

## When Tribulation Comes - Pastor Doug Batchelor

**Note:** *This is an unedited, transcript of the live broadcast. Sermon after the U.S. 911 event.*

Should we fear tribulation? Some of you are going through you own tribulation right now. There's all different forms that it takes. Some of you've got financial tribulation, or physical tribulation, physical suffering. Paul had a thorn in his side, and God used it to save him. God used it to mobilize him. Should we be afraid of it? Or should we know that God loves us and all these things will work together for His good if we trust Him?

(Program welcome narration.)

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Our message today I hope you'll find to be relevant and biblical. It's dealing with the issue of tribulation. "When Tribulation Comes." This is something I've been wanting to talk about but I did not plan on talking about it in the context of being in the midst of a form of tribulation, as a people.

And of course I don't need to tell you how shocked and forgive me if I get emotional today. I grew up in New York City. I was born in California, but I still have dual citizenship if you don't mind. And I was watching all this unfold. I had to go to Amazing Facts and do worship early that morning, but I'd had a hard time tearing myself away from the almost apocalyptic images that I was seeing. I was asking myself, "Is this really happening? And what does it mean? What is the prophetic significance of this, if any?" And all of these thoughts have been much exercised in my mind through this week.

But I want to talk to you about tribulation. It's a Bible subject. It's a prophecy subject, and it's a subject, unfortunately, of current events, today.

What is tribulation? Well, I've got a definition here. "Great affliction, trial or distress; suffering; an experience that tests one's endurance, patience or faith." An experience that tests one's endurance, patience or faith. Now, different kinds of tribulation come to different people. Some people's tribulation might be jumping off a building in New York because the stock market crashed. Tribulation for others might watch, it might be watching someone jump from a burning skyscraper. Sometimes tribulation is emotional. You have no physical pain, you have not lost any money, there's no burning buildings, but it's a time of emotional distress.

The Bible speaks in Luke 21 verse 26, one of the signs of Jesus' coming, "men's hearts failing them for fear. And for looking after those things that are coming upon the earth." That is a time of tribulation. You know the Bible says that God's people go through a great tribulation before the second coming, and it never refers to it so much as economic disaster, physical torture, but spiritual anguish.

Just before Jacob entered the promised land, which is, we are Israel, we are God's people, before we enter the Promised Land we go through a time of testing, of tribulation, a time of trouble. Jacob went through a time of trouble. He needed to know that his sins were forgiven. His brother was on his way to judge him, and he wrestled with God. It refers to this time of trouble in Jeremiah. Obviously, Jeremiah is looking forward, because he lived long after Jacob.

Jeremiah chapter 30 verse 6 and 7: "Ask now and see whether a man is ever in labor with child." Men typically don't get pregnant and have babies! "So why do I see every man with his hand on his loins like a woman in labor and all faces turned pale? Alas, for the day is great, so that none is like it." And it is the time of Jacob's trouble. Tribulation. That's what it means. "But he will be saved out of this." Can you say "Thank the Lord?"

There is going to be a time of emotional distress, and typically when people think about the Great Tribulation, we have those apocalyptic images that are conjured up of earthquake and plagues of locusts and famines and natural disasters and burning buildings, but for the Christian, the biggest part of the tribulation is the anguish of soul we must know, we must wrestle with God. That's where the wrestling

and the striving and the fighting comes to the Christian. It's a fight of faith. To know that we have our sins under the blood of the Lamb, and that is a very appropriate exercise for every Christian.

Some people say, "Oh, God loves us too much to let us go through any tribulation." You're not reading your Bible! It is through tribulation that He purifies us.

Now, one of the points I want to mention today, not only 'what is tribulation': we have learned this week that tribulation can come very suddenly and unexpectedly. If there is, and please forgive me - you might want to listen to this message with your eyes closed if you are a sensitive viewer - but I thought it would be appropriate to capitalize on some current events and bring them out in the light of prophecy. If I've learned anything this week, I've learned how quickly things can change. Have you read the passages in Revelation, in Matthew, that talk about the rapidity, the suddenness with which things are going to happen. I think sometimes when we picture the second coming of Jesus and the signs of the end, we see this long, slow progression of political change and people don't know that things can happen suddenly.

Some of you remember, we had a message here not too long ago called "Suddenly." The Bible makes it very clear. First Thessalonians 5:3: "For when they say 'Peace and Safety', then sudden destruction comes upon them as labor pains upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape." He uses the same language as Jeremiah there. First Thessalonians 3:4: "For in fact we told you before when we were with you that we would suffer persecution, tribulation, just as it has happened." And you know, God in His word has told us that tribulation will be part of it. This is what Paul has said.

And then Peter says, 1 Peter 4:12: "Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial that is to try you as though some strange thing has happened." You know what that means, the word 'strange' there? Do not be surprised.

