

April 5, 2020 - Zephaniah 3:14 -17 / I Timothy 2:3-7 - Take Heart and Have Courage.

Introduction:

Palm Sunday marks the day that Jesus made his triumphant entry into Jerusalem. It marked the beginning of the last week that He would spend as a man (god /man) on this earth among His disciples. On that road to Jerusalem Jesus is traveling towards his death, burial and His resurrection. It is during this Holy Week we have recorded one-third of all the events in the life of Christ. It is important to note that Jesus endured a mocked trial he suffered cruel beatings and knew of his impending execution. He exhibited for us courage even in the face of death.

Jesus offered himself as the King of the Jews. People began stripping palm branches off the trees and then started laying them in the pathway as Jesus rode by. The crowd followed Him into Jerusalem yelled out, 'Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest... which means "Save." They cried out "Save us, save us."

Now, we know that Christ was rejected and was not exalted as the King of the Jews; instead of sitting upon a throne he was nailed to a cross. This took great courage beyond our thinking for at any time he could have called ten thousand angels to His side. We too need to take heart and have courage. What we are experiencing in this global pandemic is troubling, it is not our normal and we have seen folks get sick and many even die but it will come to pass.

I Christ Shall Returns in All His Glory

1. Folks, take heart and have courage there is a new world coming. The Lord Jesus will return to earth in His glory as King. A day is coming when there will be no illness, disease or stay at home quarantines because of an evil virus. We are scrambling in this pandemic for doctors, nurses and medics but in that day there will be no need for them.... I plea pray for them all.

There will be no poverty, no famines, no earthquakes, no racial unrest, no need to lock your doors or stay in-doors. How can this be? That wonderful day will become a reality a time of peace and joy that people have dreamed of. So take heart and have courage all we are experiencing has been prophesy and all other prophesies too will come to pass.

2. It is written by the prophet Zephaniah in chapter 3 that Christ our King is coming again and he will set up His Millennial Kingdom. Folks, we need to keep our hearts and mind in the perspective of scriptures and what they promise. This will give us all courage. That day will occur when Jesus Christ the King of King returns as it is written in Zechariah 14:9.

And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one.

3. It will be a literal 1000-year reign of King Jesus ruling on planet earth. It will be an earthly political kingdom of Christ when He will restores the nation of Israel, their temple worship, and their holy city and fulfill his covenant to David and take his rightful throne. His appearance will be a visible, physical and catastrophic event, as we will see. **Matthew 24:27: For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.**

3. Palm branches were laid in the pathway as Jesus rode by and were a symbol of victory. The winners of the old Greek Olympics Games carried a palm branch as a flag. Today we carry the flags of our country at the Olympic Games. Sad to note the games were scheduled to begin

between July and August of this year however due to increasing numbers of covid-19 cases they have made the decision to postpone the Olympic Games in Tokyo to the summer of 2021.

One of the most exciting Olympic events in these games is the 4x100 relay. Four men (or women) each race 100 meters, passing the baton as each runner finishes his part of the race. Coaches say that the most critical moment in a relay race is not the beginning or the end; it's that split second when one runner takes the baton and places it in the hand of the next runner. If there is a bobble, or if the baton is dropped, the race will be lost. This year these Palms speak to us to have courage they represent victory even in the midst of our crisis.

So it is with the Christian message in a world crisis we must not drop the baton. We must do what we can so that the next generation believes and has courage too. We must pass the baton of truth along, we must pass our faith along, we must pass our hope along and we must pass our courage along. I encourage that Moms and dads, boys and girls get together more than ever for family devotions and Bible reading it will strengthen your faith and grant you courage.

II Take Courage and be a good Soldier- I Timothy 2:3-7).

1. We live in a society that has not experience the hardness of war. Yet we are at war. Our president has declared we are at war with an invisible enemy and if truth be told Satan is the real enemy. We must take heart and have courage. We take courage in God's promises of Christ the true King's return and we take courage also in the letter of the Apostle Paul.

