

SABBATH THOUGHT 2023-10-21—WE LIVE BY FAITH

May God bless you on His Sabbath day!

For decades, churches have promoted the idea that God's people must be prepared for the coming Great Tribulation. Biblical prophecies surely describe that time as the worst in the history of the world. But the message from some churches is one of storing food and water; having cash, gold and silver; and even relocating to remote locations to avoid that time. While there is wisdom in having provisions to guard against short-term and unavoidable problems common to this world (usually weather related), it is just not practical or even possible that any amount of preparation will be adequate to avoid the coming Tribulation likely has not considered the realities involved.

For example, the average person eats about 2,000 pounds (900 kg) of food every year. While many dehydrated long-term food supplies weigh much less, the volume does not change significantly. A fair amount of storage space is required, especially if the idea is to 'prep' for 3-1/2 to 7 years. And that is PER person PER year.

Perhaps the solution is to grow food and raise animals. This sounds like a great idea but a garden would have to be about 200 square feet (19 sq. meters) to support one person per year. Is there space available? Is the ground suitable? Is it protected from wildlife? What about insects and drought? These are serious concerns especially given the uncertainties in the weather the last few years. Also, canning uses a lot of water that must be heated and boiled. It also requires at least an acre of land to support just a few animals not including the land required for the winter hay.

Even ranchers and farmers would be hard-pressed to live in isolation. Most purchase their hay for the winter months to supply their cattle. Without fuel, they would have to harvest the hay by hand, which limits the number of cattle they can have. Harvesting crops by hand is labor and time intensive. Few have the means to support more than their own family without help. Tools also require maintenance or repair. And drought can kill off a crop or animals inside of a few weeks. All these things and more require consideration and preparation.

Speaking of water, each person requires about 2.5 quarts (2.4 liters) of water per day—that is around 250 gallons (1,000 liters) per year not including that used for personal hygiene and dehydrated foods, which only increase that amount. Water also does not have a long shelf-life although there are additives that may preserve it for several years. Even if preservatives are used, fifty-gallon (189 liters) barrels of water take up a lot of space. Assuming 300 gallons (1,136 liters) per person per year requires keeping six barrels for each person somewhere.

Even so, storing food and water is possible and many have done this for years or even decades. But there are other concerns that cannot be ignored. For instance, how does one prepare against sickness, disease, and injuries? Simple things like knowledge of first aid and medical supplies can mean the difference between life and death. Some medications can be stockpiled but anyone who requires insulin has a problem—it must be kept in cold storage because it otherwise only lasts only about a month. Heart medications require a monthly prescription

from a physician and a pharmacy to fill it. Will people are not part of the Beast power have access to either?

What about injuries? In the case of a compound fracture, even if someone has the knowledge and skill to properly splint it, very few know how to first set the bone without severing an artery. Furthermore, can you imagine doing this without painkillers or anesthetics? There are many injuries that can result in serious infections that require antibiotics or antihistamines—poisonous snakes and plants, animal bites, bee stings, cuts and wounds, etc. These all require knowledge, experience, and ‘prepping’ of supplies.

In a survival situation, will young people remain celibate to avoid pregnancy? There are few things more agonizing than helplessly watching an infant die due to complications at birth or a subsequent disease to which they are susceptible in the beginning. There can also be serious risks to the mother.

What about dental problems? An abscessed tooth is not only excruciating, but the infection can spread especially if it is in an upper tooth, which is close to the sinus cavities and the brain. Many people experience issues with their teeth and 3-1/2 to 7 years is a long time to go without some form of professional dental hygiene or intervention.

Fire for heating and cooking is another consideration. Even with a fireplace or woodstove in a moderate climate, the average house requires about seven ricks (cords) of wood during the winter for heating. That is a pile stacked four feet (1.2 m) high, 8 feet (2.4 m) deep, and 28 feet (8.5 m) wide. But that just provides heat for the *winter*. What about cooking during the rest of the year? Doubling that amount of wood takes up about 500 square feet (46 sq. meters). That is a large area and is per year. Keeping wood for multiple years requires protecting it from weather and insects because it will rot and become useless in a few years. What if the chainsaw needs repair? I can tell you that cutting trees even with a chainsaw and splitting logs requires new chains every now and then and a LOT of manual labor, not to mention the fuel. It is also not without risk of injury. If you live in the city, will you have the means to get wood? Will there be a fuel shortage, roadblocks, or lockdowns?

Moreover, few can afford the cost of all this. Perhaps there is an organized undertaking for making such preparations. But when hard times come, people can change for the worse; so what assurance is there that you will be included? What if you have physical limitations that others would consider to be too much of a burden? Would those who are wealthy have priority over those in poverty? Regardless of these considerations, there is a *limit* to the number of people that can be supported so who decides who can enter and how do they base their decisions?