You know there's a lot of people out there who do not think that the church is going to go through tribulation, that are going to be surprised, and when tribulation hits, they're going to be surprised they're going to think its "Strange!" Pastor said we wouldn't be here when this happens." Well, you know what? We had some tribulation this week, and we're all still parked on the planet, aren't we? So anybody who's telling people that there's no tribulation or trial comes to the church, I think they're willing to reconsider now that we may be here for it, and I've got more Scripture on that later.

The final events will be rapid ones. Jesus tells us in speaking about tribulation that the work will be cut short. And He says that we must be praying, 'lest the watchman, the Master, coming suddenly, catches us not watching.' There's so many stories in the Bible that bear out this truth that things can change very quickly. And that's why we cannot say, we cannot procrastinate and say, "Well, I know I have a soul preparation. I'm going to wait. I'm going to put it off." Now is the time.

Revelation chapter 18 verse 19 - I can't help but think of those verses in the Apocalypse that talk about the fall of Babylon. And those images that we've seen this week of people fleeing the disaster, covered with ashes and dust. And you read, "They threw dust on their heads and they cried out weeping and wailing and saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city in which all who had their ships of the sea became rich by her wealth,' and it goes on to say, 'For in one hour she is made desolate.' How quickly does it happen? In one hour. Someone did the math, and I think it was only about an hour and a half, maybe two hours, from the time the first plane hit until those buildings were reduced to ashes. That's very quick! And that of course is a reminder - and this is not the great tribulation, friends. Is it a tribulation? Yes. There have been times of tribulation through history, and I'll say more about what the Bible calls the "Great Tribulation."

Tribulations come suddenly. Who causes the tribulation? A lot of people this week, especially insurance companies, define what's happened as an act of God. And others are shaking their fist at God and saying, "Why has God allowed this?" And some of you heard Elder Billy Graham's message this week. I was proud of him, that he was able to slip a gospel presentation in. I was not at all ashamed with people

representing many different religions on the platform to say that you need to have your sins under the blood of Jesus. And, you know, he's getting old enough where he can say whatever he wants! But, he also addressed that people would be blaming God.

What does the Bible say about who is responsible for the tribulation? John 16 verse 2, it says: "Yea, the time comes when whoever kills you will think he's serving God." Now we saw diabolical - and I like that word. I borrowed it from Elder Graham - diabolical attack, demon-inspired attack.

Well, you know those who were responsible thought they were serving God, and some of the most disturbing images were not in North America. To me, some of the most disturbing images were the West Bank where people were celebrating the deaths of innocents. Men, women and children they don't even know - they don't even know their religions, but they think they're serving God. Revelation says that in the last days, that those who are pushing the Beast and his image will inspire others to kill in the name of God, in the name of worship. And we might be thinking, "That would never happen in our country."

But you know, it's amazing how the devil can hypnotise people to think they're serving God and to murder others in the name of God. "Exhibit A" this week we've seen that. Who's responsible? Matthew 24 verse 9-13, Jesus, speaking of the tribulation, He says: "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you." Does it say God or they? These are demon-inspired people. Whether it's religious, political leaders, it doesn't say God is going to deliver you up to tribulation, "They". It was Esau coming after Jacob.

It talks about often it's people who claimed to share the Christian name. They've become the enemies. These people who were responsible, I understand they're 99% sure, claim to worship the same God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, did you know that? And they're murdering in the name of that God. "They'll deliver you up to tribulation and to kill you, and many will be hated. And you'll be hated by all nations for my namesake. And many will be offended and betray one another, and will hate one another. And many false prophets will rise and deceive many, and because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he that endures to the end shall be ..." what? Endures what? Endures tribulation! So for those who are saying that the church is up looking down, enjoying eternal bliss when the tribulation hits, why would Jesus say this to us if we're not here?

Why would He challenge us that we must be willing to hold onto our faith, that we can endure tribulation? It's tribulation that tries, that tests. I would much rather warn people so they can brace themselves and be prepared, than lead people in some kind of reckless ignorance so they're caught by these fiery trials and think some strange thing has happened.

### **What is the Great Tribulation?**

Now, typically, if I say, "The Tribulation", that phrase, typically people think about the great time of trouble in our scripture reading. Jesus quotes Daniel chapter 12 when he says, "There will be a time of trouble such as there never has been since there was a nation even unto the same time." None like it, none after it. A time of trouble. "Woe to those who are with child and to those that are nursing in those days, when you see the signs of these things, drop what you're doing, don't even go back and get your jacket, head for the hills!" The Great Tribulation is principally the seven last plagues. That's when God's mercy is withdrawn, probation closes, and very quickly, I'm not going to preach on the plagues now, but you've read about it. You find them in Revelation 15 and 16, it talks about the noisome and grievous sores, the sea turning into blood. Most of the people in the world live by the coasts. The rivers turning into blood, the rest of the world lives by the rivers. And some are wondering, "Are these real plagues, or are they symbolic plagues? Were the plagues that fell on Egypt real?"

