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God's Seal of Protection

Revelation Part 10

Prayer: *Father, we just continue to lift up our praise and thanksgiving to you for who you are and for what you have done for the glory that belongs to you and you alone. Lord, this morning we just continue in this series. Again, these are not easy words to speak, this is not an easy subject to tackle and so again I pray for your Holy Spirit, I pray that you would accompany us, I pray that you would give us eyes to see and ears to hear and that it would be of permanent value. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, if you're counting, this is our tenth lesson so far in the book of Revelation. We are up to the seventh chapter. We are well into the book. And so far we've seen in the first three chapters, we've seen that devoted to Christ kind of critique of the church; and chapter 4 and 5 is John's vision of this worship service that's taking place in heaven and that was followed by chapter 6 which is the beginning of God's judgment and he's opening these seven seals.

If you recall the chapter opens with four horses each produced by the breaking of a seal. There's the white horse which represents a host of false christs unleashed on the earth. It's followed by a red horse representing the removal of peace from the earth which is followed by the black horse representing famine and want which is followed by the pale horse representing death itself. Each of these horses rides out as progressive seals open and each one represents the beginning of God's judgment on the earth.

If you recall the fifth seal represents the martyred saints as they cried out to God: *"O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"* God tells them: *Rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.*

Well the sixth seal represents a massive earthquake and that's followed by a calamitous destruction and the sun grows dark and the moon turns red and the atmosphere literally begins to burn. We pointed out though by this time the die is already cast, for many repentance is no longer possible. Mankind has so thoroughly rejected God that they no longer are in a position to respond with anything other than fear and loathing. I mean, just think about it, God has demonstrated his awesome power and who he is, these

terrible things are taking place, and yet people refuse to turn to him. It says: *Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"*

Well mercifully chapter 7 is basically an interlude, it's an interlude between the sixth and the seventh seal. Chapter 6 answered that question who can stand. And chapter 7 answers that question definitively by saying only God's people, only those whom God has chosen, only those whom God has sealed. So chapter 7 is broken into two major visions that both have to do with God's action of sealing his own from the judgment that is to come. And that judgment's been called the tribulation, it's been called the time of Jacob's trouble, it's been called Daniel's seventieth week. It will be a time of undescrivable horror.

As I said last time sorting out what actually is going to happen is incredibly challenging. I mentioned one of the great difficulties in studying the book of Revelation is this incredible variety of opinions that people have over just what its many and varied signs

actually mean. As I said, each symbol, each statement, each description is surrounded by a myriad of sincere, gifted and passionate commentators, many of whom disagree wildly about what's taking place. I mean there's a great deal of confusion surrounding the interpretations of this book as well as the understanding of the different genres that apply.

I mean there are three different events surrounding the end of time, each of which has different schools of thought surrounding it and anyone who's even dabbled in end times has probably heard these three terms: the rapture, the tribulation, and the millennium. Well, the rapture refers to an event in which Jesus comes down to snatch up his church. The tribulation refers to a seven-year period of unprecedented worldwide trial, and the millennium refers to the thousand-year reign of Christ. So I want to just first just to basically define these terms before we go forward.

So first let me define the rapture and again without getting too much into the weeds, we know that at some point Jesus is going to descend from heaven and that the dead in Christ will rise. We look at *1 Thessalonians 4*. It says: *For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be*

caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord in the air. 1

Corinthians 15 says: Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.

Well that particular event is called the rapture. It's based on the word "rapio" which is the Latin translation of the Greek word which is "caught up." And suffice it to say, groups divide on exactly when Jesus is going to come for his church. Some say this rapture is going to happen before the tribulation period; they believe in a pre tribulation rapture in which Jesus comes literally like a thief in the night and rescues his church. He brings them back to heaven only to return a second time at the end of the tribulation to begin his millennial reign. Well, critics object to this understanding. They suggest that means there's not only a second coming of Christ but a third one. The first was his birth, the second was when he comes for the church at the rapture, and third one will be the start of his millennial reign. Well, folks meet that objection by saying the rapture's not the same as Christ's second coming and they have a point. If you notice one thing about Christ coming for his church is that believers then

alive, they all meet not on the earth but where? In the air. Pre tribulation folks believe that this is not the second coming of Christ but rather Christ's snatching up his church which takes place altogether in the air prior to his coming to begin his millennial reign.

