINGS
ARE
BECOME NEW.”**

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17

Dwight Porter update: Our latest report is a good one as he has gained a few pounds, is aware of his surroundings and of different people, is deeply grateful for each person's prayers for him and the Lord's will concerning his health and recovery, and has an 'itching' to get back home and start up in the ministry where he left off in September of last year. He remains in rehab north of his home and is currently not able to move the leg that was operated on. He will need to get bodily strength as well as begin to exercise the knee. After three months of being immobilized, it will take some pain coupled with exercise on a consistent basis. It is needful to be able to walk again. I would ask you to pray for patience in all of this rehab, but we all know that the Bible teaches that tribulation worketh patience – even in recovery – so go ahead

anyway and pray for patience. He will be better for it and stronger too.

Our articles and messages are varied this month, touching on important things for our lives and the world in which the Lord has left us here for. I find it amazing that, when one gives forth the Word of God, its relevance endures. Reading A.W. Tozer's message, **THIS WORLD: PLAYGROUND OR BATTLEFIELD**, doesn't sound like it was delivered 45 plus years ago. It sounds like today. Only today is worse. Our churches are going farther and farther away from the Word of God, to the words of men and to what makes man feel good. One by one, you can make a difference against that decline. Live out the Word that has been put in you, even if you are the only one doing it. Our God is still able to deliver us. Our country is going under like a drowning victim. How many more times can we come back up before we go under for good? Our country is looking like it is no longer our country, but somewhere else from a foreign field. My hope has never been in government or politics and neither should yours. We are well aware of the direction governments are leading their countries: right into the belly of the beast of Revelation. I believe that we had a parenthesis in that movement when President Ronald Reagan was in office. One of his quotes is especially pertinent today and not as far fetched as you may think. **“How do you tell a communist? Well, it's someone who reads Marx and Lenin. And how do you tell an anti-communist? It's someone who understands Marx and Lenin.”** A growing number of people in government are moving this country systematically and energetically toward that direction. It is somewhat disguised, deception and lies are deployed – all in order to reach the desired goal: enslavement of the people to serve the State. It has happened elsewhere, always at great loss of life. If it comes here are you ready or willing to sell out your faith in Christ for a few years of being taken care of, but only if you can produce for the State? Pray for our country and for our boldness to pay attention to what is the most important: souls of men and women and boys and girls, all going into eternity somewhere. Be like Harlan Page, and make witnessing and soul winning your life. Yes, it could be dangerous soon, but there are countries today where it is very dangerous, and still, people are being dealt with and won to Christ . . . and at a larger rate than in the United States.

Finally, God is still the God of families. At the flood in Genesis, God saved an entire family. At Jericho, God delivered Rahab and the entire household that were gathered in with her. God still desires whole families to be saved. In Acts 16, the Philippian jailer fell before Paul and Silas after the earthquake opened all the cells of the prison and said, **“And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”** The response by Paul and Silas is just as relevant today: **“And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.”** Our loved ones are in peril today. They are in danger of Hell-fire. And many Christian men are too filled with pride, the world, and with self to be like Abraham – to command their children after them. It's time for more than just you to hide yourself in Christ: it's time for your whole family to hide themselves in Him.

Assistant Editor, Dr. T. Michael Eccleston

THIS WORLD: ...Continued from page 2) living, and the best we can do is to rid ourselves of our inhibitions and our frustrations and live this life to the full. This, we believe, is a fair summary of the religious philosophy of modern man, openly expressed by millions who live out that philosophy without having given any verbal expression to it.

This changed attitude toward the world has had, and is having its effect upon Bible believing Christians. By a curious juggling of the figures, they manage to add up the column wrong, and yet claim to have the right answer. It sounds fantastic, but it is true.

That this world is a playground instead of a battleground has now been accepted in practice by the vast majority of fundamentalist Christians. They might hedge around the question if they were asked the question bluntly to declare their position, but their conduct gives them away. They are facing both ways, enjoying Christ and the world too, and gleefully telling everyone that accepting Jesus does not require them to give up their fun, and that Christianity is just the jolliest thing imaginable.