2. Paul likened the Christian life as being in warfare in Ephesians 6:11-12. That implies we are at war--a picture used in these Scriptures. It is a war with God's adversary Satan. There are three important factor related to being a faithful soldier. First, we must be empowered by the grace of God as in verse one. We do that by acknowledge our weakness, being humble to ask for it and third, saturate your minds with God's Word.

3. Paul now gives us three illustrations of what it means to be a strong Christian. He begins with the illustration of a soldier by writing: ***Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ (2:3).*** Paul didn't want Timothy to have any misconceptions. In this world we have to endure hardness, which includes persecution, being misunderstood, sickness, disease and opposition. Jesus told his church in John 15:18 - **If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before [it hated] you.** Paul knew what it meant to suffer hardship. - **2 Cor.11:24-28**

4. Paul explains what it means to be a good soldier. He says we are to be "good" (Gk. Kalos means- honourable, conferring honour) soldiers. We are not to be soldiers simply in terms of function and duty--we are to be active, noble, and heroic soldiers. Those are the kind of soldiers who earn medals of valor and honor. So we need to take heart and have courage. ***No man that warreth*** implies we are at war. The Greek word is (strateuōto) do military duty, be on active service, be a soldier.

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Christians are "in active service" (v. 4) .The Christian army does not have any members on rest and recreation. All are on the front lines of an active battle. We all work together.

5. Timothy 2:4 a) We can get too entangled with the affairs of this life to the point it eats up our time and energy and now worry and fear hindering our service as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. We are at war with unbelief like never before but the door of opportunities is open.

The Greek word translated "entangles" (Gk. emplekmao) in verse 4 means "to interweave". A believer's life is not to be wrapped up in the non-essentials of this life. Because we live on the battlefield, all things are to be subservient to winning the battle. Paul knew much about the Roman soldier of his day. A good soldier also wants to please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier (2:4b).

Illustration:

Josephus, the Jewish historian of that time, described the Roman soldier like this: "Each soldier every day throws all his energy into his drill, as though he were in action.

II Take Courage and Be Athletics -I Timothy 2:3-7).

1. Paul uses an illustration of athletics: (2:5). The crown probably refers to the wreath given in Greek Olympic Games. The word translate crown (**stephanos**) is the Greek word from which we get our English names "Stephen" and "Stephanie." In contrast to the kingly crown (**Diadema**), which always refers to kingly dignity or position, this crown was a token of honor for distinguished service or accomplishment. This crown reveals that our goal should be to attain Christ's approval.

2) An athlete must know the rules of the event, train diligently, and compete with an understanding of those rules. Paul knew what it meant to keep the rules. I Cor. 9:24-27

The point is that we Christians must strive lawfully, or contend according to the rulebook, the Bible. This means we run the race set before us with love, compassion, purity, and integrity to receive the victor's crown.

IV. Take Courage and Be like a good farmer. (2:6).

1. In this illustration we learn that being a Christian is sometimes just plain hard work. A farmer (husbandman) does all kinds of back - breaking work, such as plowing, planting, and cultivating. Sometimes it's no fun being a farmer, especially when there are droughts, weeds, insects, or early frosts. The same is true of being a Christian. Sometimes it's just hard work.

2. There's hard work but verse 6 also makes the point that when the crop does come in, the farmer ought to receive the first of the harvest. Many blessings await those who work hard in ministry--both in the present and in the future.

2. God has given all of us a spiritual field in which to plow, plant, cultivate, and harvest. It may be a school, an office, a factory, a store, a warehouse, etc. Most of us discover soon after becoming a Christian the newness and glamour wears off, and it begins to be just plain hard work. That's the reason so many new Christians are no longer in church after six months. When being a Christian is just hard work, we need to remember the husbandman that laboreth will be the first partaker of the fruits. Paul tells us this truth in **1 Corinthians 15:58**.

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

Conclusion

In these times of distress, when you are put to the greatest test, you must let Scripture guide and comfort you and give you the courage you need. Never let the world crisis and culture around you dishearten you from the father's will and purpose for your life. What he has said will come to pass. Turn to the scriptures and allow them to reorient you to God and His activity. If you will immerse yourself daily in the Word of God, you will not be caught off guard or disillusion you.