Now mid tribulation folks, they just differ as to the timing. They say it's right in the middle of the tribulation and they too believe that Jesus then brings the church up to heaven and also returns a second time at the end of the tribulation. Thirdly, there's those who believe in a post tribulation rapture. They don't wrestle with the idea of Jesus going back to heaven and returning a second time with his church, they see the rapture of Christ and his millennial rule as happening simultaneously.

What about the tribulation? Well the tribulation is something that was predicted by Daniel in the Old Testament. He said: *"And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book."* We have Jesus' words on the tribulation in *Matthew 24*. It says: *"For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be."* He says: *"Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun*

will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken."

Now seven years had been given to the time of the tribulation and that's again based on many prophecies including Daniel. Daniel prophesied that one week or seven years would define the tribulation and that this period would be broken into two three-and-a-half-year periods. He says of the enemy in *Daniel 7*, he says: *He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time.*

And finally there's this thousand-year reign of Christ, this thing known as the millennium. Many folks have heard that Jesus is going to return and rule for a thousand years, everything's going to be restored, everything's going to be healed. You may well have heard Isaiah's prediction describing it. He says: *The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the*

cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

You probably also heard that the devil's going to be bound for that thousand years and then released for a little while and again that's based on a scripture near the end of Revelation. *Revelation 20:1* says: *Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while.*

Now this thousand-year reign of Christ, this thing known as the millennium has lots of different schools surrounding it. And there are basically three main approaches to this event in the book of Revelation. You've probably heard of them. There's the pre mil, the post mil and the a mil. Obviously "mil" stands for millennium, which again is that thousand-year reign. These three groups all disagree on different aspects of the millennium: How long it is, when it started when it will end.

The post mil view says that we are living in an age that's already passed the millennium, hence it's post millennial. I mean, these folks believe that the millennium has already taken place and that the tribulation was actually part of ancient history that focused mainly, primarily in Jerusalem. They suggest that we are now still in the millennium of Christ's victorious rule and that Christ is still on his throne. His saints are still Christianizing the world through the gospel since satan was bound at the very start of Christ's ministry.

Now you might wonder how the thousand-year reign of Christ can fit into Christ's ministry because the church has been around over 2,000 years. Post millennials believes that millennia is not necessarily a literally 1,000-year period, instead they see it as a lengthy epoch in which God's people slowly but surely are advancing. Post millennials look forward to a time when they actually see the kingdom of God on earth. They believe it will be a time when the vast majority of the world has been converted to Christianity where Christ is welcomed as a conquering king. Now the a mil position also believes that the thousand years of the millennium is figurative, that it's not literal. They also believe that we're in the millennium right now, that Satan has been bound and Christ is reigning not on earth but in heaven, they believe the gospel is going forward.

So what are the differences between the post and the a millennial view? Well Sam Storms gives a good explanation. He says this, he says: "Some have jokingly referred to postmillennialism as 'optimistic amillennialism' or to amillennialism, conversely, as 'pessimistic postmillennialism'! There is a measure of truth in this, for the critical question is whether or not one conceives of the church age as a time of ever-increasing gospel prosperity. Will Christianity experience both worldwide growth and influence, such that it gradually becomes the rule rather than the exception among the majority of mankind? Amillennialists say No. Postmillennialists say Yes." And each side can muster their own set of verses to support their tradition.

There's a third view, the pre millennial view that says the millennium is still a future event, that Christ will come for his church before the millennium, that we will live and reign with him for a thousand years before Satan is once again loosed, stirring up the final battle. This is definitely the view that I lean towards but I'm certainly open to being convinced otherwise. I appreciate because it simply takes the scriptures at face value when they describe future events as being future.

And perhaps the strongest piece of evidence supporting a pre millennial view is that it believes that Israel as a nation will be

a vital part of God's plan at the end. I mean we all know present day Israel is not even close to that point yet. Israel's largely a secular nation with mostly cultural ties to Judaism. I mean, this is a nation that now actively suppresses the gospel. You may well know sharing the gospel there will bring all kinds of legal implications. But God speaks at length and Paul speaks at length in the book of Romans about the nation of Israel fully coming into the fold. As we'll see in this chapter of Revelation, that can certainly be interpreted literally.