The plagues that fell on Egypt, as much as a trial as it was for the Egyptians, God preserved His people during that time. They were in the world during the plagues, but those plagues were the echo of their deliverance. So this great tribulation, these plagues take place just before God's people are delivered.

The sun scorching people with heat, darkness on the seat of the Beast, the battle of Armageddon, and ultimately a great earthquake and the second coming of Jesus. These are known as the seven last plagues. This is the Great Tribulation.

Now if you're waiting until the Great Tribulation begins before you completely consecrate yourself to the Lord, you lose. It doesn't work that way.

When the Great Tribulation begins, probation's closed. The saved are saved, the lost are lost. Now is the time. There will be a period, and I must admit this week I have wondered if these events are the beginning of what is often referred to as the "Small Time of Trouble". Now it sounds like an oxymoron, doesn't it? "Small Tribulation?" But the Bible tells us that there will be a period of time when the Beast's power is haggling with God's people for souls. There will be a decree made that tells people they cannot buy or sell unless they give up their faith and capitulate. And during this time, and that period of time may last three and a half years, we don't know - the Great Tribulation is going to be rapid, and I'll talk about that in just a minute.

### **The small time of trouble.**

But there's a small time of trouble, when there's a death decree, and when God's people can't buy or sell, and you know, we still have yet to see what its going to happen. I'm not a prophet, I'm not going to predict. If I was a financial prophet, I would have predicted that just before the year 2000 the markets would have tanked. Instead, the stock market went through the roof! I am not a prophet and don't make your investments based on Pastor Doug. But we don't know what's going to happen when the markets open Monday. It's hard to image this is all going to be good for the economy. I know it has pulled people together. But the economists, and I've been listening to them, are worried. Store what I'm about to say, and use it when important. It is a fact that the Bible teaches there will be some form of totalitarian power at the end that will compel people to worship a certain way. He causes all. If you understand that, say Amen.

All dictatorships have come into power on the heels of financial disaster. That's a fact. Napoleon was able to nearly conquer the ancient Roman empire on the heels of the financial disaster of the French Revolution. Kaiser Wilhelm stepped into power on the heels of financial disaster in Germany and Adolph Hitler did the same thing. They were bringing their money to the market in wheelbarrows! How many of you know that from the history books? People, when there's a financial disaster, are much more ready to embrace, a despot. Someone who will be a supreme authority. And so I don't know if this is the beginning of the end. I'm learning to be more measured and mellow in what I predict. But I do think that it's very significant. I do think it's going to have some repercussions that will play into the final scenario.

### **When is the tribulation?**

People always need to know that. Tribulation is right at the end of time. Daniel 12:1 and 2: "At that time Michael will stand up, the great prince who stands over the sons of your people..." And there's a time of trouble such as there never was since there was a nation, even to that same time, and at that time your people are delivered." You notice it doesn't say, 'God delivers the people, then there's tribulation'? Here it says tribulations then deliverance! And it goes on to say, "... and many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake." What do we call that? The Resurrection.

So the tribulation precedes the deliverance and the resurrection. Now that shouldn't be too complicated. Mark 13 verse 24: "But in those days after the tribulation the sun will be darkened, the moon will not give its light, the stars of heaven will fall, the powers of heaven will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with power and great glory." Jesus' coming is at the end of the tribulation. Now there are two tribulations it speaks of here in Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21, Luke 17, you've got a historical tribulation called the Dark Ages. You've got a tribulation, the fall of Jerusalem that's also addressed in that passage. You've got the tribulation of the Dark Ages historically, and historically there as a day when the sun turned dark and the moon turned to blood and there was the great day when the stars fell, but these things are going to happen again in quick succession.

Revelation tells us that not only does the sun grow dark, the moon turns to blood, the stars fall from heaven, the heavens depart as a scroll - that has not happened yet. And that mighty earthquake and these events that tell about the second coming, those things will happen again in the future in quick succession. So I hope it's clear for you, I know it is, and I hope it's clear for friends who are maybe watching this program, we are going to be here if God grants us life during the tribulation, and the Second Coming is on the heels of that. It's the great deliverance through the tribulation.

### **How long will the Tribulation be?**

I'm speaking about the Great Tribulation. Again, the Bible is not very specific, but I'd like to ask for a show of hands (and you can get a camera ready). How many of you have heard of the seven years of tribulation, let me see your hands? The seven years of tribulation. OK.

Where is the verse that says 'seven years of tribulation'? There is no verse. Some people say, "Well, the teaching is there." I don't find it. There are some scholars who take the seventy week prophecy in Daniel chapter 9, and they take that last week, and it talks about the one who confirms the covenant with many for one week, and there are some who actually believe the one who confirms the covenant is the anti-Christ.

