



Wise Preparation for Coming Difficulty

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. A Hanukkah Theme
- B. Processing Emotionally

II. THE COMING STORM

A. The Present Storm

1. I am so aware of the relative mildness of the storm around me; it alarms me how poorly at times I navigate this mild storm. David Sliker
2. Swimming against a 1mph current; a 5mph current is coming

B. Progression of Persecution: five stages of persecution (Strait, pg. 5):

- 1) **Stereotyping of a target group so that they are seen as different than the norm.** This is applying an overly simplistic caricature of a group. People at this stage say, “All Christians are superstitious, hypocritical, self-righteous, repressed, and sexist.”
- 2) **Vilifying the target group as harmful to others.** This makes bigotry permissible. We might hear, “Christians are against human dignity, in opposition to science, homophobic, and intolerant. Christianity is a negative force on the planet.”
- 3) **Marginalizing the group’s influence to the periphery of society.** The secularists comment, “Since Christians are harmful, faith must be kept in private, and excluded from education, workplaces, social media, and political dialogue.”
- 4) **Criminalizing the target group or their practices.** This includes litigation, legal injunctions, and rulings limiting religious freedom: “If you—a Christian—refuse to bake a cake/do a wedding for religious conscience reasons, we will punish or compel you.”
- 5) **Persecuting the targeted group outright.** The group is a danger so it must be stopped. This includes fines, restrictions, incarcerations, or killings. Those in power believe, “Christians must be removed from our society, shut down, and punished.”

C. The Coming Trouble (Matthew 24:4-13)

III. PREPARATION FOR DIFFICULTY

I need increased discernment from the Lord to fight for what actually matters and what actually helps me prepare for what is coming. I need increased understanding and clarity on what is profitable for my life in God and what is vanity – permissible but meaningless.

The distance between what I think that I am doing and what I am actually doing in reaching for God is often quite uncomfortable. I find that so many times I confuse **awareness** of what I need to do in Christ with **engagement** and action to press for righteousness within my own soul. I am often confronted with my own soul’s reaction against mourning, reaching, and pressing for the breakthrough of God – breakthrough in my heart, in my family, in my ministry, and in my city. The encroaching, ever-present nature of passivity and complacency in my own life is an assignment against me that demands constant vigilance and accountability to overcome. I excel at neither vigilance nor accountability, because I am often out of touch with my great peril. David Sliker

- A. **Understanding persecution/tribulation is coming for all Believers...**and in many cases for our brothers and sisters around the world the tribulation is already here. The worst type of punch is a sucker punch where you are not expecting to be hit. The first item for preparation is simply to understand this and expect that times of greater persecution and tribulation will come to us as Believers.
- B. **Learn from Others:** We inform ourselves of the stories of others who persevered in great trial. This is one of the great benefits of the Hanukkah story. On an annual basis we recount the story of a small group of Believers who stayed faithful to God while enduring great persecution and suffering. Check the end notes to get more idea
- C. **Cultivate a life-giving relationship with Yeshua** and walk in active love and forgiveness. Our relationship with Yeshua is one that is intended to grow and that we are to consistently cultivate. We are also to grow in actively

walking in love and forgiveness towards those who hate us because of our identification with Yeshua. We can't remain in this place of love and forgiveness without a life-giving relationship with Yeshua.

1. Our greatest and most valuable resource – particularly as it relates to our current dilemma (weak and prone to wander) and future crisis (unprecedented shaking and trouble) – is the knowledge of God that comes through beholding Him. The way of true comfort must be fought for in the arena of beholding Him and knowing Him. David Sliker
 2. The more that we believe that He is unwilling to rest until the fullness of His desires are manifest in our lives the more that faith produces an aggression within our souls that reflects His. We “become what we behold”, and what we become in the waiting are ones confident in His affection and mercy, aware of our own frailty and weakness, mourning for His breakthrough. David Sliker
 3. Our righteous response to the revelation of the transcendent beauty of the Lord is not to passively wait for Him to do His part but to respond to His message of comfort by aggressively preparing, aggressively proclaiming, aggressively beholding, and aggressively positioning ourselves to receive the strengthening and renewal of the Lord that He wants to release to us in the proper time. David Sliker
 4. “*If you don’t quit, you win*” – “**not quitting**” takes aggressive interior pursuit of God in prayer, fasting, beholding, and radical reach for revival on a continual basis. Part of how God sustains us in the long-term is by fueling us with the understanding that we will see His goodness **now** (**suddenly**) and **in the age to come** (**ultimately**). We **must** continually contend for both. David Sliker
- D. Set our focus on the eternal.** For the joy set before Him, Yeshua endured the cross and despised its shame (Hebrews 12:2). We too can endure difficulty by focusing on the glorious future which is ahead of us as Believers. We are to realize that our present (or coming) afflictions are working in us an eternal weight of glory beyond compare (2 Corinthians 4:17-18). We also realize that in the midst of our suffering that the Spirit of glory rests upon us (2 Peter 4:14) and that no difficulty can separate us from Yeshua's love (Romans 8:35-39).
- E. Stay Connected in Biblical Community.** There is a strong admonition for continuing to meet together with other Believers--and all the more in the tumultuous times preceding Yeshua's return (Hebrews 10:25). There is strong accountability, support, and protection in staying actively connected to other weak, fellow saints. This is part of the reason that we are intentional at emphasizing the small house churches within the Lighthouse. In times of greater persecution we will need to continue to draw together but won't be able to do it as easily or safely in a larger setting.

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