I think the nation of Israel is one of the most spectacular proofs we have of the gospel and the power of Christ. I oftentimes love to share that whole story with folks because they really have no response to this miracle which is nothing less than spectacular if you think about it. I mean, just consider in A.D. 70 Israel basically went out of business. You know, the temple was sacked, it was destroyed by Rome, people were slaughtered en masse and those who escaped, they were scattered. And so for 19 centuries the Jewish people, they lived scattered all over the globe. And then suddenly in 1948 we know that Israel was established as a nation. What we forget is that nowhere in the history of mankind has anything even remotely like this ever happened before. Think about it. Never has a nation gone out of business, never has it been scattered throughout the entire world only suddenly to

reappear and reconstitute themselves. I mean picture the Incas or the Aztecs or some other group suddenly reassembling in Arizona after nineteen centuries of disbursement and then declaring Arizona to be a new nation? Well that's just what Israel did. That's just what the Jews did in Israel. Not only did these separated people separate for nineteen centuries, they suddenly, miraculously came back together and now they're the fourth most powerful nation on the earth. I mean if Israel isn't a miracle, you just don't believe in miracles.

Now of the three millennial views only pre millennial only views Israel's national role as vital. The post and amillennials see Israel largely as a metaphor for the church and not as an actual national presence, so I'm drawn to the premillennial view. But you can see how the book of Revelation presents all kinds of unique problems and understanding considering that there's three different ways to understand the rapture, there's at least three other ways of understanding the millennium and those are just the major ones. There's quite a few minor ones as well and it presents a daunting challenge to any lay person just trying to understand what God is saying.

Well, what we do know is that chapter 7 represents the protection that God is extending to his own during this tribulation period.

So we start at Revelation 7:1. It says: *After this -- this is John's description of yet another vision -- After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, that no wind might blow on earth or sea or against any tree. Then I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, with the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm earth and sea, saying, "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads."*

So the picture here is that these four angels who represent all four corners of the earth, north, south, east and west, they're all actively involved in holding back, holding back something human beings have been incapable of subduing and that's the weather. These angels are about to unleash these incredibly destructive forces when another angel arises from the east which is Israel, Jerusalem, and he says, *"Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads."* The angel uses the plural "we" because what he's saying is a mass of angels then goes out throughout the world marking and sealing all those who belong to God in order to protect them from the forces that are coming.

We've all heard about the mark of the beast, the number 666 that's affixed either to the right hand or to the forehead. What people don't hear about is that God is going throughout the world affixing the mark of God on the forehead of those who belong to him.

Revelation 14:1 says: Then I looked, and behold, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. Revelation 9 says: They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any green plant or any tree, but only those people who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads.

Now does this mean that all who belong to Christ will escape any and all physical harm? It does not. Every single day hundreds of blood bought believers in Christ lose their lives and those who are martyred join the saints under the altar. If you remember in the last chapter what God said to those saints, he said that even more of his precious saints have to die before their number is filled. So you say, okay, what's the point of the sealing? Well, the sealing is to sanctify and set apart God's own from the direct effects of this judgment. That doesn't mean saints aren't going to lose their lives through persecution, accidents and sickness. It simply says that no one who is sealed will be subject to God's particular judgment on the earth, and this is incredibly significant as we learn how quickly things are going to turn ugly

and awful.

You want one example? Let me give you an example of God's seal protecting God's people. This is Revelation 9. It says: *And the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star fallen from heaven to earth, and he was given the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit. He opened the shaft of the bottomless pit, and from the shaft rose smoke like the smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened with the smoke from the shaft.* I just got to -- I remember that train derailment which we just saw a couple of weeks ago. You see these times, often these incredibly thick black clouds just going up and what he's saying, this is one of unbelievable proportions. And it says: *Then from the smoke came locusts on the earth, and they were given power like the power of scorpions of the earth. They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any green plant or any tree, but only those people who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. They were allowed to torment them for five months, but not to kill them, and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings someone.* And in those days people will seek death and will not find it. *They will long to die, but death will flee from them.*

Well, clearly in amongst those who are tormented by these scorpions will be believers protected and sealed from that type of attack.