In all cases, how can someone protect those provisions? Who is willing to use lethal force against men, women, or children who are hungry, thirsty, cold, sick, or injured? What if they are brethren? What about those who are willing to take what they want by force? Who is willing to kill another human being who is made in the image of God? What about a family member—a spouse, child, brother, or sister? Jesus said, **“I came not to send peace, but a sword. ... And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household.”** (Matt. 10:34, 36).

I could go on and on about the realities of ‘prepping’ for the coming Tribulation. It might be possible for a few months, but beyond that it is not practical or possible for most. Even if it is possible for some, it is not possible for everyone. Will God only allow those who do not have the wealth, property, and supplies to endure the Tribulation? In other words, are those who are rich and resourceful the only ones that God will bless and protect from this world? Is God a “respector of persons¹?” I think not.

World events naturally elevate the specter of the end time events of the Great Tribulation in the minds of people. The war in Israel provoked by the Hamas terrorists is the most recent one. Events such as this usually result in more than a few claiming that one or more Seals have already been opened. Have they? The First Seal is the *conquering* (subjugation) of the world’s religions. The Second Seal is the *conquering* (subjugation) of the nations *through bloodshed*. **Both are the result of the Beast and False Prophet** under the authority and power of Satan. These Seals involve many deaths in order to subjugate the governments and religious organizations of the world. That most assuredly has not happened. It is even harder to imagine that the Beast and False Prophet are hiding in the background once these seals are opened. So, what should God’s children do? What does God and Jesus tell us about these times?

LUKE 12:22-23, 28-34 And He [*Jesus Christ*] said unto His disciples, Therefore I say unto you, **Take no thought for your life**, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. 23 The life is more than meat, and the body *is more* than raiment. ... 28 If then God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and to morrow is cast into the oven; **how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith?** 29 And **seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind.** 30 For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and **your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.** 31 But rather **seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added** unto you. 32 **Fear not**, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. 33 **Sell that ye have, and give alms [to the poor];** provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. 34 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

The parable in Luke 12 is a story of a rich man who stored up a vast abundance of provisions but he died before he could enjoy them. Jesus concluded it by saying, “he that layeth up treasure for himself ... is not rich toward God.” (Luke 12:21). Might He also have said, “he that lays up provisions to escape the Tribulation is without FAITH toward God?” Instead of stockpiling food, water, money, medicine, etc., Jesus says to do the opposite: sell what you have, give to those in need, and **have FAITH** (Luke 12:28, 33) that God will provide. God’s people WILL suffer² both as a test of worthiness to receive the Kingdom but also to be perfected in agape love and to overcome sin³. But those that live through the Tribulation will never do it by their own means. “**[W]ithout faith it is impossible to please God:** for He that cometh to God **must believe that He is**, and *that* He is a rewarder of them that **diligently seek him.**” (Heb. 11:6). Given all this, the message to the children of God is:

¹ Acts 10:34.

² 1 Pet. 5:10.

³ 1 Pet. 2:20-24.

EPHESIANS 6:11-18 **Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.** 13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, **that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.** 14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; 15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 **Above all, taking the shield of faith,** wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: 18 **Praying always** with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.

Paul is CLEARLY referring to the time of the end (“in the evil day”). And did you notice that it is the shield of FAITH that is **above** all other things by which we stand against evil? Telling people to stockpile for the coming Tribulation is a message of fear, and fear is a lack of faith. No human preparation will stand against the evil of that day. Jesus said, **“Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?”** (Mark 4:40). We know that there “shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.” (Matt. 24:9) but it is through faith in God that we *stand*. What does it mean to stand? It means we have not fallen or collapsed. It means we are NOT defeated, NOT too weak to go on, NOT overcome by sufferings, and NOT without hope in God. A person who is able to stand still has strength and the ability to resist. Rest assured that “He that findeth his life shall lose it: and **he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it.**” (Matt. 10:39). The children of God must CRY OUT to Him in *faith*:

PSALM 56:4, 11 In God I will praise His word, **in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.** ... 11 In God have I put my trust: **I will not be afraid what man can do unto me.**

PSALM 7:1 O LORD my God, **in Thee do I put my trust: save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me:**

Another of the Psalmists wrote, **“Put not your trust in [men].”** (Ps. 146:3). Habbakuk wrote (and was quoted four times in the NT⁴), “The just shall live **by His faith.**” (Hab. 2:4). Whose faith? **“[T]he faith of the Son of God.”** (Gal. 2:20). Faith removes fear and “faith ... worketh by [*agape*] love.” (Gal. 5:6). Faith, above all, is the only real preparation for the Tribulation.

May God’s grace and peace be upon you!

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⁴ Rom. 1:17; Gal. 2:20; 3:11; Heb. 10:38.