Nowhere in the Bible does it say the anti-Christ made a covenant with anybody. It's God who confirms the covenant with many. He confirms the covenant with His people for one week. Three and a half years in person, Jesus did it in the midst of the week He died, He causes the sacrifice to cease. The veil temple curtain is ripped. Then it says in Hebrews chapter 2: "Then He confirmed the covenant through those who heard Him." Three and a half years later, Stephen is stoned. The Supreme Court of the Jewish nation plug their ears, they reject the message of Jesus and the Gospel as a nation, and then the Gospel goes to the Gentiles. After that, Cornelius is converted, Paul becomes a preacher to the Gentiles. That's the one week - it's way back there! But they rip that week off the end of the 490 year prophecy and they sort of have it hovering at the end of time, and they say, "This is the seven years of tribulation."

Typically in the Bible, these tribulations don't last seven years. They're either three and a half years, or just a few weeks. The famine in the days of Elijah, how long? That was a small time of trouble. And, you know, we may have those kind of things happening. Natural disasters and distress, and you might have Jezebel and Ahab persecuting God's people. That's a religious system and a government working together to persecute God's people. Elijah had to flee into the wilderness!

During the Dark Ages, God's church fled into the wilderness, and He fed her there. That's the small time of trouble. The big time of trouble, some have thought that it would last a year, because it does say, "For in one day her plagues shall come." Now, it doesn't say it will take a day. It says, "For in one day..." If a day is a year in prophecy, and it says in one day, it means it all happens within a year. It doesn't mean it takes a year.

I think, (by permission, not by commandment) that the plagues are going to be about 45 days. Here are my reasons: There are three times it says in Revelation 18: "For in one hour she falls politically; in one hour she falls economically; in one hour she falls religiously." And, if a day is a year in prophecy - have you heard that before? One hour is 1/24th of a day. Three hundred and sixty days in a Jewish year. One hour is exactly 15 days. Three times 15 is what? Forty-five.

Have you noticed in Daniel chapter 12 when it speaks about the time of the end, Michael standing up? There is a 45-day period between the 1290 days and the 1335. And it says at the end of the 1335, blessed is he who comes to the end of those days. Let me give you more reasons for that. The seven plagues of the end of time are very much like the plagues, the 10 plagues, that came on Egypt that were the catalysts to deliver them from slavery.

The seven last plagues are the catalysts to deliver us from this world, right? How long did the 10 plagues of Egypt take? Did you ever try to map that out? They go like this: Plague comes, Pharaoh repents, Moses comes back, says I'll let them go, changes his mind, another plague comes, it all happens very

quickly, within a matter of weeks. Job's trial, how long did that take? Did you ever try to calculate it? His friends sat with him for a week. He lost all of his possessions in one day, and his family. Maybe a few weeks went by, and the devil went back to Heaven and asked to attack him again, and then he lost his health, and then his friends came who weren't very friendly, and began to criticize him, and you map out the times, and it seems like it just came in a few weeks. And you start studying these great tribulations in the Bible - they happened very quickly. And so, my belief is, that the seven last plagues, you look at the nature of them - how long do you think the world's going to last when the ocean is blood, and the rivers are blood, and people have noisome sores and there's great heat scorching the planet and darkness on the seat of the Beast, and you start to add that up, and it can't last!

That's why Jesus said, "Except those days be short, no flesh..." - that doesn't mean no humans! That means no life, would survive! So, I think the plagues will come very quickly.

Now, one of the points that I want to emphasize is that God is going to save His people through tribulation. There have been hundreds of stories that have been coming out of this disaster on the East Coast. One in particular that got my attention, Leon Findlay shared this with me. I said, "That can't be true!" And I went and got online and I found it in the New York Times, so if they're correct, it's true. They found one person, I guess, right after the disaster, and the buildings imploded. His name was John McLaughlin (spelling?), 21 year veteran with the Port Authority Police Department in New York City, was pulled alive from the mountains of rubble, having survived for nearly 24 hours after the South Tower collapsed around him. Co-workers said that eight years ago, Sergeant McLaughlin conducted a dramatic rescue during the first Trade Center bombing. And they said that he'd dived into a gaping hole caused by an explosion to shield others from the impact of the blast. That was back then. No one knows exactly how Sergeant McLaughlin survived Tuesday's collapse, but a battallion chief at the rescue said that Sergeant McLaughlin was on the eighty-second floor when the building imploded. And he rode it down. He was covered by about 40 feet of rubble, which makes them believe that this is true.

How a person could survive that, how they could live through that, is incomprehensible to me. His legs were pinned and entangled in the metal cables they used to bind the cement. Rescue workers said that they formed a human chain and passed the tools down to cut him free, gave him some morphine and pulled him to safety. He is seriously injured, but he's going to survive. He went through that tribulation. It's just mind-boggling to me.