Those around them will literally will be begging to die but death will flee from them. It goes on to say the sealing begins with the sealing of the 144,000. He says: *And I heard the number of the sealed, 144,000, sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel: 12,000 from the tribe of Judah were sealed, 12,000 from the tribe of Reuben, 12,000 from the tribe of Gad, 12,000 from the tribe of Asher, 12,000 from the tribe of Naphtali, 12,000 from the tribe of Manasseh, 12,000 from the tribe of Simeon, 12,000 from the tribe of Levi, 12,000 from the tribe of Issachar, 12,000 from the tribe of Zebulun, 12,000 from the tribe of Joseph, 12,000 from the tribe of Benjamin were sealed.*

Now, at this point it should come as no shock to anyone that folks are terrifically divided as to what are we seeing here? And again, basically there's two schools of thought. One sees this as a description of a mighty revival among the Jewish nation producing 144,000 on fire Jewish converts who are going to be unleashed to the world tasked with bringing the Jewish nation and the rest of the world into the fold as to -- before there's one final ingathering before the end. And this pre millennial view has always held that the Jews who rejected Christ did so as a means of allowing God to reach out to the Gentiles. And then when the time of the Gentiles has been fulfilled there would be this huge resurgence of Jews coming back to Christ. Again, I think we're

starting to see that now, I mean, just ask Mitch Glaser. Many see this as the fulfillment of what Paul was seeing in *Romans 11*. This is what he said: *Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.*

Now the other camp, the camp that rejects the pre millennial view, notably the post and amillennials camps, instead they see the 144,000 as signifying not the nation of Israel but the church. Darrell Johnson illustrates this position. He says this: "The one hundred and forty-four thousand, a hugely symbolic number, represents the complete number of God's people, now made up of Jews and Gentiles. What is going on here? Israel's reason for being has been fulfilled! The nations are coming to the Messiah! The nations, the Gentiles, are now numbered as the tribes of Israel. It is not so much that Israel has been replaced. It is rather that Israel's national boundaries have been abolished. The nation of Israel was chosen to bless all the nations (Gen 22:18). Those nations have now come in and are numbered as the chosen people of God." (Johnson, Darrell W.. *Discipleship On The Edge: An Expository Journey Through the Book of Revelation* (p. 185). Canadian Church Leaders Network. Kindle Edition.)

Two different positions, two different views. And whether the 144,000 is viewed exclusively as the nation of Israel or as the church, there's one thing that all sides agree on with regard to chapter 7 and that it's that the next vision applies to the entire world. This is *Revelation 7:9*. He says: *After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen."*

And once again we harken back to that massive worship service that we observed in chapter 4 and 5. If you remember, we're struck by the fact that the lion of the tribe of Judah is actually a lamb slain. As you recall, it's a lamb slain but standing. And that was simply telling us that Jesus's ways are altogether different from the world's and that Jesus wins by losing. And here the worship of a multitude proclaims the excellence of the Lamb's way. They are *crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our*

God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

And so who exactly is this multitude? Well, that's a question that John has asked by one of the elders. John goes on to say in verse 13, it says: *Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?" I said to him, "Sir, you know." I mean, it's like John is like in the middle of this vision, he's being quizzed by an elder. He says, "I have no idea. You know." And he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."*

So what he's told is that it's people from every tribe, tongue and people group all gathered together. Daniel Akin observes: "In this massive throng of the redeemed in heaven, there is not the slightest hint of bigotry, ethnocentrism, prejudice, or racism. Of the 11,243 people groups in the world, each is present and represented. Of the 3,056 people groups currently unengaged, each is represented. Of the 3.7 billion persons still not having an adequate opportunity to hear the gospel, the Lamb is reaching out and calling them unto Himself by the Spirit and through His people. The gospel is going to be heard and believed among all the peoples of the earth. The nations will rejoice! The nations will worship!" (Exalting Jesus in Revelation (Christ-Centered

Exposition Commentary) (p. 180). B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.)

And again we ask, okay, just who is this massive group? We know that they've come from every tribe, tongue and nation but once again opinions differ greatly as to who they represent. John MacArthur believes that this group are those who have been slain for the gospel since the tribulation along with all believers who have died since the beginning of it. He says in his book *Because The Time Is Near* -- quote -- "As the tribulation wears on, the number of martyrs will increase, as will the number of believers who die naturally or violently, eventually accumulating into the vast uncountable multitude in this passage."