The “worship” growing out of such a view of life is as far off Scripture as the view itself, a sort of ‘sanctified’ night clubbing without the champagne and the dressed up drunks. This whole thing has grown to be so serious of late that it now becomes the bound duty of every Christian to re-examine his spiritual direction in the light of the Bible and, having discovered what the Scriptures teach, to follow them, even if to do so, he must separate himself from much that he formerly accepted as real but, which now, in light of the truth, he knows to be false.

A right view of God and the world to come requires that we have also a right view of the world in which we live and our relationship to it. So much depends upon this that we cannot afford to be careless about it.

The people in Jeremiah's day heard what the prophet said about the old ways and the old paths, but then rejected them. Here is the conclusion to Jere.6:16, **“...But they said, We will not hearken.”** Which one will you be? A. W. Tozer, (1897-1963) Alliance Witness (Adapted)

A PROFILE IN CHRISTIAN HISTORY: HARLAN PAGE

Harlan Page's life span (1791-1834) was one of short duration and covered 43 years, but it can be summarized in one brief phrase, "A *Lover of Souls*." Although only his last 10 years were given to a 'formal' full-time Christian vocation with the American Tract Society, his entire adult Christian life was devoted to the task of personal soul-winning.

Never claiming any gifts as a preacher and laboring as a teacher and mercantile worker before serving as 'depository' for the ATS, he nonetheless dedicated his entire life to reaching lost souls on a personal basis. Similar to 'Uncle John' Vassar, he witnessed to nearly everyone he met.

Page utilized two chief means for his soul-winning endeavors: personal correspondence and personal witnessing. If his memoirs are any indication, he must have witnessed to hundreds of souls a second or third time via letters addressed to those whom he verbally witnessed to with his lips. Much of this evangelism took place after the conclusion of long working hours (He witnessed fervently during formal 'working' hours as well).

Upon obtaining "a hope" of salvation in 1813, he made his life's goal, the laboring for souls and seeking to induce fellow believers to follow the same path. To a cousin in New York, he wrote, "*How is it possible that any who have tasted the love of God can rest, while on every side, sinners are thoughtlessly going down to Hell?*"

On May 19, 1821, he recorded in his journal that he "*went to the factory and conversed with each person employed in it on the state of their souls.*" On July 14, 1821, he wrote, "*When He (God) has in so many instances blessed my feeble efforts, how guilty that I am not more earnest in exertions for the good of souls.*"

Always connecting his witnessing efforts to a local church, one of his pastors once declared as he stood near a window of his house and saw Mr. Page approaching, "*Here comes Mr. Page with another lamb.*" Another pastor declared that Page's efforts were principally directed to one object – the conversion of sinners – and that at the conclusion of every church service. Soul-winning was the one burden of his heart and the purpose of his life.

When the disease that finally caused his death overtook him, he declared, "*My life work here is all done. I have said all that I can say.*" When however, the disease lingered and he realized his suffering might continue for a longer span, he stated, "*I thought my work was done: but I find it is not. I must strive to urge Christians and sinners to their duty from this dying bed.*"

The secret of his soul-winning can be traced to several factors: (1) He was wholly devoted to His Savior. Turning his eye away from the accumulation of property as the object of his life, he felt money's prime purpose was to advance the spread of the Gospel. (2) His intense prayer life: he loved prayer, and prayed at all occasions and seemingly at every opportunity. His biographer states that "*at all times prayer seemed to be a privilege and the throne of grace a palace and solace to his heart.*" (3) He gave God all the credit, continually maintaining a sense of his own unworthiness. His tender dread of sin continued up to his dying breath. During his final sickness he wrote, "*I look upon personal conversion and prayer with individuals as among my most successful endeavors . . . but it is not me, it is all of grace in Christ. There's nothing in me but sin: I am nothing- less than nothing.*"

Plagued with a sickly constitution all his adult life, he finally succumbed to the ravages of his diseased body, having burned his life out in soul-winning service for his Master. Looking forward to his meeting with his precious Savior, his last earthly words were, "*I do love Him: I do love Him.*"

Over his grave in Coventry, Rhode Island, his native home, a marble slab bears the following epitaph: "*In memory of Harlan Page, for nine years depository of the American Tract Society, who died in New York, Sept.23, 1834 in the triumph of Faith, age 43. He ceased not to warn everyone night and day with tears.*"

Harlan Page was a true 'lover of souls.' How we need men and women today with the passion for souls like Harlan Page.

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the Lord" I Corinthians 15:58*

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