Well, you know, probably one of the most important points that people need to understand in the context of the tribulation is that God never promises to save His people from tribulation. He said He will save them through - not from, but through - tribulation. You can read in Acts chapter 14. If this isn't clear, there are no clear scriptures in the Bible. Paul is speaking, and he said, "We must through many..." - not one - many! "...tribulations, enter the kingdom of God."

Nobody gets in without going through tribulation. God doesn't promise to save us from it. Just look at the stories in the Bible. With Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, did God say, "I'm going to save you from the furnace"? Or did He save them through it? Did He save Noah from the flood, or through the Flood? Did he save Daniel from the lion's den, or did Daniel go through the lion's den? How about Joseph and his trials? Was he saved from prison and slavery? Or did God deliver him through those tribulations? And what about Job? Just because you're in tribulation doesn't mean you're on the losing team. God's people go through tribulation. God delivered him through it. Blessed him twice as much on the other side of it.

And so you do not find in the Bible this wacky teaching that, you know, all you've got to do is name it and claim it, if you've got faith, you don't have trouble. The Bible says suffering is the lot of the Christian.

I got a phone call, guess it has been a couple of weeks ago now, some of you heard of Joni Eareckson Tada, the famous quadriplegic gal, who broke her neck at 16 and tried to commit suicide, tried to get her friends to kill her, and figured her life was over and she went through a genuine conversion and has ministered around the world to millions through her books and her preaching and her speaking and she

called the Amazing Facts office to talk to me! And I missed the call. I was so upset. I told Bonnie, "Oh, just any way you can get her back, I can't believe she would call me." Because I read her books and had her pictures and listened to her music and just a great Christian. And she called the house. And I picked up the phone, and she said, "Hi, this is Joni Eareckson Tada," and I thought, "Oh!" I was so excited. I said, "I am so thankful that you called me." And her mother had died, and some friends of hers who are also supporters of Amazing Facts told her about the loss of our son. And she said, "I heard about what happened to you, and I just felt impressed. I couldn't get it off my mind to call you." And I said, "Well, I am so thankful you would do that." And she wanted to pray with me, and I said, "You know, I really enjoy your singing." And she said, "Oh, really? Do you want to sing together?" And I said, "Well, um, ahh...." And I said, "I enjoy your singing!" And we did actually, "Well, you know there's one song you sing, and it's that song, you know, 'He Careth for Me'", and she said, "Well, I haven't sung that in years." We sang a little bit of it, it sounded pretty bad, on the phone together, but she prayed with me, and I couldn't wait to get off the phone and run out and tell everybody, like you, that she called me! And I thought that was so nice, so I sent her a couple of books. I sent her the Mary book, and some other books, and she sent me a book she just finished. It's on audio, because a lot of her people are disabled. And I've been listening to it, and it's about when God weeps. It's about trials, and you know, I'll tell you what - she's got her head screwed on right when it comes to theology. She understands that God never promises to save us without suffering. He saves us through suffering. And I've been at the point of tears many times as I've been reading about that.

### **God's people do struggle. They do go through tribulations.**

Point Number Eight I want to make: **Does tribulation separate us from God?** Or does it unite us with God. What have we seen happening in this country? Has tribulation separated us as families, as neighbors? You know, just in my neighborhood I've noticed everybody's going around, putting up little flags and ribbons, and neighbors I don't talk to very often are coming over, people I talk to at the health club, they want to talk. It pulls people together - suffering, trials pull people together. And God says that it's through trials that we become the closest with Him.

When you share in the suffering of Jesus, nothing will bring you closer. Nothing gives you more of an affinity for God than when you are crucified with Christ, when you suffer with Jesus. Romans 8:35-39: "Who will separate us from the love of God? Shall tribulation?" First thing he asks! "Shall tribulation separate us? Or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword? As it is written, 'For your sake we are killed all day long. We are counted as sheep for the slaughter. Yet in all these things, we are more than conquerors for Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death...' - -You know, you can be more than a conqueror even through tribulation - - "...For I am persuaded that neither death..." - and we've seen all too much of that this week.

You know one of the hard things, and one reasons I've been emotional this week, uh, when you lose a parent, it hurts, but it seems like part of the life process. And statistically, at some point, one spouse buries the other. But when you lose a child, that's a different club, they live on a different floor. And when we lost our son, I don't say much about it, but you know, that not a day goes by when I don't really hurt because of that. And I used to hear about natural disasters, and national disasters, and terrorism, and yeah, there's so much, I used to shed those emotions very quickly. But now I'm thinking about all the parents who maybe lost children. A lot of those people in the Trade Center were young professionals.