And just what are these saints doing? Verse 15 says: *"Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."*

Well this concludes chapter 7 which again acts as an interlude,

that's a brief pause between the carnage that we saw in six and what's going to be taking place in the rest of Revelation. Just a casual reading through this book makes you wonder how even our planet can withstand the horrors that are headed our way. I mean we've already been through the seal judgment, we're on the verge of experiencing the trumpets which include hail and fire that's going to destroy much of the plant life in the entire world. So much for environmentalism. And that's going to be followed by the death of almost all aquatic life, the darkening of the sun and the moon, a plague of demonic locusts that torture those with the mark of the beast and then a demonic army that kills one-third of humanity, and that's just the trumpets. They're followed by the bowl judgments and that includes painful sores breaking out, more death in the sea, a great increase in the heat of the sun, a great darkness followed by more sores followed by the death of virtually all life in the sea, the turning of the rivers to blood which is then followed by a monstrous earthquake accompanied by gigantic hailstones.

Every time you think you're getting to the end of horrors you find the last judgment opens up a whole new series of new judgments. And once again there's great controversy surrounding the unfolding these events. Many commentators believe that the judgments that are coming are actually the same judgments recapitulated over and

over again. You know, we've seen the seventh seal judgment introduces the seven trumpet judgment, the seven trumpet judgment introduces the seven bowl judgments. And maybe, say many commentators, these are the same judgments being recast in a different light. Maybe they are. But even so, that doesn't make the future any less horrific.

You see, we live in a day when God's mercy and patience is mocked to his face. God has warned us: *Because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.* And just what does God mean by saying that our hard hearts wind up storing up wrath for ourselves? The vast majority of folks go by the understanding that out of sight means out of mind, God's never in their vision, so he's never in their thoughts. He just doesn't count. I mean the idea of impending judgment simply doesn't register. But thinking so doesn't make it so. In fact, John gives us an eye witness account of what's going to take place in heaven in Revelation.

He says: *And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done.* Jesus describes the

extent of this examination in *Matthew 10*. He says: *"Nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known."* In *Matthew 12* he says: *"I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak."* I mean the book we're studying right now is part of that judgment revealed. If you remember, the opening line to the book of Revelation is: *The revelation -- the revealing -- of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place.*

And you know there's two different pathways that lead to this judgment. There's one that's going to be taken by the vast majority of the world, it's that wide, it's that well-traveled highway that leads to eternal damnation. The other is the narrow road that leads to eternal life. Jesus said: *"Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few."*

Well, the fact that you're sitting here this morning means that you may be one of those whom God has chosen out of the vast sea of humanity to be blessed beyond measure, that is to have your eyes and ears opened to what God and Christ has done for us. You see,

he bore far more than the worst judgment we will ever read about. I mean, he literally became all of our failures, all of our sin as he bore that sin on the cross. And our sins, which are many, they've also come under judgment, but every one of them has already been paid for by Christ on the cross. Every failure, every sin, every shortcoming even down to our idle words have been placed not on us but on our Savior. We stand before God perfect in Christ, able to stand before a holy God not based on our righteousness but on his that he's given to us by faith. And I know I've given you nothing but bad news, but here's the good news, the really good news, literally the best news there could ever be and that is the time is still right. Paul said: *We appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For he says, "In a favorable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.*

If any of you in this building has any doubt whatsoever about your own salvation, see me, see one of the elders, let's make that a certainty. And one thing I can say with absolute certainty is that judgment is coming and it will be terrible beyond your wildest imagination.

One thing that I can also state is that if you belong to him, you

are safer than you can even imagine. God still causes all things to work together for our good, and he promises when that day of judgment comes we will be under his prospective hand with the seal of God on our foreheads. As the angels said: *"Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads."* And that seal represents God's ownership and God's protection. And every one of us who know Christ as Lord and Savior, you know we've already been sealed, we've been sealed with God's Holy Spirit. *Ephesians 1* says: *In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.* So whether it's here or now or there and later, we have God's promise, God's power and God's protection. We also have the privilege, the opportunity and the obligation to share the good news while there is still time. *Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.* Let's pray.

Father, I just thank you and praise you for the privilege that we sit under. There are terrible things that are coming to this planet, there are times that are incalculably evil that will break forth on this planet. I thank you, Lord, that you have given us your seal, I thank you that you've given us your protection, I

thank you that you have still given us time. I pray that each of us would be just filled with the need to share this gospel while there still is time, with our friends, with our neighbors, with our relatives, with all those whom we love, those whom we even meet on the street. I just pray for that holy passion and I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.