I was shocked one day, I looked in the paper. My son's obituary, and it said, "A man in Ukiah..." and I thought, "A man? Twenty-three, I guess he's a man." I'd never thought of it that way. He was always my boy. I would think about all these parents who had now left their children, and the emotions of this have been much stronger for me now, when I think about others suffering.

You know one reason God lets us suffer, is because it gives you an empathy that you may not have before. I heard about this lady that was in the hospital. She'd just had this painful gallbladder surgery or something, and it's supposed to be painful. And one of the nurses came in and she was, you know,

shaking around, and pulling the tubes and checking things and rolling her over, and checking her pressure, and very rough and coarse. And a little later that day, the shift changed, and another nurse came in, and she was being very gentle, and she was saying, "How do you feel?" Holding the hand, very gentle with the blood pressure, changing the IV. She said, "Boy, you are so gentle, you're so kind, you're so thoughtful." She said, "That other nurse who came in earlier, boy, she's just like a wrestler!" And she said, "Well, I'll tell you," she said. "I've had this operation. I know how you feel."

And sometimes God lets us suffer so we can know how other people feel.

Does tribulation separate us? It pulls us together. Now, that's good, and it could be bad. You know the Bible does tell us that we should weep with those who weep. And I am so glad our country got together to pray. But we need to also have our antennae up. Are you listening to me? I'm so thankful that we can pull together as a country, and I am a patriot. I mean I was in military school at five years old, and ... again at 11, 12 and 13. That is a form of patriotic indoctrination. I can't shake that. You salute the flag every day. You fold it up every day. So I am a patriot, and I am standing behind my country. We've got a flat at the Bachelor home right now, and my eyes welled with tears when Esmee was singing earlier.

Don't misunderstand, I support our country. You know why? Right now, this country is still wearing the two horns of the lamb. Some day it will speak as a dragon, we know that. And unity can turn the wrong way. And I'm hoping that those of you who are listening who understand those prophesies in Revelation 13, you will know how to balance what happens right now, you won't make an idiot of yourself and start saying that this sense of patriotism and the sense of praying together is a bad thing. It's a good thing. As long as we still have those two horns, the freedom of religion and the freedom of government, then let's stay together, amen? But if our country starts to speak as a dragon, that's when the unity becomes a bad thing. That's when the world will begin to tell people how and when and where to worship. Then it gets scary. But I hope not only will it pull us together as a nation, as families, I hope it pulls us together as a church.

Talking about the unity and the patriotism. Abraham Lincoln said, "I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go. My own wisdom, and that of all about me, seemed insufficient for the day." There is a time when we all, as a nation, just need to get together and pray because we don't know what has happened, or what's next. And of course the Civil War that he did not survive was an example of that.

What should we do? What do we do about all this? Revelation chapter 7 - Let's turn to that very quickly. Revelation chapter 7 describes four angels, standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth that the winds should not blow on the earth or the sea or any tree. Here you have this apocalyptic image of these angels, it's a symbol. Four angels leading the four corners of the earth - north, south, east and west - holding these storms, these winds of strife and turmoil and trouble, preventing them to blow upon the earth, and what you saw this week almost looks like an angel lost his grip. But God is still on the throne, He did not make any mistakes. But I think He did allow us to see a glimpse of what can happen on a more universal scale when those angels all let go. Can you imagine that? That's going to happen some day. And the Bible says, before that happens, we have a work to do.

What are we supposed to do? "Do not harm," the angel tells these four angels, "Do not harm the earth, the sea or the trees, 'til we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads." This message, this sealing message, this saving message, everybody is marked in Revelation. The loss of the Mark of the Beast, the saved have the seal of the name of God in their foreheads. First of all, that seal of God is the Holy Spirit. I believe it's Ephesians 4 that says, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit with which you were sealed." Secondarily, that seal of God is the law of God. We should never be ashamed that we are a commandment-believing-keeping people. And if you're not keeping them, you ought to at least believe in them, amen? That's the law that shows us our need of a Savior! The Bible says, "Bind up the testimonies, seal the law among my disciples." Revelation says, "The Dragon is wroth with the woman that keeps the commandments of God."

Revelation 14 talks about one group that's got the Mark of the Beast, and says 'Here, you've got the other group, they keep the commandments of God and they've got the testimony of Jesus.' We've got a message! We've got a ministry, we've got a mission, as a church, and the devil would like nothing more than for us to get so preoccupied with evaluating our own belly button that we neglect all the lost around us, amen? We have answers. We need to go out there and be giving answers, and the devil loves to distract us with internal strife. The disciples were arguing among themselves which of them was the greatest just before Jesus' tribulation in the Garden of Gethsemane, just before the Last Supper. Things haven't changed, have they. Some day these angels are going to loosen their grip.

So, what should we do? Mark chapter 16, verse 15, "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." Luke 21:28: The Bible says, "And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draws nigh." That doesn't mean go around with a neck brace and your head cocked upward. It's talking about let your heart, your prayers be looking up. Let the direction of your life be storing your treasure in heaven. Let your priority to be seeking first God's kingdom and His righteousness. That's what it means, "lift up your heads."

We become so, you know, earthly oriented. We've got this horizontal vision, and He says, "You need a vertical vision when you see these things beginning to come to pass. Lift up your heads. Your redemption draws near." John 16, verse 33: "These things I've spoken to you, that you might have peace."

I'm not afraid to get on an airplane. That doesn't worry me. You know what I'm afraid of? I'm afraid that some people are going to use this event to take away our freedom. Freedom's dangerous. And I think that if we ought to do anything, what we ought to do is go take care of the threat, but we should not be cowering. There are some people in government, and I want you to pray for the people in government. I was proud of the way the president's conducted himself through all of this. I'm glad he showed some heart and some courage. I want to hear you say "Amen." He's your president. You are commanded in the Word of God to pray for your leaders, it doesn't matter whether you are a Democrat or a Republican, pray for your leaders. But there are some "goobers" in government, amen? We know that. And if some of them have their way, they'll start making you get strip-searched before you go to Taco Bell. And then these diabolical terrorists win.

Some of them are going to say, "Let's not build any more high-profile buildings - could be dangerous!" Now, I don't know they're going to do in New York. I almost wish they'd build it a little taller and a little stronger. People get scared, and God believes in ingenuity and creativity. He doesn't believe in pride. If they do it, do it to the glory of God.

Point Number 10: **Some day probation's going to close**, and we need to know that. Right now the door of mercy is open. Probation closed for thousands of people this week. We trust many of them knew the Lord. Some of them laid down their lives because they would not leave people who could not save themselves. But there's a lot of people alive out there in our communities and our neighborhoods that don't know Him.

I'm ashamed to tell you that we've got a neighbor, he recently moved in with his parents. He hasn't been there as long as we've been there, but I asked him yesterday, "Jeff, have I ever given you my testimony book?" He said, "No, I didn't know you have a testimony book." Next door neighbor! So I gave him my book. Something like this kind of wakes you up, and realizes you've got to do something. You've got to tell people. Someday Jesus will declare, "He that is unjust, probation will close, let him be unjust still. He that is filthy, let him be filthy still. He who is righteous, let him be righteous still, and he who is holy, let him be holy still."

### **Should we fear tribulation?**

Some of you are going through you own tribulation right now. There's all different forms that it takes. Some of you've got financial tribulation, or physical tribulation, physical suffering. Paul had a thorn in his side, and God used it to save him. God used it to mobilize him.

Should we be afraid of it? Or should we know that God loves us and all these things will work together for His good if we trust Him?

The Bible says in the last days, Luke 21 verse 26: "Men's hearts may be failing them for fear and looking after those things that are coming upon the earth, for the powers of heaven will be shaken." But no, we shouldn't be afraid of that.

I told you, you know what we need to be afraid of? Sin. We need to be afraid of sin. Matter of fact, I appreciate anybody, whether they're in the media or religion, who has said, "This is a time for us to evaluate how we are as a people morally." Washington said, "A democracy, this republic, will only survive with a moral people." You can only give that kind of freedom and trust it to moral people. And I think that there's been room for improvement in our country. I believe that it's time for us to implement that verse in II Chronicles chapter 7 verse 14 that says, "If my people, which are called by my name..." - and you know, Solomon says this, this is the wisest man speaking, he says this when he says - "If a plague comes on your people, if they're carried away captive, if they're struggling through tribulation, then..." - he says - "...if my people, which are called by my name..." - we're supposed to be a God-fearing country - "...will humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn..." - that's repent - "...from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven. I will forgive their sin, I will heal their land."

He promises to do all those things, but there's something for us to do. You know the Bible says that if we humble ourselves, He will lift us up. The Bible says if we are in God's care, if we're under His wings, no weapon formed against you will prosper. We don't have to strip-search everybody that gets on an airplane because we're living in terror. If we're living in terror, then they win. That's why they call it terrorism.

God wants us to live in peace! "Perfect peace have they that love thy law, and nothing will offend them." If we know that we're obeying God, we don't need to be afraid. Should we fear the tribulation? No.

You know, for six weeks when we were in New York, I grew up there. Went to the Empire State Building several times. I'd never been to the top of the World Trade Center until I went with my family in '99. I'm embarrassed to say that. I still have never been to the Statue of Liberty. Karen went without me. I was busy with "Net New York!" Now, we literally slept, we'd look up, we were on the penthouse - they gave us a penthouse - it was the seventh floor, in an apartment in New York City. It was one room, mice, cockroaches, just want you to have the picture. Kids shared a bed. We were not in the lap of luxury. Four thousand dollars a month for that in New York City! Continue your offerings to Amazing Facts... And Karen and I, we had a loft. We didn't even have a wall separating us from where the kids slept. But we were up the stairs, and there was a skylight, and we looked up every night. We watched the lights change color on the Empire State Building.

You know in 1945 that in a thick fog, a B-29 hit the Empire State Building broadside, 78-79th floor, and 14 people died. Some people died because part of the engine cut the elevator cables and they were killed in a free fall. But because they used - it was the first real skyscraper, it was for years the tallest building in the world, they really built that thing tough because they didn't know exactly what the wind dynamics would be. They used a lot more stone, and a lot more iron, and you know today it's the tallest building in New York City. Who would have ever dreamed 70-year-old lady, 70 years old, you see her, still there. It's on the rock. They dug deep. It's got a good foundation. And you know, we don't have to be afraid if we know that we're building on the Rock. Psalm 91 verse 4 and 5: "He will cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you will take refuge. His truth will be your shield and your buckler. You shall not be afraid of the terror by night..." - or the aircraft by day. You don't have to be afraid if you're under the wings, amen?

Some of you remember seeing that story that was in National Geographic. One of the photographers was following up on a forest fire, and he went by this barn that had burnt, and he saw a chicken that did not escape. And he inadvertently, he took his foot - I've got a picture of that, put that up on the screen -

....He took his foot ..... and he kicked this dead chicken. And out from under this burnt chicken came four live little chicks. The mother saw the fire coming and she spread out her wings, and she chirped, and her little chicks went under her wings, and she insulated them against the flames, and she held her ground and died that they might live. And here God says we can find shelter under His wings. He died that you and I might live.

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Now I'm not afraid of what's happening in the world today. Bonnie said, "Doug, you'd better cancel your trips here and there because...." I'm not afraid of that. Probably the safest time ever to fly right now. What I'm afraid of is that my attitude might be wrong, that I might become complacent, that I might fail the spiritual opportunity, to not only come closer to God, but to be a better witness. When it comes to everything happening in the world around us, Jesus said, "In the world, you're going to have tribulation, but don't be afraid! Be of good cheer! You can have peace, because I've overcome the world." We're under His wings. If you're thankful for that, and you'd like to take your position under His wings, reach for your hymnal. I believe it's 529, (and let's stand together as we sing)

You know, there's a poem that's gone around, and it talks about how God uses trials to prepare people for service, and to deepen His relationship with those individuals. This week, I was listening to the book Joni Eareckson sent me, and there was a poem in there you may have heard before, we don't even know who the author is, it's written by a guy named "Unknown." Maybe you're going through a trial. Maybe you've been going through your own form of tribulation. It might be something in your family, where you work, or you're just buying into the emotions of this national trial. Listen to this:

When God wants to drill a man, and thrill a man, and skill a man to play the noblest part, when He yearns with all His heart to create so great and bold a man that all the world shall be amazed, watch His methods, watch His ways, how He ruthlessly perfects whom He royally elects, how He hammers them and hurts them, and with mighty blows converts him into trial shapes of clay which only God understands, while his tortured heart is crying, and he lift beseeching hands, how He bends, but never breaks, when his good He undertakes, how He uses whom he chooses, and with every purpose fuses him by every act induces him to try his splendor out, God knows what he's about.

God knows what he's doing. Maybe you'd like to submit to the craftsman who holds the chisel as he shapes and polishes you to have a place in his kingdom. And there may be some of you who do not have that peace and refuge that come from the wings of Jesus. If you would like to experience that now, come as we sing our last verse. We'll make that special prayer for you, verse 3...

Our loving Heavenly Father, Lord, we are so thankful at a time like this that we have the promises in Your Word that give us peace and comfort. There might be a thousand falling at our side, and ten thousand at our right hand, but we don't need to be afraid of the arrow that flies by day, or the pestilence that walks in darkness with the plague. It's so comforting, Lord, to know that You have promised, even at the expense of your own life, to provide refuge for us, to come under the shadow of the Almighty, under Your wings. Lord, this is a time of special prayer, not only are we praying for our own individual needs that we might have the peace that comes from a relationship with Jesus, I pray, Lord, that in an appropriate way, we can accept whatever chastening has come to us as individuals in a country that we can humble ourselves and You can lift us up. I pray that in the appropriate way we can unite as families, as neighbors, as citizens, even on a global scale, that we can unite against this kind of diabolical evil. And Lord, I also ask that as a people of prophesy, You will not blur the truth that we know about what these things could mean. That all of this is a harbinger of what's coming. We've seen this week, in very vivid apocalyptic images, things that may accelerate in the future, and I pray that we will do our part to strengthen our relationship with Thee, and to be Your witnesses. I pray, Lord, that You will help us to put aside our differences that others might know that we are Your disciples by our love for one another. And as we go from this place, help us to know that the wings of the Almighty go with us. These things we ask in Jesus' name, Amen.